CHAPTER 15

Working with the Media to Promote Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Communications and pregnancy prevention

A good media campaign can generate awareness, motivate action, spur funding, and keep a community focused on the bottom line—reducing teen pregnancy. Media can be the activity that makes the rest of your initiative's work come together. Media can even add some sparkle and excitement to your work and make everyone feel that your program is "hot"—on the move and making a difference.

Getting from here to there, however, is challenging. Even with the best planning, media campaigns can be disrupted. Funding can run out, other issues can intrude, or a message may not work as well as research said it would.

Doing media on teen pregnancy calls for a complex balancing act. A program's media effort should advance its own agenda but also respond to new developments. It should control its message but disseminate it broadly. It should generate "buzz" about the message but also exercise enough control to maintain credibility. It should target specific messages to narrow audiences but not overlook other important segments of the community.

Developing effective media messages about teen pregnancy prevention can be tricky as well. An effective message is clear and one-dimensional, but it is not easy to simplify such a complicated issue. Emphasizing one aspect in the interests of simplicity and clarity risks defining the issue too narrowly. In addition, programs and communities differ. There is no one message that will work for all purposes and in all communities. Messages related to teen sexuality and pregnancy can create controversy. Many communities find they must water down their message in order to get it out into the public arena at all.

Despite these difficulties, the most important step in teen pregnancy media work is finding strong core messages. Because

A good media effort can generate awareness, motivate action, spur funding, and keep a community focused on the bottom line—reducing teen pregnancy.

you will need to repeat them frequently to get them across, getting the message right makes all the difference.

This chapter will help you develop your messages and use the media to get them out to your target audience. The ideas outlined here are meant to inspire, spark ideas, and get you started. The chapter starts with a section on "Creating a Communication Plan," which reviews the steps involved in defining a target audience, developing core messages, and choosing the appropriate type of media (or "media channel") to employ. This is followed by section on working with the two major media that community programs use most: news and public service advertising.

Creating a communications plan

An effective media effort must be based on a concrete plan that reflects strategic thinking about your program's overall objectives and the ways in which you will achieve them. Developing such a plan consists of these steps:

- determine your desired result;
- define and study your target audience;
- develop your core messages;
- select the most appropriate media channel for each audience and message;
- test and refine your messages with the target audience; and
- monitor your progress.

You should expect to work through these steps several times before you end up with a satisfactory plan. You will likely find that as one part of the plan becomes clearer and more defined, other parts of the plan will fall in place. Don't force the process—let your plan evolve over time.

KEYS TO MEDIA SUCCESS

- **constantly monitor how well your media work is going**
- **be open to change and new ideas**
- **listen to what the audience thinks**
- **keep your goals in mind at all times**
- **use the media as a tool to help achieve those goals effectively**

Determine your desired result

What do you hope to achieve through your media work? What do you want to accomplish? Do you hope to increase knowledge among community residents of teen pregnancy? Change parental attitudes? Encourage teens to delay sexual activity?

The more specific your desired result, the easier it will be to accomplish. Unsuccessful media campaigns often suffer from ambitious objectives that may work better for a long-term, comprehensive pregnancy prevention program.

Generally, the desired result of a teen pregnancy prevention media initiative falls into one of four categories, though others may also be appropriate:

Increasing community awareness of teen pregnancy as a problem. In many communities, teen pregnancy does not get as much attention as drug use, violence, or school failure. In such a community, you might want to let a target audience know how high its teen pregnancy and birth rates are and what the consequences are.

The first step, though, is to learn what the community thinks. You should never start working in a community without first understanding its attitudes and sensitivities.

Changing the behavior of individual teens or adults. The ultimate goal of most prevention initiatives is to influence the behavior of teens, parents, other adults, or public officials. Sometimes the behavior you hope to change is directly related to pregnancy ("never have sex without birth control"); sometimes it is less closely related ("stay in school"). Whatever your goal, it's important to tell people *exactly* what they should do: "Call for this booklet." "Talk to your children." "Mentor a teen—call to find out how."

Promoting a particular service or program. People can only use a service or get involved with a program if they know about it. For example, the media is one way to let sexually active teens know that a clinic offers teen-friendly services, convenient

A DIFFUSE DESIRED RESULT

Reduce teen pregnancy in my county by 25 percent.

A MORE CLEARLY FOCUSED DESIRED RESULT

Reach teens under 15 in our community with a "delay" message and, as a result, raise the age of onset of sexual activity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

Take the temperature of a community or group before crafting a message to them—find out what they think.

hours, confidentiality, and easy-to-get appointments. The media can also help recruit adults to volunteer in your program, or promote special events.

Promoting change on an issue. You may want to promote your point of view on important issues (this is often called media advocacy). For example, you might encourage support for a youth development agenda by publicizing the stories of successful young people who have completed a particular program. (Note: Be aware of federal and state regulations about lobbying activities by non-profits.)

You may find that you would like to work on all these fronts. That is possible, but only over time and only if all four support your overall goal. A better approach is to decide which desired result is your top priority, focus on that, and then work on the others in turn.

The following worksheet may help you figure out a specific desired result.

Define your target audience

Along with determining your desired results, you will need to define your target audience or audiences. These audiences

Desired results worksheet

General Categories	Specific Action or Awareness Desired
Sample: Promote a specific program	*Sample:* Motivate the business community to support expansion of after-school programs in inner-city neighborhoods.
Promote a specific program	
Increase community awareness of teen pregnancy	
Change the behavior of teens or parents	
Promote youth-oriented public policy	
Other	

consist of those whose behavior or attitudes you want to change. Target audiences may include, among others:

Teens

- sexually active teens
- abstinent teens
- pre-teens and young teens
- older teens
- out-of-school teens

Adults

- parents of teens
- others who influence teens (coaches, youth workers)
- adult volunteers
- young adult men who date younger teenage girls

Organizations that Work with Teens

- agencies that serve teens
- community service groups
- religious/faith organizations
- schools

Potential Partners or Supporters

- business leaders
- community and civic leaders
- public officials

A VAGUE TARGET AUDIENCE

All sexually active teens

A MORE FOCUSED TARGET AUDIENCE

Sexually active teens in the service area of a clinic where teen pregnancy rates are high

WAYS TO DEFINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

- **geography/community environment**
- **demographics**
  - **age**
  - **gender**
- **cultural background**

As with your desired result, the more specific you can be in describing your target audience, the better. You will need to know the composition of the target audience so that you can develop appropriate messages and test them with all subgroups.

There are many ways to define and refine a general list of audiences:

Geography. Your audience may be made up of urban, suburban, and rural individuals, if the targeted program area is large enough. You should divide them into these segments and refine messages and testing procedures accordingly.

Age. The age of the audience targeted by a pregnancy prevention campaign can range widely. Choosing the right age group is a function of your overall prevention goal. For example, a

campaign to delay sexual initiation may target a different age group than one that seeks increased contraceptive use among sexually active, older teens. The basic message will need to be tested—and may need to be different—with each different age group.

Breaking the Cycle in Hartford, Connecticut, targets diverse audiences with various messages, though all are consistent: to parents ("talk to your teens about sex and values"), to other adults ("get involved as mentors"), and to teens ("stay abstinent" for young teens and "be responsible" for sexually active teens).

The Montana Department of Health and Human Services' **Don't Kid Yourself** campaign reaches an audience of sexually active 18- to 24-year-olds through radio and newspaper ads, as well as pamphlets and posters, with messages about avoiding unintended pregnancy.

