



Advocates for Reproductive Education

Community Needs Assessment Executive Summary

Advocates for Reproductive Education (WeARE) is a nonprofit dedicated to providing comprehensive reproductive healthcare and education for youth and young adults in Crow Wing County. WeARE conducted a community wide needs assessment survey in June 2017 to gather attitudes and opinions about current reproductive health resources for local youth using an online survey interface. The adult form targeted respondents ages 25 and older and received 348 completed surveys. The youth form targeted respondents ages 18-24 and received 42 completed surveys.

Most adult respondents report that reproductive health resources, in the form of education and clinical services, are lacking for youth in Crow Wing County. Youth report receiving reproductive health information from alternate sources and identified different barriers to clinical reproductive health care than what adults selected as sources of information and barriers for youth. Survey data shows that only a slight majority of youth respondents use any form of contraception during sexual activity. Local youth report a range of gender preferences for sexual partners. The majority of youth report being likely or very likely to use future services to be offered at The Clinic, WeARE's youth-focused clinic opening in October 2017.

Limitations of this needs assessment include the short duration of data collection, limited access to local youth and their opinions, and difficulty conveying concepts through the online survey interface due to lacking language. Based on the data collected, WeARE should develop programming and offer services for a range of sexualities, focus education initiatives on STI prevention, and bring youth and adults together to engage in discussions about reproductive health.

The Vision of WeARE:

“All youth and young adults in the Brainerd Lakes Area have access to accurate and evidence-based reproductive education and healthcare. Through community collaboration, led by compassionate healthcare professionals, youth and young adults are empowered to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.”

Background:

| | Crow Wing County | Minnesota |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|
| Birth Rate per 1,000 (15-19 year olds) | 24.1 | 15.3 |
| Birth Rate per 1,000 (18-19 year olds) | 57.1 | 28.3 |

- Youth ages 15-19 make up only **7% of the MN population**, but accounted for **26% of chlamydia** and **18% of gonorrhea** cases in 2016.
- **Half of all gonorrhea cases** in Crow Wing County 2016 were individuals under 25 years old.

Methods:

Two survey iterations, one for adults and one for youth, were developed using the Google Forms interface. The adult survey was intended for respondents 25 and older, and contained either 12 or 13 multiple choice questions, depending on answers provided, and one open-ended question. The youth survey was intended for respondents 13 to 24 years old, and contained either 16 or 22 multiple choice questions, depending on answers provided, and one open-ended question. Both forms of the survey were available at the same link; respondents would be directed to the appropriate form after answering a question to determine their age. Survey responses were collected for 25 days; the link to the survey was distributed using Facebook, email lists, fliers, and the Brainerd Dispatch. 348 adult surveys, age 25 and older, and 42 youth surveys age 18-24 were completed. Because of difficulty collecting and verifying parent or guardian consent for those under 18, few responses were collected from youth ages 13-17. Those that were collected were not used for analysis.

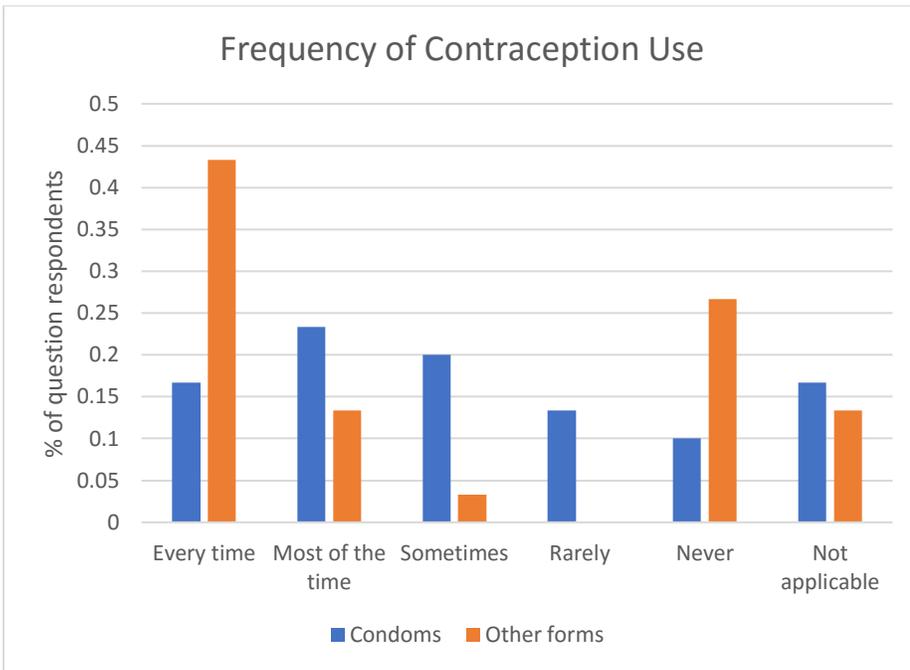
Survey Results:

| | Youth Survey Results | Adult Survey Results |
|--|---|---|
| Where do youth go for information on sex and reproductive health? Top 3 sources: | 1. Internet 2. Trusted adults or parents 3. Friends | 1. Friends 2. Internet 3. Media |
| What prevents youth from seeking clinical services for reproductive health? Top 3 barriers: | 1. Cost 2. Judgement or peer pressure 3. Time | 1. Lack of education or awareness 2. Family values or beliefs 3. Cost |

