

Says: **Effective and Promising Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs for Latino Youth**



Even though the teen pregnancy and birth rates among Latinos have declined, it is still the case that one in two Latina teens (51%) gets pregnant at least once before age 20—nearly twice the national average. Not surprisingly, there is growing interest in programs that are effective with Latino youth in delaying sex, improving contraceptive use for sexually active teens, and reducing teen pregnancy.

For those at the federal, state, and local levels interested in addressing the high rate of teen pregnancy among Latino teens, it is important to carefully consider which programs have the best evidence of success among Latinos and to build new efforts around the common elements of these proven programs.¹ Unfortunately, while the number of programs designed to serve Latino youth is increasing, to date relatively few have been carefully evaluated and shown to be effective in changing Latino teens' sexual behavior.

This research brief details six programs that have been shown through careful evaluation to either delay sex, improve contraceptive use, and/or reduce teen pregnancy. Some of the programs were designed specifically for Latino teens and some were not; those that were not designed specifically for Latinos included Latino teens as part of the program evaluation or were found to be particularly effective among Latino teens. Four promising programs—those that have not been as rigorously evaluated but have shown some encouraging results—are also briefly discussed. This list of programs is a starting point for those interested in helping Latino teens avoid too-early pregnancy and parenthood. More effective programs designed specifically for Latino youth are needed as are additional strategies for reaching parents, families, policy makers, and other community leaders.

Data

- Latino teen girls are less likely—and Latino teen boys are more likely—than their peers to have had sex.²
- Although Latina girls are less likely to have had sex than their peers, they are also less likely to use contraception when they do have sex, leaving them at greater risk for pregnancy.³
- One in two Latina teens (51%) gets pregnant at least once before age 20—nearly twice the national average.⁴
- The Latina teen pregnancy rate is declining at half the pace of the national teen pregnancy rate and 17 states have seen an increase in the Latina teen birth rate.⁵
- Latinas have the highest teen birth rate of any major ethnic/racial minority in the United States—nearly two times higher than the national average.⁶
- Among sexually active high school students, Latino boys and girls are less likely than their white or black peers to have used a condom the last time they had sex.⁷
- Latinos are now the largest minority group in the United States. It is projected that by 2025, almost one-quarter of the youth population will be Latino.⁸
- Among sexually experienced teens aged 15-19, Latinas (35%) were more likely to report that their first male partner was four or more years older than were non-Hispanic black (19%) and non-Hispanic white (20%) girls.⁹

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A Note about the Methods

Even though a program has been shown to be effective in changing behavior, it is important to approach the implementation of such programs with realistic expectations. The reality is that some programs may have positive results for only part of the target population (e.g. boys but not girls), may have results that diminish over the long term or are relatively modest to begin with, or may have mixed results (e.g. leading to positive changes in some behaviors but negative changes in others).

These limitations are natural given the complexity of behavior we are trying to change. In spite of these limitations, it remains the case that science-based approaches offer some of the strongest opportunities for success. Their value lies primarily in the fact that the rigorous methods used to evaluate them give us great confidence that the results we do see are directly attributable to the program itself and not other factors. Of course, there are a number of other creative programs that may be effective in helping young people avoid risky sexual behavior that simply have not yet been evaluated.

Effective Programs

The following six programs have been carefully evaluated. Five of the programs have been evaluated using an experimental design—that is, participants are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups—and have been shown to delay sexual initiation, reduce the frequency of sexual intercourse, reduce the number of sexual partners, or increase the use of contraception among Latino teens. One of the programs, Poder Latino, was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design and, therefore, provides less robust evidence of success.

Draw the Line/Respect the Line

This school based program for youth in grades 6 through 8 focuses on helping students set sexual limits and teaches them that not having sex is the healthiest choice. The program also includes information on condom use. Topics identified for discussion are based on school grade. The program has been found to delay sexual initiation among boys but had little effect among girls (program evaluators suggest this might be due to the fact that the program did not address the issue of young girls dating older boys). A 36 month follow-up showed that 19% of boys in the program had sex compared to 27% in the control group. These results pertain to all program participants, 59% of whom

were Latino. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. †* ° a

Safer Choices

This school-based HIV prevention program for 9th and 10th graders has been used in both urban and suburban settings. The program encourages abstinence as the safest way to avoid pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and includes five main components: school organization, curriculum and staff development, peer resources and school environments, parent education, and school-community linkage. The program has been shown to delay sexual initiation among Latino teen boys and girls and to improve contraceptive use. At the 31-month follow-up, Latino teens in the program were 43% less likely to have initiated sex when compared to Latino teens in the control group. Latinos in the program who were sexually active were 65% more likely than Latinos in the control group to have used a condom at last sex. Program materials are available in English only.* ° a