Gender. Teens are not a monolithic block; boys and girls need different messages to motivate their behavior. The choice of boys or girls as your target audience depends on what will best achieve the community's overall prevention goal.

As part of its comprehensive male and father involvement initiative, the **California Department of Health Services** has developed a campaign about sexual responsibility targeted to teen boys and adult men.

Cultural background. Being knowledgeable about the culture of the target audience is essential. Subtle differences in the way different cultures think about family, birth control, pregnancy, education, the role of girls, male responsibility, education, careers, and planning for the future can affect how various messages are perceived. Culture can also affect your choice of media. Once messages are selected, you need to know about the newspapers that particular cultures read, the TV stations they watch, and the factors that motivate them to accept a message.

Study your target audience

A certain amount of information about your target audience will emerge during the initial process of audience selection. At some point, though, you'll need to explore these groups in more detail. For example:

- Whom do they trust? Who would be a credible carrier of the message—a sports figure? Another teen? A community organization or leader?
- What do they already think about teen pregnancy? Boys

may think, "It's a girl thing." Parents may think, "It's someone else's problem."

- Where do they get information? Do they watch TV? Listen to the radio? Read periodicals? In what language?

Expand your understanding of your target audience. If a program intends to reach teens, watch the TV shows they like, read their magazines, listen to their music. If parents of teens are the potential audience, you might attend a local PTA meeting or church gathering. If public officials are the target, consult the public affairs staff of an organization with similar interests.

The following tools can further help you study your target audience:

Advisory groups. Many teen pregnancy prevention initiatives create ad hoc or permanent groups of teens or parents to advise them on all aspects of an initiative or campaign. This can be a relatively inexpensive way to learn more about your target audience. It will also draw teens into the program. Choose an advisory panel that is similar to the target audience. Create more than one if there are multiple audiences.

Surveys. Surveys allow a program to assess the views of a representative number of the potential audience. Large-scale professional surveys or polls can be expensive, but some pollsters may be willing to add teen pregnancy questions to a planned poll. A simple questionnaire to administer to smaller groups is another option.

Focus groups. A focus group is a gathering of 8 to 10 people who are interviewed by a trained moderator using a prepared list of questions. Focus groups are often used to test messages or actual media products, such as posters or radio spots, for acceptability and ease of comprehension. Table 1 at the end of this chapter is a focus group discussion outline that shows how to structure such a conversation.

The worksheet on the next page can help you define specific target audiences.

Develop your core messages

Your core messages contain the most important ideas you want to get across to your audience. They should reflect your initiative's values and should be the

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO CONDUCT A SURVEY

See Chapter 12 (Volume 3), "Tailoring a Program to Your Community Through Needs Assessment."

kernel from which you create events, slogans, advertising, fundraising, and all the other elements that go into any teen pregnancy prevention effort.

While there may be many possible core messages at this stage, try to whittle the number down to no more than three. Deciding on these few core messages does not mean that they are the only things your program stands for; they just provide a focus for your current media efforts. You need to decide what you want to say, then find a way to get the word out.

Developing your messages takes time. Think of it as similar to the process a sculptor goes through in transforming a solid block of marble into a finished figure. First, you start with a basic idea of what you want to say. Then, through discussion, revision, testing with potential audiences, and refining, a finished phrase or sentence emerges, couched in such a way that it resonates with the target audience.

Target audience worksheet

Potential Target Audience	Age, Gender, Culture, Location	Other Important Characteristics
Sample: Parents of teen boys	33-35, many single parents, most working, inner city	What they read, listen to, watch; where they shop; what form of transportation they use; who their community leaders are

THE STARTING POINT FOR A CORE MESSAGE DIRECTED AT TEENS

Delay sexual activity.

THE FINISHED PRODUCT

"Not everyone is 'doing it.' It's okay to say no."

Here are examples of messages targeted to teens used by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Although they sound simple and straightforward, they are the result of considerable discussion, testing, and reworking.

- *For girls:* You don't have to have sex to keep a boyfriend. You don't have to have sex to be popular. You don't have to have sex unless and until you decide to.
- *For boys:* Boys can say no, too. You don't have to have sex to prove anything to your friends or girlfriend. Having sex doesn't make you a man; waiting until you're ready and acting responsibly does.

Table 2 at the end of this chapter provides more details on these National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy messages. The worksheet on the next page can also help you brainstorm core messages.

Select the most appropriate media channels

Once you have determined your desired result, clearly defined your target audience, and developed your core messages, you will be ready to choose the best vehicle for reaching your audience. Each of the three major media channels described here differs according to the credibility it adds to a program's message, the breadth of audience it reaches, and the amount of control a program has in using it.

The news media

News coverage has high credibility (it is written by independent reporters) and a broad reach (TV, newspapers, and radio reach large audiences at the same time). The tradeoff is that you have little control over how your message gets through to the audience. News media work is not expensive, but it sometimes takes long-term, consistent work to pay off.

Public service advertising (PSA)

This strategy involves developing print, radio, or TV ads, billboards, or bus boards to carry a prevention message—a production process that may be costly even if an advertising firm has offered to provide its creative work for free. Messages conveyed through such advertising are typically short (a headline, a 10- or 30-second radio spot, a slogan). If you buy air time or ad space, you can use an advertising campaign to target a precise audience. With donated space, the audience reach is questionable (your TV

Core message worksheet

Desired Result	Specific Core Messages
Sample: Increase community awareness of teen pregnancy	*Sample:* Most people don't know that one out of every two girls in this city will be pregnant by the time she is 19.
Increase community awareness of teen pregnancy	
Promote a higher profile of a particular prevention program	
Change the behavior of teens or parents	
Promote youth-oriented public policy	
Other	

spot may run free at 2 a.m.). Because the messages are clearly from an organization with a point of view, credibility is only as good as the organization's reputation.

Public affairs work and special events

These vehicles provide programs with an ongoing way to reinforce their messages and put a human face on what they say in the media and advertising. Both involve direct contact with audiences through activities such as giving speeches to community groups, writing articles for professional and community newsletters, and offering free workshops to schools, businesses, or community organizations. For example, a program could kick off a media campaign with a health fair, and then describe its ongoing work in the resulting news coverage. A successful special event can raise the profile of an initiative. Often the greater value of special events

THE 3 MAIN MEDIA CHANNELS

- **news media**
- **public service announcements (PSAs)**
- **public affairs work and special events**

comes from news coverage of them rather than the event itself.

You have a great deal of control over the message in special events because you are delivering it directly to the audience. Public affairs work and special events do not have to be expensive (though they often are). Both require considerable staff or volunteer time to plan and carry out the activities.

Messages delivered in this way generally have medium credibility—less than news stories (because they are delivered by an advocate with a point of view), but more than advertising (because the message comes directly from a respected organization or a community event). Another attribute of this approach is that public affairs work and special events have a fairly narrow reach; only those who come to the event or read about it receive the message.

The box on the next page summarizes some of the considerations involved in using various media options.

Test and refine your messages

Before you roll out your messages, you need to be sure the audience is ready to listen to them. For example, a mother who is already concerned about her daughter's well-being will be receptive to a message about talking to her teen about sex. On the other hand, a message about the long-term consequences of unprotected sex might not be the right way to reach teen boys because they often focus only on short-term consequences.

You also need to be sure that the message can be expressed in simple, clear, layperson's language, particularly if TV or radio are involved. For example, the Catawba County Social Services' **Age of Consent Campaign** has a very specific message for older teen males and adult men: Sex with a minor who is at least four years younger is now a crime in North Carolina.

