



The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

Press Release

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New Research Identifies Effective Teen Sex Education Programs and Other Interventions

(Washington, DC) — A growing number of sex education programs that support both abstinence and the use of contraception for sexually active teens have now shown positive effects in delaying first intercourse, improving contraceptive use, and preventing pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease among teens, according to a new report released today by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Other interventions—several that mention sex little or not at all—have also shown effective results.

Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, by researcher Douglas Kirby, Ph.D., is the most comprehensive review to date of evaluation research that answers the question, what programs work to prevent teen pregnancy and STDs. The report's findings are based on a total of 115 program evaluations.

Two-thirds of sex education programs examined in the report that focus on both abstinence and contraception had a positive effect on teen sexual behavior—for example, they delayed the initiation of sex, improved contraceptive use, or did both. Despite the concerns of many adults, *none* of the programs that discussed abstinence and contraception hastened the initiation of sex or increased the frequency of sex among teens.

The report also notes that, at present, there is no strong evidence that programs that stress abstinence as the only acceptable behavior for unmarried teens delay the initiation of sex, hasten the return to abstinence, or reduce the number of sexual partners.

Emerging Answers 2007 identifies 15 programs with *strong* evidence of success. Seven are classified as sex education programs, two are community service learning programs, two are programs with several components, two involve ways clinicians interact with patients, and one is a parent-teen program.

Other results from the report include:

- Teen girls and young women who receive emergency contraception from clinics *in advance* of having sex are not more likely to have sex and are more likely to use emergency contraception if they do have sex than those who do not receive emergency contraception in advance.
- Some longer sex education videos that are interactive and viewed many times can have a positive effect on teen sexual behavior.
- School-based and school-linked clinics and school condom-availability programs do not increase sexual activity, but it is not clear whether they increase the use of contraception.
- Programs for parents and their teens sometimes reduce risky sexual behavior among teens by delaying sex or increasing contraceptive use.

- Most programs that are effective at changing behavior give a clear message about avoiding risky sexual behavior, either by abstaining from sex or by using contraception.
- There are now several sex education programs that have been evaluated multiple times. Results from these evaluations suggest that when the original programs are carefully replicated in similar settings with similar populations of young people, the program's positive effects on teen sexual behavior can also be replicated.

“Teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined by about one-third since the early 1990s—a remarkable success story,” said Sarah Brown, CEO of the National Campaign. “Even so, it is still the case that one in three girls in the United States get pregnant by age 20. Given the nation’s stubbornly high rate of teen pregnancy, it is most welcome news that the menu of proven, research-based interventions that help young people make better decisions about sex, pregnancy and parenthood is expanding”

About the author. Douglas Kirby, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Scientist at ETR Associates in California, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through education, training, and research. He has conducted studies of adolescent sexual behavior for 30 years. Dr. Kirby wants to note that ETR Associates developed and continues to market several of the programs his review concludes have the strongest evidence of success.

The National Campaign’s goal is to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy.

For more information about the National Campaign and this report, please visit:
www.TheNationalCampaign.org/EA 2007

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