

The Cost of Implementing a Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program for Middle School Boys

Cost is often a primary concern when policymakers and practitioners consider a new program. This brief provides information on the cost of implementing a teen pregnancy prevention program for 7th-grade boys. The information comes from an evaluation of the *Wise Guys Male Responsibility Curriculum*, which Mathematica conducted for the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The evaluation involved 736 boys recruited from seven middle schools in and around Davenport, Iowa. A team of two trained facilitators from a local social service provider, Bethany for Families and Children, delivered *Wise Guys* as a 14-session voluntary elective class during the regular school day. Mathematica partnered with Bethany staff to collect information on the program's cost, with the goal of understanding the resources required to provide the program and how its cost compares to other federally funded teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Estimated cost

The estimated cost of the program includes the value of all resources Bethany for Families and Children required to deliver the program for a single school year. As discussed later, these resources reflect what other similar organizations would likely need to replicate the program during a steady state of operations. The estimated cost does not include any training or other start-up costs. The estimated cost of delivering the program was \$488 per student.

Personnel costs for two facilitators and other program staff accounted for more than three-quarters (78 percent) of the program cost. Supplies, office equipment, and other direct costs accounted for 13 percent of program cost. Indirect costs (overhead) accounted for the smallest share of program cost (9 percent). Overhead costs included physical office space and shared administrative personnel, such as human resources and accounting staff.

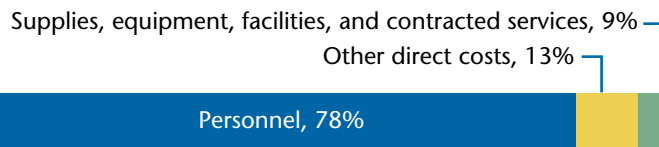


Summary of key findings

- The study team estimated the per-participant cost of *Wise Guys* in Iowa as \$488 per student served.
- Personnel costs for two facilitators and other program staff accounted for the largest share (78 percent) of the total cost.
- The use of two facilitators and voluntary nature of the program led to higher costs compared with other in-school teen pregnancy prevention programs.

In Iowa, Bethany for Families and Children delivered *Wise Guys* in school as part of a voluntary elective class, so it did not pay for the physical classroom space used for the program. Local tax dollars and other school funding sources paid this broader societal cost. If Bethany had paid for the physical classroom space, the estimated per-participant cost would have increased from \$488 to \$508, an increase of about 4 percent.

Proportion of Costs by Resource Category



Cost estimates in perspective

The estimated cost of \$488 per participant is higher than the cost for another in-school program Mathematica examined as part of the national PREP evaluation. Mathematica estimated a per-participant cost of \$113 for the adapted version of *Reducing the Risk* in Kentucky (Schulte and Goesling 2019). Unlike Kentucky, where one facilitator delivered each *Reducing the Risk* session to students in mandatory high school health classes, two facilitators implemented each *Wise Guys* session as part of a voluntary program with a relatively small number of boys in each group. Higher personnel costs and smaller group sizes contributed to higher per-participant costs.

Even so, available evidence suggests that the cost of implementing *Wise Guys* was still relatively low compared to the broad range of pregnancy prevention programs offered to teens. Among the 28 programs included in a recent cost study of teen pregnancy prevention programs funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average annual per-participant cost ranged from \$68 to \$11,000, with a median program cost of \$927 per youth (Zaveri et al. 2017).

For the per-participant cost of \$488, *Wise Guys* increased boys' knowledge of contraception and sexually transmitted infections, and also increased their support for the view that sexually active youth should use condoms (Covington et al. 2019). Compared with the standard school curriculum, the program did not change the likelihood of sexual initiation, but a low overall rate of sexual activity limited the effect the program could have during the study period. These findings are based on Mathematica's impact study of *Wise Guys*, which used a random assignment design to measure the impacts of *Wise Guys* up to two years after boys enrolled in the study.

References

Covington, Reginald D., Robert G. Wood, and Brian Goesling. "Focusing on the Boys: The Longer-Term Impacts of Wise Guys in Davenport, Iowa." OPRE Report # 2019-97, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.

Data and methods

We estimated program cost using the resource cost method (Levin and McEwan 2001), which involves identifying all the resources required to deliver a program and assigning a dollar value to each resource identified. For *Wise Guys*, we collected data and estimated costs for implementing the program during one academic year (2014–2015).

We relied primarily on Bethany's accounting records to value the resources, with two exceptions. First, to account for local prices and the cost of living in Iowa, we adjusted personnel resource prices to national equivalents using a wage index created from state- and national-level wages. Second, we estimated the value of physical classroom space using rental prices for comparable physical spaces, such as meeting rooms in community centers.

To estimate the per-participant cost, we used an adjusted number of participants that accounted for under-enrollment that resulted from the need to form a control group for the evaluation. We estimated that Bethany had the staffing capacity and classroom space to serve as many as 20 students in each *Wise Guys* group, even though they served smaller group sizes than might have been possible because of the evaluation. We created an adjusted count for each *Wise Guys* group by adding to our enrollment counts the number of students assigned to the control group. We capped the adjustment at 20 students per group.

The PREP Multi-Component Evaluation

This brief is part of a series of products from the PREP multi-component evaluation. Learn more about the evaluation at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/personal-responsibility-education-program-prep-multi-component>. Learn more about the PREP initiative at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/programs/adolescent-pregnancy-prevention>.

Levin, Henry M., and Patrick J. McEwan. *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: Costs and Applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001.

Schulte, Theresa, and Brian Goesling. "The Cost of Implementing a Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program in High School Health Classes." OPRE Report #2019-33. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, 2019.

Zaveri, Heather, Theresa Schulte, and Adam Swinburn. "The Cost of Implementing Select Evidence-Based Programs that Prevent Teen Pregnancy: An Overview of Study Findings." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health, September 2017.

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