



# GETTING STARTED AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

Reducing Unplanned Pregnancy and  
Strengthening Academic Achievement

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BY MARY JACKSTEIT



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# Introduction

You're aware that unplanned pregnancy among young adults is directly related to student success.<sup>1</sup> Presumably that's why you're looking at this guide. Our hope is that the guide will take you beyond awareness to developing and putting in place a plan of action for your community college.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy is devoted to improving the lives and future prospects of children and families by preventing teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. One area of intense interest is unplanned pregnancy among community college students.

At present, half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned and more than one-third of these—over 1 million—are to unmarried women in their twenties. In addition, almost all pregnancies among older teens (18- and 19-year-olds) are unplanned; this age group accounts for the majority of teen births and the birth rate for this group is on the rise. Many of these older teens and young adults are students at community colleges, and emerging data makes clear that community college students are disproportionately affected by unplanned pregnancy. For example, a recent study by the Health Services Association of California Community Colleges found that 5.4% of students attending California community colleges reported having an unintended pregnancy, more than twice the percentage of students (2.4%) from a national cohort of four-year colleges and universities nationally. Although we don't yet have proven, evaluated programs or curriculum to offer, these data suggest that efforts to help community college students avoid unplanned pregnancy and to complete their education simply cannot wait.

What do these high rates of early and unplanned pregnancy mean for students? Mothers and fathers involved in an unplanned birth report more depression, more conflict in their relationships, and more emotional and financial stress. Most of the time, their relationships do not last. Couple these concerns with the challenge of juggling education, work, and family responsibilities, and it is not surprising that becoming a parent increases the risk of dropping out of or stopping college. Consider this: 61% of community college

students who have a child after enrolling do not finish their education; this rate is 65% higher than students who don't have a child.<sup>2</sup> And there are other consequences that are important community concerns: Unplanned pregnancies are correlated to a higher incidence of late access to prenatal health care, infant mortality, and low birth weight.<sup>2</sup>

New efforts to increase post-secondary education completion and President Obama's public pronouncements are putting community colleges at the center of a national spotlight. Along with academic preparation and study skills, young adults need resources and support to avoid decisions that will undermine their chances of college and vocational success no matter how hard they work at their studies.

Even if preventing unplanned pregnancy has not been on your school's radar screen, we encourage community colleges to start directly addressing unplanned pregnancy and building knowledge, experience, and lessons that will help advance this work. In short, we encourage community colleges to get to work, to begin evaluating and sharing the results of their efforts, and to begin building the evidence for what is effective.

This guide takes you through 10 key steps for getting started:

- #1 Take the initiative
- #2 Assess the situation
- #3 Get commitment
- #4 Find a low-threshold starting point
- #5 Tailor to how, when, and how much students use your campus
- #6 Match the needs and environment of your particular school and students
- #7 Meet students where they are in their sexual lives
- #8 Identify broad program elements
- #9 Identify specific program activities
- #10 Get going

This guide draws heavily on examples from three community colleges currently developing distinct approaches to preventing unplanned pregnancy with grants from The National Campaign (see box below). Advice from the people working on those projects is incorporated throughout.

Other suggestions come out of early scans of community colleges' work on preventing unplanned pregnancy conducted for The National Campaign by Mary Ellen Duncan, Ph.D., president emeritus of Howard Community College, and educational consultant Joanne Davis, as well as many conversations with community college leaders over the last two years. All National Campaign resources mentioned here are available at <http://www.thenational-campaign.org/resources/cc.aspx>.

### THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRANTEEES 2008-2010

Delaware Technical and Community College (DTCC) is operating a project called Education FIRST (Fostering Individual Responsibility Starting Today). Through a partnership with Christiana Care Health System, the largest health care provider in Delaware, DTCC is providing free or low cost reproductive health counseling, referral, and some medical services through an on-site clinic. It is also increasing student and faculty awareness of unplanned pregnancy and its consequences through training, peer education, and health-related events.

The Sexual Decision-making and Life Choices for College Students initiative at Montgomery College-Takoma Park/Silver Spring, MD Campus (MC-TP/SS) is a collaboration between student affairs staff and academic faculty to take the issue of unplanned pregnancy into classrooms across the campus and into first year experience courses, orientation, and service learning. The goal is to influence the attitudes and decision-making patterns that undermine prevention. Awareness of the issue is being promoted in a variety of social marketing strategies.