“ENABL [Education Now and Babies Later, Brainerd School District’s abstinence-based sexual education curriculum] is a good thing to teach, but not enough information about birth control, how to use it, and when to use it, is given.....Scare us a little with the odds of getting pregnant, but don’t act like we’re actually going to wait until marriage.”

-Youth Survey Respondent, age 18

- **69.7%** of adult respondents and **66.6%** of youth respondents stated that the reproductive health education youth receive in schools gives youth adequate information to make informed decisions about their sexual health either **“Not really”** or **“Not at all.”**
- **89.4%** of adult respondents agree that youth should receive **fully comprehensive sexual health education in the schools**, which includes information on abstinence, all contraception and barrier methods, healthy relationship behaviors, and risks *and* benefits of sexual activity.
- **86.5%** of adult respondents think that Crow Wing County should provide reproductive and sexual health resources to local youth.
 - **98.8%** of these respondents say **education** should be provided by the county.



| Top 3 Contraceptive Methods Used by Local Youth: |
|--|
| Condoms |
| Oral Contraception |
| Withdrawal |

“When we had the family planning clinic, I knew lots of people that used it as a resource and I’ve found myself hesitant to go elsewhere.”

-Youth Survey Respondent, age 22

Figure 1: Frequency with which youth who identified as sexually active use condoms or another form of contraception during sexual activities.

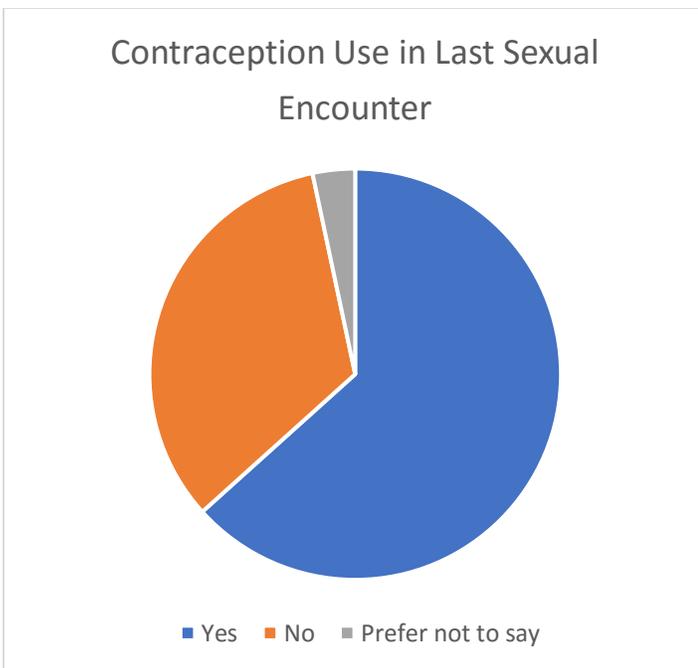


Figure 2: Fewer than two-thirds (63.3%) of sexually active youth survey respondents used any form of contraception in their last sexual encounter.

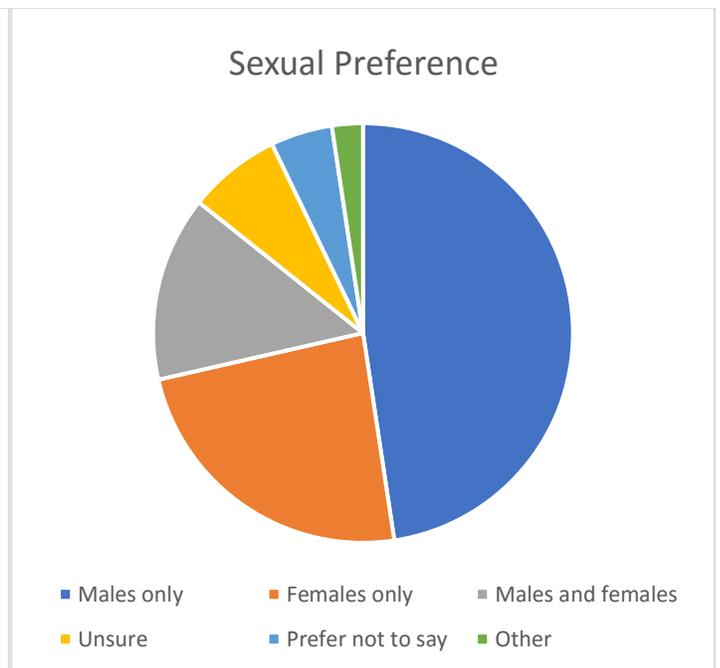


Figure 3: Sexual partner preferences of youth survey respondents. Over one-fifth (21.8%) of respondents answered “Males and females,” “Other,” or “Unsure.”