Finally, you need to make sure the message is worded and framed in just the right way to touch your audience. A message may sound good to you, but you must let the target audience's opinion guide your final decision about its suitability and power.

Message testing will help you reach all these objectives. Testing provides a crucial opportunity to refine your messages and make them more memorable, attention-getting, and motivating.

Testing proved invaluable for the **Family Planning Council of Southeast Pennsylvania** when

Selecting a media option

OPTION	CONSIDERATIONS
News media	
Radio	Teens listen.
Television	Advertising is expensive, hard to get coverage, good for saturating the community with a message.
Newspaper	Credible place for program name and ideas to be mentioned in editorials, news stories, advertising.
Magazines	Good for targeting specific audiences.
Specialty publications	Good for targeting specific audiences, may be interested in articles written by program.
Public service advertising	
Radio	Teens listen, advertising is inexpensive, audience reach is questionable with donated air time.
Television	Good for targeting a large audience, production is expensive, audience reach is questionable with donated air time.
Internet	Hard to measure impact, but popular with teens.
Bus boards	Highly visible way to reach teens who use public transportation, diffuse reach.
Billboards	Highly visible.
Public affairs work and special events	
Speeches	Great way to reach audiences in person.
Direct mail	Expensive, low credibility for message work.
Public workshops	Great way to reach parents.
Organizational workshops	Great way to reach parents.
Flyers	Inexpensive, little impact, best for specific events.
Events	Take a great deal of work with uncertain payoff.
Promotional items	If cleverly done, can be useful in getting the message out.

the slogan, "Pregnancy: It's Not for Me," tested poorly among parents, but was very popular with teens. Abstinent teens interpreted it as a supportive message, and sexually active teens believed it was a credible reminder to practice effective contraception.

Testing can also help you figure out how to reach multiple target audiences with variants on the same core message.

In Maryland, **Campaign for Our Children** has distinct messages for parents ("talk to your teens about sex before they make you a grandparent") and teens ("you can go farther when you do not go all the way"), which reinforce the same

prevention goal of reducing teen sexual activity.

Some campaigns use focus groups to test messages. Participants give immediate feedback on potential messages, offer suggestions for changes, and even suggest where to run it or who would make a good spokesperson. Other programs use surveys, which can be more expensive. Still others have ongoing advisors.

Not Me, Not Now, in Monroe County, New York, maintains a teen panel for message testing.

Commercial marketers know that people remember messages that meet their needs or support their values. Experts on teens suggest that young people are more receptive to positive messages. However, fear appeals are a staple of public health PSAs—particularly in relation to AIDS, drugs, and drunk driving. While there is some disagreement about the use of fear appeals, research shows that they are effective in limited circumstances and when done very carefully (DeJong & Winsten, 1998).

Create a system for ongoing monitoring

Successful media initiatives include ways to track their progress, evaluate whether they have successfully reached their ultimate goal, and find out when they need to make corrections along the way. Formal evaluation of media campaigns can be very challenging, especially if you want to measure behavior change, but there are less expensive ways to track progress, including:

- collecting press clips, listing the audiences for presentations, and keeping track of the number of times a PSA has run and where;
- continuously testing the validity of messages with teen advisory panels; and
- conducting audience surveys to measure how far the message has reached, or whether, for example, parents are talking with their children about sex more since the campaign began.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EVALUATION...

See Chapter 16 (Volume 3), "Building Evaluation into Your Work."

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION COMMUNICATOR

- **create a buzz**
- **keep the message out there**
- **always have something new to say**
- **convey a sense of urgency**
- **inspire action**

Working with the news media

The most efficient way to reach the general public is through the news media: newspapers, radio, and television. Reporters and editors—especially on the local level—are always looking for stories to fill their pages and newscasts, and teen pregnancy prevention initiatives have important stories to tell. Seeking news coverage, however, should not be a one-shot deal; you should develop relationships with reporters and keep your initiatives prominent in their Rolodexes.

What is news?

To generate coverage, a program must create a news "hook"—that is, a reason for a reporter to tell a story. Reporters look for:

- new information (statistics or trends);
- conflict (disagreement and controversy);
- personal stories (reporters tell stories through the lives of individuals);
- local angles to national stories;
- counter-intuitive information ("teens want to hear from their parents about sex"); and
- quotable people.

Creating a media list

The first step in creating successful, ongoing relationships with the news media is to identify and develop the right media contacts. In some communities, the local library will stock a media guide with detailed information about newspapers and broadcast stations and their personnel. Many United Way organizations publish media guides as well. Another way to identify likely reporters is by reading local papers and magazines and finding out who covers youth, education, health, and social policy.

Potential sources of names for a media list:

- newspapers (from major dailies to suburban weeklies)—city, health, and editorial page editors; health, education, lifestyle, and political reporters;
- television—news assignment editors; news directors; health, education, lifestyle, and political reporters; segment and show producers;
- radio—news directors, talk show producers, radio personalities;

- wire services—bureau chiefs, daybook editors (the daybook lists events taking place each day in the community), reporters; and
- other news outlets—community and faith-based publications, high school or college newspapers, and special interest and professional newsletters.

You may also want to develop a list of nonmedia individuals and groups whom it may be useful to inform or influence. These might include funders, policymakers, community leaders, and collaborating agencies and institutions.

Making contact with local news media

Your goal should be to become the first person a reporter or editor thinks to call when doing a story on teen pregnancy. Some ideas for becoming a credible source for local news media (National Campaign, 1997a):

- introduce yourself, your organization, and your issue to the producer of a local talk radio or TV show;
- send reports, updates, and notice of upcoming events or publications; always send items to a specific person, not to a title (John Jones, not "News Editor");
- offer to do a briefing for the editorial board of your local paper;
- get to know the community affairs liaisons for local news media outlets whose job is to stay abreast of community issues and concerns;
- when national stories break about teen pregnancy, give reporters a local angle to work with—offer data, a statement, visuals, or access to a successful local program, if possible;
- when a local story runs that is related to teen pregnancy, offer the reporter additional information that would enhance or provide context for the story; and
- develop a group of credible spokespersons who can discuss different aspects of teen pregnancy with reporters, including school teachers, parents of teens, teens themselves, and health officials.

USE THESE SOURCES TO PUT TOGETHER YOUR MEDIA LIST

- **newspapers**
- **television**
- **radio**
- **wire services**
- **other news outlets**

Using the tools of the trade

Reporters expect story ideas and messages to be packaged in particular ways. Each of these tools has particular uses:

Press releases. A short description of the story you want to tell, a press or news release describes the who, what, when, where, how, and why right up front. Never more than one double-sided sheet of paper, double-spaced, a release uses simple, nonjargony language, short sentences, and short paragraphs. It should be written in a news style so that it can be printed in smaller papers as is. Press or news releases follow a standard format.

Media advisories. Similar to a news release, a media advisory announces the particulars of a press event in bullet form. It often is sent a few weeks before an event so that it can be added to reporter's coverage schedules; in contrast, a press release appears on a reporter's desk much closer to the actual event. See Table 3 at the end of this chapter for a sample media advisory.

Press conferences and media briefings. Press conferences and briefings offer a visual event around which to organize a news story you are pitching. It is essential, however, that you have something newsworthy to announce and an effective spokesperson to announce it. There is nothing worse than holding a press conference in an empty room—and it does happen. Here are a few guidelines:

- Choose a convenient site for the media. Get a room that will just accommodate the number of people you expect (or even a few less) so that the event will not look underattended.
- Make sure you have the necessary equipment —microphones, podium, chairs for reporters, a banner or poster for a backdrop.
- Time your event carefully. Give reporters time to attend your event, do additional reporting, and file their stories before deadlines—10 or 11 a.m. is often ideal. Connect your event to a related hook—like National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month in May.
- Hand out press kits and have a sign-in sheet for the press.