The University of Wisconsin Colleges (UWC) is a multi-campus 2-year institution within the University of Wisconsin system. Its WIRE (Wisconsin Intimate Relationship Education) program is bringing relationship education, sex education, and alcohol education together in a comprehensive manner to increase critical thinking and intentionality in how students make choices. In phase one, a website is being developed to provide students with access to comprehensive prevention information and interactive learning about relationships, pregnancy prevention, and alcohol use. Phase two will supplement the on-line education with campus-based activity.

## #1 Take the Initiative

Any number of people within a community college can lay claim to the issue of unplanned pregnancy and get things started. Possibilities include: student development/student services staff (including student life programs, women's centers, and health/wellness centers); faculty (e.g., nursing, health, sociology, psychology/human sexuality); and administrators.

A catalyst may come from the outside suggesting that building relationships with existing or potential new community partners can create opportunities.

- Montgomery College became interested in unplanned pregnancy after the school hosted a “listening session” on the issue for the wider community. The strong response of participating student leaders convinced the student life director to take on the issue.
- After determining that there was a lack of services at UWC to help students with relationship and family issues that might impede college success, a University of Wisconsin faculty member in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies approached UWC administrators to develop a partnership where the expertise of relationship researchers in the state would be used to develop an intimate relationship education program for UWC students. The UWC project represents a partnership with two 4-year institutions in the state (UW-Madison and UW-Green Bay) where professors are active researchers in the area of healthy relationships.

## #2 Assess the Situation

Look at your students, your college, and the surrounding community. What is your perception of how students view unplanned pregnancy? To what extent is it mentioned or reported? Are there students who you know have had unplanned pregnancies? Do you see an impact on student success and retention? Has the issue shown up in surveys of student needs or in connection with data on students dropping out or stopping out? Delaware Technical and Community College

(DTCC) organizers had anecdotal information from women's center participants that they needed help with family planning, and that unintended pregnancies were a challenge to them completing school. From their involvement in the community, they knew that unplanned pregnancy and sexual health generally were significant issues in the population attending the college.

- If you don't know enough, do some exploratory work on campus.
  - Determine whether your college collects data from exit interviews about why students leave. If so, review it. Is there any information about pregnancy or parenting responsibilities?
  - Use surveys and/or focus groups to ask students directly what they think about unplanned pregnancy and related issues. Montgomery College-Takoma Park/Silver Spring, MD Campus (MC-TP/SS) used focus groups with student leaders, simple surveys, and classroom discussions to learn what students thought about the importance of the issue and about what the college might do to help. Sample questions developed for this project can be found in the Appendix.
  - Ask Faculty and staff, too, since they hear and see a lot. Interviews conducted at MC-TP/SS surfaced stories of students unable or struggling to meet their goals because of unplanned pregnancy, and more generally, disconnected from the consequences of their actions.
  - Consider participating in The American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment (NCHA)—a regular exploration of the needs of students. The Health Services Association of California Community Colleges organized 13 California community colleges to participate in the survey, which revealed rather alarming sexual and reproductive health behavior and outcomes among California community college students. For instance, these community college students reported a high rate (5.4%) of unintended pregnancy, a figure more than twice (2.4%) that of the national NCHA cohort (which consists mainly of four-year colleges and universities). Further, more than one in five (21.3%) sexually active students reported that they or their partners have used emergency contraception within the last school year, which is 1.5 times higher than the overall NCHA cohort (14.1%).