“...I think most youth are embarrassed to seek out this kind of help/info/etc, but I definitely think it’s needed. Most of the time kids are going to do what they want to do, so if sex is something they choose, at least they can have awareness and tools to do so as safely and responsibly as possible.”

-Adult Survey Respondent

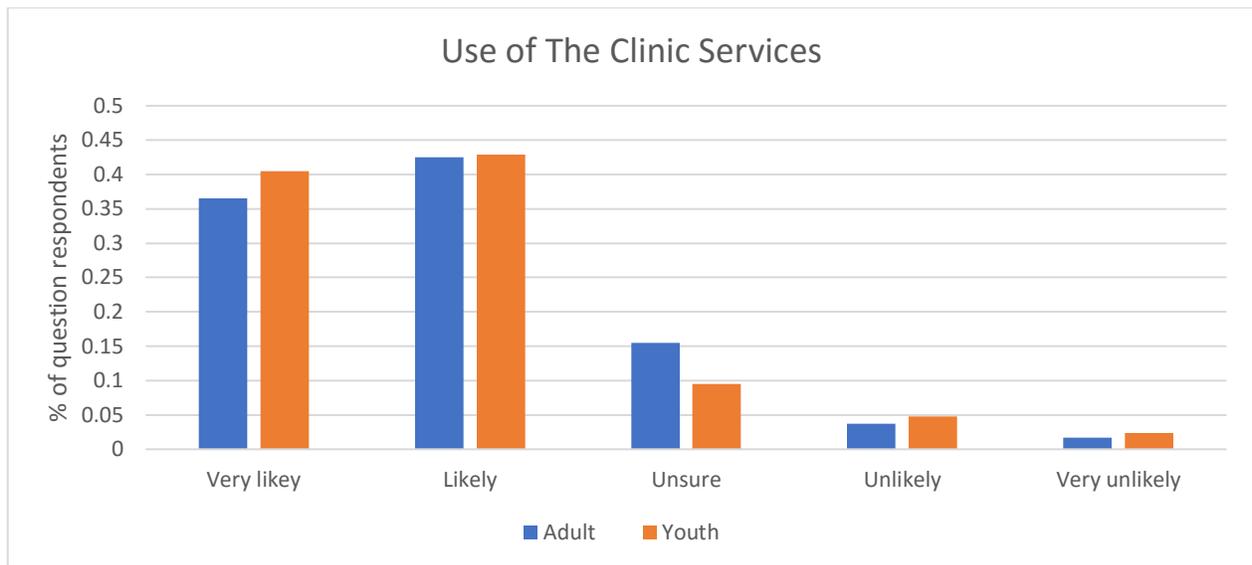


Figure 4: Adult and youth responses when asked, “If there was a free clinic available in our community for youth to receive information about birth control, STIs, and other reproductive health topics, how likely do you think youth would be to use it?” or the equivalent in the youth survey.

- **59.6%** of adult respondents think that “Most” local youth have had sex by the age of 18.
- **66.6%** of youth respondents ages 18-24 identified themselves as having been sexually active.
- Previous nationwide studies show that **the average US youth has sex for the first time at age 17.**

Limitations:

- Short time frame: Crow Wing County is home to over 63,000 people and is almost 1,000 square miles; 25 days is simply not enough time to reach a truly representative proportion of the population.
- Limited access to youth: Parental consent submission and verification of who had submitted consent proved to be complicated using the online interface. Additionally, the survey was released at the end of the school year, preventing us from visiting classrooms to administer or promote it.
- Language is lacking: The terms “contraception” and “birth control” both refer to pregnancy prevention, but make no mention of STI transmission. Those in same-sex relationships or non-monogamous heterosexual relationships who are not using barrier protection are at risk for STI exposure and transmission. This point was challenging to make in the online survey interface. Additionally, individuals define being sexual active in different ways; we defined sexual activity as intimate touching, oral sex, or vaginal or anal intercourse. Survey respondents may or may not have followed this definition.

What’s Next?

Recommendations for WeARE based on survey findings:

- Develop programming and offer clinical services for various sexual preferences or orientations.
- Focus on STI education.
- Educate Crow Wing County residents about the lack of county reproductive health services and encourage community action to change this.
- Develop programming that brings youth and adults together to discuss reproductive health.
- Continue to engage local youth for further feedback and to guide future programming.

Thank you!

Kate Anderholm

WeARE Graduate Student Intern

University of Minnesota School of Public Health