



**What can adults
do to prevent
teen pregnancy?**

GET REAL!



ABOUT TEEN PREGNANCY





Introduction

Many people believe teen pregnancy doesn't affect them, but the reality is – teen pregnancy affects everyone. Most efforts to prevent teen pregnancy directly target youth; few recognize the critical role adults play in teen pregnancy prevention. In fact, adolescent pregnancy is more about adults than it is about young people. Adults create the environment in which youth grow up and they create and control the messages youth receive about sexuality.

While many adults view teenage pregnancy as a serious problem for youth, few feel empowered to act as individuals to help solve the problem. Adults need to know how they can help and what roles they can play in reducing teen pregnancy rates.

While teen pregnancy rates have decreased over the past few years, rates of sexually transmitted diseases have increased. Annually more than 62,000 babies are born to teen parents each year.

Clearly there is need for a more realistic approach to teen pregnancy prevention that includes a focus on what adults can do.

Parents... And Other Adults

Research continues to show that most teenagers want to talk to their parents about sex and issues related to teen pregnancy. Teens look to their parents to model good behavior as well as to share their values on sexuality and pregnancy prevention.

As a parent or other adult YOU CAN:

- Set a good example for your children.
- Pay attention – your teen **does** want to hear from you.
- Take a risk – ask your teenager if they are sexually active. If they are, take a moment to calm down, then ask them if they're using protection.

- Get real – recognize your teen is a sexual being and has hormones as well as curiosity.
- Step outside of your comfort zone – remember what it was like when you were a teenager – and then be ready to listen.
- Understand policies that affect teenagers – take the time to listen to the public debate and find out if your local elected official supports policies that promote healthy adolescent sexuality.
- Get involved – even if you don't have teenagers, take the time to listen, cheer them on in sports or the arts; but most importantly, give them the respect they deserve.

Educators/School Administrators

More and more young people are looking to their teachers and school leaders to help them make important decisions affecting their future – decisions about jobs, career, sports, relationships and sexuality. Adults who interact with youth through education have an incredible opportunity to support and challenge youth for success and affect a positive change in their lives.

As an educator or school administrator YOU CAN:

- Set high standards and clear expectations, then celebrate each success.
- Make sure programs are open and available for all youth, not just those from families with high incomes.
- Take time to talk with a young person about their goals for the future – if they don't have any, help them come up with some.
- Take a look at the sexuality education offered in your school and make sure it's medically accurate, comprehensive and realistic.
- Involve parents from all parts of the community, encourage them to voice their opinions, then listen when they do.
- Recognize that some teens are sexually active and must have access to free contraceptive services, either at school or through a partnering agency.

Business Leaders

Business leaders rarely get involved in teen pregnancy prevention efforts because of the perception that it's not their problem and it doesn't affect them. But it does and it's everyone's problem, not just the teenagers. Business leaders have

the opportunity to contribute to the development of a positive future for a teen. The support they can bring to community efforts in influential leadership, political will and material resources is often crucial to the success of local teen pregnancy prevention efforts.

As a business leader YOU CAN:

- Create employment opportunities and support job training resources for teens in the community.
- Become a mentor or create or support a mentoring program in your community if there is none.
- Adopt a local school. Donate your time and/or money.
- Show how much you as a business leader care about the community and demonstrate it – give a teen a job or start a scholarship program.
- Sponsor youth organizations and encourage your employees to volunteer in those organizations.
- If your business serves teens, consider having free condoms on site or at least information on where they can get health care services.



Faith Leaders

The faith community plays a unique role in teen pregnancy prevention. Research shows that religious faith and a strong moral sense helps teens avoid early sexual activity and pregnancy. Religious leaders need to be willing to talk about sexuality and healthy youth development because their leadership can help young people consider questions about sex in the context of the values and moral traditions of their faith.

As a faith leader YOU CAN:

- Organize or sponsor youth group activities such as field trips and community service activities.
- Encourage adults in your church or religious organization to serve as mentors.
- Support organizations in the community working to reduce teen pregnancy.
- Teach parents in your faith community how to talk to their children about sexuality and how it relates to their faith.
- Be willing to work with other faith leaders to encourage support for teen pregnancy prevention efforts.

Youth Service Providers

Many organizations in the community work with youth in one way or another. Often youth providers do not realize the incredible opportunity they have to talk to a teenager about their health, sexuality and the consequences associated with teen pregnancy. Whether it's job training, drug and alcohol abuse prevention or sports and recreational groups, youth service providers come into contact with teens on a regular, sometimes daily basis. Don't miss the opportunity to give them information about their health, sexuality and future.

As a youth service provider YOU CAN:

- Help youth discover their potential and use skills and talents they didn't even know they had – so they can assume new roles and responsibilities.
- Motivate youth with clear expectations and high standards. Then reward them for their successes.
- Ask young people about their goals and dreams for the future, then help them figure out how to attain those goals.
- Make sure you have the information necessary to talk to

teens about their reproductive health and sexuality, then don't be afraid to actually talk to them about it.

- Create partnerships with other agencies, such as a local family planning provider, so you can refer teens to services they may need.

Health Care/Medical Providers

The entire health care community, including family planning experts and medical providers, can and do play a major role in efforts to reduce teen pregnancy. Because health care providers are respected, reliable sources of information, they have an important responsibility to communicate accurate information about healthy teen sexuality, contraception and disease prevention.

As a health care/medical provider YOU CAN:

- Create a “teen-friendly” medical practice by asking teens to rate your current services.
- Offer services for teens at convenient hours, such as after school and on weekends.
- Make sure that services for teens are free or low cost, confidential and administered by friendly, approachable staff that communicate clear, accurate

messages about sexuality and contraception.

- If you're a primary care or family health provider, ensure that all youth are asked about their sexual activity.
- Be ready and willing to refer a sexually active teen to a partnering agency for information on contraception and disease prevention.
- Get involved in your local school district curriculum review committee – make sure all information regarding teen sexuality is accurate and up-to-date.



Local Elected Officials/Opinion Makers

Programs and policies that local elected officials develop and support can contribute greatly to the success of teen pregnancy prevention efforts. These programs do not need to be controversial. Some of the most effective and powerful solutions for reducing teen pregnancy rates involve efforts that address the environment in which teens are growing up. School failure, dropout rates, lack of job

opportunities, scarcity of social supports and lack of positive educational and recreational activities all contribute heavily to teen pregnancy.

As a local elected official/opinion maker YOU CAN:

- Create and support policies that provide opportunities for youth such as job training, after-school programs, art programs and recreational activities.
- Create and support policies that enable schools and school districts to improve academic achievement, mentoring and peer tutoring.
- Invite teens to come talk to you about what matters to them – and then listen.
- Ask the parents in your community what they want for their children and their community.
- Publicly support local teen pregnancy prevention efforts including improved access to contraception.
- Support policies that will establish and mandate standards for sexuality education programs and training for sexuality education teachers.

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This document was created jointly by The Cornerstone Consulting Group and Deen+Black Public Relations as part of the “Get Real About Teen Pregnancy” public education campaign. The Get Real campaign is funded by a grant to Deen+Black from The California Wellness Foundation and is part of the Foundation’s 10-year \$60 million Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI). The Cornerstone Consulting Group, a national health and human services consulting firm, manages the Technical Assistance program for the TPPI.

For more information, check out our web site at www.letsgetreal.org