- The South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy recently surveyed two- and four-year colleges in the state to assess sexual health information and services provided to students, as well as the perception of the college representatives regarding the college’s role in providing such information and/or services. Respondents from both the two-year and four-year colleges strongly agreed that unintended pregnancy makes it harder for student to complete their schoolwork and further their education, and that the campus does have a role to play in the prevention of unintended pregnancies among young adults. They also agreed with the need for college students to receive medically accurate information about their sexual health, but two-year schools were significantly less likely to have sexual health services and resources available on campus.<sup>3</sup>
- Familiarize yourself with relevant resources from The National Campaign (videos, fact sheets, reports) that lay out the facts about the high rate of unplanned pregnancy among young adults in general, and community college students in particular, and the significant impact of early and unplanned pregnancy among older teens and young adults, including those who are similar to your student population. Two other resources that might be helpful: *The Changing Twenties*, a snapshot of this generation of young adults, and *Magical Thinking: Young Adults’ Attitudes and Beliefs about Sex, Contraception, and Unplanned Pregnancy—Results from a Public Opinion Survey*. The National Campaign also sends out a quarterly Community Colleges update via email in addition to their semi-weekly electronic news piece, the EGRAM. Sign up for both here <http://signup.thenationalcampaign.org>.
- If you think the issue is beyond what the college can (or should) do alone, explore the potential of an outside partnership. You may approach a local health provider that offers reproductive health services (a specialized agency such as a family planning clinic) or a hospital or local health department, particularly if they have a connection to the college already through the nursing/health sciences program or campus health fairs. That is how the Delaware Technical and Community College (DTCC)-Christiana Health

partnership came about. Consider city or county departments of health/human services/social services/children, youth, and families. A nearby four-year public university may have a relevant program or clinical services in its medical school. If your interest is more in the direction of education and student development, the UWC project illustrates the value of partnering with local university faculty. Academic societies offer a means of identifying faculty with a relevant interest (e.g., The International Association for Relationship Research).

Other ideas for external partners are local programs addressing male responsibility (including child support), teen pregnancy prevention, maternal and child health, sexuality education, healthy relationships, family issues, and parenting. DTCC's training partner is the ARC (A Resource Center for Youth) program of Children and Families First, a human services agency. Also useful may be community programs that address family, youth, and/or health needs of specific populations significantly represented in the student body, such as immigrant and minority health programs.

The presence of a viable partner may give you leverage at the next stage, especially if it brings significant resources and assistance. There are multiple possibilities for a partner's role: clinical services (on or off campus), educational curricula/programs/forums, special campus events, educational/social marketing materials, training, or project management.

## #3 Get Commitment

You need to garner support and obtain authority for any effort going forward. That means making the case to the college President or other administrators as to why it's in the interest of the college to address unplanned pregnancy.

- Use The National Campaign's resources developed for community colleges:
  - Two fact sheets are useful: *Briefly: Unplanned Pregnancy and Community Colleges*, and *Briefly: Unplanned Pregnancy: What Community Colleges Can Do*.
  - The National Campaign video *Unplanned Pregnancy and Community Colleges* features community college students talking about the issue and

is an excellent introduction to the topic. It has a guide for leading a discussion with college staff, administration, and/or faculty.

- Think about convening key players on the campus or holding a “launch” event. A video of the forum held at MC-TP/SS can be viewed at The National Campaign’s community college web portal.
- Invite people who really care about this issue to work as a team and serve as internal advocates. Unplanned pregnancy prevention will not work as a “topic of the month,” a one-time campaign, or a bright idea coming from the top down. As much as possible draw in people from across the campus (different departments and offices) so this becomes a collaborative effort.
- Put the statistics at your fingertips. Numbers often speak louder than words. There is some data about the connection between unplanned pregnancy and student retention (found in National Campaign materials). Check The National Campaign’s website as additional information will be forthcoming.
- Student voices and stories carry extra weight. Using feedback from student leaders and classroom discussions, the MC-TP/SS student life director got attention from administrators and faculty when he said, “Students tell me this is something critical to talk about.” He’s been able to say to students, “Your peers say this is important.” Resources for holding exploratory discussions with students include (1) sample questions used at MC-TP/SS, included as an appendix to this guide and (2) The National Campaign community college video referenced above, as well as a second video, *What Twenty-Somethings are Saying About Unplanned Pregnancy*. Both have student discussion guides.
- These arguments seem to get attention:
  - First, and maybe foremost, unplanned pregnancy makes it hard for students—male and female—to remain in school.
  - Teaching about making good choices, healthy relationships, and personal responsibility directly supports the community college mission to educate students to achieve their goals and help every student succeed.
  - Colleges work hard to support single parents to succeed in school, providing special services including child care; there is more they could do to help with prevention.

