

## **Responsible Behavior with Younger Children (RBYC)**

Responsible Behavior with Younger Children (RBYC) is a classroom-based universal prevention program designed to prevent the onset of child sexual abuse perpetration in adolescents. Simply, the program is designed to teach adolescents the information and tools they need to avoid making mistakes when interacting with younger children. The program consists of 10 interactive sessions that last 45 minutes each. The RBYC program is intended to function as either a stand-alone intervention or for easy integration with other violence prevention, health education, or sexual education classes implemented on a weekly or biweekly basis. The program requires minimal materials and is designed to be administered by teachers and other youth-serving professionals after a relatively brief training.

Sessions engage students in classroom discussions of developmental differences between teens and younger children; perspective-taking and empathic responding to younger children; and what child sexual abuse is, why it occurs, its consequences for victims and perpetrators, and how to avoid/prevent/intervene in it. A session designed to increase awareness of sexually abusive behaviors that may occur among peers, to understand why these sexual behaviors are harmful, and to identify ways to prevent these behaviors with peers, is included as well. Four student-led family activities are dispersed throughout the program to promote parental awareness of factors that increase risk for child sexual abuse (e.g., low parental monitoring), encourage parent-child communication about child sexual abuse, and establish clear family rules against sex with children. RBYC incorporates best practices associated with effective prevention interventions, including multi-dosage content, skill practice (e.g., role plays), continuity between sessions, and parent-facilitated activities.

The National Institutes of Health funded an initial randomized controlled trial of RBYC in four urban public middle schools. The RBYC program was implemented and assessed with 161 students, ages 11 to 13, using a randomized wait-list design. Participating students were fluent in English and provided written parental consent and their own assent to participate. The samples of students in the treatment group and control group were balanced in terms of gender and current grades in school (6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade) but differed significantly in race and the average grades they reported receiving in school. Preliminary analyses were conducted to compare pre- and post-survey mean outcome scores using a generalized linear model that controlled for the differences in race and average grades.

The preliminary findings are encouraging. Compared to students who had not yet received the intervention, students who had received the intervention reported more accurate knowledge about developmental differences between teens and younger children and more accurate knowledge about child sexual abuse, the situations when it may occur, and how to avoid it. Students who received the intervention also reported more accurate knowledge of inappropriate peer sexual behaviors, the situations when they may occur and how to prevent them. Responsible Behavior with Younger Children is a promising example of how increasing adolescent knowledge, a known risk factor for perpetration, may prevent child sexual abuse.