



## **SexEdVA** *(previously Teen Pregnancy Prevention, or "TPP")*

### **Placement Description**

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- In-school programming for over 3,000 students in grades 6-10 through "Draw the Line", "Safer Choices", "Teen Outreach Program", and "Project AIM" curriculum.
- Prevention and education program serving Harrisonburg City, Rockingham County, and Page County Schools.
- Distributes educational and program materials for community learning and public awareness.
- Also provides workshops and presentations including; Being an Askable Adult, Safe Zone: LGBTQIA Allyship, Disability-inclusive Sexual Health Programming, Healthy Relationships.
- Partners with organizations throughout the US to provide and train instructors in the "Vision of You" online sexual health program.

### **Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities**

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- Network with other agencies, schools, and community members working towards decreasing adolescent health in the region, particularly related to reproductive well-being.
- Facilitate discussion groups with teenagers in various settings.
- Opportunity to make adaptations and supplemental resources for the "Vision of You" program.
- Assist with data entry and analysis
- Help design research
- Administrative tasks

### **Contact Information**

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**Read about students' experiences at this site below:**



*Spring 2021 – Gabriella Cangialosi*

This semester I did my field placement at JMU's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program. Their mission is to work with local schools and community organizations to equip teens, parents, and community members with education and skills that allow young people to make the healthiest decisions for themselves when it comes to sex and relationships. By doing this their goal is to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy in the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County community. Some of the services they provide are programs that do a number of things. The Teen Outreach Program promotes positive youth development through a social-emotional learning curriculum, community service learning, and supportive relationships with adults. Through this program teens are empowered with the tools and opportunities needed to develop social-emotional skills; promote healthy relationships and community connections; develop a sense of purpose; and avoid risky behaviors. Another program is Draw the Line/Respect the Line. This program is a three-year, school-based sex education program for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. This program was primarily designed to help you adolescents postpone having sex through a 19-session curriculum that teaches youth how to establish and maintain limits regarding sexual behavior. Lastly, there is Safer Choices. This program is a 2-year, multi-component STD, HIV, and teen pregnancy prevention program for high school students. It aims to reduce the frequency of unprotected sex by reducing the number of sexually active students and increasing condom use and other methods of pregnancy protection among students who are sexually active.

The section of the program that I interned in dealt with teaching the programs that I listed above. However, when I was there I only worked on the TOP program. When I worked on this program I taught lessons and came up with warm up activities to do before the lessons. Also, because of COVID I was teaching the lessons online through Google Hangout, which was difficult. It was hard to get the students to engage with me and I was unsure of when they were really paying attention. Luckily, the last lesson I taught was actually in person because the students started going to class in person again. I found that lesson much easier to teach because I could tell when they were engaging with me and paying attention. I also found it easier to get them to participate when we were in person.

In addition to teaching lesson, I also did some data entry and research. They take surveys pre and post the initiation of the program to determine how effective the programs actually are. I would input this data into the platform that they used to analyze it. The research that I did was on how to reach rural communities. Sex education is pretty taboo in rural areas and the program is always trying to figure out ways to reach these areas. I ended up finding research about how libraries are very important in rural communities and as a part of my contribution project I made handouts about some of the programs services to put in local libraries, so that we can reach more than we were before.

Overall, I really enjoyed my time in the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program. My supervisor was very flexible when it came to my schedule and supported me a lot through my process in the program. I also thought that I had a lot of opportunities at being creative and that my opinion and input mattered. I think one thing that I did miss out on, like I mentioned before, is the personal connection with the students because of COVID. However, because they are starting to go back in person I think that connection can be made in the future.



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I will be going to graduate school at Longwood University for Clinical Mental Health Counseling and I want to work with children. I think that by being able to work in middle schoolers and talk about some difficult and uncomfortable topics helped me prepare for when I one day counsel a child because they will most likely be telling me about some uncomfortable things. Additionally, I learned how to think on my feet a little better. Sometimes the children would get off topic or say something inappropriate and so I would have to get them back on topic or address what they said without getting the rest of the class distracted.

