

ATTACHMENT H  
PRETEST SURVEY MEMO

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**MEMORANDUM**

955 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 801  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Telephone (617) 491-7900  
Fax (617) 491-8044  
www.mathematica-mpr.com

**TO:** Amy Farb, Office of Adolescent Health

**FROM:** Sarah Forrestal, Laura Kalb, Jennifer Walzer, and Andrea Bucciarelli

**DATE:** 7/1/2016  
TP3 FADS 26

**SUBJECT:** Pretest Findings for the MPC! Evaluation Baseline Questionnaire

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In this memorandum, we report on the pretest of a baseline questionnaire for the *Making Proud Choices!* (MPC!) Evaluation. Mathematica Policy Research conducted the pretest in May and June 2016 in order to assess how long it took to administer the instrument and to improve the questions we developed for the baseline data collection.

In the following sections, we describe the (1) pretest participants, (2) pretesting and debriefing procedures, (3) pretest findings, and (4) proposed revisions to the instrument in addition to those informed by the pretest. Appendix A includes the draft of the pretest questionnaire (A.1) and a question-by-question documentation of the issues raised during the pretest (A.2). Appendix B includes a revised draft of the instrument, with suggested revisions noted in Track Changes. Appendix C includes the same revised draft with the revisions incorporated and no tracking of the changes.

#### A. Recruiting process and final pretest sample

We pretested the instrument with two different groups of youth in Chicago, Illinois. One group was presumed not to be sexually active (Group 1) and the other was presumed to be sexually active (Group 2). Having two groups enabled us to test the two alternate paths in the instrument; the first group answered questions on pre-coital sexual behaviors, whereas the second group answered more detailed questions on their sexual behavior.

We recruited Group 1 through Erie Neighborhood House, a community-based organization serving low-income families. Agency staff agreed to coordinate the pretest by distributing and collecting signed consent forms from parents of 7th and 8th grade students and hosting the pretest at their facility. Both English and Spanish versions of the consent forms were provided. Staff recruited 11 participants to help ensure we would have at least nine youth available for the pretest.

We recruited Group 2 through Options for Youth, a community-based organization that serves at-risk pregnant or parenting young women in sites throughout Chicago. We worked with a site located in a public high school. The site program director agreed to coordinate the pretest

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by recruiting young women in grades 9 and 10 and distributing and collecting signed parental consent forms. She recruited nine participants.

Participants signed assent forms in which they agreed to participate in the pretest and have the debriefing audio-recorded. After completing the pretest, each participant received a \$25 or \$50 gift card.<sup>1</sup> We also distributed gift cards to additional youth who were recruited but could not participate due to OMB restrictions. In total, nine youth who were presumed not to be sexually active and nine youth who were presumed to be sexually active participated in the pretests. Table 1 summarizes participants' characteristics. Because four Group 2 participants self-reported as non-sexually active, we tabulated them separately.

**Table 1. Pretest participants' characteristics**

Grade	Group 1		Group 2		Total
	Presumed non-sexually active		Self-reported non-sexually active	Self-reported sexually active	
	Male	Female	Female	Female	
7th	3	3	0	0	6
8th	1	2	0	0	3
9th	0	0	3	1	4
10th	0	0	1	3	4
11th	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>

## B. Pretest and debriefing process

The process was similar for both groups. We gathered participants in a room and handed each one a packet containing an assent form and a hard copy of the survey. A member of the study team described the pretest procedures and read the assent form aloud. Participants signed the assent form and completed the survey. They were instructed to mark any questions or words that were difficult to understand and to record their start and end times so we could determine how long it took them to complete the survey. We reminded participants that their actual survey responses were less important than understanding the process necessary to answer the questions, and that they would not have to reveal their responses to the group. We reviewed the completed survey of each participant as he or she finished it in order to note points for follow-up during the discussion. Participants were divided into smaller groups of two or three for a debrief on their

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<sup>1</sup> We discussed offering \$50 gift cards with Erie Neighborhood House staff, but they recommended offering the \$25 amount instead because it is consistent with amounts offered to participants in similar activities they have hosted.

