



Planned Parenthood® of Indiana

There's No Place Like Home...

FOR SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Having the “Talk” about Teen Pregnancy

The issue of teen pregnancy seems to be everywhere you look lately. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that the teen birth rate in the U.S. rose between 2005 and 2006; the first increase in 14 years. While teen birth rates decreased 35% between 1991 and 2005, they rose 3% in 2006. It is unclear whether this increase is just a blip in a continuing downward trend in teen births or if it represents a return to increasing teen birth rates. In either case, the U.S. teen birth rate remains significantly higher than those of other industrialized countries.



You may have also noticed that the star of *Juno*, a film about teen pregnancy, was nominated for an Academy Award this year. And then there is the widely reported, and commented on, pregnancy of Jamie Lynn Spears, Britney Spears's 16-year-old sister and star of the Nickelodeon show *Zoey 101*.

All this publicity about teen pregnancy may have parents and other caregivers wondering what they can do to help the young people in their lives avoid teen pregnancy. Talking with youth about pregnancy prevention can be a tough task. Parents often aren't sure how to bring up the subject, exactly what to say, or when to start.

For a start, it is important that teens have a good understanding of the physical, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality and feel comfortable talking about it to their parents or other adults. They need to know their family's values about sexuality. Developing this comfort-level and understanding one's sexuality is a life-long process and needs to be nurtured from a very young age.

Toddlers should know that you are open to their questions. They need to feel loved and safe with the adults in their lives. Teaching them the proper names for their body parts and the concepts of maleness and femaleness are appropriate. Elementary school age children need to learn about the developmental changes that occur during puberty and how those changes relate to reproduction. For more ideas on how to talk with young children to build a foundation for later communication about teen pregnancy, please see the last issue of *There's No Place Like Home...For Sexuality Education* found at www.ppin.org/newsletters/parent_newsletter_winter07.pdf.

As children approach puberty they may need help in feeling comfortable about the upcoming changes in their bodies and emotions. Make sure preteens understand how pregnancy occurs. While pregnancy happens most often with vaginal intercourse, any time sperm are deposited in or near the vagina a woman can get pregnant.

Adolescents should have a clear understanding about what their family's values regarding sexual behavior are. However, teens are also beginning to form their own values about many different aspects of life, including sexuality. Don't be surprised if their values differ from yours, but don't let those differences keep you from discussing them. This is often a difficult time to keep communication going between parents and children, but it's worth the effort.

Sexual abstinence has both physical and emotional benefits and you will want to convey this idea to young people. Abstinence from intercourse is the surest way to prevent pregnancy.

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

HAVING THE “TALK”
ABOUT TEEN
PREGNANCY 1-2

FACTS ABOUT TEEN
PREGNANCY 2

TEEN SUCCESS 3

TEEN PERSPECTIVE 3

RESOURCES 4

A sexually literate person ...

has an accurate, well-informed, age-appropriate understanding of all aspects of sexuality—biological, cultural, social and ethical. Possesses a strong sense of personal values about sexuality and sexual health. Demonstrates respect for values of others.

Having the “Talk” about Teen Pregnancy *(continued from page 1)*

Teens who are in a dating relationship can express their feelings, including sexual feelings, without having intercourse.

Most people, at some time in their lives, will transition from sexual abstinence to sexual activity. Nationally, on average sexual activity begins between 16 and 17 years of age. Encourage your teens to talk with a trusted adult if they are considering becoming sexually active. Talk to them about alternatives, but let them know that you are there for them, whatever their decisions. Make sure they understand that they must use contraception during vaginal intercourse if they want to avoid pregnancy.

All teens, whether or not they are currently engaging in intercourse, need to know about the various methods of contraception and how to access them. Each method has advantages and disadvantages: some are more effective than others, some are easier to get than others, some also protect against sexually transmitted infections. To be effective at preventing pregnancy, contraception must be used consistently and correctly. Therefore, you should emphasize the need for people to choose a birth con-

trol method that they will be able to use effectively. The method that is best may change over the course of a person’s lifetime; what works best for a teen may not be the best method for someone in their 30s.

This information is not just for girls! Just as it takes a man and a woman to create a pregnancy, avoiding a pregnancy is best achieved with the involvement of both partners. Make sure the young men in your lives also know about contraception, how to use it, and where to get it.

Boys and men will find that once a pregnancy has occurred, much of their opportunity for decision-making about the pregnancy is past. Should the pregnant woman choose to terminate the pregnancy, he has no say about that legally. If she continues the pregnancy, and chooses to be a parent, he will be required to pay child support.