## #4 Find a Low-Threshold Starting Point

Even before the recent economic downturn, community colleges had limited resources. Now, it is especially important that activities designed to prevent unplanned pregnancy not require a big investment. Those working in our grantee colleges stress the importance of finding a starting point that does not require much in the way of new money, staff, or programs. Here is some of their good advice:

### **Build on what is already in place. These are among the “internal resources” that colleges are tapping:**

- *The expertise, experience and resources of the college team:* At MC-TP/SS the director of student life has student leadership programs and clubs, service learning, and student activities under his office. He also has expertise in group deliberation and in training student facilitators. A faculty member on the team teaches women’s health and women’s studies.

The Wisconsin team includes experts in healthy couple relationships, the development of romantic relationships, the intersection of relationship issues and academic performance as well as expertise in college life, first year experiences and alcohol issues among college students.

DTCC’s core group includes the head of the campus women’s center that works closely with women in transition. All three women comprising the team are deeply connected to inner city Wilmington where DTCC is located, and have strong ties to church and community groups addressing risky sexual behavior.

- *Established networks and relationships:* DTCC organizers built on community connections and access to the college leadership. Through Christiana Care they gained access to Health Navigators and counselors working in many of the high schools in Delaware, some of whom now work with Education FIRST. These licensed clinical social workers educate and counsel students on

sexual health issues while guiding students through the health care system by making referrals and helping them obtain health insurance as necessary.

At MC, Student Life staff reached out to faculty across disciplines and departments. They discovered interest in unplanned pregnancy and related issues among faculty who teach health, English, biology, women's studies, communications, nursing, math, and first year experience courses. This opened up the opportunity for unplanned pregnancy and decision-making discussed in a variety of settings, reaching a wider circle of students. Student Life also tapped its network of student leaders to train as facilitators.

In Wisconsin, UW professors who are experts and educators in understanding intimate human relationships have connections with state and national professional organizations and networks that bring multiple layers of expertise to their unplanned pregnancy prevention effort. For example, the Wisconsin project relies on the expertise of the Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Program, a statewide network of family educators. The UW professors also bring access to graduate students to work as researchers, website and content developers.

- *Existing health or wellness center:* None of the three grantee schools have a campus health or wellness center but some community colleges do. At DTCC, it helped that, at one time, there was a campus health clinic (closed for budgetary reasons), so the idea of preventing unplanned pregnancy was not unprecedented. Furthermore, the clinic space was still available and was offered for use by Education FIRST.
- *Existing community partners:* A longstanding relationship between DTCC's nursing program and Christiana Care Health System created a logical partnership for Education FIRST. After staffing wellness centers in Delaware high schools for many years, Christiana welcomed the opportunity to work with the college in this new way. MC-TP/SS knew about Teen and Youth Health Connections (TAYA), a reproductive health clinic for teens and young adults, from its participation in campus health fairs. This acquaintance creates potential for greater involvement on unplanned pregnancy prevention.

## Locate no or low-cost resources

- *Written materials:* Good materials (brochures, fact sheets) about contraception are available from a number of sources. For example, the American College Health Association offers brochures on contraceptives, safer sex and related issues (visit: <http://members.acha.org/source/orders>).

See what's available from local health organizations. Some of the images from National Campaign materials can be used for posters or fliers (contact The National Campaign for more information).

- *The Internet:* It is easy to connect students to good online information. A new or existing page on the campus website, any campus social networking sites, and brochures and fliers can provide links to reputable websites with extensive, reliable information about sexual health and preventing unplanned pregnancy. Here are a few:
  - The US Department of Health and Human Services has information on contraception: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/birth-control-methods.cfm>.
  - Columbia University hosts *Go Ask Alice* (Sexual Health section) [www.goaskalice.columbia.edu](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu) which has a question and answer feature.
  - Many colleges and universities have information on sexual health on their websites. See, for example, this page for University of Maryland students: <http://www.health.umd.edu/programs/sexualhealth.html>. Your own state universities may have good web resources.
  - [www.smartersex.org](http://www.smartersex.org) belongs to the BACCHUS Network, an international association of college and university peer education programs.
  - Planned Parenthood has extensive information on contraception (and a health center locator) <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/birth-control-4211.htm>.
  - The WIRE (Wisconsin Colleges) website should launch in March 2010.
  - The National Campaign site [www.SexReally.com](http://www.SexReally.com) is designed specifically for people in their twenties to be a place for telling stories, discussing relationships, and learning about contraception and making wise, healthier decisions, including avoiding unplanned pregnancy.

