

Teen Listening Tours: Talking to Teens about Adolescent Pregnancy and How to Prevent It

NORTHEAST FLORIDA
HEALTHY START COALITION

CITY MATCH CONFERENCE 2011
SEPTEMBER 19, 2011



How it began

- Healthy Start Coalition formed a regional Teen Pregnancy Task Force in October 2010 to determine ways to address the high primary and secondary teen pregnancy rates.
 - What could we do within the Healthy Start program?
 - What is the role of schools, community organizations in preventing teen pregnancy?
 - What do teens want and need to prevent pregnancy?

National & State Data

- National Campaign to Prevent Teen & Unplanned Pregnancy:
 - **That's What He Said: WHAT GUYS THINK ABOUT SEX, LOVE, CONTRACEPTION, AND RELATIONSHIPS**
 - **Talking Back: What Teens Want Adults to Know About Teen Pregnancy**
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey results (National, Florida, Duval County/Jacksonville)

What do Northeast Florida teens think?

- Regional “listening tours” to have a conversation with teens about teen pregnancy, sex education and adolescent behavior
- The results would be used to determine whether teens in the region were on par with teens nationwide and also shape local approaches to reduce teen pregnancy.

Demographics

- **Heard from a wide variety of teens:**
 - **Different Races & Ethnicities: White, Black, Hispanic**
 - **Male: 44.8%**
 - **Female: 55.2%**
 - **Ages 13-19, middle school and high school students**
 - **Pregnant teens, teen mothers, repeat teen pregnancies**

Non-pregnant Teens

THE FIRST FIVE FOCUS GROUPS WERE COMPRISED OF MALE AND FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL TEENS FROM NORTHEAST FLORIDA.

What influences teens to have sex or have babies?



Common themes identified:

- Peer Pressure
- Family
- Self-Esteem
- Education

Peer Pressure

- **Teens say sex is very prevalent in their lives:**
 - Media
 - Rap & other music videos
 - Family members (brothers, sisters, cousins) having sex.
 - Constantly hearing about sex creates a curiosity
- **Many teens feel egged on or pushed into having sex:**
 - By their friends
 - From older siblings or cousins
- **Teens do it because they think it's cool and they want to brag; "Everyone else is doing it" mentality**

Self-Esteem

- Teens are aware of more than just the physical aspects of sex.
- Emotion:
 - Can be emotionally overwhelming
 - Can feel sad or used if dumped after having sex.
- Trust:
 - If their partner was pregnant, male teens would immediately ask for a DNA test (influence from their mother or aunt).
 - In relationships: girls feel that having another baby will ensure the father of her child stays in the relationship.
- Confidence:
 - Girls may dress sexy to get attention or because they think their body is all they have.

Family

- Family is a big part of teens' lives — it is a source of information and an influence on their behavior
- Having the talk: teens want to be able to ask their parents about sex, but it's uncomfortable and parents don't always know how to talk to their kids about it or handle the fact that their children are sexually active
- Continuing the cycle: If teens are raised by young parents, many of the teens think it's normal and can't see past that — they become young parents themselves.

Family

- **Family dynamics:**
 - Many boys think the girls are responsible for raising a child because their moms did it for their family.
 - ✦ 75/25: Males said three quarters of the responsibility falls on the mother of the child
 - Many girls start having sex at a young age because they come from a broken family and they use sex to get away from that.
 - Many very young kids (3+ years old) learn about sex from their cousins – just learning through absorption.

Education



- **Where are teens getting their information about sex from?**
 - Media
 - Friends
 - Internet
 - Family
 - A little bit in school health class (mainly anatomy and hygiene).

Education

- **Sex education in school:**
 - Stresses abstinence, but not everyone is abstinent
 - Cannot stop teens from having sex – instead they want all of the details (good and bad)
 - ✦ Holistic approach
 - Very limited education on birth control and STI prevention.
 - ✦ Many believe birth control doesn't work.
 - Want to know more about the emotions relating to sex.
 - Want to feel comfortable enough to ask questions, not be scared away

Focus Groups 6-7

FOCUS GROUPS 6 AND 7 WERE COMPRISED OF CURRENTLY OR PREVIOUSLY PREGNANT FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL TEENS IN NORTHEAST FLORIDA.

Teen Parenting Program Listening Tours

- **Two sessions:**
 - Session 1: 5 high school girls (1 girl with 2 children), 2 middle school
 - Session 2: 5 high school girls (1 girl pregnant with 2nd child)
- **Know they could get pregnant but either didn't use protection or said they did and it didn't work**
 - Girls continue same risky behavior...sex without protection
 - Men also play a role in preventing pregnancy

Teen Parenting Program Listening Tours

- **Who can teens talk to about sex and pregnancy?**
 - Parents, doctors, teachers, friends
 - Parents' reactions and experiences important though
 - Ultimately dependent on individual's choices and outlook
 - "Parents need to be there. If they're willing to be there and teach you, you'll have more courage to say no."

