



**TeenSmart**  
INTERNATIONAL

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

**Teens, like all of us, need to feel connected.**

However, caught between childhood and adulthood, all too often teens slip through the cracks. In fact, research shows that teens are the most underserved population for health care and services. So they turn to their phones for support and connection, but if they find the opposite, we see increasing rates of teen depression, suicidal ideation, and isolation.

But what if we can change that?

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# CONNECTIONS

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What if we can say to teens when they are looking for connection:

**Share your concerns with us. You are safe here.**

**Sculpt your life project. You are worth it.**

**Define your values and goals. You are the author of your life.**

At TeenSmart, that *IS* what we say. In fact, as you'll see in this report, we said that over 14,000 times in 2019. That's powerful. That's TeenSmart.

**Your support allows us to send this message! Read on. Be inspired. Stay connected.**

# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear TeenSmart friend,

This year, we chose Connections as our 2019 Annual Report theme because it describes both the need and the opportunity. Teens need connection in order to live into their best selves. They need to be connected to wise coaches, to health information and resources, and, most importantly, to their own inner voice and values. When communities work together to meet that need, the opportunities are enormous!

See for yourself. In 2019, TeenSmart registered:

- **13,191 new users**
- **2,726 course graduates**
- **14,287 coaching sessions**

## **Your support has made it possible!**

In 2019, the JovenSalud Alliance came together in San Jose, Costa Rica for our very own *Conexión* event where stakeholders, philanthropists, and government ministers recommitted to sustain JovenSalud services for Central American youth.

As a result, corporate partners like Grupo Numar, Marina Pez Vela, Arrocería Venllano, CrispyChurros, and others, are **taking TeenSmart to marginalized areas to make sure EVERY teen aged 10-24 has access and support.**

*¡En la unión está la fuerza!* This year, Manpalider included a link to JovenSalud on the cover of the 5 million school notebooks they sell throughout the region! And Fundación Uno, Grand Canada Challenges, and other long-term partners underwrote a tech library for Nicaraguan teens to use TeenSmart. This year also brought new alliances with the Inter-American Development Bank and government institutions in Costa Rica focused on adolescent health.

## **This is the power of connection!**

And now, a new decade awaits us. Understanding the importance of high-quality connection, TeenSmart's strategic focus moving forward will be on dramatically improving our technology services for teens. With upgraded technology, we will be able to grow more meaningfully to support youth as they make their mark on the world.

**Together, we are sending a message to our youth: We are here and we are listening.**

Thanks for your support! Join us in this new decade, too!



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink.

**Adriana Gómez Gómez**  
Executive Director





# OUR MISSION

Empower youth to exercise their leadership and to adopt a healthy lifestyle.



## Connecting through partners

87% of teens access JovenSalud.net through a school or youth center that provides computers and internet access



## Connecting with teens directly

An increasing percentage of users (12%) come to JovenSalud.net based on a friend's recommendation or looking for help online



## Connecting Central America

# OUR CHALLENGE

#1

Nicaragua has the highest levels of alcohol consumption in the region

Costa Rica holds **second place** for issues with **bullying** in the Americas

2

The World Health Organization calculates that bullying will cause **more than 850,000** teen suicides by 2025



Traffic accidents are the **#1 cause** of death for teens in Central America



**1 out of every 10** teens smokes cigarettes. Smoking is still the **#1** cause of preventable death



**66%** of people arrested for **drug trafficking** in El Salvador are **under 24** years old

**79%** of **suicides** occur in low- and medium-income countries



Suicide is the **third highest** cause for death among teens in Costa Rica

More than **50%** of the population in Latin America has overweight issues



**15.3**

average age to start **sexual relations** in Nicaragua



**50%** of mothers in Costa Rica had a teenage pregnancy

**50%**

of **sexually active** teens in Latin America never use protection

**Only 1 in 5** Costa Rican teens exercises regularly



**1 out of every 4** girls under the age of 19 in Nicaragua has already had a child

# WE FACE THE CHALLENGE DAILY

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In 2019, more than 5,000 teens turned to JovenSalud.net to share their concerns about these challenges:

