

Adolescent Sexual Risk-Taking Prevention Program Selection Guide

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Prevalence and consequences of sexual risk-taking

– teens, their children, and society pay a significant price when teens become pregnant or contract an STD. The following facts illustrate there are too-high levels of sexual risk-taking among teens in Alabama:

- * Roughly half (50.6 percent) of Alabama high school students participating in 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) report that they have had sexual intercourse. (U.S. is 46.8)
- * 61.8 percent of teens participating in 2005 YRBS survey report using a condom during last sexual intercourse. (U.S. is 62.8%)
- * 18 percent report using birth control pill before last sexual intercourse. (U.S. is 17.6%)
(2009 data to be released soon)

Unprotected sexual activity leads to high pregnancy and birth rates among teens:

- * The teen pregnancy rate in Alabama during 2008 was 39.2 (among girls age 10-19).
- * Teen childbearing in Alabama during 2008 was 8,567 births (among girls age 10-19).
- * Nationally, about 75 of every 1,000 girls age 15 to 19 became pregnant in 2002 (the last year for which national data are available), which means that, cumulatively, more than 30 percent of teenage girls in the United States become pregnant at least once by the age of 20. More than 80 percent of these pregnancies are unintended.

Sexual risk-taking has also resulted in high rates of STD among teens:

- * Young people age 15 to 24 account for one-quarter of the sexually active population in the United States but nearly one-half of all new cases of STDs
- * The number of chlamydia cases in 2008 was 9,533 and the number of gonorrhea cases in 2008 was 3,086 for the state of Alabama (among youth age 10-19).
- * Nationally, the prevalence of HIV is low among young adults in general, but the estimated number of HIV/AIDS cases among teens rose between 2001 and 2005.

Types of sexual behavior that affect pregnancy and STD

- Most teen pregnancy prevention programs target two areas of behavior: **abstinence** – which enables teens to avoid pregnancy, and the correct and consistent **use of contraception**, which reduces the risk of pregnancy for sexually active teens. Preventing STDs requires a more complex approach. These programs may promote abstinence and condom use, but can also emphasize reducing the number of sexual partners, avoiding concurrent sexual partners, increasing the number of weeks or months between sexual partners, testing for and treatment of STDs. When appropriate, teen pregnancy prevention and STD prevention programs should focus on preventing both outcomes.

Factors influencing teen sexual behavior – Nearly all teenagers are at risk of pregnancy and STD because most will experience pressure to have sex at some time or other. Research has identified more than 500 risk and protective factors that influence teens' sexual behavior. Effective programs act on these factors and can change teens' sexual behavior.

Programs have been evaluated for effectiveness in three categories:

- 1) Programs that focus on sexual factors (abstinence and comprehensive programs)
- 2) Programs that focus on nonsexual factors (early childhood development programs and youth development programs for adolescents)
- 3) Programs that focus on both sexual and nonsexual factors (substance abuse, violence and sexual risk-taking)

Based upon an in-depth analysis of programs that demonstrate effectiveness at changing sexual risk-taking behaviors, 17 common characteristics were found (atch 1). Fifteen very different programs in different settings have strong evidence of positive impact on behavior (atch 2). It should be noted that no existing program matches the needs of every group nor will it match the values or resources of every community. To be effective, programs must address the specific needs of the teen participants.

Information contained in this fact sheet was obtained from resources available through the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, Alabama Department of Public Health and Alabama Department of Education.