## #5 Tailor Activities to How, When, and How Much Your Students Use the Community College Campus

As you develop your approach, keep in mind the profile of your student body (for example, how many hours are students on campus? Are they mainly there during the day or evening?), the facilities available on your campus (Do you have dorms? What about a student center?), and your geographic location (Do students live or work near campus or do they travel a long way to school?). All of these factors will affect the opportunities available to reach students. One size does not fit all!

- *Location:* Classrooms are important since most community college students spend little time anywhere else on campus. MC-TP/SS has been enlisting faculty to get the issue into their courses. DTCC is finding ways to make short classroom presentations about the purpose and services of Education FIRST. Other locations to consider include computer labs, food courts, student club meeting rooms, athletic facilities, book stores, and so on. Are there any widely attended events (career days, transfer days) that pull students into one location? Is there a childcare center used by students?

The start of the school year offers unique opportunities to reach students—especially those just entering community college—that do not exist the rest of the year. MC-TP/SS has given a short (voluntary) survey about unplanned pregnancy to new students during the entrance and orientation process. DTCC is ramping up for a major awareness campaign at the start of the new academic year.

- *Time:* How much free time do your students have while on campus? How realistic is it to try to draw or keep students on campus outside of class time? When and for how long? Are there “access points” in support groups or special programs that some colleges have for students who are already parents, male students, TANF recipients (welfare to work), high school students enrolled in bridge programs, minority students, athletes? Experience taught DTCC to experiment with clinic hours earlier in the day while students were on campus for classes rather than in the evening.

- *Incentives:* Incentives can motivate students: food, food coupons, useful information, freebies, and entertainment can all be used to attract student attention and participation. Work study funds and tuition credits can attract students to peer educator/facilitator programs. Making pregnancy prevention efforts for credit is a big advantage. MC-TP/SS has focused on the regular classroom as the place to reach students, as well as developing service learning opportunities. Community-based research on a topic related to this issue is another potential academic activity to inform both student participants and campus and community prevention programs.
- *Internet use:* We have already noted some relevant and available resources. Regarding the community college's website, it is helpful to understand the answers to some basic questions. How do students use the college website? Where do they typically navigate to and what information are they seeking? Does it make sense to create a new section of the website with sexual health, healthy relationships, and pregnancy prevention information? What would it take to do that? Is enough in-kind help available on campus to create a new website/page? How else could students be effectively informed about internet resources? Are there social network/Web 2.0 options?

## #6 Match the Needs and Environment Presented by Your Particular School and Student Body

Here are some of the ways that other colleges are designing activities that fit the needs of their campuses:

- DTCC is learning from its students about specific family and health needs. Sexually transmitted infection (STIs) and HIV-AIDS are high on the list of concerns, so services to help students avoid unplanned pregnancy are offered as part of a wide range of sexual health services. Education FIRST's initial open house focused on HIV-AIDS and STIs (offering free STI testing) and the students that attended could also learn about available

services to prevent pregnancy. Single parenthood is also a reality among DTCC students, so preventing a second pregnancy is an important focus along with offering parenting support on campus. Additionally, since the launch of Education FIRST, DTCC has encountered students who are uninsured and unaware that they actually qualify for Medicaid. This has led Education FIRST to encourage eligible students to get enrolled in public health programs. Among other things, this will help provide an ongoing source of affordable contraception.

- The developers of UWC's WIRE program are tackling excessive alcohol use along with unplanned pregnancy because of the close correlation between drinking and unprotected sex. Both of those issues are embedded in the larger framework of healthy relationships which program developers believe is both a core issue for their students and the best way to engage them.
- The student development approach used at MC-TP/SS focuses strongly on improving the way students make choices about a variety of important life issues and unplanned pregnancy prevention easily slips into that frame. It also resonates with an institutional priority on social responsibility.