 158

Suicidal ideation concerns

 308

Questions about depression

 97

Teen pregnancy consultations

 375

Help requests for bullying





# OUR RESULTS: 2019



# TSI BY THE NUMBERS

## Annual Trends in Service Delivery and Processes

|                           | 2015    | 2016    | 2017    | 2018    | 2019    | Cumulative Total |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
| Total registered users    | 6,677   | 8,027   | 12,689  | 9,444   | 13,191  | 74,483           |
| Health profiles completed | 7,681   | 8,655   | 15,625  | 11,295  | 14,070  | 75,257           |
| Online courses completed  | 1,020   | 1,104   | 2,339   | 1,604   | 2,726   | 10,818           |
| Online coaching sessions  | 14,901  | 13,280  | 18,019  | 9,368   | 14,287  | 110,713          |
| Youth requesting coaching | 3,665   | 3,782   | 7,141   | 3,944   | 5,694   | 34 584           |
| Organizations served      | 90      | 75      | 123     | 130     | 130     |                  |
| Income (USD)              | 280,313 | 322,344 | 343,027 | 328,328 | 352,514 |                  |
| Expenses (USD)            | 293,296 | 286,190 | 323,647 | 350,490 | 385,453 |                  |

**74,000+**

Youth registered  
on JovenSalud.net

**44%**

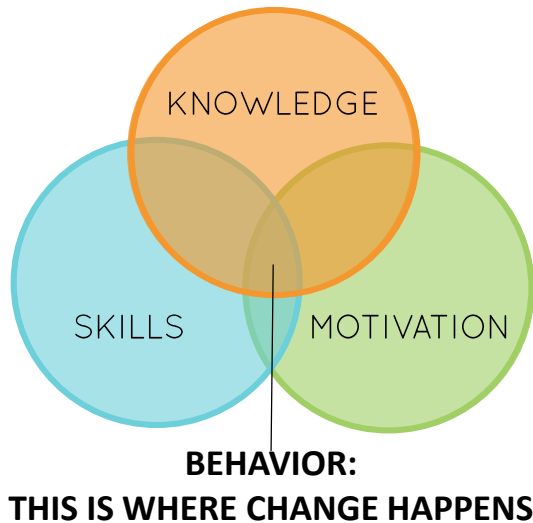
Increase in teens requesting  
virtual coaching support

**10,000+**

Total graduates of  
TeenSmart life-skills courses

# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

When teenagers are empowered with *knowledge*, *skills* and *motivation*, they will make smart choices to reduce or prevent risky behaviors, and build life-skills that promote education, employment and social responsibility.



# CHANGING THE FUTURE

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TeenSmart graduates are better equipped for a healthy, satisfying life. Below are a few of the empowered changes teens report after taking our brief (3-month) virtual courses.



Less bullying



Improved their knowledge about alcohol abuse



More teens decided to delay drinking alcohol



More teens decided they can enjoy a relationship without having sex



Improved anger management skills



Learned something new about STI protection



Improved communication with their families



Increase use of seatbelt and helmet



# WE ARE LISTENING...

Coaching services continue to be one of our most popular services for personalized youth empowerment. In 2019, we registered...

- **5,694** youth requesting coaching support
- **79 high-risk cases** for suicide and/or abuse with on-the-ground follow-up for additional support
- **761** youth using the JovenSalud app to connect with their coach

**93%** of teens feel the coaching service has had a positive impact on their life. These are the main reasons why:

1

**They felt supported.**

2

**Coaches helped them analyze their problems in a non-judgmental way.**

3

**Coaches empowered them to believe they would be able to solve their problem.**

**TeenSmart now has over 100,000 total coaching sessions!**



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# IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"When I was sixteen, I started having problems with depression and **a classmate told me that cutting myself would make me feel better. It didn't.** I felt alone and frightened and afraid of what I might do. Until the night I decided to reach out to TeenSmart and this is what my JovenSalud coach said to me:

"Please stop cutting yourself because you are only going to leave a scar on your body and not fix the scar in your heart. Tell your parents. They can help. **Be brave because you are worth it.**"

**Those words changed my life. They helped me remember my core values.** I did talk to my parents and with their support, I got better.

Now, as a TeenSmart volunteer, I know I can help other teenagers with my testimony. I have graduated from high school and am applying to medical school. **My goal is to help others through my service as a doctor.** I want to help my parents and be an inspiration for my younger brother.

I am grateful to TeenSmart for helping me remember who I am. I feel confident. I have goals. I want to use my life to help others."

**-Jareth, 18 years old**







“I found out about TeenSmart through my friends at school. They told me about JovenSalud.net and it sounded interesting, so I decided to sign up, too.

Unfortunately, my school doesn't have an internet connection, but my aunt does, **so I would go to her house after school and finish my life-skills courses.**

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Now, as a graduate of TeenSmart's courses, **I have been encouraging my classmates to finish their courses because it does really help.**

**The health topics and coaching services are already making a difference in my life:** I'm taking more responsibility in my classes and I've got a closer relationship with my parents – which is important as the third of seven children.

