

The Project Connect Parental Monitoring Intervention: Population-Level Effects on Adolescent Perceptions of Parental Enforcement of Family Rules

Patricia J. Dittus, Christopher R. Harper, Elizabeth Hoo, & Kathleen A. Ethier

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Background

- The relationship between parental monitoring and adolescent risk behavior is well established.
- Both overall parental knowledge of adolescent activities and parental enforcement of family rules are associated with a decreased likelihood of sexual initiation.
- Few interventions exist to improve parents' monitoring efforts with their children, particularly at a population-level.
- Project Connect is a low-cost highly sustainable approach using distribution of print modules to influence parental monitoring practices.

Intervention: Development, Content, and Distribution

- Formative research in the form of surveys (N = 600), focus groups, and in-depth interviews with parents & youth informed the development of intervention content and format, as did an expert panel of parenting researchers and an on-going Community Advisory Board.
- Intervention consists of three print modules, in English and Spanish, providing parents with information about monitoring and supervision practices and practical steps parents can take to improve their monitoring skills, including setting and enforcing family rules.
- Intervention materials were mailed to all parents in intervention schools (approximately 33,000), although there was no face-to-face contact with parents and no tracking of who received and used the information provided. The intention was to mimic the process schools would use when trying to reach parents with this information and to assess intervention impact at a school population level, rather than following a cohort over time.

Evaluation Methods

- Twelve high schools and fourteen middle schools in a public school district in Los Angeles, California were matched on geography, teen birth and Chlamydia rates, and then randomly assigned to intervention and comparison conditions.
- Survey data were collected from 28,470 male and female students sampled cross-sectionally every year for five years, from randomly selected required classes.
- Parental knowledge was measured with two items: "My parents know where I am after school" and "When I go out, my parents know where I am."
- Enforcement of family rules was measured with seven items that assess parents' restrictions on extracurricular behavior. For example, "My parents let me go out with friends on school nights," and "I can stay out as late as I want on weekend nights." Items were reverse coded so high scores were indicative of more rules.
- The sample was 78.6% Latino and 10.6% African American and 45.4% female; the mean age was 15.4.
- Analyses were conducted in SPSS 21 with linear mixed models that accounted for some students being sampled across multiple years.

Results

- Across all years, intervention school students reported higher enforcement of family rules than comparison school students ($F[1,28470]=5.25, p=0.022$). Although student reports of family rules enforcement increased across the five years for both intervention and comparison students ($F[4,28470]=9.66, p<0.001$), there was a significant interaction between condition and time, with intervention students' reports of family rules increasing more than comparison students' ($F[4,28470]=2.54, p=0.038$). Intervention effects on student reported parental knowledge were non-significant.

Parental Monitoring Intervention Materials – 3 modules



Sample Content

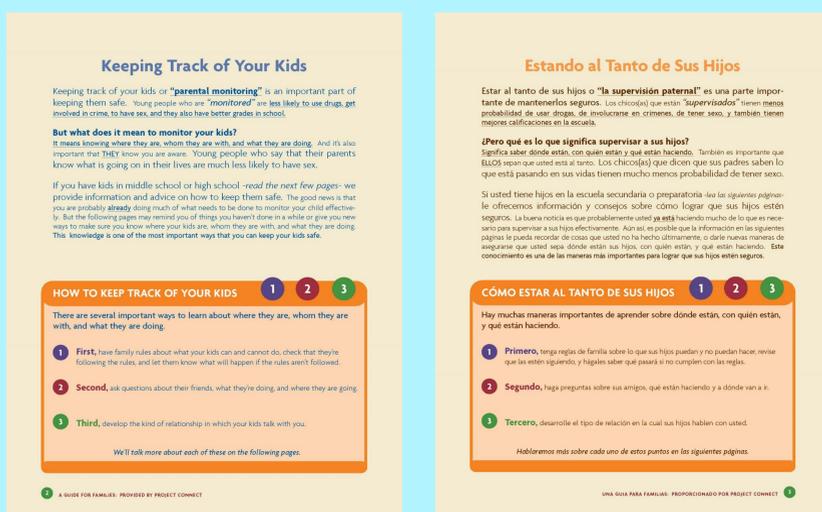
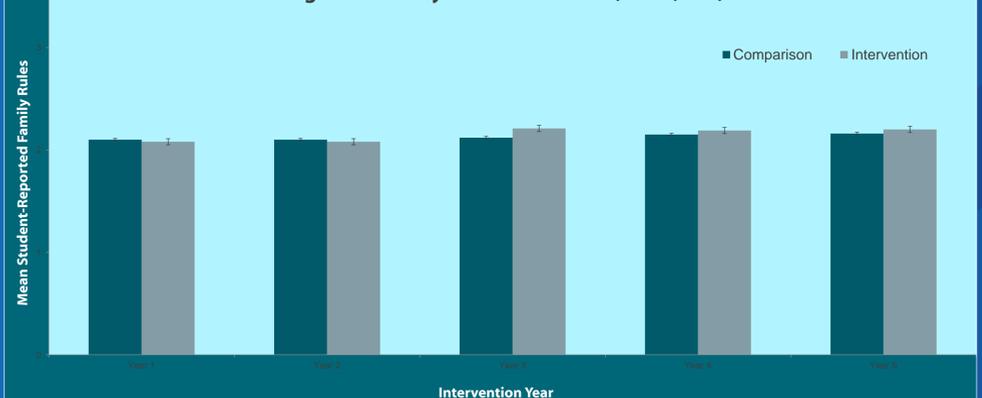


Figure 1. Family Rules Outcomes (N=28,470)



Conclusions

- We observed a population-level intervention effect on adolescent perceptions of parental enforcement of family rules using a brief, easily administered print-based intervention.
- Project Connect materials may be used to increase this protective factor against sexual initiation in a variety of contexts where parents of adolescents may be reached, including schools, physician's offices and clinics, and community-based organizations.
- The findings are based on self-reports from an urban, mostly Latino population.
- Despite these limitations, this is one of the few studies to demonstrate a population-level effect of a low-cost, low-touch informational campaign.



Correspondence to: Patricia J. Dittus | Centers for Disease Control & Prevention | E: PDittus@cdc.gov | P: (404) 639-8299

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Division of STD Prevention

