

Involving Parents and Other Adults in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Why involve parents in teen pregnancy prevention? Because communication is key

Here are just a few of the comments and questions heard by the teacher of an upstate New York parent-child communications class:

- “My teen does not want to hear from me.”
- “My daughter thinks she knows it all already.”
- “I think my son is having sex. How can I get him to talk to me without scaring him off?”

She hears parents complain about feeling powerless in the face of a media and music culture that promotes risk-taking behavior among young people. Parents feel as though their opinions do not matter to their teens, and that their values mean little to their children.

Studies show, however, that these parents are mistaken. Children want to talk with their parents. A solid relationship between a teen and his or her parents is consistently related to healthy emotional functioning and self-esteem. When the topic is sex, parents are even more

important in helping their children make the right decisions.

It is *ongoing, sustained* communication between parents and their teens that helps prevent teen pregnancy, as well as a host of other risky behaviors. For example, the more parents talk to their children about responsible decision-making, the less likely those children are to engage in sexual intercourse as adolescents. Studies show that teens with little support from their parents say they have more problems in school and are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs than are teens who have strong parental support (Licitra-Kleckler and Waas, 1994). Thus, the first step is helping parents and their children open the lines of communication.

A 1999 SURVEY SHOWED THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS...

Teens ranked parents as the biggest influence in their decisions about sex.

National Campaign, 1999

Program strategies to strengthen parent-teenager connectedness

Organized programs can do a lot to help parents and teens communicate more openly and lovingly. The following strategies, based on the experience of others, can help programs develop effective interventions.

Reassure parents that communication difficulties are normal

Many parents are afraid to admit they need help communicating with their children. The best programs offer parents the opportunity to share their experiences with other parents, reassuring them that they are not alone in their difficulties.

Make it convenient for parents to participate

Parents are often too busy to come out on the weekends and too tired for evening classes. Programs should consider meeting parents on their own turf by offering a parent-education program at the worksite. Any program needs to be convenient for parents.

Let parents set the agenda

Allow parents to define their own needs. This offers them a chance to gain information about issues they may be dealing with at the time. It is also important for parents to be able to ask questions without being embarrassed.

Ideas for getting parents and children to talk

- Teach parents that listening can be even more important than talking.
- Offer information about the importance of parent-child communications to parents on their own turf: at the worksite, in the home, at the gym, and at the church, synagogue, or mosque.
- Promote the value of parent-child communication among youth; encourage teens to ask their parents for information and guidance.
- Give families the courage and motivation to turn off the television and talk. Begin simply by reminding families that time spent together builds strong families.
- Develop volunteer activities for parents and children to do together: serving food at a soup kitchen or cleaning up a littered highway.
- Encourage family dinner or breakfast hours as a time for sharing experiences and personal events.
- Encourage a faith community, employer, school, or community organization to sponsor parent-child communications programs.
- Organize opportunities for parents and their teens to socialize together: a neighborhood picnic, a church social, or a school Super Bowl party.

The **Family Guidance Center** in St. Joseph's, Missouri, collects questions anonymously and answers them at the next class session. Answering the questions this way allows parents the freedom to ask about anything they want and makes class content much more meaningful.

Have teens and parents practice listening skills

Talking together in class about difficult and sometimes embarrassing issues—and learning how to listen—helps promote positive communication at home.

The **Family Guidance Center** uses a variety of ways to get parents and teens talking together, from a “Human Sexuality Board Game” to a pretend “Dear Abby” advice column activity.

Teach parents about the developmental stages of youth

Educating parents about the stages of adolescent development allows parents to better communicate with their children. It helps them get their point across effectively and helps them adjust their expectations for teen behavior.

Know the cultural norms and literacy levels of teen and parent participants

Programs should consider surveying area adults and teens

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WAYS TEENS GROW UP...

See Chapter 2 (Volume 1) “Tailoring Pregnancy Prevention Programs to Stages of Adolescent Development.”

about their values and feelings on sexual issues. This will reveal important information about what parents and their children want in discussions of sexuality and relationships.

Before they began their efforts with parents, **Plain Talk Seattle** surveyed adults and youth in the area to get a feel for their cultural values about sexual issues. Plain Talk then developed classroom activities that reflected those values.

It is also important to make communications materials as easy to understand as possible. Materials need to be appropriate for the language and literacy level of participants, allowing both parents and teens of any educational level to comprehend them. Materials should use examples or situations that reflect real-life issues and that are relevant to the community.

Innovative parent-child communication programs

Several promising parent-child communications programs have been developed in recent years. These programs tend to focus on sexual issues, but the basic message is the same no matter

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

- try a humorous approach when recruiting participants
- class size is important—too small and discussions will flop; too big and no one will have a chance to talk (try for at least 6 participants)
- try to work with parent-child couples of the same gender to help avoid embarrassment when discussing sensitive subjects like menstruation or wet dreams

what the topic: Parents and teens need to talk *together* about values, experiences, and expectations.

Cortland, New York: A Lunch 'n' Learn Work-Site Program

Reaching parents is often the greatest obstacle to success for any program. The **Zero Adolescent Pregnancy (ZAP)** program in rural Cortland, New York, decided to take their program directly to worksites. ZAP's program, called "Lunch 'n' Learn—How to Talk With Your Teens About Sex," is offered

through many area employers, both large and small.

The course is given once a week for six weeks over a brown bag lunch. It focuses on helping parents and their children develop open and honest communications. Participants are recruited directly by the employer through posters, paycheck stuffers, memos, and e-mail. Businesses are asked to participate through personal phone calls, mailings, networking, and advertising in the local newspaper.

FIELD NOTES

Diversity considerations when involving parents

- Programs that work with immigrant cultures need to get a clear picture of how parents and children deal with acculturation differently. The children may be more "Americanized" than their parents—perhaps becoming more independent as a result—and, therefore, programs that work with immigrant parents and their children need to reflect such differences.
- For many cultures and individuals, sexuality is very private. It may not be possible to start the discussion with sexuality or pregnancy prevention. A better tack may be to start with less-charged topics, probe for sensitivities, and gradually move to issues related to sexuality.
- Some minority cultures have had negative experiences with the way contraception and birth control have been promoted in their communities. Programs need to know this history.
- There may be parents in the class who were themselves teen parents. Programs need to be sensitive to this.

ZAP's facilitator conducts a survey of participants before the first class. Topics requested by parents have included:

- peer pressure and dating;
- family planning;
- sexual decisionmaking and values;
- STDs/AIDS;
- homosexuality;
- masturbation;
- puberty; and
- sexual assault and rape.

To break the ice, the facilitator encourages participants to bring pictures of their children and share funny stories. During the class itself, ZAP offers parents precise information on what to say and how and when to say it, as well as specific information on child and adolescent development. Although the course is called "How to Talk With Your Kids About Sex," ZAP's facilitator includes general communication issues in classroom discussion to help parents talk with their teens about all kinds of subjects.

Seattle, Washington: Plain Talk for Parents—A Community-Wide Approach

One of five community programs funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, **Plain Talk Seattle** is a community-wide campaign

to promote teen health through training workshops for parents, educators, youth workers, and health care providers. The program helps parents communicate with their children about sexual issues and relationships. Four one-hour classes are offered to parents at area schools, libraries, churches, and other similar settings. During the class, parents of children grades 4 through 12 are encouraged to share family values on sexuality and sexual relationships, and to become advocates for teen health and sexuality issues in their community. Videos, worksheets, and role plays strengthen and encourage classroom discussion.

Plain Talk Seattle has developed a complete training package and provides them to many parent and parent-school organizations and local agencies. For communities where many different languages are spoken, classes are offered with help from trained English as a Second Language (ESL) coaches or translators. Participants are

MANY PARENTS ARE HUNGRY FOR INFORMATION BUT HESITANT TO PARTICIPATE...

"Sometimes the courageous souls who attend are mobbed after class by those who did not. They are pumped for information and strategies for talking with their own teens."

Andrea Rankin, ZAP Director

recruited through local media and personal contacts with schools and other sponsoring agencies.

The classes offered are: Personal Boundaries, Sex on TV, Decision Making, and Healthy Neighborhoods. A survey conducted afterward is used to track the impact of the class and to gain feedback on course content, classroom activities, and printed information.

St. Joseph, Missouri: Parents and Teens Learn Together

The Family Planning Department of the **Family Guidance Center** in St. Joseph, Missouri, serves nine counties in rural northwest Missouri, an area with high rates of teen pregnancy. The Family Guidance Center offers reproductive health services and pregnancy counseling as well as sexuality and family life programs with schools and other local organizations in an area where most local schools do not offer comprehensive sexuality education.

Working with the support of parent groups, youth organizations, local religious institutions, and area educators, the Family Guidance Center offers a series of six parent-child sexuality education classes to:

- mothers and daughters aged 9-12;
- mothers and daughters aged 13-17;
- fathers and sons aged 9-12; and
- fathers and sons aged 13-17.

