

## Promoting Science-Based Approaches— Getting To Outcomes Success Stories: The Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy (The Alliance)

### About The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy:

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization supported largely by private donations. The National Campaign's mission is to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors.

**Case Study Participant:** Erica Fletcher, Prevention Program Director for The Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy (The Alliance)

**Site:** Youth Empowerment Adolescent Health (YEAH!) and Lawrence Coalition on Teen Pregnancy (LCTP)

The Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy (The Alliance) works with youth-serving professionals, educators, health care workers and others on the front line to provide them with information, technical assistance and training on science-based approaches to prevent teen pregnancy. Youth Empowerment Adolescent Health (YEAH!) and Lawrence Coalition on Teen Pregnancy (LCTP) both partnered with the Alliance to use Promoting Science-Based Approaches-Getting to Outcomes (PSBA-GTO) to strengthen approaches to reduce the teen birth rate in their respective communities.

YEAH! is a coalition of youth development agencies, medical service providers and advocates in Hampden County who serve primarily black and Hispanic youth in the area. In 2006, Hampden County had the highest teen birth rate of all Massachusetts and among the highest Latino teen birth rates in the state.<sup>1</sup> YEAH! commissioned a doctoral student at the University Massachusetts at Amherst to further explore these disparities within the Latino community. YEAH's Adolescent Advisory Board will help conduct some of the focus groups under the direction of a doctoral student. The focus groups with youth and parents will help YEAH! better understand the community's perspective on teen pregnancy and

how it should be addressed. This process not only helped YEAH!'s stakeholders (comprised of 10 community members and medical personnel based in the community) to make the decision to implement a science-based program, it also informed YEAH!'s needs assessment (Step 1 of PSBA-GTO).

YEAH! found step 1 of PSBA-GTO to be more time intensive than they had initially planned for, but felt it was an extremely beneficial process because it allowed them to get to know the Latino community in their county in more depth. The risk and protective factors identified as common to the youth served to steer YEAH's logic model development for their community-wide efforts as a coalition. It also led the group to advocate with the Springfield Public Schools to select a teen pregnancy prevention program that addresses family and community values. In large part due to the advocacy of the YEAH! Network, the Springfield Public Schools voted in the fall of 2009 to implement comprehensive, science-based sex education. Currently the Springfield Public Schools are implementing the Family Life and Sexual Health (FLASH)<sup>2</sup> curriculum in the 2009-2010 school year for all 7th and 9th graders.

The Alliance also worked extensively in the community of Lawrence. Lawrence is consistently ranked within the top 5 cities

with the highest teen birth rates in the state, and the teen birth rate in Lawrence in 2006 was approximately four times the state's teen birth rate in the same year (81 per 1,000 teen girls versus 21 per 1,000 teen girls respectively).<sup>1</sup> In January 2008, *The Alliance* partnered with Heath Quarters to provide the Lawrence Coalition on Teen Pregnancy (LCTP) technical assistance on science-based approaches to preventing teen pregnancy.

LCTP used existing data (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, state vital statistics data and Chlamydia rates as reported to the county health department) in their needs assessment (Step 1 of PSBA-GTO). They also surveyed the community on their views of teen pregnancy and interviewed key stakeholders. Questions ranged from where youth received information about pregnancy prevention to the community's views on what teens need in order to prevent teen pregnancy. The survey revealed that a large majority of city residents thought pregnancy prevention information should be provided through the schools and that middle school is the best time to start teaching about pregnancy prevention. Teen respondents also stated they would like sex education in schools. In addition, teens would like for their parents to talk to them about sex and birth control and positive alternatives to pregnancy such as education beyond high school and prospects for good jobs.

LCTP appreciated the multi-layer structure PSBA-GTO provided. The four distinct parts and 10 steps of PSBA-GTO helped LCTP see how each step played a role in the next (for more information see: <http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/AdolescentReproHealth/PDF/LittlePSBA-GTO.pdf>). Since LCTP is a volunteer run organization and is unfunded, the structure that PSBA-GTO provided prepared LCTP for each consecutive step in the process. PSBA-GTO's framework also allowed LCTP to plan collaboratively with community partners which was very important. LCTP continues to broaden their relationships in the faith based community, with parents, youth, and community members to continue to serve and support comprehensive health educational services that help the city's youth positively achieve their goals. In the fall of 2009 they initiated a "Let's Talk Night" program to encourage parents and youth to have honest open conversations about sexuality and pregnancy prevention.

Although YEAH! and LCTP have different organizational structures, both organizations found that PSBA-GTO provides an easy-to-use framework for how to implement science-based teen pregnancy prevention programs. YEAH! and LCTP value the solid foundation PSBA-GTO builds in each step because it enables the organizations to create the necessary buy-in from the community and especially from key decision makers.

### **About the Putting What Works to Work Project**

Putting What Works to Work (PWWTW) is a project of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy funded, in part, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Through PWWTW, The National Campaign is translating research on teen pregnancy prevention and related issues into user-friendly materials for practitioners, policymakers, and advocates. As part of this initiative, the *Science Says* series summarizes recent research in short, easy-to-understand briefs.

### **Author Information**

This research brief was written by National Campaign staff member Corinna Sloup.

### **Funding Information**

This research brief was supported by Grant Number U58/CCU324968-05 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> O'Keefe, G., Cohen, B., & Nyberg, S. Massachusetts Births 2006. Boston: Massachusetts Department of Public Health. February 2008

<sup>2</sup> The Family Life and Sexual Health curriculum (FLASH) is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum. For more information, please visit: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/personal/famplan/educators/FLASH.aspx>