Children's Aid Society - Carrera Program

This urban-focused, after-school program is long-term and intensive and includes the following components: family life and sex education, academic assessment, work-related

activities, free and comprehensive health care, and sports/arts activities. The program has been shown to significantly delay the onset of sex, increase condom use, and reduce pregnancy and birth rates among girls in the program, but not boys. These results pertain to all program participants, 39% of whom were Latino.¹⁰ Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.* ° a±

¡Cuidate!/ Take Care of Yourself: The Hispanic Youth Health Promotion Program

This HIV prevention intervention is an adaptation of the Be Proud! Be Responsible! (*±) program, specifically designed for Latino teens. The program stresses such topics as the importance of family and gender role expectations. The program emphasizes abstinence and condom use as effective methods for stopping the spread of STDs, including HIV. At the 12-month follow-up survey, adolescents were less likely to report being sexually active or having multiple partners. Adolescents in the intervention group were also almost half as likely as their peers in the control group to have engaged in unprotected sex, and were almost twice as likely to have consistently used condoms compared to teens in the control group. Furthermore, Spanish speakers in the intervention group were almost five times more likely to have used a condom at last

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intercourse compared to Spanish speakers in the control group. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. ▼

Reach for Health Community Youth Service (RFH-CYS)

This school-sponsored program combines service learning and skills-based health instruction, allowing for meaningful opportunities for community engagement. The two core program elements are a classroom health curriculum and a service learning component, which includes approximately 90 hours of community service in a year. While this program did not

focus solely on Latino youth, they did comprise a large proportion of participants in the original evaluation site. A study of participants surveyed in seventh grade and again in tenth grade found that students who participated in the intervention were less likely than their peers in the curriculum-only group to have initiated sex by tenth grade. Program materials are available in English only. ‡

Poder Latino: A Community AIDS Prevention Program for Inner City Latino Youth

This school and community based program was designed for urban, Latino youth aged 14 to 20. The

program incorporates TV and radio public service announcements (PSAs), workshops held in school, health and community centers, community-wide and parent education, and neighborhood distribution of informational condom kits. An 18-month follow-up showed that male participants were 92% less likely to have initiated sex than those in the comparison group. However, similar results were not found with girls in the program. Program materials are available in English only.* ° ▲

For more information:

† No Time to Waste Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy among Middle School Youth (<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/NotimetoWaste.pdf>)

* Emerging Answers (http://www.teengregnancy.org/resources/data/report_summaries/emerging_answers/default.asp)

° Not Yet (<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/NotYet.pdf>)

▲ For materials go to PASHA at <http://www.socio.com/srch/summary/pasha/passt11.htm>

ª It's a Guy Thing: Boys Young Men and Teen Pregnancy Prevention (<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading/males.asp>)

± A Good Time (<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/goodtime.pdf>)

‡ Curriculum Contact, Materials: Diana Dull Akers, Ph.D. (ddull@sociometrics.com)

▼ Villarruel, A.M., Jemmott, J.B., and Jemmott, L.S. (2006). A Randomized Controlled Trial Testing an HIV Prevention Intervention for Latino Youth, Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 160: 772-777.

Promising Programs

The following four programs have not been evaluated using an experimental or quasi-experimental design. As a result, evidence of their success is not as strong as that cited for the programs noted previously. Even so, these programs have demonstrated some promising results and, therefore, provide those interested in addressing the high rate of teen pregnancy among Latinos a greater number of programmatic interventions to consider.

Pathways/Senderos

Pathways/Senderos is a “neighborhood-based, child-focused, and family-centered” program in New Britain, Connecticut that serves primarily low income Latino

youth. The program, based on the Carrera program (mentioned above), is offered after school and throughout the summer and includes three primary components— education, career, and family life/sexual health. A small business where participants can work and are required to open a savings account is also part of the program. Parents are involved through outreach and monthly meetings. While boys seemed to respond better to the program in terms of attendance and retention, the program reported only two pregnancies in 11.5 years. The program also has a 100% graduation rate with 50% of the youth going on to higher education. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.◊

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro

Plain Talk/Hablando Claro is a neighborhood-based initiative developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that is designed to increase adult/teen communication about sex, increase sexually active teens’ access to contraceptives, and, thereby, decrease unwanted pregnancy, STDs, and HIV/AIDS. Hablando Claro is the program name used in the Spanish-speaking sites. The program is currently operating in nine states and Puerto Rico and is being put into place in eight others. Evaluations have found that after participating in the program, participants reported increased levels of communication between adults and youth. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.◻

**Make a Life for Yourself/
Como Planear Mi Vida**

Make A Life for Yourself/Como Planear Mi Vida focuses on establishing goals for the future, exploring the steps needed to achieve those goals, and how making decisions about sex and relationships can affect those plans. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. +

Wise Guys/Jóvenes Sabios

Wise Guys/Jóvenes Sabios is a comprehensive ten to twelve session program that targets Latino boys ages 11-17. The program encourages abstinence, provides information on contraception, and works to promote responsible decision making.