Press kits. For distribution to reporters at a press event, a press kit usually includes a press release, an event agenda, a fact sheet about your organization, brief biographies of event participants, and supporting documents (reports, statistics,

FOR MORE ON WRITING A FACTS AND STATS SHEET
See Table 4 at the end of this chapter for an example.

lists of story ideas, and expert contacts).

"One-pager." A one-page description of the basics on your initiative or program:

- name, address, phone, fax, and email
- program description
- funding sources and sponsors
- brief program history including start date and purpose
- leaders and participants

Facts and stats sheet. Reporters like to be able to cite the latest teen pregnancy data available. If possible, get community statistics from your health department. National and state data are available from several agencies and organizations listed in the Resources section. Be sure to list your organization as a contact. See Table 4 at the end of this chapter for an example of a facts and stats sheet.

Story ideas. Although most reporters do not like to be told how to cover a story, they do appreciate leads on potential angles, sources, and interviews. Look at your initiative with a reporter's eye. Tell a personal story. Locate a good visual for a TV crew or print photographer. Describe how this issue affects viewers or readers. Tell them how much teen pregnancy costs your community.

Editorial board meetings. Make an appointment to offer a background briefing to your local paper's editorial writers on teen pregnancy, your initiative, or a new report. Explain to them how important this issue is to their readers.

Opinion pieces (op-eds) and letters to the editor. Op-eds are usually written by experts in their field—like you!—or by prominent people in the community. Most op-eds are between 500 and 1,000 words long. Check with your local paper about how to submit an opinion piece. Send your op-ed to the opinion page editor at least two weeks before any related event. Letters to the editor, which are much shorter (less than 200 words), must usually be written in response to something that has already appeared in the paper. Submit them as soon as possible following the original article.

Reactions to events. Depending on what kind of news you want to make, you should consider providing reactions to teen pregnancy-related news: legislative briefings, governmental proclamations, and similar events. Do so by crafting a three- to four-sentence commentary and faxing it to your local paper.

Getting professional help with media work

Public relations and advertising firms can be invaluable. If you plan to launch a long-term media effort, select a firm early on and stick with it over time. Its resources, relationships, and advice will be very helpful. To make the relationship productive, however, you must know what you want from them before you begin working together. These tips can help.

1. Write down exactly what you need *before* you talk with a public relations firm. This can be formal (a "Request for Proposal" or RFP) or an informal memo. Include:
   - your goals for public relations and media work
   - the amount of money you have available to spend (choose a number less than the true maximum).
   - your desire to have donated creative services and a discount on production costs
   - the time frame in which you want the work to be done
   - the person at your organization who will be the liaison with the firm
   - key deadlines that are non-negotiable
2. Take your RFP or list of needs to two or three firms and see what they can offer you. Ask to see samples of past work—for both paying and pro bono (non-paying) clients.
3. Ask the firms to send you a brief proposal of what they would be able to do for you. Be sure it responds to the needs you have identified.
4. Ask to meet with several firms in their offices to get a feel for the way they work and their mix of clients. Consider the following to help you know which firm is right for you.
   - Do you like the style that they have used with other clients?
   - Do you trust that the people you have met understand your message and your goals?
   - Did they seem eager to win your business?
   - What benefit might they draw from working with you (e.g., added exposure, creative challenge)? It's better to work with a firm that might get something out of the relationship, too.
   - Small firms may be more eager to get exposure and make a name for themselves, so they may view working for you as a chance to make a splash on a compelling issue. However, small firms need to pay the bills, so you may end up as a lower priority at deadline time.
   - Larger firms may have more staff to devote to your work, and might assign a junior person to take charge of your account. This can benefit you because they may bring added enthusiasm and rigor to the work. Larger firms also have access to databases, clip services, and a host of other resources that they can tap for your project. However, *pro bono* projects can get lost at larger firms, so be sure to invest time in staying on top of the work.
5. Ask other nonprofits in your community about their experiences with local firms, and get suggestions from them on things to watch out for.

WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH REPORTERS, REMEMBER...

You're selling, the reporters are buying.

Dealing with reporters

The following tips will help you deal smoothly with reporters. The bottom line is that when you are working with reporters, you will always have different agendas: you are selling, the reporter is buying. Make sure reporters feel as though they are getting value for their time and effort. Some advice from the experts:

- Respond immediately. Return reporters' phone calls right away; they may be on a deadline. If you cannot talk, tell them when you can or suggest others who are available. If you promise to get them more information, deliver it on time. If you are helpful, reporters will call you again and again.
- Anticipate questions. Prepare talking points so that you are not caught off guard.
- Choose three main points you want to get across in your press event, press release, or interview, and then repeat them. For television, focus on only one or two simple points.
- Do not raise subjects with the press unless you have answers. If you say there's a teen pregnancy problem in your community, be prepared to offer simple numbers and solutions, or explain why they are hard to find.
- Personalize the story. Make statistics come alive with examples of real people, preferably people the reporter can interview.
- Stay on your message. Do not let a reporter get you to say something you do not want to say.

6. Once you select a firm, work together on a plan that will meet your needs. Specifics may change over time, as the firm comes up with new ideas for you.
7. Be open to new ideas, but be vigilant about your budget. If you cannot afford a great idea, perhaps the firm can help you find ways to cover costs, or other funders may be willing to support the idea.
8. Most firms can donate "creative"—ideas, slogans, artwork—but they must charge for the cost of paper, printing, mailing, and other services. To save money, ask them for a list of reporters and ideas for what to send, then do the mailing yourself.
9. Think of this work as starting a long-term relationship. Over time, the firm can get to know your organization and your goals, and can continue to think of creative public relations strategies beyond the limits of a single campaign or project.

- Do not go "off the record." Do not say anything you would not want quoted. You cannot control what reporters write or air, only what you say to them.
- Do not be pushy. Make your best pitch and let reporters make their own decision. If you make them an enemy, they will not be likely to cover future stories for you.

Making the most of your success

The value of news coverage is hard to measure precisely, though collecting news clips and video highlights is one good way to keep track of your success. Professional clipping services are available (for a price), but following your own media appearances is not too difficult, particularly in smaller communities. A stack of positive newspaper clippings can be very influential with funders, politicians, and other groups that you are trying to impress.

It is not quite true that "any coverage is good coverage," so make sure your public image is what you want it to be. Change your tactics if it is not.

Public service advertising

A public service advertising campaign is a high-profile, expensive communications strategy. A good PSA campaign can reach your target audience very effectively. A poorly designed and executed campaign can damage your cause and organization. The following strategies can help ensure a successful campaign.

Be sure public service advertising is right for your message

Do not try to convey complex messages using PSAs. If you cannot reduce your message to a slogan or sound bite that you can use over a long period of time, a PSA is not the right strategy.

Make a long-term commitment

You and your funders must be willing and able to make a long-term commitment—measured over several years—to the PSA campaign. One PSA, no matter how good, is not worth the expense.

Get adequate funding and in-kind support

PSA campaigns are expensive. Besides production costs, you

must pay or negotiate for air time or print space. Print and radio campaigns are less expensive than television. For example, a radio announcer could read a brief announcement about your nonprofit initiative for free. On the other hand, TV PSAs can cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to produce and air.

The **California Department of Health Services** has budgeted $29 million over three years for its total media/public information campaign about responsible parenting and teen pregnancy.