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reactions to the instrument, with males and females kept apart. Each youth received his or her own completed survey to refer to during the discussion, and our team collected the surveys from the youth again at the end of the discussion.

Before the Group 1 pretest, the study team attended a two-hour training on logistics, best practices for speaking with youth about sensitive topics, subjects to prioritize during the debriefing, the best way to address any issues that might arise, and the debriefing interview guide. Although the guide included specific probes for many survey items, researchers were given the latitude to rephrase the questions as needed and to choose which items to ask about if time ran short. The guide focused on (1) how respondents came up with their answers; that is, the process they went through to interpret and formulate responses to questions; (2) whether respondents followed instructions and completed the survey as expected; and (3) whether any question or wording was confusing or outdated. In a few cases, researchers gave respondents alternate versions of question wording during the debriefing and asked them which version they preferred.

To avoid asking more than nine pretest participants the same question, we followed different protocols for the two groups. In administering the survey to the second group, we dropped some of the questions we asked the first group, followed up on different aspects of the questions based on feedback from the first group, and asked about different items in the survey based on the sexually active vs. non-sexually active paths. In addition, we made a few minor changes to questions based on the first pretest to assess the effect of alternate wording in the second pretest.

### C. Key findings of the pretest

As noted, we were particularly interested in learning more about how long the survey took to administer, including whether the length of time was similar for both groups and whether the questions were clear and understandable. Overall, no major issues were identified:

- **Administration time.** The five Group 2 pretest participants who self-reported having been sexually active took an average of 21.2 minutes to complete the survey. The Group 1 (presumed non-sexually active) participants took an average of 20.1 minutes.<sup>2</sup> The total average time for both groups was 20.5 minutes. We recommend maintaining a 30-minute burden estimate in the OMB Information Collection Request because, as we discuss in Section D, we recommend adding new items that will be asked of all survey respondents.

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<sup>2</sup> In calculating the estimated time it took to complete the survey, we excluded the four Group 2 participants who self-reported not having been sexually active, because their hard-copy questionnaires did not include the set of questions designed for the non-sexually active group. As a result, their administration time is lower than it should be and cannot be used to estimate burden for the actual survey.

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- **Sensitivity.** Several questions in the survey are potentially sensitive (for example, questions on gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, and substance use). Pretest participants differed on whether they thought other youth would find these topics sensitive, but they generally agreed that survey respondents would answer the questions truthfully, because the mode of administration would help keep the answers from being seen by other students or school staff.
- **Question comprehension.** Overall, few pretest participants had difficulty understanding the questions in the survey.

Question-by-question issues that were identified during the pretest informed our recommended revisions to the instrument. These findings are presented in Appendix A. For questions whose wording came from another survey, such as the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) survey or the Concordance survey, or are about one of the Office of Adolescent Health's recommended behavioral outcome measures, we considered how changing the wording of the questions might affect our ability to compare findings across studies. Appendix B presents the revised questionnaire with changes tracked.

#### D. Additional revisions to the instrument

In addition to the proposed changes informed by the pretest, we recommend some other changes to the baseline questionnaire. First, before the pretest we changed "sexual intercourse," which in previous instruments such as PREP was defined specifically as vaginal sex, to "sex" and used the term "vaginal sex" when applicable. The reason for the change was twofold: it both simplified the terminology and expanded the types of behaviors respondents might think of as "sex" to be more inclusive of sexual behavior in people with different sexual orientations.

Second, we reviewed the draft instrument's contents and added or revised a few items to better align the survey contents with the evaluation research questions or otherwise improve the questions. We added items to assess attitudes about condoms; these items had been used in the Evaluation of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Approaches Ohio baseline survey. We also added questions from the Fog Zone survey measuring knowledge about pregnancy and long-acting, reversible contraceptives, and revised the response options on the marijuana use question to be more consistent with the drinking question.

Finally, we selected a participant-facing name for the study: the Attitudes, Behaviors, and Choices (or ABC) Study. This is different from the evaluation's name, yet it still accurately describes the survey contents without including language that potentially could embarrass participants if their peers or others were to see consent forms or study recruiting materials. In addition, not all participants in the evaluation will be exposed to the MPC! curriculum.