A Parent Focus Group to Inform Improving Access to Adolescent Reproductive Health Services and the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy: A Community Participation Study

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Presenter Information
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A PARENT FOCUS GROUP TO INFORM IMPROVING ACCESS TO ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES AND PREVENTING TEEN PREGNANCY: A COMMUNITY PARTICIPATORY STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The Focus Group was part of a community participatory evaluation in collaboration with the Lowell Teen Pregnancy Prevention Taskforce (TPP), which is facilitated by the Lowell Teen Coalition from the Lowell Health Alliance (LCHC) and is now a subcommittee of the Greater Lowell Health Alliance. The overarching goal of this research is to improve the utilization of teen health services, to increase understanding of how parents and the Lowell community view teen access to reproductive health information and services and teen pregnancy prevention and to highlight non-economic barriers to accessing pregnancy prevention services.

REFERENCES

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University of Massachusetts Lowell, School of Health and Environment, Department of Nursing; Andrea Laskey, RN, Melanie Priestly, CCE

COMMUNITIES THAT CARE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The CTC conceptual model is a prevention model based on the risk-focused framework and provides structure in making informed decisions concerning prevention services and youth development programs through assessments. Researchers utilizing the CTC model have been able to identify interrelationships between varied adolescent risk behaviors and to replace them with positive youth development. The CTC model is a prevention model based on the risk-focused framework and provides structure in making informed decisions concerning prevention services and youth development programs through assessments. Researchers utilizing the CTC model have been able to identify interrelationships between varied adolescent risk behaviors and to replace them with positive youth development.

PARENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What do you feel are some of the concerns, issues, or pressures facing youth today?
2. Why do you believe some teens are getting pregnant?
3. What do you think would help prevent teen pregnancy?
4. What do you think are the obstacles to addressing teen pregnancy?
5. Where do you think young people obtain their information about sex?
6. Where should 12-14 year olds get their information about sex?
7. What resources should be in place in the community to address teen pregnancy?

In 2009, Lowell’s teen birth rate was 53 per 1,000 teens age 15-19 as compared to 48.7 in 2008 and more than double the Massachusetts 2009 rate of 19.6. Teen births often occur disproportionately to the most vulnerable teens, with racial and ethnic disparities being common. In 2009, births to Asian teen mothers made up 31.6% of teen births, nearly doubling the rate since 1996. Hispanic mothers accounted for 32.4% of all teen births.

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PARENTS’ PERCEPTION OF WHY TEENS GET PREGNANT

• Peer acceptance/ peer pressure
• Go with the flow
• Means of keeping their mate
• Lack of sexual education
• See no evil, hear no evil” mentality
• Today’s parents grew up not talking about sex
• Do not know how to use sexual contraceptive devices
• Do not know what types of contraceptive devices exist
• Resistance to signing parental consent for student attendance in sex ed class
• Teens decline to attend sex ed class because their peers do not attend
• Parents shelter their teen by keeping them home
• Cultural influences trickle down to the next generation inhibiting open discussion of sex and protection
• Girls marry young in certain cultures
• Teen mentality that they are invincible
• Teen denial that they can get pregnant
• Teens’ misconception of sex and pregnancy influenced by media, TV, Internet, magazines, etc.
• Teens misguided with faulty information from friends and media

PARENTS’ PRECESSION OF BARRIERS TO TEENS’ ACCESSIBILITY OF RESOURCES

• Transportation
• Mobility
• Limited time for organized peer groups for younger teens
• Younger teens tend to go home after school
• Fear of diminished privacy
• Do not want being help at a community resource center
• Fear of confidentiality breaking when confiding in counselors
• Schools do not condone passing out condoms
• Loss of services in community resource center due to funding cuts
• Immature and adolescent parents

CHANGES TO IMPROVE ACCESS & PREVENTION OF TEEN PREGNANCY

• Encourage parents to establish open communication with their teens
• Car Talk
• Backyard Sharing
• Discourage with early menses
• Discuss all forms of birth control
• Stress abstinence
• Informal conversation about peers who are pregnant
• Encourage pediatricians to discuss with teens about sex and pregnancy prevention
• Keep and/ or increase services at Youth Build, Utech, and Teen Coalition
• Increase funding for parents to educate them on the importance of allowing their teens to attend sex ed class in school
• Provide books that stress self worth, i.e. The Caring and Keeping of You
• Normalize the sex ed discussion by discussing with them at a young age because it may decrease embarrassment

LIMITATIONS & NEXT STEPS

Sample size was limited and only included participants who were employed at the Lowell Community Health Center. However, this forum provided a basis for conducting a community survey involving parents of teens in the residential community of Lowell.

The focus group, a larger community survey and teen responses to a Communities that Care Survey during the spring of 2012 will guide the TPP in building programs that target specific risk factors in terms of age, race, and ethnicity, the adolescent-parent relationships and youth development to build a community based intervention to improve teen sexual health and reduce teen pregnancy.