Facilitators discuss such topics as values, future goals, and sexuality. Evaluations of this program have shown some increase in parent and teen communication, a more positive attitude towards women, and an increased knowledge of reproduction and safer sexual behavior. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.♦

For more information:

- ♦ See <http://www.pathways-senderos.com/aboutus.html>.
- See www.plaintalk.org
- + See <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/PUBLICATIONS/cpmv.htm> and in Spanish at <http://www.metabase.net/docs/paniamor/0627.html>
- ♦ See <http://www.wiseguysnc.org/jovenes.htm>. Review at http://www.moapp.org/Documents/curriculum_review/Files/WiseGuys.PDF

What Latino Teens and Adults Think and Advice from the Field

In addition to considering evaluated programs, there is much to learn from survey data of Latino teens and adults themselves as well as from practitioners who work directly with Latino teens. In 2007, the National Campaign published the results of a nationally-representative survey of Latino adults and teens on sex, pregnancy, and related issues. In 2006 the National Campaign interviewed leaders of 16 Latino-serving organizations and programs and asked them to share their ideas for effectively working with Latino youth, their families, and the community at large. Selected findings from both projects are presented below. (For more on this, please see *Voices Heard: Latino Teens and Adults Speak Up About Teen Pregnancy* and *Bridging Two Worlds: How Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs Can Better Serve Latino Youth* at www.teenpregnancy.org.)

Pregnancy Ambivalence

Latino teens may be more ambivalent about avoiding pregnancy than their peers. Survey data suggests that Latina teens are more likely to say their pregnancy was planned and Latina boys are more likely to report being pleased when they learn about a pregnancy.¹¹ As many practitioners have suggested, it's simply not enough to tell teens to wait.

Emphasis on Education and Support of High Aspiration

Given that about half of teen pregnancies occur after an individual has dropped out of school, and given that Latino teens are more likely to drop out of high school than white or black youth, keeping Latino teens connected to school is an important step toward reducing teen pregnancy among Latino teens.¹² Many practitioners suggest that it is important to give teens a reason not to get pregnant until later in life, and that one of the primary messages to teens should be one of timing—education now, family later.

Parent and Family Involvement

Latino teens are less likely than other teens to have talked to their parents about sex, love, and relationships. About three-quarters of Latino adults admit—and teens agree—that they don't know what to say when it comes to talking about sex. Moreover, fully one-third of Latino teens say they have never had a helpful conversation with their parents about sex.

Recognize and Respect Cultural Values

Practitioners note that many cultural values shared by Latinos—the importance of and connection to family and faith in marriage to name just a few—are values that can and should be used to help teens delay sexual activity and avoid early pregnancy and parenthood.

The Role of Boys and Men

Many of those who work with Latino youth underscore the importance of addressing male roles and responsibilities. For example, confronting the double standard that often encourages Latino girls to not have sex while offering little to discourage sexual activity among Latino boys. Those working to reduce Latino teen pregnancy should also consider encouraging fathers—not just mothers—to provide guidance and to convey positive expectations about sexual behavior.

In Sum

Despite declines, Latino teen pregnancy and birth rates remain stubbornly high. At present, there are a handful of interventions that have been shown through careful

evaluation to delay sexual activity, improve contraceptive use for those who are sexually active, and/or reduce teen pregnancy. However, there is an increasing need for

even more proven interventions for this diverse population that are culturally sensitive, inclusive of families, and sensitive to gender differences.

References

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 - 2 Abma, J.C., Martinez, G.M., Mosher, W.D., Dawson, B.S. (2004). Teenagers in the United States: Sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing, 2002. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(24).
 - 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance." Surveillance Summaries, June 9, 2005. MMWR 2006; 55 (No.SS-5).
 - 4 National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, (2007). An Overview of Latina Teen Pregnancy, A Look at Latinos, Washington, DC: Author.
 - 5 Ibid.
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 See 2.
 - 8 See 4.
 - 9 See 1.
 - 10 Philliber, S., Kaye, J.W., Herrling, S., and West, E. (2002). Preventing Pregnancy and Improving Health Care Access Among Teenagers: An Evaluation of the Children's Aid Society—Carrera Program. Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 34(5):244-51.
 - 11 Vexler, E. (2007). Voices Heard: Latino Adults and Teens Speak Up About Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
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About the Putting What Works to Work Project

Putting What Works to Work (PWWTW) is a project of the National Campaign 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.

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About the National Campaign

The mission of the National Campaign is to promote values, behavior, and policies that prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancies among single, young adults. Through these efforts, more children will be born to stable, two-parent families who are committed to the demanding task of raising the next generation. Both poverty and stress on families will be reduced; overall societal well-being will be improved; and there will be far less need for abortion. To accomplish this mission, we support a combination of responsible behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors.