

Theoretical Models Used in Nu-CULTURE

The ability of youth to make healthy relationship choices depends on information, perceived risk and vulnerability, and the self-efficacy to practice abstinence or utilize effective contraceptive methods (e.g., condoms). Healthy choices are the result of individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community-level influences. Additionally, youth must learn and develop relationship skills and confidence in their capabilities to effectively weigh the potential benefits and consequences of their choices. For these reasons, Nu-CULTURE is based on the Social Ecological Model¹ and Social Learning Theory.^{2,3}

Social Ecological Model

The Social Ecological Model suggests that changes in individual behavior result from influences at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community levels. The model recognizes that lasting changes in health behaviors require physical environments and social systems that support positive lifestyle habits. Accordingly, Nu-CULTURE includes activities that influence individual attitudes (classroom activities), interpersonal behavior (classroom activities and parent connection forms), organizational knowledge and support (resources for schools), and community knowledge and support (parent connection forms, parent education programs, and new media resources).

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory states that human behaviors are the result of three interacting factors, mediated by contingencies of reinforcement and observational learning:

- 1) Pre-existing behaviors
- 2) Cognitive, affective, and biologic internal events
- 3) External events within the environment

Accordingly, Nu-CULTURE includes four components directed at changing or strengthening each of these interacting factors:

- 1) Informational, to increase awareness and knowledge of health risks of sex during adolescence and the benefits of delaying sex
- 2) Social and self-regulatory skills, to teach youth how to translate knowledge into effective action, through observations of role models
- 3) Skill enhancement and resilience self-efficacy, opportunities to practice healthy skills and bolster beliefs in one's capability to effect change, such as role-playing
- 4) Social supports for personal change, to provide a broad network of social supports, such as health educators, peers, teachers, and parents

Nu-CULTURE Core Components

- 1) Incorporating the Healthy Futures message of “The choices you make NOW will affect you LATER” throughout the program.
- 2) Implementing 24 50-minute lessons over three years (6th, 7th, 8th grade).

¹ McLeroy KR, Bibeau D, Steckler A, Glanz K. An Ecological Perspective on Health Promotion Programs. *Health Education Quarterly* 1988;15:351-77.

² Bandura A. Social Cognitive Theory and Exercise of Control Over HIV Infection. In: DiClemente RJ, Peterson JL, eds. *Preventing AIDS: Theories and Methods of Behavioral Interventions*. New York: Plenum Press; 1994:25-29.

³ Carter-Jessop L, Franklin LN, Heath JW, Jr., Jimenez-Irizarry G, Peace MD. Abstinence Education for Urban Youth. *J Community Health*. Aug 2000;25(4):293-304.

- 3) Building participants' skills and self-efficacy to effectively weigh the benefits and consequences of their choices.
- 4) Incorporating activities that increase knowledge and influence positive attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy to prepare teens for making healthy choices regarding relationships and sexual activity.
- 5) Using age-appropriate and medically accurate materials and activities.
- 6) Delivering high quality, participatory, and interactive sessions.
- 7) Engaging parents and guardians via distribution of daily parent connection forms.

These seven **Core Components** must be maintained with fidelity to ensure the effectiveness of the program. A fidelity checklist is included in each implementation guide. Fidelity means conducting a program by following the **Core Components**, protocols, procedures, and content set by the research study that determined its effectiveness. While the **Core Components** cannot be changed, agencies can make adaptations to make the program appropriate for their setting or community. Appropriate adaptations for activities and delivery methods are discussed in detail in the **Nu-CULTURE Adaptation Guide**.