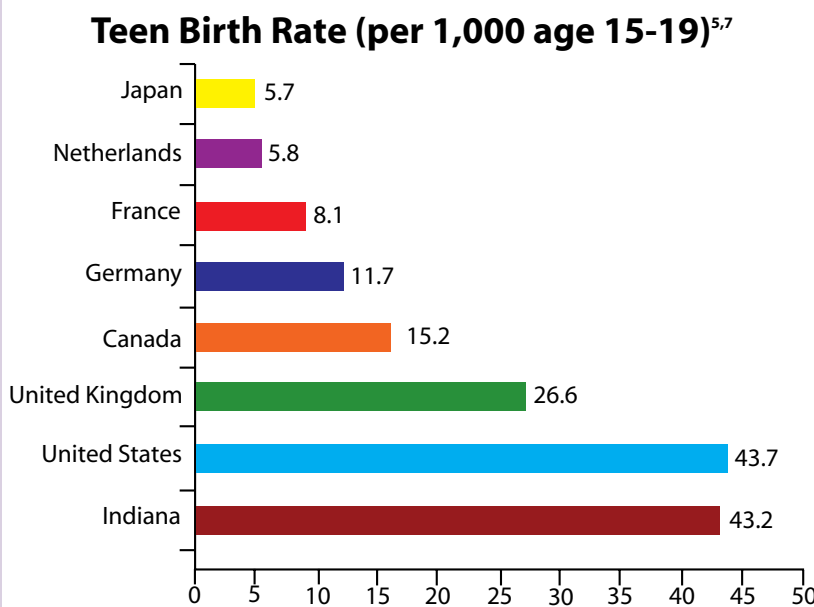
But more than just knowledge is necessary when it comes to preventing teen pregnancy. Research shows that teens who have goals in life are much more likely to delay parenthood. As Michael Carrera, the director of one of the most successful teen pregnancy prevention

programs in the country, has written: We must help young people generate the belief that they are valuable individuals. We must help them locate and grasp a positive, hopeful outlook on their lives and their future. We must be like prospectors, helping them pan for gold and treasures that exist within them.¹

Help your teens set goals for the future and strategize with them about how they will reach those goals. Show them the benefits of education and the importance of staying in school. Help them get involved with activities that enhance their chances of reaching their goals, as well as giving them a sense of accomplishment and a chance to interact with lots of different people.

While communicating with adolescents about teen pregnancy prevention is not easy, there are lots of resources out there to help you. You may want to start with the PPIN Family Pages at www.ppin.org/parents.aspx. Talk with the parent’s of your teens’ friends, teachers and counselors at their schools, or youth group leaders at your place of worship. You can help your teen avoid a teen pregnancy.

Facts about Teen Pregnancy



- 63% of all 12th graders report having had sexual intercourse at least once.²

- The pregnancy rate for teens aged 15-19 decreased 22% in Indiana and 24% in the U.S. between 1992 and 2000.³

- Between 1991 and 2005, the U.S. teen birth rate decreased 35% to a record low of 40.4 per 1000 teens in 2005. It then rose 3% between 2006 and 2006. Between 1990 and 2005, the teen birth rate in Indiana decreased 26% to 43.2 per 1000 teens, also a record low.⁴

- 11% of all births in Indiana and the U.S. as a whole are to teens.⁵

- Teen pregnancy costs the United States at least \$7 billion annually.³

(Continued on page 3)

Facts about Teen Pregnancy *(continued from page 2)*

- Each year, almost 750,000 American teens, including 16,000 Hoosier teens, become pregnant.³
- 31 teens, on average, get pregnant every day in the state of Indiana.⁵
- A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90% chance of becoming pregnant within 1 year.⁶
- Two-thirds of all teen pregnancies, in both Indiana and the U.S. as a whole, occur among 18- to 19-year-olds.³

Teen Success in Indianapolis

Teen Success was founded in 1990 by The Morgan Family Foundation and Planned Parenthood Mar Monte.

The program was created to address the issue of repeat pregnancies among teen mothers. Participants in this program have a repeat pregnancy rate of 4% as compared to the national rate of 20% or more.

PPIN was chosen as one of six replication sites for the *Teen Success* program in 2005. The PPIN program currently operates in Indianapolis, where there is an active partnership with Trinity Episcopal Church, which provides space for

the weekly support meetings. Currently there are 7 active members, with the capacity for serving 12 girls.

Teen Success is a free program designed to support teenage girls who are currently pregnant or who are already parents. *Teen Success* will help participants recognize the benefits and rewards of planning for the future. The program provides encouragement for young mothers to delay another pregnancy until reaching adulthood and reaching their educational goals. Through weekly support group meetings, there are opportunities to meet with other teen mothers, share the joys and challenges of parenting,

discuss relationship building and learn skills for planning a positive future.