JovenSalud.net will help me a lot throughout my life.”

**-Diego, 17 years old**

I'm writing you because I have a problem and I don't know what to do.

For a while now, I've been feeling bad. About myself. I can't even look in the mirror because I just see someone that is obese and ugly. My self-esteem is awful, and I feel depressed.

I have nowhere to turn. I can't tell my family and friends because they are part of the problem... Honestly, I have been considering suicide for the past few weeks.

Please respond. I really have nowhere else to turn.

**-Anonymous  
coaching  
request-**



**-After TeenSmart coaching  
response-**

Thanks for answering me.

Your reply really made me feel better. I can see now that there are other ways to look at my situation and that makes me feel motivated. Just being able to tell someone how I was feeling has been such a huge relief...  
(continues coaching session)

# “It’s a dream come true!”

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“Being a TeenSmart volunteer has been a **life-changing opportunity** for me.

These teens face such challenging situations and we are able to tell them that someone is there for them.

As a psychologist, it has been a dream come true to learn from these youngsters. **Every case is unique and we are trained to try and see things from the point of view of each teen.**

It is so important to remember what it means to be a teenager. That is what makes TeenSmart different.”

**-Carmen, TeenSmart volunteer**





# CONNECTING MEANINGFULLY

We learn from our teens in order to serve them better. In 2019, we learned:



Though millennials do prefer quick, brief responses, **focus group participants this year told us they actually want to build relationships with their coaches** and to believe that there is someone behind the screen.



During a recruitment phone-a-thon for the Grand Challenges Canada grant this year, we learned that **75% of our Nicaraguan teens had changed their phone number** within the past 18 months – likely due to economic instability. (TeenSmart donors responded by donating a cell-phone lending library so that teens could keep using JovenSalud.net.)



**Family relationships continue to be the top coaching topic** among our users. What's the take-away? Teens are building independence, but they still need support to get there.



Teens that have downloaded the JovenSalud App account for only 3% of all coaching requests, but **our statistics indicate that these teens interact with JovenSalud 24% more than teens using the website**, which is why we offer several channels of communication for our teens.

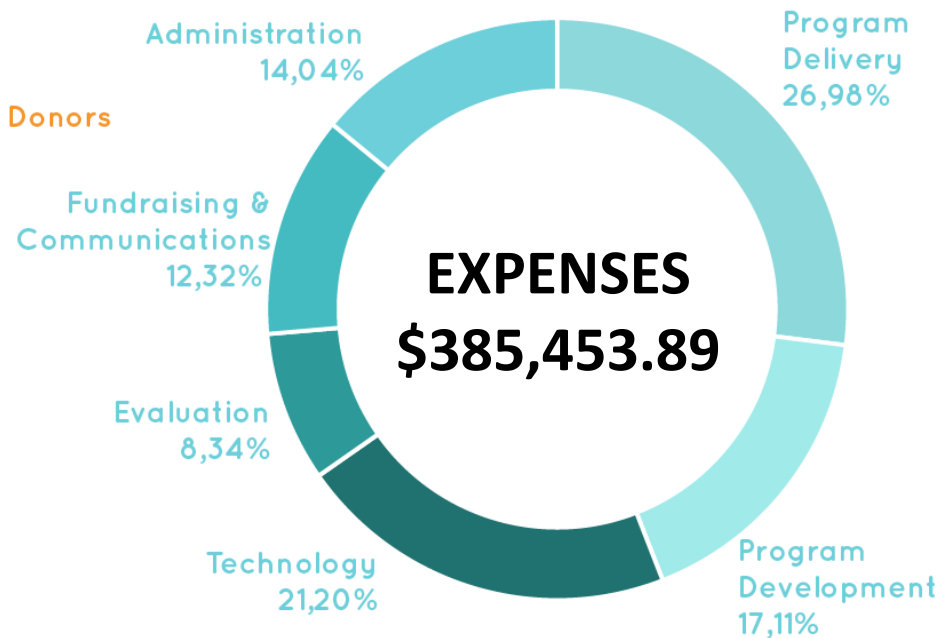
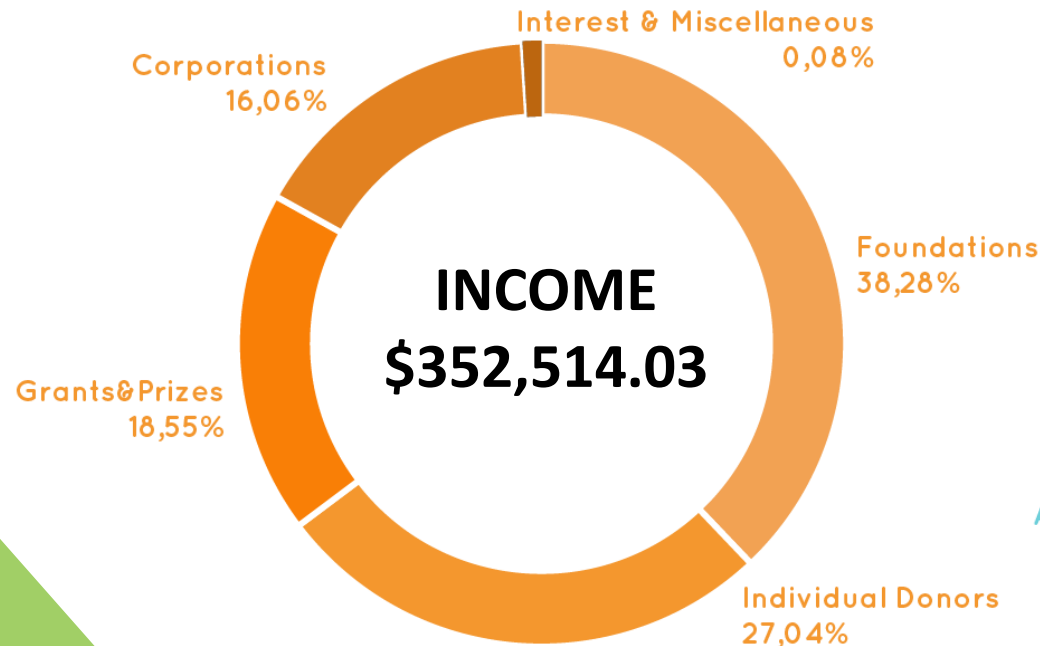
# YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