What cultural or other norms impact how you address unplanned pregnancy? There are any number of factors that might influence how you frame your pregnancy prevention effort. Some possibilities:

- The importance of values messages;
- Cultural differences about childbearing;
- Language/terminology that doesn't resonate with students; or
- Concern about highlighting contraception (e.g., due to religious/moral differences about birth control).

Language used by the three grantee colleges in naming their initiatives illustrates the range of different emphases and possibilities: *intimate relationship education, be wise about love and sex, education first, fostering individual responsibility starting today, sexual decision-making and life choices for college students.*

## #7 Meeting Students Where They are in Their Sexual Lives

Because you are educators and administrators in a community college, you already know that to connect successfully with students you need to understand their perspectives and interests. Those involved in planning an initiative regarding unplanned pregnancy need to be good listeners and learners.

- DTCC program staff have found it critical that they be open, willing to learn, and able to meet students “where they are” without being judgmental. The health navigators from Christiana Health bring a depth of experience and solid rapport with students based on a track record of dealing with youth about their sexual lives.
- UWC’s WIRE developers have used graduate students in developing a new website to ensure that content will draw and hold its intended young adult audience.
- Classroom discussions and forums at MC-TP/SS feature open-ended questions that aim to be free of embedded assumptions and elicit frank, open participation by students (see the Appendix).

## #8 Identify Broad Program Elements

Based on experience from the three community college grantees and suggestions from other college leaders, there are several broad program elements to consider.

- *Deepening knowledge about the nature/extent/perception of the problem of unplanned pregnancy on your campus and determining whether and how targeting prevention efforts might be the most strategic approach.*
- *Creating awareness about the high rate and potential negative impacts of unplanned pregnancy among students, staff, faculty, administrators, and possibly parents and community members.*
- *Increasing knowledge about preventing unintended pregnancy and how*

to successfully use and apply this knowledge. Providing up-to-date and accurate information about the full range of contraceptive methods is one obvious topic. But prevention may include, emphasize, or be embedded within related skills and knowledge areas such as: principles of healthy relationships; basic sex education; good communication skills; personal responsibility and efficacy; making sound decisions; and avoiding excessive alcohol consumption.

- *Offering some level of access to contraception and sexual health services* either on campus or through arrangements at a community facility, or by providing information about local service providers. Take into account that male students as well as females need these services.
- *Providing targeted prevention education for specific groups of students* identified as underserved or at higher risk of having educational goals derailed by unplanned pregnancy. These might be young, single parents, young men, first year students, part time students, high school students/drop outs in bridge programs, students from immigrant communities, and so on.

## #9 Identify Specific Program Activities

Given the limited resources available and competing priorities you likely face, we strongly encourage you to pick a limited number of concrete activities and stay focused. Below are some possibilities from which you may want to select that best fit your campus based on the considerations you've gone through in the preceding steps.

**Conducting a Learning Phase.** Possible approaches include:

- Interviewing college staff and faculty to gather anecdotal evidence and locate interest and useful experience/expertise.
- Hearing from students in focus groups or discussions in which students are invited to share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions about preventing

unplanned pregnancy. At MC-TP/SS these were initially student leaders, and then first year experience classes (see the Appendix for sample questions).

- Conducting surveys of students on their views about unplanned pregnancy and related issues. These can be focused and short or a broader college survey of student needs can be designed to surface concerns related to sexual health and/or family planning.
- Using campus events (like registration/orientation, “theme weeks,” a special awareness activity) for testing the level of interest in the issue and getting student input (a short on-the-spot survey).

### **Introducing the issue into a wide array of classroom settings.**

- Incorporating information/a curriculum module/an instructional activity related to unplanned pregnancy into existing courses such as:
  - First year/student success/college survival classes and workshops. These usually cover important topics such as financial planning, academic planning, and career planning, but rarely cover family planning, which can help students avoid an unplanned pregnancy that could derail other plans and goals.
  - Credit courses in a range of disciplines including health, sexual behavior (psychology), sociology, biology, communications, English, speech, etc. Though numerous colleges have one- to three-credit courses in human relationships or human sexuality, these classes typically reach small numbers of students. MC-TP/SS is creating models for integrating discussion of decision-making and unplanned pregnancy across academic disciplines, with a particular focus on core courses that reach large numbers of students.
- In-class methods might include:
  - Facilitated classroom discussions using questions like those in the Appendix;
  - Using a discussion catalyst like a film/video/reality show episode (MC-TP/SS faculty have used episodes of the NBC reality show *Baby Borrowers*, and the MTV documentary-style series *16 and Pregnant*<sup>4</sup>);
  - Assigning or offering the issue of unplanned pregnancy as the topic for a

