



Supporting Young Male Involvement in Pregnancy Prevention & Parenting

Despite increased recognition of the critical role males can play in both teen pregnancy prevention and effective teen parenting, young men remain less involved than their female counterparts. Oftentimes prevention education is directed at young girls while boys pass their adolescent years without the benefit of comparable instruction, information, or advice.

We must target boys and young men specifically in order to reduce teen pregnancy and early, unintended fatherhood and to promote the development of positive relationships between young fathers and their children.

FAST FACTS

Males and Pregnancy Prevention

- Helping boys and young men understand the importance of sexual health not only increases their likelihood of avoiding teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but can positively impact other areas of their development as well, including:
 - Peer and intimate partner relationships;
 - Definitions of masculinity and strength; and
 - Mental and emotional health.¹
- Parents are often unsure when and/or how to address sexual and reproductive health issues with adolescent males. As a result, parents may hesitate to provide boys and young men with the information necessary to protect themselves from unplanned pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections.²

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- Contraceptive use should not be the sole responsibility of one partner or the other, instead boys and young men should be encouraged to discuss contraceptive methods with their partners, assist in choosing a method, acquiring it, and using it correctly. The same principles may be applied to use of emergency contraception (EC).³

Males and Parenting

- Active parental involvement early in a child's life helps to form a positive parent-child bond and sets the foundation for a healthy and enduring parent-child relationship.⁴ Furthermore, a young father's role as a parent is crucial, as research suggests that children who grow up without fathers may be at greater risk for the following:

- Poverty;
- Experiencing violence and/or abuse;
- Exhibiting aggressive behaviors;
- Involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems;
- Behavior and achievement problems in school;
- Interpersonal relationship problems;
- Substance abuse; and
- Teen pregnancy.⁴

- There is growing evidence that teen fathers want to be and are increasingly involved in their children's lives through more than just financial support.^{5,6} Failing to support young fathers with resources and social supports only increases their struggle to maintain a positive and supportive relationship with their child and with their coparent.⁷

Effectively Involving Males

- The concept of male involvement recognizes boys and young men as critical and valued members of society. A goal of the movement is that professionals who work with boys and young men will incorporate this perspective into the design and implementation of teen pregnancy prevention and parenting programs.⁷
- When empowered and supported, boys and young men are capable of making positive choices regarding their health and behaviors. Effective programming provides boys and young men with the necessary tools and support to make the decisions that are best for them.¹ Effective teen pregnancy prevention programs should include the following goals:
 - Reducing teen parenthood;
 - Ensuring medically accurate information;
 - Assisting boys and young men in effectively communicating about their

reproductive health, sexual limits, and desires; and

- Helping boys and young men examine and break down the negative stereotypes surrounding their reproductive health, sexual behaviors, and values.⁷
- Programs that afford boys and young men the opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with responsible, caring adult men can be beneficial. Successful programming for boys and young men and/or young fathers may also involve them in program design and implementation.⁸
- Training staff on how to work with adolescent boys and/or young fathers should prepare them to effectively interact with and involve this population. Building skills in the following areas may be particularly valuable:
 - Respecting differences in communication styles;
 - Recognizing and respecting different parenting styles;
 - The importance of young father involvement in the early years;
 - Addressing barriers to adolescent young father involvement; and
 - Recruitment and retention strategies for working with young fathers.³

RESOURCES

Healthy Teen Network: www.healthyteennetwork.org

National Center on Fathers and Families:
www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu

Center for Family Policy and Practice: www.cffpp.org

**US Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration of Children and Families:**
www.acf.hhs.gov

REFERENCES

¹ Brown, R. Wise guys – making a difference by working with males. *NOAPPP Network*, 23, 3 (2003).

² Sonenstein, F. et al. (1997). *Involving males in preventing teen pregnancy: A guide for program planners*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

³ Tift, N. Inviting young dads in. *NOAPPP Network*, 23, 3 (2003).

⁴ Ruiz, S. New Mexico young fathers project: involving young fathers in their children's lives. *NOAPPP Network*, 23, 3 (2003).

⁵ Gavin, L., et al. (2002). Young, disadvantaged fathers' involvement with their infants: An ecological perspective. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31, 266-276.

⁶ Allen, W. & Doherty, W. (1996). The responsibilities of fatherhood as perceived by African American Teenage Fathers. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 77 (3), 142-155.

⁷ Sanchez-Flores, H. Young male involvement in pregnancy prevention and parenting. *NOAPPP Network*, 23, 3 (2003).

⁸ *Young Men Moving Forward: California's Male Involvement Program, A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program for Males*. (2002). California Department of Health Services, Office of Family Planning.