The more than 40 states and communities that are developing or planning to develop a teen pregnancy prevention media campaign have been very resourceful in seeking public and private grants, as well as in-kind and pro bono support, including:

- Public funds—federal and state government offices, including adolescent pregnancy prevention, maternal and child health, public health programs, general funds, welfare reform, labor and employment security, education, and juvenile justice; commingled state agency funds; county and city funds.
- Private funds—national, state, and local foundations, the March of Dimes, corporate foundations, insurance companies.
- Pro bono and in-kind contributions—free and discounted air time from local broadcasters, pro bono services from ad agencies, donated PSAs from other communities, partnerships with the Ad Council.

Putting together a mixed portfolio of funding sources and in-kind support is the best hedge against inconstant funding. Some suggest that there are fewer strings attached to private money, although all funders expect to have some oversight of campaign messages and tactics.

Set specific goals for your PSA campaign

A PSA campaign must have a clearly stated, *specific* communications goal. For example:

KEYS TO PSA SUCCESS

- **a good fit with your message**
- **a long-term commitment**
- **adequate funding and in-kind support**
- **specific goals**
- **coordination with other prevention activities**
- **audience research**
- **a persuasive message**
- **the right media channel**
- **cooperation with local broadcasters and ad managers**
- **support from other activities**

Florida's six-year **Education Now and Babies Later** campaign seeks to promote abstinence among fifth and sixth graders through TV and radio ads, along with other activities.

The Idaho Governor's Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention runs a campaign, **Sex Lasts a Moment, Being a Parent Lasts Your Whole Life.** They want to reach 95 percent of Idaho teens ages 12-17 with a message to delay sexual activity.

Other campaigns have linked their goals to those of related health promotion campaigns:

The **Michigan Abstinence Partnership** targets 9- to 15-year-olds and their parents with a message of abstinence from sex, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.

The Mississippi State Department of Health's **Take Care Campaign** seeks to reduce teen pregnancy and infant mortality rates by encouraging teens, especially sexually active teens, to take care of their health by protecting themselves from the consequences of unprotected sex.

Because behavior change—the ultimate goal of many PSA campaigns—is so hard to achieve, it is a good idea to set interim goals, as well. These may be related to the process of creating the PSA campaign or may be measures of how widely and well your messages reach the target audience.

The interim goal for Idaho's Sex Lasts a Moment, Being a Parent Lasts Your Whole Life campaign is to achieve a better than 70 percent message recall rate among the target audience.

Coordinate your PSA campaign with other prevention activities

Your PSA campaign should be part of a larger, integrated initiative. Campaigns are most effective when they are combined with other programs at the local level. If you want your PSAs to motivate your audience to do something, you must offer them opportunities, support, or more information if they are to take the next step.

Invest in audience research

Investing the time and resources to learn about your target audience and to test your messages with them is absolutely critical. The material earlier in this chapter can help you plan ways to carry out this task.

Craft a persuasive message

A PSA campaign is like any other ad campaign: you are selling something. However, selling a change in behavior (social marketing) is much harder than

getting someone to change his or her brand of toothpaste (commercial marketing). Social marketing has the great challenge of changing deeply ingrained attitudes and behaviors. Behaviors related to teen pregnancy are influenced by many factors, too many to be greatly affected by media messages alone. If your goal is to change your audience's long-term behavior, commercial marketing techniques suggest you follow these steps in crafting your message (DeJong & Winsten, 1998):

- Highlight the seriousness of the problem and get the audience to reevaluate their own risk. For example, make it clear to lawmakers that the high rate of teen pregnancy contributes to all kinds of social problems, or that it means teens will likely remain poor as adults.
- Anticipate the audience's resistance to the message and present the advantages of the changed behavior. Tell boys that being sexually responsible is what makes them men.
- Teach behavior skills. It is not enough to tell teens to "say no." Show them behaviors to emulate.
- Build the audience's self-confidence about being able to make the change. Convince teens that talking to their partners about condoms is not too embarrassing.
- Show them that their peers are adopting the behavior. Use teen voices or actors or cite survey results.

FIELD NOTES

Message DOs and DON'Ts for PSA campaigns

Practitioners who have worked with teens on message development offer these tips:

- Scare tactics and negative images can backfire.
- Teens do not like to think of themselves as teens. Teens and preteens are more receptive to messages from people two or three years older than themselves.
- Use images that are visually similar to what teens usually watch (music videos and action movies).
- Immediate consequences (tonight, tomorrow) are far more real to some teens than long-term ones.

Reprinted with permission from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (1997a). Sending the message: State-based media campaigns for teen pregnancy prevention. *Washington, DC: Author.*

- Create a buzz. Use complementary strategies (focus groups, previews, T-shirts, etc.) to stimulate conversation among your target audience so that your message will find a larger audience.

Select the type of media for your PSA

Consider a number of factors, including the type of message (Does it lend itself to visual expression?), the audience's preferences (Do they listen to a lot of radio? Will they see the billboards?), the resources available (Has a graphic designer offered free services?), and cost (Can you afford a sustained TV campaign?). Each medium has its advantages and its limitations.

Television

TV is great for expressing clear, uncomplicated, and visual messages. A well-placed ad can reach a large and broad audience quickly. However, it can be expensive to produce TV PSAs and even more expensive to secure *quality* air time, because broadcasters offer free time at odd hours and charge high rates for prime spots.

The Family Health Council's **Break the Silence** campaign in Pittsburgh has negotiated a good mix of paid and free radio and TV air time, as well as reduced fees from a professional ad agency.

Radio

Because radio enjoys a disproportionately large youth audience, it is a particularly good way to reach teens. Radio audiences are often highly segmented by age, race, culture, and geography, which can be a benefit if you want to reach a very specific group. Radio time is much cheaper than TV time, and a campaign can submit a 15- or 30-second script to be read by a radio personality.

Print

Although they often command less attention, print advertisements are good for reaching policymakers and community opinion leaders. They are better suited for delivering more complicated and detailed messages. Other forms of print materials —pamphlets, feature articles in community newspapers, and posters—offer similar advantages and provide opportunities for the audience to reread and reflect on your messages.

Nontraditional media

Campaigns have found other creative and cost-efficient venues. Billboards, bus boards, videotapes, newsletters, community-access cable, promotional items, comic books, photo-novellas, and the Internet are among the many other ways to get a message out.

The Kansas **Children's Service League** runs PSAs in Topeka-area movie theaters using messages created by teen focus groups.

Work with local broadcasters and advertising managers

Getting your PSA accepted involves negotiating free or reduced rates with those people who decide what to print or air. As business people, local broadcasters are unlikely to air controversial spots. They like PSAs with a tie-in to a community institution or event. Many of them welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the campaign messages, PSAs, and related products and events. Consider asking one station in your area to sponsor your campaign. That way your message will be assured good air time, and the station will reap the benefit of community recognition.

Bolster your PSA campaign with other activities

Because PSA campaigns are more likely to be effective if they are supported by complementary activities, teen pregnancy prevention initiatives have integrated their media strategies with other programs and events at the community level.

PSAs developed by the **Scott County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign** in Eastern Iowa offer a hotline number and a resource packet to help parents and teens talk about sexual issues.

Nevada Public Health Foundation's abstinence-based campaign encourages parent and teen involvement in Community Action Teams throughout the state.

The **Pregnancy: It's Not for Me** campaign by the Family Planning Council of Southeast Pennsylvania is supported by extensive programs in local high schools and middle schools.