As an incentive to attend the support meetings, each participant receives a \$10 stipend each week. The young women commit to participation for at least one year.

For more information about the program, contact Jill Rezek at 317-637-4343 ext. 1159 or jill.rezek@ppin.org.



Teen Perspective by Stephanie Guetig*

Teen Pregnancy



During my senior year of high school, a record number of freshmen girls became pregnant and many more females found out they were pregnant before the year ended. It was difficult to walk through the hallways and not see a young girl waddling with her book bag, attempting to make it to the next class before the bell rang. I even discovered that some junior high students were pregnant and I personally knew a couple girls that dropped out due to pregnancy. Other girls continued their education, but with a great deal of assistance

from others.

Many people think teen pregnancy is just an inner-city issue. However, I grew up in one of the Caucasian, upper-class suburban areas north of Indianapolis. In fact, in 2005 the U.S. Department of Education awarded my high school a “No Child Left Behind” Blue Ribbon Award. Yet, I am sure that a fair number of girls sitting in the stands while the award was presented would not be in school for the next term, let alone graduate, due to pregnancy.

I feel very lucky that I never ended up in a similar situation. Growing up in conservative surroundings, I fell prey to the abstinence-only information that “enriched” my educational ca-

reer. I, like many of my peers, thought waiting until marriage seemed like an unobtainable goal, but walking into the drug store at the age of 14 to buy condoms was a terrifying prospect. I understand why there are so many young teens that become pregnant. I just wish something would change to lessen the fear and embarrassment that goes with trying to practice safer sex, which would lessen the risk of teen pregnancy.

**Stephanie is a student at Butler University studying psychology. She has volunteered with the PPIN Peer Education Program for the last two years and has recently taken the position of staff peer educator. As a volunteer, Stephanie was particularly active as a PPIN representative at large events including Indy Pride, Fiesta and Sex on the Mall.*

There's No Place Like Home... for Sexuality Education is a publication for families by the staff of the education and training department at PPIN.

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Resources on Teen Pregnancy Prevention

PPIN believes in providing resources for parents and caregivers to help their youth avoid teen pregnancy. In addition to this newsletter, PPIN has a Resource Center in Indianapolis that provides the public with books, videos, DVDs, and various kits and games designed to help adults communicate positively about sexuality with young people of all ages. PPIN also has sexuality educators who lead programs for children, teens, parents, caregivers and professionals on all aspects of sexuality.

The most accessible resource PPIN offers parents and others who care about young people is the Family Pages at www.ppin.org/family. This interactive web page helps adults explore their understanding of sexuality and their own values surrounding sexuality and teen pregnancy, provides information on how to use the media to facilitate communication, and gives an overview of the current state of sexuality education in the United States. There are activities for adults to complete on their own and some that they can do with the young people in their lives. While the site is primarily aimed at parents and caregivers of teens, parents of younger children will also find helpful, relevant information on these pages.

Other Websites on Teen Pregnancy

Planned Parenthood Federation of America—www.plannedparenthood.org—has lots of helpful health information on contraception and pregnancy prevention, as well as helpful hints on ways parents can communicate with their children.

Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention—www.etr.org/recapp/—provides practical tools and information that health educators can use to reduce sexual risk taking among adolescents.

The National Campaign—www.thenationalcampaign.org—has all the latest statistics on teen pregnancy as well as information on what works in the area of teen pregnancy prevention.

Teen Friendly Websites

Stay Teen—www.stayteen.org—is a teen-oriented site designed to help adolescents avoid a teen pregnancy.

Teen Wire—www.teenwire.com—gives sexuality and relationship information for teens from Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Sources

¹ Michael A. Carrera. *Lessons for Lifeguards*. New York: Donkey Press, 1996.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (June 2006). *Surveillance Summaries*. MMWR. 2006;55 (No. SS-5)

³ Guttmacher Institute. (2006). *U.S. Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: National and State Trends and Trends by Race and Ethnicity*. New York: AGI.

⁴ National Center for Health Statistics. (2007). *Births: Preliminary Data for 2006*.

⁵ Indiana State Department of Health (2007). *Natality Report 2005*.

⁶ Harlap, S. et al. (1991). *Preventing Pregnancy, Protecting Health: A New Look at Birth Control Choices in the United States*, New York: AGI.

⁷ United Nations Statistics Division. (2004). *Demographic Yearbook 2004*. New York: United Nations.