

Nov 30th, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

# 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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Brewin, Dorothy; Koren, Ainat; Fortenbacher, Angela L.; Laskey, Andrea; and Priestly, Melanie, "A Parent Focus Group to Inform Improving Access to Adolescent Reproductive Health Services and the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy: A Community Participation Study" (2012). *Community Engagement and Research Symposia*. 3.  
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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 Community Health Center (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

Massachusetts Births 2009. Boston, MA: Division of Research and Epidemiology, Bureau of Health Information, Statistics, Research, and Evaluation, Massachusetts Department of Public Health. July 2011.

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Feinberg, M., Greenberg, M. & Osgood, W.(2004). Readiness, functioning, and perceived Effectiveness in community prevention coalitions: A study of Communities That Care. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 33(3-4), 163-176.

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UML IRB APPROVED  
July 11, 2011  
IRB No: 11-073-BRE-XPD

## DISPARITY

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. <sup>3</sup> Teen births often occur disproportionately to the most vulnerable teens, with racial and ethnic disparities being common. In 2009, births to Asian mothers made up 31.9% of teen births, nearly doubling the rate since 1996. Hispanic mothers accounted for 32.4% of all teen births. <sup>5</sup> .

## PARENT FOCUS GROUP

As part of a comprehensive teen pregnancy prevention assessment, parents of preteen and teens living in the greater Lowell community and working at the LCHC were recruited to discuss issues around teen sexual health and pregnancy prevention.

### Purpose

- To develop a means to assess parents' perspectives about solutions to reduce risk taking behaviors among adolescents that may lead to teen pregnancy.
- To determine if parents feel adequate health care services are being provided to address the diverse needs of adolescents related to teen pregnancy prevention.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Parent of a child between the ages of 10-20 years
- Available on August 11, 2011 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm
- Limited to 10 participants

## INCENTIVES

No incentives were given except the provision of a light lunch.

## 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 characteristics of risk and resilience, the adolescent-parent relationships and youth development to build a community based intervention to improve teen sexual health and reduce teen pregnancy.

## 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 annual 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.

## SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

N= 10*	Variables	Mean or %
	<b>Age, y</b>	36.75
	<b>Ethnicity</b>	
	Hispanic	30%
	NonHispanic	10%
	Other	20%
	<b>Race</b>	
	White	60%
	Unknown	40%
	<b>Education</b>	
	High School	20%
	Some College	30%
	Post College	10%
	<b>Religion</b>	
	Catholic	40%
	Protestant	10%
	Other	10%
	<b>Marital Status</b>	
	Married	20%
	Never Married	20%
	Divorced	20%
	<b>Political Views</b>	
	Moderate	30%
	Liberal	30%
	<b>Past Sexual Ed</b>	
	Yes	40%
	No	20%

\* Four subjects did not complete demographic form

## 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 efforts addressing teen pregnancy?
5. Where do you think young people obtain their information about sex?
6. Where should young people obtain their information about sex?
7. What resources should be in place in the community to address teen pregnancy?

## 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' PRECEPTION 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
- Fear of family finding out if they seek help
- Fear of being seen getting 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



## CHANGES TO IMPROVE ACCESS & PREVENTION OF TEEN PREGNANCY

- Encourage parents to establish open communication with their teens
- Car Talk
- Backyard Sharing
- Discuss 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
- Maintain and/ or increase services at Youth Build, Utech, and Teen Coalition
- Hold open forums 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