The **Ohio Family and Children First Initiative** is launching a state-wide abstinence-based campaign and encouraging counties to develop their own local campaigns using Wellness Block Grants from the state.

Iowa's **Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign** kicks off a new ad campaign each May during Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month.

The **Lincoln-Lancaster (NE) Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Coalition** gives state legislators cardboard "Remember Me" Dolls with representative stories about teen mothers.

Conclusion

Media campaigns designed to change behavior require a long-term commitment: Cutting the smoking rate in half among adults took nearly 40 years of intense media and nonmedia work. Your work can keep a teen pregnancy prevention message in the air and on the minds of teens and adults, and, over time, help make a difference in your community's teen pregnancy rates.

References

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Campbell, J., & Nelson-Weaver, J. (1997). *Public awareness for adolescent pregnancy prevention: A guide for involving communities.* Columbia, SC: South Carolina Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.

DeJong, W., & Winsten, J. (1998). *The media and the message: Lessons learned from past public service campaigns.* Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Kirby, D. (1997). *No easy answers: Research findings on programs to reduce teen pregnancy.* Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Media Campaign Resource Center, Office on Smoking and Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1995). *Media campaign resource book for tobacco control.* Rockville, MD: Author.

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National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (1997c). *Snapshots from the front-line: Lessons about teen pregnancy prevention from states and communities.* Washington, DC: Author.

Schlitt, J., & Jennings, P. (1993). *Creating public awareness for adolescent pregnancy prevention: A manual for state and community campaigns.* Washington, DC: Southern Regional Project on Infant Mortality.

Programs and resources mentioned in this chapter

Age of Consent Campaign
Catawba County Social Services
PO Box 669
Newton, NC 28658
(828) 326-5636
Fax: (828) 322-2497

Break the Silence
Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention
Family Health Council, Inc.
960 Penn Avenue, Suite 600
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 288-2130
Fax: (412) 288-9036

Campaign for Our Children
Hal Donofrio, Executive Director
Campaign for Our Children
120 W. Lafayette St.
Suite 1200
Baltimore, MD 21201
(410) 576-9000
Fax: (410) 528-8809

Don't Kid Yourself
Montana Department of Health and Human Services
Family Planning
1400 Broadway
Cogswell Building
Helena, MT 59620
(406) 444-7331
Fax: (406) 444-2606

Kansas Children's Service League
3616 SW Topeka Boulevard
Topeka, KS 66611
(785) 274-3100
Fax: (785) 274-3181

Lincoln-Lancaster (NE) Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Coalition
PO Box 5009
Lincoln, NE 68505
(402) 441-7716
Fax: (402) 441-6824

Nevada Public Health Foundation
One East First Street, Suite 806
Reno, NV 89501
(702) 323-3325
Fax: (702) 323-3378

Not Me, Not Now
John Riley, Director
Monroe County Department of Communications and Special Events
39 West Main St.
Suite 204
Rochester, NY 14614
(716) 428-2380
Fax: (716) 428-3268
www.notmenotnow.org

Ohio Family and Children First Initiative
65 East State Street, 9th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-0011
(614) 466-1822
Fax: (614) 728-3504

Pregnancy: It's Not for Me
Family Planning Council of Southeast Pennsylvania
260 South Broad Street, Suite 1000
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 985-2619
Fax: (215) 732-1252

Scott County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Campaign
Maternal Health Center
852 Middle Road, #11369
Bettendorf, IA 52722
(319) 359-6633
Fax: (319) 359-5261

Sex Lasts a Moment, Being a Parent Lasts Your Whole Life
Idaho Governor's Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention
Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
450 West State
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720
(208) 334-5957
Fax: (208) 334-6573

Take Care
Department of Reproductive Health
Mississippi State Department of Health
2423 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39215

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative
The California Wellness Foundation
6320 Canoga Ave., Suite 1700
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
(818) 593-6600
Fax: (818) 593-6614
www.tcwf.org.

Partnership for Responsible Parenting
Julie B. Linderman, Public Health Education Consultant
California Department of Human Services
714 P St., Room 440
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 657-2949
Fax: (916) 657-1608

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
2100 M St., N.W., Suite 300
Washington DC 20037
(202) 261-5655
www.teenpregnancy.org

Other useful resources

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's Technical Assistance Bulletins:

- *Identifying the Target Audience*, June 1997
- *Urban Youth Public Education for the African American Community*, June 1997
- *Developing Effective Messages and Materials for Hispanic/Latino Audiences*, June 1997
- *Communicating Appropriately with Asian and Pacific Islander Audiences*, June 1997
- *You Can Increase Your Media Coverage*, September 1994

Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
(800) 729-6686

Sample discussion outline for a focus group with teens

DISCUSSION GUIDE

I. Introductions, Explanation, Ground Rules (5 minutes)

A. Moderator introduces her/himself and explains project's purpose. *We are working with an organization in Washington, D.C., and some folks there are interested in hearing your thoughts and opinions about some issues that teenagers face, deal with, or are concerned about. More of the topic will unfold.*

B. Explain focus group process. *A research method for collecting data similar to surveys, except that rather than asking and answering questions on a one-on-one basis, questions are posed to the whole group and all are asked to respond and talk to each other. Ask respondents to explain why they are here and what is expected; define "opinion:" it's what you think or feel.*

C. Explain ground rules.

Audio- and video-taping: review and summarize your thoughts in a report; consent forms: "what you say is very important to us."

Assure confidentiality and stress importance of honest opinions - relax and be comfortable.

Pace of discussion is controlled: move from topics, and allow all an opportunity to speak.

This is not school and we are not teachers.

No rules about appropriate language.

Do not need to raise hands, but need to speak loudly, clearly, and one at a time.

Agree/Disagree: speak up; no right or wrong answers.

One-way mirror and observers.

D. Respondent introductions. *Names, grades/ages, school attending, what enjoy doing for fun, and icebreaker as appropriate.*

II. Saliency of Teen Pregnancy as a Problem (Group Formation) (10 minutes)

A. What types of things are important to you in your life right now - things that you think a lot about or are concerned about?

LISTEN FOR: school/education, drugs, family problems, poverty, violence, finances.

PROBE: Try and think of what the number-one issue that you most worry about is.

PROBE FOR: sexual pressures and associated problems, i.e., pregnancy, STDs, AIDS.

B. [IF IT EMERGES IN DISCUSSION:] Some people mentioned thinking about or worrying about sex or things related to sex, like pregnancy or AIDS. What worries you about sex? How much does it worry you - a lot, somewhat, or just a little? Why?

PROBE FOR: getting pregnant, doing it because someone wants you to, not doing it and feeling left out, getting STDs/AIDS, getting a reputation.

III. Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors about Preventing Teen Pregnancy (15 minutes)

A. So... [IF MENTIONED] some of you consider teen pregnancy something that is pretty important - something that concerns you or that you worry about. I am curious... How much of a "problem" is teen pregnancy in your school? ...in your family? ...in your life?

PROBE: Does anyone have friends who have babies?

PROBE: Do you know anyone around your age who has a baby?

B. Why do you think some teens get pregnant? What are the reasons they might give? Do you think there are some teenagers who *want* to get pregnant? Why is that do you think? What are the reasons to *not* get pregnant as a teenager?

C. How concerned are you about *teen pregnancy* compared with some of the other issues people mentioned? How much does it worry you - a lot, somewhat, or just a little? Why? How do you think pregnancy is related to or similar to these other issues? How is it different from the other issues?

D. Where do you go, or whom do you talk to, about some of these things you have mentioned - some of the things that are related to sex and pregnancy?

