

Introduction

Healthy Futures

Healthy Futures is an age-appropriate program framed on the social ecological model, which posits that lasting changes in health behaviors require not only increased knowledge and skills at the individual level but also supportive physical and social systems. The main component is a classroom-based relationship education curriculum, Nu-CULTURE, offered in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade for eight 50-minute sessions each year. The Healthy Futures program has been revised from an abstinence-only program to now emphasize delay of sexual initiation, with added components on safer sex practices for reducing sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy.

Nu-CULTURE

Nu-CULTURE (pronounced “new culture”) is the classroom education component of the Healthy Futures approach described above. Dedicated to **C**ultivating **U**rban **L**eaders **T**hrough **U**nique **R**elationship **E**ducation, this program provides youth with the tools and resources needed to make and maintain healthy choices and be positive role models in their communities.

Nu-CULTURE is designed for youth in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, and includes the following:

- 1) Twenty-four 50-minute sessions delivered over three years (8 sessions each year).
- 2) Curriculum for mixed gender groups of 20-40 participants.
- 3) Use of participatory activities including small group activities, role-playing, and audiovisual materials.

Goals

The goals of Nu-CULTURE are to:

- 1) Influence attitudes, behavioral and normative beliefs, and self-efficacy regarding healthy relationship choices and risk-reduction behaviors by creating an environment where healthy choices are supported by peers and family.
- 2) Strengthen beliefs about the benefits of delaying sexual activity.
- 3) Increase intentions to delay sexual activity.
- 4) Develop leaders to be positive role models.

Nu-CULTURE addresses three key areas: 1) human anatomy and physiology, 2) life skills, and 3) relationships. The curriculum emphasizes increasing skills and self-efficacy in communication and refusal skills through age-appropriate, medically accurate information about pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted infections, and sexual abuse.