**This is how your financial gifts supported youth in 2019:**

- **2,726 scholarships for online courses**
- **130 TeenSmart schools and youth centers**
- **75 TeenSmart school graduations**
- **2 Youth Leadership Conferences**
- **1 new online course on safe technology use: SmartClick**
- **Updates to our sexuality and healthy lifestyle courses for boys and girls**
- **3 regional events to promote alliances in Central America**
- **3 trainings for implementing partners**
- **97 volunteers behind the scenes**
- **More than 300 health professionals trained**
- **400 posters for regional health clinics**
- **8,500 TeenSmart bracelets, 2,000 TeenSmart popsockets and 1,000 TeenSmart t-shirts for youth leaders**



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2019







# OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to the individuals that donated to our work in 2019:

|                            |                               |                          |                             |                           |                       |
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# WHY WE SUPPORT TEENSMART

“We have donated to Teensmart for many years because we have seen first-hand the impact that it has to change young lives.

We sponsor a school because we like to have a personal connection to our giving. We love to go and meet with the administrators and students at the graduation every year and we always leave inspired by the work of Teensmart, the students and the school administrators.

We think that in giving to Teensmart we are teaching young people “how to fish” and not just giving them fish. They receive tools that will help change the trajectory of their lives in a positive direction.”



- Karol Sancho and Eric Liljenstolpe, TeenSmart school sponsors

# CONNECTING THROUGH ALLIANCES



Thank you to the many partners who subsidize and believe in the mission of TeenSmart!



# OUR ALLIES AND DONORS



# BOARD AND STAFF

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**Sorayda Aguilar**

**Ericka Hernández**

**Gustavo Castañeda**

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Join our virtual volunteer program
- Give an in-kind donation such as an event space, food, t-shirt, tablets.
- Make an online donation via [www.teensmart.org](http://www.teensmart.org)

**USA Mailing adress:** 107 Apple Cart Way Morrisville, NC 27560

**Costa Rican Mailing adress:** PO Box 402-2010, Zapote, Costa Rica

**Costa Rican physical address:** De la Universidad Veritas, 300 Este. Edificio blanco, local esquinero número 2, frente a Radio Puntarenas. Zapote, San José, Costa Rica.

**Tel:** (506) 2253-5618

**E-mail:** [info@teensmart.net](mailto:info@teensmart.net)

**Youth Services Website:** [www.jovensalud.net](http://www.jovensalud.net)

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