LISTEN FOR: friends, parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, et al.

PROBE: How do teens talk about teen pregnancy? What kinds of words do you use? What kinds of things do you say?

PROBE: Whom do you listen to about this issue? Who influences your attitudes or your opinions? ...Peers? ...Parents? ...Teachers? ...Other adults? ...Music and media?

E. Has anyone heard or read about a recent study that found teen pregnancy is down in the United States - that it has fallen to the lowest levels in 20 years? If so, what do you remember thinking about that? Do you think it's true? Why or why not?

F. Would you agree or disagree that teen pregnancy is something that can be *prevented*? If so, how? Why do you believe that? What do you think can be done about it? How would you go about trying to stop it? What do you think it will take to solve the problem of teen pregnancy?

IV. Barriers to and Motivations for Preventing Teen Pregnancy (20 minutes)

A. What are the most common ways teenagers can prevent teen pregnancy? Which are most effective?

LISTEN FOR: contraceptive methods and abstinence.

PROBE: What words do you use to describe contraceptive methods and abstinence?

B. [FOR CONTRACEPTIVES:] Some of you mentioned various kinds of pregnancy prevention methods that people use. What are some of the most popular contraceptives, do you think? Why do you think some teenagers use contraceptives? Why do you think some teenagers do not use contraceptives?

C. [FOR ABSTINENCE:] Some of you mentioned not having sex as a way to prevent pregnancy. Why do you think some teens choose to not have sex? Why do some teens choose to have sex? Do you think this is an easy choice to make? Why or why not?

FOR SEXUALLY-EXPERIENCED GROUPS:

D. Do you know if many of your friends are having sex? How do you know that they are having sex? How do you feel about that?

E. We know that at your age, some teenagers choose to have sex and others choose to not have sex. Without necessarily telling your personal story here today, could you tell me why teens like you have sex? For example, what reasons would your friends give?

F. Do you think a typical teenager who has sex *always* uses a contraceptive method, such as [NAME SOME MENTIONED]? What do you think can get in the way for someone who *wants* to use a contraceptive method, but doesn't always? Have you ever used any of these contraceptive methods? If so, why did you use it? If not, why didn't you use it?

FOR SEXUALLY-INEXPERIENCED GROUPS:

D. Do you think most of our friends are currently having sex or not having sex? Why do you think that? How do you feel about that? What age do you feel most teenagers first have sex?

E. We know that at your age, some teenagers choose to have sex and others choose to not have sex. The people in this room told the person who invited them to attend this group interview that they have not had sex. Without necessarily telling your personal story here today, could you tell me some reasons why teens like you have chosen to not have sex?

F. Which do you think is an easier decision to make - to have sex or to postpone sex? Why? What kinds of things do you think can make it difficult for someone who has made a decision - either way - to stick with it?

FOR MIXED SEXUALLY-EXPERIENCED GROUPS:

D. Do you think most of our friends are currently having sex or not having sex? Why do you think that? How do you feel about that? What age do you feel most teens first have sex?

E. We know that at your age, some teenagers choose to have sex and others choose to not have sex. Some people in this room told the person who invited them to attend this group interview that they have not had sex and some indicated that they did have sex. If you feel comfortable talking about it, can you talk a little bit about that? Try and explain what some of the reasons are why you have chosen to either have sex or not have sex.

F. Which do you think is an easier decision to make - to have sex or to postpone sex? Why? What kinds of things do you think can make it difficult for someone who has made a decision - either way - to stick with it?

V. Ten Things about Teen Pregnancy (15 minutes)

[ASK ONLY IF NOT ELICITED WELL ENOUGH THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW]

A. Imagine that you are talking to a group of other teenagers who are around your age. What is the one most important thing you would want to say to them about teen pregnancy and teen pregnancy prevention?

ACTION: Go around the room and ask each participant to respond.

B. OK. Now imagine that you are talking to a group of adults - parents, teachers, and other adults you interact with. What is the one most important thing you would want to say to them about teen pregnancy and teen pregnancy prevention?

ACTION: Go around the room and ask each participant to respond.

VI. Acknowledgements and Conclusions

ACTION: Provide NCPTP www address: www.teenpregnancy.org.

Reprinted from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (1999). *What about the teens? Research on what teens say about teen pregnancy.* Washington, DC: Author.

Sample media messages for a teen pregnancy prevention initiative

Here are 9 messages developed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy that can help to reduce teen pregnancy. Some are directed to teens and others to parents and other adults. Each message suggests a specific action, conveys an important idea, or encourages a particular point of view. Based on sound research and data, these messages emanate from two ideas that are at the heart of the entire National Campaign:

- **Teen pregnancy is not "okay."** Adolescence is for education and growing up, not pregnancy and parenthood. Children need adult parents, not parents who are children themselves.
- **There are only two ways to avoid pregnancy: either do not have sex at all, or use contraception very carefully. Teens must actively choose one or the other.** Public opinion overwhelmingly supports abstinence as the desired standard for teens still in school; there is also strong support for sexually active teens having access to contraception.

Building on these two core ideas, here are the messages:

1. Teens want to know what adults think about sex, love, and what the difference is. Take a position, be specific, and start early. Talk with teens about values, not just body parts. Research shows that parents and other adults have more influence on teens' sexual decision-making than they think. Teens say in surveys that they want to hear from their parents about sex, love, and relationships.

2. Talk to boys as well as girls. The one million teen girls who got pregnant last year didn't do it alone. We have to talk to our boys as well as our girls about consequences, responsibility, sex, love, and values.

3. Not everyone is "doing it." It is okay to delay, and many teens do just that. Only about half of teens under 20 have had intercourse, and the majority report that they wish they had waited longer to begin having sex. In fact, recent data show a slight but important decline in the percentage of teens who report ever having had sex.

4. Younger girls should not date boys who are much older. Among mothers aged 15-17, about one in four (27 percent) has a partner who is at least 5 years older. Teen girls who date much older boys are less likely to use contraception and are more likely to have unwanted first sex.

5. Have a plan. Know what you are going to do "in the moment." Finding yourself in a sexually charged situation is not unusual; you need to think about how you'll handle it in advance—and how to avoid difficult situations altogether. The vast majority of teens report that their first sexual intercourse was unanticipated and unplanned. More than 80 percent of pregnancies among girls aged 15-17 are unplanned.

6. It only takes once. A big myth among teens is that pregnancy cannot happen the "first time." In fact, 20 percent of teen pregnancies happen in the *first month* of sexual activity, and 50 percent happen in the first six months of sexual activity. Communication between the partners is often poor; sex is almost always unplanned and sporadic; denial and guilt may impede using protection; and the mechanics of securing protection may be unfamiliar. The message is: **use protection *every* time.**

7. Do not be afraid of contraception. A recent Kaiser Foundation survey confirmed what many professionals who work with young people have always suspected: that a basic distrust of contraception lies behind a lot of teen pregnancy. Young people eagerly spread rumors about terrible contraceptive side-effects, while those who use contraception with no ill effects remain silent.

8. You do not have to have sex to keep a boyfriend. You do not have to have sex to be popular. You do not have to have sex unless and until you decide to. A recent Ms. Magazine poll found that 3 out of 4 teenaged girls said they had sex "because my boyfriend wants me to." Girls need help to resist the pervasive pressure to have sex.

9. Having a baby does not make you a man. Acting responsibly does. Many teen boys feel pressure to have sex and get girlfriends pregnant. They need encouragement and support to abstain from sex or use protection every time.