classroom assignment such as a paper, presentation, or research project. Several MC-TP/SS faculty are assigning their students to read The National Campaign's book of essays *Rethinking Responsibility: Reflections on Sex and Accountability* to spark student conversation and reflection.<sup>5</sup>

- Creating opportunities for students to work on this issue through service learning and/or community-based research is another opportunity. MC-TP/SS's initiative has a service learning component.
- Incorporating into professional development for college faculty and/or staff who work directly with students such as academic advisors and counselors, financial aid counselors, special retention program staff, service learning staff, and so on.

### **Developing a core of peer educators/facilitators.**

- Training and supervising students might be done by Student Development/ Student Affairs departments, nursing programs, or campus wellness or health services. One college organizes peer educators into a health-focused community service club.
- There are external resources for training peer educators (one such is the Bacchus Network <http://www.bacchusgamma.org/>). Many four-year universities have peer educator/facilitator programs, which typically use curricula covering pregnancy prevention. Two examples are the Healthy Sexuality Peer Educator program at the University of Texas at Austin in which peer educators teach a Methods of Contraception Class (<http://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/peereducation.html>) and the SHARE (Sexual Health and Reproduction Education) program at the University of Maryland (<http://www.health.umd.edu/programs/share.html>). Check your own state university for similar programs.

### **Offering sexual health services and/or information.**

- Provide on-campus health or wellness services. Schools need to decide about the scope of services available, hours of operation, types of professional staff on site, and where to refer students for services not provided on campus. Other decisions concern whether contraception, such as condoms and emergency contraception, will be dispensed on campus.

- Make arrangements with a community-based partner for off-campus low or no-cost sexual health services including pregnancy prevention counseling and contraception.
- Provide referral information about where contraception and other reproductive health services can be located, ideally covering location, costs, contact information, and the types of services offered. This information can be conveyed in person by on-campus staff or counselors (like the DTCC health navigators); in written materials that are widely available/distributed to students, staff, and faculty; or on a campus website or social networking site.
- Arrange special health fairs/health services events that invite community providers to come on campus to provide information and/or testing (such as for STIs) and contraception. DTCC brought a community HIV-AIDS program to campus to provide information and free STI testing and “coupons” for a free test were passed out around campus. Information about the Education FIRST program was handed out and tours of the clinic were offered. MC has a health fair where a local reproductive health provider comes on campus to offer testing which is an opportunity to talk about safe sex as preventing pregnancy as well as disease.
- Have free condoms available on campus.
- Disseminate informational material about sexual health and contraception (see earlier references for informational brochures and websites). You may find others from local agencies.

**Promoting safer/responsible sex including the effective use of contraception.**

- Social marketing can be multi-media including the college website, social networking sites such as Facebook, a campus newspaper, performances/presentations, visual displays, fliers, and so on. Review our earlier suggestions about good sites for links and questions to consider in developing web resources.

- Include a regular column in the campus newspaper where a campus health professional answers student questions on sexual health.
- The campus bookstore may be a good distribution point for fliers or bookmarks leading students to campus resources, useful websites, etc.
- MC made inexpensive posters using a National Campaign publication enlarged to poster size. They also found good posters at a local program aimed at African-American men that were willingly shared free of cost.
- Use start-of-the-year orientations to raise awareness of how unplanned pregnancy can derail educational plans, and to inform students about campus services/information resources. DTCC included a session on sexual health, including avoiding unplanned pregnancy and STIs, in its fall 2009 orientation and provided information about the Education First project and clinic.
- Take advantage of established campus events as opportunities for getting attention and giving out information.
- Hold or host special events, workshops, and forums bringing community resources, and/or speakers to campus.
- Use college-run child care centers (if used by students) and existing peer support groups for education about preventing unplanned pregnancies. We know that peer support groups exist in some schools for single parents, male students (focusing on male leadership/responsibility), women in transition (entering the workforce, in some instances under TANF), and high school students in bridge programs. One also finds student groups organized for specific ethnic groups (e.g. Latino Students Association).