Overall, I really enjoyed my time in the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, and I learned a lot about how to deal with uncomfortable situations along with how difficult it is to reach rural communities. Coming from a suburban area, I never realized some of the things that I took for granted until working in this program.

### ***Spring 2020 – Lola Beste***

The mission of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program is to help teenagers make healthy choices and avoid risky behaviors with special emphasis on teen sexual activity and drug and alcohol use. The purpose of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program is to help reduce the rates of teen pregnancy by educating and informing teens, adolescents and their families about important topics such as consent, safe sex, birth control, LGBTQ+, and provide other important resources. The goals of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program are to facilitate healthy and open conversations about sexual health, provide teens and adolescents with accurate and truthful information about sexual health, and to provide teens and adolescents with proper resources about sexual health. Some of the services provided by the Teen Pregnancy Prevention program are: Draw The Line/Respect The Line, Safer Choices, Wyman's Teen Outreach Program, Consent, Safe sex and birth control, LGBTQ+, and Emergency and other resources.

Draw the Line/Respect the Line is a three-year, school-based sex education program for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. This program was primarily designed to help young adolescents postpone having sex. The program uses a 19-session curriculum that teaches youth how to establish and maintain limits regarding sexual behavior. Safer Choices is a 2-year, multi-component STD, HIV, and teen pregnancy prevention program for high school students. The program aims to reduce the frequency of unprotected sex by reducing the number of sexually active students and increasing condom use and other methods of pregnancy protection among students who are sexually active. The Wyman's Teen Outreach Program promotes the positive development of adolescents through curriculum-guided, interactive group discussions; positive adult guidance and support; and community service learning. The Wyman's Teen Outreach Program is focused on key topics related to adolescent health and development, including healthy relationships, communication, influence, goal-setting, decision making, values clarification, community service learning, and adolescent development and sexuality.

My main experience at my site before the class becoming online-only was helping to teach the Draw the Line/Respect the Line Program at Skyline Middle School. I assisted two different teachers, one named Becca Vazquez and another named Emily Moss. They both taught me how to answer questions effectively, maintain control of the classroom, and become familiar with the content of the Draw the Line/Respect the Line program. There were many times in which I had a student ask me questions that I either did not know how to correctly answer or,



they had asked me personal questions to which I did not know if I was allowed to respond. Both teachers helped me to answer questions effectively and with sensitivity to the subject. I also had the opportunity to help my supervisor Kati with a grant for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program. I was able to learn about some of the processes that went into writing a grant as well as learning how to research effectively and efficiently. my other task that I had in office was to enter survey data. For all of the programs that the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program teaches there is a pre and post test given. Since the schools do not have access to enough computers or tablets for all of the students, each survey needs to be hand entered back in the Teen Pregnancy Prevention office. I spent a lot of time in the office entering data when I was not in the classroom. This data entry was incredibly important because this information is used to determine not only the effectiveness of the programs but also determines if the Teen Pregnancy Prevention will continue to receive funding for each of the programs.

Some of the advantages I found of working at the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program were that it was a very close commute, the structure of the program provided me with a lot of opportunity to share my opinion and grow, and also it allowed for very flexible scheduling and hours. The close commute was nice because I know a lot of other field placement sites were located much farther away and require a lot of travel time which can be hard to add into an already busy schedule. All of my supervisors at the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program also always encouraged me to share my thoughts and opinions about any project or task I was working on. I never felt afraid to speak up and try and suggest new ideas to make anything better. They also allowed me to work very flexible hours with my schedule which helped me to stay on task with all of my other schoolwork and classes. Some disadvantages and limitations were that the programs did not allow for changes to be because the program is so rigid and planned from the federal level. I found that there were a few shortcomings that I would have loved to suggest changes for however, those changes were not able to be implemented.

I learned a lot about how under-funded so many public schools are and how desperately they need money and resources. I have always loved working with children, and I have been a teaching assistant before in other classroom settings before, so this helped add to my knowledge and skills. I honestly am still very confused about what I want my career path to be. I know I want to help people and there are a lot of areas and fields I am passionate about. The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program helped me to realize that I am passionate about education and helping those in need.