Sample media advisory

THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

Media Advisory
April 13, 1999

Contact: Bill Albert, 202-261-5655
Director of Communications

SEX AND TEENS: ARE PEERS GETTING A BAD RAP?

New research, polling data, and advice for teens and parents to be released

Winners of *Teen People* Public Service Campaign Contest Also Announced

What: **New research and polling data**—released by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy—on the *surprising* ways peers affect adolescent sexual debut and pregnancy will be discussed at a press conference to kick off May as National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month. New analysis of peer-led and peer-support groups will also be discussed.

New national and state-by-state teen pregnancy and birth data—released the same day by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Alan Guttmacher Institute, an independent research organization—will also be discussed.

Two new consumer pamphlets—ten things teens want parents to know and ten things teens want other teens to know about teen pregnancy—will be released.

Winning entries will be unveiled in the "Take a Stand Against Teen Pregnancy" contest, which challenged teens to create their own teen pregnancy prevention media ads.

When: **10:30 am, Thursday, April 29, 1999**

Where: 2222 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC

Speakers: Reps. Michael Castle (R-DE) and Nita Lowey (D-NY), Co-Chairs of the National Campaign's House Advisory Panel.

National Campaign Chairman, and former New Jersey Governor, Tom Kean

National Campaign President Isabel Sawhill

National Campaign Director Sarah Brown

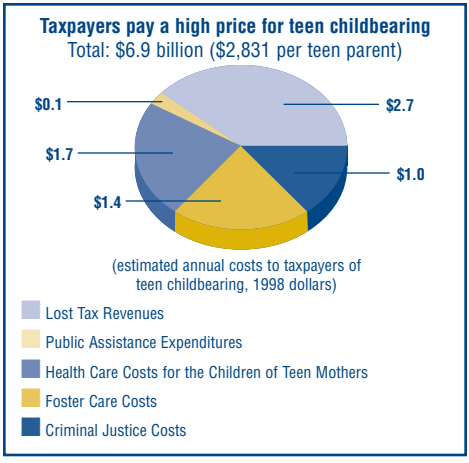
Teen People Executive Editor Amy Paulsen

Researchers Peter Bearman, Ph.D., Susan Philliber, Ph.D., and B. Bradford Brown, Ph.D.

About the National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Founded in 1996, the National Campaign is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third between 1996 and 2005.

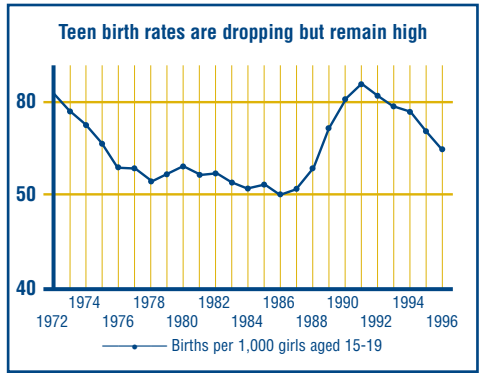
Sample facts and stats sheet

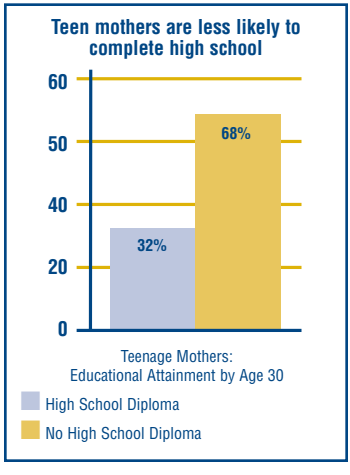


How bad is the problem?

- The United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and births in the western industrialized world. Teen pregnancy costs the United States at least $7 billion annually.[1]
- More than 4 out of 10 young women become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20-nearly one million a year.[2] Eight in ten of these pregnancies are unintended[3] and 80 percent are to unmarried teens.[4]

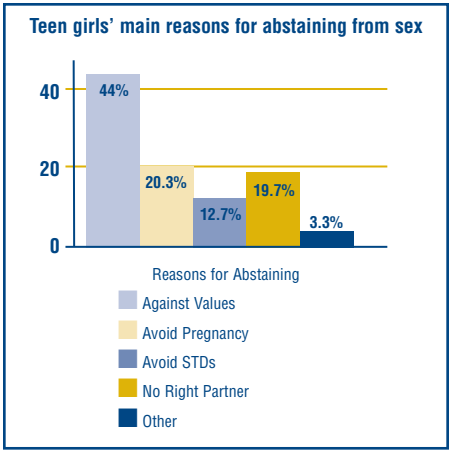
- The teen birth rate has declined slowly but steadily for 6 years. In 1986, the birth rate reached 50.2 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19, its lowest point in more than half a century. Between 1986 and 1991, the teen birth rate rose by one-fourth, peaking at 62.1 per 1,000 females in 1991. Since 1991, the rate has declined by approximately 16 percent, to 52.3 per 1,000 in 1997.
- The younger a sexually experienced teenaged girl is, the more likely she is to have had unwanted or non-voluntary sex. Close to four in ten girls who had first intercourse at 13 or 14 report it was either non-voluntary or unwanted.[5]





Who suffers the consequences?

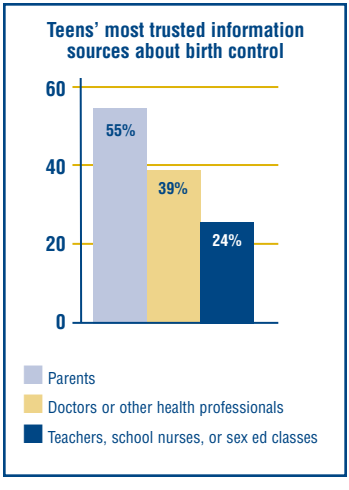
- Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school (only one-third receive a high school diploma)[6] and more likely to end up on welfare (nearly 80 percent of unmarried teen mothers end up on welfare).[7] The children of teenage mothers have lower birth weights,[8] are more likely to perform poorly in school,[9] and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect.[10] The sons of teen mothers are 13 percent more likely to end up in prison while teen daughters are 22 percent more likely to become teen mothers themselves.[11]



What helps prevent teen pregnancy?

- The primary reason that teenage girls who have never had intercourse give for abstaining from sex is that having sex would be against their religious or moral values. Other reasons cited include desire to avoid pregnancy, fear of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD), and not having met the appropriate partner.[12]
- Teenagers who have strong emotional attachments to their parents are much less likely to become sexually active at an early age.[13]
- Most people say teens should remain abstinent but should have access to contraception. Ninety-five percent of adults in the United States-and 85 percent of teenagers-think it important that school-aged children and teenagers be given a strong message from society that they should abstain from sex until they are out of high school. Almost 60 percent of adults also think that sexually active teenagers should have access to contraception.[14]

- Contraceptive use among sexually active teens has increased but remains inconsistent. Two-thirds of teens use some method of contraception (usually a condom) the first time they have sex.[15] A sexually active teen who does not use contraception has a 90 percent chance of pregnancy within one year.[16]
- Parents rate high among many teens as trustworthy and preferred information sources on birth control. One in two teens say they "trust" their parents most for reliable and complete information about birth control, only 12 percent say a friend.[17]
- Teens who have been raised by both parents (biological or adoptive) from birth have lower probabilities of having sex than teens who grew up in any other family situation. At age 16, 22 percent of girls from intact families and 44 percent of other girls have had sex at least once.[18] Similarly, teens from intact, two-parent families are less likely to give birth in their teens than girls from other family backgrounds.[19]



ENDNOTES

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