In everything you do, remember this is not just about women. Make sure the information, services, and activities you provide are relevant to men as well. Be clear that reproductive and sexual health is an issue for men as well as women, and that pregnancy happens to two people, not one. Discuss the legal and financial responsibilities of child support, and perhaps invite local child support officials to provide information or presentations. Educate students about the role of fathers in healthy child development and family formation.

## #10 Get Going!

The experience of all three grantee colleges has been to plan as much as possible but, ultimately, to *get started*, anticipating a “learn as you go” process.

We’re all in this together.

# APPENDIX

## Sample Questions for Student Discussions

These questions were used for student discussions held to assess the prevalence and degree of concern about unplanned pregnancy. They are not intended as a script and questions were used, rearranged, and added to, as called for by the situation.

### **Sample Introduction:**

The goal for this discussion is for all of us to learn more about the issue of unplanned pregnancy among students, because the college is exploring whether this is an area where we should be doing more. There is research indicating that people in their twenties have the highest rate of unplanned pregnancy, and that for those in college, it often leads to people dropping out. So our interest is in whether this is something impacting our students. We're not asking you to talk about anything uncomfortable or to discuss personal things you prefer to keep private. But we do hope to get your thoughts because your perspective is so important.

Before we start I want to ask people to follow some simple ground rules for this discussion.

- Show respect to the other people in room, even if you disagree with what they're saying.
- Listen to whoever is talking and don't interrupt.
- Share air time—make room for everyone who wants to speak.
- If you want to speak, raise your hand and wait until you're recognized.
- Be conscious of the impact of words. Be considerate.
- Let the facilitator run the discussion

Thanks for helping us by participating in this discussion.

## Questions

1. Statistics show that the number of unplanned pregnancies among people in their twenties is high and has been increasing. Do you see that? Do the statistics make sense to you?
2. Does it matter that there's a high rate of unplanned pregnancy? Why is that important?
3. What are your ideas about why young adults are getting pregnant when don't they intend to?

*A possible follow-up or prompt is to ask for responses to these statements:*

- a) Some people say that the reason young couples get pregnant unexpectedly is that they don't always plan to have sex, and that "Sex just sort of happens."
  - b) People also say that pregnancy happens unexpectedly because women and their partners do not use contraception consistently. If you agree, why aren't people always using contraception? Or using it correctly?
  - c) We've been told that people are actually more likely to use contraception in a casual situation and less like to use contraception the longer they are in a relationship. If you think that's true, how do you explain it?
4. How much do you believe that people your age actually think about pregnancy as a possible result of having sex (as opposed to contracting HIV/AIDS or STIs)? Is preventing pregnancy a big issue for people? Why or why not? Are men and women different about this? If so, how?
  5. Now let's look at the other side of the coin. What's going on with young adults who don't get pregnant? What are they doing or not doing and why? Is there anything to learn from that?
  6. What's the impact of an unplanned pregnancy?
  7. There's a statistic that 61% of college students who have a child after they enroll don't finish their education. This is a much higher drop out rate than

for students who don't have children. What do you think about that? Have you known of anyone dropping out under these circumstances?

8. In order to avoid unplanned pregnancy what do people need to learn that they don't know now? What do people need to do that they aren't doing now?
9. Could the college be doing more about the things we've been talking about? [If yes] What should that be? Is there anything already going on at the college that you think is helpful?
10. Thinking about what the college could do, do students need access to information? [If yes] What information? What's the best way to do that? [You might ask specifically about the internet, the college website.]
11. How about relationships? What do you think about classes that teach how to develop and maintain healthy, committed relationships? How would that help with unplanned pregnancy? Would that be valuable here?
12. Any other suggestions?







**The National Campaign**  
to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

National Campaign websites:  
[www.TheNationalCampaign.org](http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org)  
[www.SexReally.com](http://www.SexReally.com)  
[blog.TheNC.org](http://blog.TheNC.org)  
[www.StayTeen.org](http://www.StayTeen.org)