

Briefly...

State Legislation to Reduce Teen Pregnancy

Teen pregnancy is closely linked to a host of other critical social issues, as well as the substantial public costs associated with adolescent childbearing. Consequently, teen pregnancy should be viewed not only as a reproductive health issue, but as one that works to improve social and economic measures.

Recognizing the importance of the complex issue, individual states have approached reducing teen pregnancy from various angles. While this document is not exhaustive, it does give some examples of a variety of state legislative initiatives ranging from incorporating teen pregnancy prevention into afterschool programs to increasing resources for at-risk teens to supporting parent-child communication to setting standards for sexual education.

States

California

Introduced in 2006, Assembly Bill 2141 created the Parent-Child Communication Assistance Program within the office of Family Planning, to equip parents with the knowledge, understanding and communication skills necessary to talk to their children about sex and sexuality.

Introduced in 2007, Assembly Bill 1511 establishes a public education campaign to help parents talk to their kids about sex

and health, particularly in communities with health disparities and barriers to health care access.

Colorado

Passed in 2006, House Bill 1351 established a community-based program that provides support to Medicaid-eligible at-risk teens and teen parents, including intensive individual or group counseling, vocational and educational guidance, and health services. The program only uses federal and local dollars.

Passed in 2007, House Bill 1292 ensures that any program teaching human sexuality to teenagers adopt science-based content standards.

Florida

In 2005, Florida enacted Senate Bill 1650, which authorized inclusion of teen pregnancy prevention in a plan to encourage educational attainment and reduce the need for public assistance. ENABL (Education Now and Babies Later) is a multifaceted approach which targets youth especially at-risk of teen pregnancy, including the children of teen parents, those who receive public assistance and teens in areas with the highest teen pregnancy rates.

Hawaii

In April 2002, the Hawaii legislature adopted House Resolution 69, establishing a Special Assistant on Children and Families in the office of the governor to convene and chair a task force to be known as the Hawaii Afterschool Initiative. The task force's activities include the development of a plan to ensure quality afterschool programs for every school-age child in the state, implementing a needs-assessment, and mapping existing funding streams and programs. The middle schools initiative will emphasize teen pregnancy and drug abuse prevention.

Illinois

In 2003, the Illinois Legislature passed House Bill 1630, which called for creation of a program to conduct research, education and prevention activities for at-risk Hispanic/Latino teenagers.

Tips on Addressing Teen Pregnancy Legislation for Your State

- Define the problem and the consequences of early pregnancy and childbearing.
- Include teen pregnancy and birth data for your state, and if possible for localities within the state.
- Highlight how much teen childbearing costs your state to help make the case for investing in prevention.
- Set a clear and reasonable goal for your state.
- Whenever possible, invest in evidence-based approaches.

Kansas

Senate Bill 508, the Abstinence Plus Education Act, was introduced in 2006 and replaces abstinence-only education. It states that students should be given factual and age-appropriate sexual education, including information about birth control and sexually transmitted diseases.

New Mexico

Senate Bill 124 provides \$2.6 million for a statewide teen pregnancy prevention program for fiscal year 2008. The bill was introduced in 2007, but action has been postponed indefinitely.

New York

Passed in May 2007, the New York State Assembly passed the Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act (A.5569 / S.3579) by a huge margin of 115 to 27. This bill enables women to obtain emergency contraception (EC) in pharmacies and from nurses through collaborative agreements with physicians. It also requires insurance policies that provide coverage for prescription contraception to cover the cost of emergency contraception.

The Healthy Teens Act, Assembly Bill 2856, would establish a competitive grant program to support real sex education in New York State. The legislation would provide funding for schools and communities to develop sex education programs that best suit their needs while ensuring that students receive medically accurate information.

North Carolina

Introduced in 2007, House Bill 879 and Senate Bill 1182 would fund comprehensive school health education to cover many health topics including preventing teen pregnancy, HIV, and STDs.

Ohio

HB 251 and SB 179, both titled the Ohio Prevention First Act, were introduced in May 2007. The bills will help prevent unintended pregnancies and reduce the need for abortion by increasing access to contraceptives and honest sex education.

Texas

House Bill 2176, effective September 1, 2007, requires that every school in the state incorporate a parenting and paternity awareness program into the curriculum. Topics included are responsibilities associated with becoming a parent, violence prevention, communication and relationship skills, and marriage preparation.

For More Information

For more information on The National Campaign's State and Local Outreach, visit us online at <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sla/> or email us at sla@thenc.org