### ***Spring 2020 – Sofi Portillo***

The mission statement of Teen Pregnancy Prevention is to work “in collaboration with local schools and community organizations to equip teens, parents, and community members with education and skills that allow young people to make the healthiest decisions for themselves when it comes to sex and relationships.” The services provided by TPP include evidence-based programs such as Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program (TOP), Draw the Line/Respect the Line, Safer Choices, and Project AIM. In some way, all these programs teach skills that decrease the chances of participating in risky behavior and initiate personal understanding within students.

Since I mainly assisted with TOP and Project AIM, the types of experiences and opportunities I had included facilitation assistance and paperwork. On Mondays, I would help



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prep and assist facilitation for TOP at Thomas Harrison Middle School: Great Oak Academy. This TOP group was in an alternative school within a middle school. We would have a lesson or activity planned for the day that related to safe sex and personal health. Some activities included self-esteem worksheets, sex ed matching games, and discussion of motivational videos. Thus, prep would include gathering writing materials, making paper copies of worksheets, and overall accommodating to the activity materials for the day. Since this is TOP group takes place in a non-traditional learning environment, I am usually instructed to observe facilitation to better understand working with alternative school students. When the students work on the activity with other students or by themselves, I go around the room to check progress, answer any questions, and validate work.

On Wednesdays, I would create documentations for Project AIM. This program is an elective for at-risk middle school students at Page County High School to build individualized career plans for themselves. Class sessions involved the students researching careers, learning about education programs for certain career paths, participating in mock interviews, drawing business cards, and building resumes. At the end of the school year, each student receives a portfolio made by the facilitators to see all the hard work come to life. Due to the number of students participating in Project AIM, I was assigned to help build these portfolios. This includes writing mock letters of recommendation based on the mock interviews and digitally designing individual businesses cards based the drawn-up ones through the graphic design website known as Canva. Once enough progress was made for the day, I would either digitally or physically store these documents for the facilitator of Project AIM to obtain.

On Thursdays, I would help prep and assist facilitation for TOP: Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Youth Council. This is essentially the same program I help with on Mondays, but the differences are that it takes place within my site's building, it has more diverse members (home-schooled teens and student of a few different local high schools), and it has more advanced content since the members are older teenagers. While my supervisors on Thursdays were picking up the students from school or from home to provide a way for them to get to the meeting, I stayed at IHHHS to prep. My process usually involved being explained the facilitator's agenda for the day, creating a PowerPoint based on the agenda and activities for the day, and setting up the meeting room with materials needed for the activities. Once all the students arrive with my supervisors, the meeting starts.

Our meetings usually involved student discussion guided by facilitators. Topics we covered include relationship expectations, reasons people do/don't participate in sex, and relationship norms in different cultures. I helped facilitate the meeting when needed, such as jumping in to help further discussion. We then moved on to the activity which can either be furthering discussion by working in groups or individual worksheets to build and discover personal sexual/relationship health. When the activity for the day occurred, I went around the room, asked if any of the students need help, checked progress, and validated the students' approach to the activity, similar to how I helped with Monday's TOP group.

I mostly have positive impressions about TPP. I loved working with a variety of teenagers, learning the purpose behind each program and activity, making portfolio materials, and being mentored by passionate facilitators. What I didn't enjoy is that sometimes my work was limited due to not being "qualified" since I haven't had the trainings my supervisors have.



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But that didn't stop me from putting my skills to good use and learning new ones through my assigned duties.

Something I learned at my site is how insightful and impressive it is to work with teenagers. The experiences I had allowed me to truly listen and take in the information the students were vocalizing. It has allowed me to learn more about their mindsets, realize their needs, and how to treat them in an equal manner. I feel as though other jobs that involve working with youth only make one talk down on them and nothing more. For example, I have worked with younger people in the past in unpleasant ways that involve strict discipline or lecturing. Although I enjoyed serving them, the moments where I had to be "the adult" both decreased my enjoyment and diminished the positive relationships I had built with them. Therefore, I enjoyed the facilitation, guiding, and mentoring set-up within TPP's programs that allowed me to work with teenagers in a better, educational, more productive and validating manner. I truly feel like I have changed their lives for the better and that I have learned from them as much as they have learned from me. TPP has only made me want to continue working with youth services even more.