Teen Parents -- Common Themes Identified

- **Influenced by many sources**
 - Family
 - Media
 - Friends
- **Need to revamp sex education**
 - Mentoring
 - Discussion of contraceptives
 - Experiences mimicking real life
- **Lack of confidence in contraceptives**
 - Teen with 2 children became pregnant with both kids while on the pill
 - Education needed on how to properly take birth control

Breadth of Influences

- **Repeating cycle--girls born to young mothers becoming young mothers themselves**
- **Lack of guidance from parents**
- **Media often glamorizes teen pregnancy**
 - 16 and Pregnant; Bristol Palin and Jamie Lynn Spears
- **Many girls said they got information from their peers**

Revamping Sex Education

- All in favor of some type of mentoring program
- Characteristics of an ideal mentor:
 - Young (in twenties or thirties, but no older)
 - Have had similar experiences
 - Female
 - Trust very important (no judgment)
- Would like to see girls have pseudo-pregnancy experiences
 - Pregnancy suit/belly
 - Take home dolls

Revamping Sex Education

- Girls noted that doctors and parents did not discuss contraception until *after* they were pregnant
- Only abstinence taught in schools – even after getting pregnant

Lack of Confidence in Contraceptives

- “No good”
- Girls get pregnant even when on birth control
- Hard to remember to take pill daily
- Condoms break and don’t protect against pregnancy or STIs
- IUDs can get stuck, are dangerous
- Patch could fall off
- Pill makes girls fat, nauseated
- Birth control also guy’s responsibility

Now that we know what teens think...

**What do they think we
can do?**

Provide better sex education

- **What kind of sex education do teens want and need?**
 - Abstinence-only education is NOT working – need to be realistic!
 - ✦ Teens want the truth.
 - ✦ Open and honest conversations about sex (good and bad) instead of demonizing it.
 - ✦ “Sex education is sugarcoated and boring.”
 - Need to include the emotions in sex education (attachment, guilt, anger, etc.)
 - Education needs to include STD information.
 - ✦ Learn best through visuals — photos of STDs gets their attention better than a lecture

Provide better sex education, cont'd.

- **What kind of sex education do teens want and need?**
Continued
 - Much more information on birth control.
 - ✦ Most popular prevention methods named: condoms, IUD, the pill, and tubes tied (in teens)
 - ✦ General mistrust of birth control – it doesn't work!
 - Holistic, consistent and age-appropriate sex education.
 - ✦ “Start early, do it yearly and go through college.”
 - ✦ Needed earlier because kids are hearing about it much earlier.
 - ✦ Girls suggested starting in middle school.
 - Mentorship programs needed.
 - ✦ Would want a mentor or someone who is “open-minded, outgoing, someone they could trust and not make you feel bad.”

Provide better sex education, cont'd.



• What kind of sex education do teens want and need?

Continued

- Sex ed. needs to be taught in small classes by someone teens can relate to and trust.
 - ✦ “Someone in their 20’s and has had sex before – not someone who is a virgin.”
 - ✦ Abstinence for kids 11 and younger
 - ✦ Honest education for those 12 and older: risks, protection, lifestyle consequences
 - ✦ Have women who had baby in teens talk to students

Educate and Engage Parents

- What can parents do to be more engaged?
 - Educate parents to make them feel more comfortable talking to their kids.
 - ✦ Parents should be “open with kids and talk about the issues”.
 - ✦ Parents need to learn how to make the topics less awkward.
 - Encourage adults to talk to adults about teens’ sexual maturity and wellbeing
 - ✦ Physicians communicating with parents
 - ✦ Teachers communicating with parents
 - Break the cycle: Teens need to see their OWN potential
 - ✦ Boost self-esteem for teens.
 - ✦ Teens only know what they see, they don’t have role models.
 - ✦ Teens need to recognize that they need to be emotionally and financially ready before they have children.

What we learned

- There is a huge gap between knowledge and behavior.
 - Teens know what they need to do to prevent pregnancy, but no one is talking to them, educating/guiding them, or holding them accountable.
 - ✦ Teens getting pregnant on the pill – not taking it every day like they are supposed to.
 - ✦ Unprotected sex
 - ✦ Lack of connection between baby and a lifelong commitment

What we are doing with the results

- Teen Pregnancy Task Force developed five areas of focus based on results
 - **Engaging Parents** – came directly from Listening Tours; teens consistently emphasized their desire to have more open relationships and conversations
 - **Repeat Teen Pregnancies**
 - **Adolescent Health Services**
 - **Community-based Teen Pregnancy Prevention** – teens reported school sex education was lacking
 - **Public Policy**

What others are doing with the results

- Duval County Health Department in Jacksonville, FL is utilizing the results to target their social media campaign around preventing STIs and teen pregnancies
- Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation incorporated messages about opening the door of communication between parents and teens into their teen pregnancy prevention media campaign

Next Steps

- Promote implementation of NEFL Teen Pregnancy Task Force strategies
 - Final plan to be released in October
- Pilot comprehensive sex education curriculum in Jacksonville Housing Authority apartment complexes
 - 4Me curriculum
 - Evidence-based curriculum designed for urban, low-income housing complexes
- Digging deeper – doing more specific listening tours
 - With parents
 - Teens active in the faith community

Questions?

