

PREVENTION AND PLANNING FOR FATHERHOOD



What Policymakers Need to Know

Abstinence education works better for teens who have not yet engaged in sexual behavior.

Abstinence education by itself is less effective for teens that are already sexually active.

A pregnancy prevention program that combines an abstinence-based message with information about contraception tends to produce better results for a wide range of teenage behaviors.

Boys are less likely to receive information about their responsibility in preventing pregnancy if they are raised in a female-headed household.

Schools and the media are major sources of information for teens on sexuality and contraception

Teen boys who participate in other types of risky behavior (substance abuse, violence, delinquency) may not be part of a school environment.

Two-thirds of teen pregnancies occurred with a male that is two or three years older than the female—removing the possibility that these men will be influenced by a school-based program.

Boys who do not have a responsible male role model are more likely to engage in a variety of risky behaviors—violence, school dropout, substance abuse—in addition to being sexually active.

Boys already engaged in at-risk behavior see no risk in sexually active behavior if they have a weak sense of future—you can't lose the future you are never going to have.

Teens and young men who may already be fathers can benefit from prevention strategies.

What Policymakers Can Do

4 Identify the population you are trying to target—young teens, older teens—to identify whether your message should focus more on abstinence or on a combined message that includes responsible sexual behavior and contraception.

4 Integrate contraception into existing abstinence and sexuality education and STD/HIV prevention education.

4 Allow schools to provide accurate information regarding abstinence, sexual behavior, contraception and the risks associated with early parenting.

4 Conduct media campaigns on abstinence, pregnancy prevention, the use of contraceptives and that encourage parents to discuss sex with adolescents.

4 Use a variety of access points—recreation centers and sports, for example—to connect with boys who may not be in school to ensure the likelihood they will have access to prevention information.

4 Offer information about human sexuality and contraception to males at health clinics.

4 Conduct outreach programs for school dropouts and boys and young males involved in gangs.

4 Provide boys in the juvenile justice system access to life skills and prevention information.

4 Use mentoring programs that provide young boys and men with positive adult role models.

4 Combine prevention strategies with other services like substance abuse or anger management.

4 Provide employment and educational opportunities that demonstrate alternatives to school dropout, gangs and substance abuse.

4 Use female-dominated services like healthy start and WIC to channel information to fathers.

What Policymakers Need to Know and What They Can Do

PREVENTION AND PLANNING FOR FATHERHOOD (CONTINUED)

Q: Why should schools focus on pregnancy prevention at school? Shouldn't it be taught at home?

A: Research has shown that roughly nine of 10 teenage males who have ever had sexual intercourse received information about contraceptives from their schools or the media. Less than half of these males received information from their parents, and less than one-third received information from doctors or nurses. Additionally, boys raised in a female-headed household are less likely to receive information about responsible sexual behavior from that parent.

Q: Isn't abstinence the best message to be sending young boys about sex?

A: Studies indicate that abstinence by itself is less effective for teens who are already engaged in sexual activity. Abstinence seems to effectively delay the age at which teens have sex. Information about contraception and responsible sexuality seem to be more effective when combined with an abstinence message and exhibit longer lasting effects.

Q: Why do new programs have to be developed? Can't we just include boys in current programs for girls?

A: Boys and young males respond best when their specific concerns are addressed. Programs that help young men develop a positive self image and set goals in a confidential setting have shown the most promise. In addition, boys and men who respect and feel good about themselves also will respect their partners.

Q: Isn't it true that "boys will be boys" and that they aren't interested in taking responsibility for their role in prevention?

A: Males want to be more responsible, both in pregnancy prevention and in their own sexual behavior. A recent survey shows that more than 90 percent of teenage males feel that talking about contraception before sexual intercourse, using contraception to prevent pregnancy and taking care of a child all are part of a male's responsibility.

Q: Why should states develop outreach programs outside of schools?

A: Young fathers are, on average, two to three years older than their partners and are more likely to be out of school. Extending beyond programs that address pregnancy prevention within schools may be effective at reaching those most likely to be involved in a teen pregnancy. Outreach programs allow members of the community to contact these boys and young men and get them the information and resources they need to make healthy and responsible choices.