The first class is for parents only, offering an overview of the course and information on the role of the parent in the classroom and at home. The importance of including the nonparticipating parent is also stressed. The classes that follow cover biology, reproduction, pregnancy and childbirth, and feelings and values. Classes for parents and older teens (ages 13-17) also include information about birth control methods, breast and pelvic examinations, STDs and HIV, teenage sexual

PLAIN TALK FOR PARENTS— A SPRINGBOARD FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Many other community activities have developed as a result of Plain Talk's efforts:

- the opening of a school-linked health center
- a Plain Talk Training Institute
- a recent public policy forum on teen health issues

behavior, values clarification, and decisionmaking and communications skills.

To keep embarrassment to a minimum, the instructor places a “question box” at the back of the classroom where individual participants can place questions anonymously. The instructor answers the questions at the following week’s class session.

One of the most popular exercises has been the “Dear Abby” activity. This game helps parent-child pairs focus on decision-making and problem solving in a relevant, fun way. The class is divided into groups of two parent-child pairs. Each group is given a “Dear Abby” card with a letter asking for advice. Developing the answer allows parents and their children to begin discussing differing values, feelings, and beliefs.

Parent participants report feeling closer to their children, and say that they will continue to talk with them about sexual issues outside of class. Teen and pre-teen participants say that they develop a more positive understanding of the values and beliefs of their parents, and that they feel more comfortable talking about sexual issues with their parents after taking the class.

FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER KEYS TO SUCCESS

- **small classes**
- **real-life, relevant topics geared to specific age groups**
- **varied activities that reinforce learning and foster skills-building**
- **shared participation that creates a bond between parents and teens**

Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. is a youth organization which, for the past 50 years, has dedicated itself to helping girls become “bold, smart, and strong.” Girls Inc. serves over 350,000 girls ages 6 to 18 in over 1,000 communities across the country through educational programs that encourage girls to take risks and master challenges. Programming includes education, media literacy, health, sports, and substance abuse and pregnancy prevention.

Among its teen pregnancy prevention programs, **Growing Together** is the most important in helping parents and their daughters communicate about sex and pregnancy. In five, 90-minute classes, Growing Together works to increase communication between parents and daughters about sexuality, reinforce the idea that parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children, help parents learn how to start conversations and answer questions about

Developing a parent-child communications program

- Create a planning committee, including community leaders, members of the school community, business people, clergy, teens, and others.
- Assess community needs and values.
- Set content area and program goals. Set realistic participation targets.
- Gather materials from established programs and review. Choose the approach that will best meet identified needs.
- Learn about local PTA and public and private school systems. Enlist their support and involvement.
- Secure financial and in-kind support.
- Prepare promotional materials to show the benefit of the program to potential sponsoring agencies, business leaders, faith communities, and participants.
- Recruit and train class leaders/facilitators. Choose class sites.
- Market the program to potential sponsors and participants:
 - Circulate press releases and place advertisements with local media.
 - Make personal contacts with community organizations like the YWCA and YMCA, the PTA, and religious institutions as well as area service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, local industry councils, and human resources groups.
 - Place posters in area department stores, malls, schools, and other community gathering places.
- Prepare and order materials for classes, including videos, classroom activities, homework, and printed information.
- Develop any evaluation instruments that will be needed, such as pre- and post-course surveys.
- Make arrangements for props, audio-visual aids, and refreshments.
- Assess the program to the extent feasible. Meet with facilitators for fine-tuning and program changes.
- Follow up with mailings, a newsletter, or other communication to reinforce new skills in parent-child communications.

sexuality, and help parents and their children clarify feelings and values.

Let's Talk Month

In 1980, the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina designated October as **Let's Talk Month** to encourage parents in their role as the primary sexuality educators of their children. In 1997, **Advocates for Youth**, a national youth advocacy organization began a national promotion of Let's Talk Month, encouraging every state, community, religious institution, school, youth organization, and parent to get involved. Its extensive *Let's Talk Month Campaign Manual* offers materials, suggestions, and organizing tips for community groups.

The goals of Let's Talk Month are to provide parents with factual information, to help them feel more comfortable discussing sexual matters with their children, and to encourage ongoing communication. The typical schedule has a variety of activities, including:

- press conferences;
- film festivals;
- parent/child sexuality education seminars;
- teen parent panel discussions;
- lecture series;
- clergy conferences;
- professional training programs for educators; and
- teen theater performances.

Some communities offer special events for teens as well, such as teen essay and/or poster contests and awards for outstanding local teens. Suggestions for lecture topics include healthy relationships, being an “askable” parent, peer pressure, sexual relationships, abstinence/postponing sexual activity, HIV/STDs and other health issues, and life and career planning.

“Working together, parents and their communities can provide the information and support necessary to prepare today’s young people for their responsibilities as adults and parents of tomorrow.”

*North Carolina Gov.
James B. Hunt Jr. in his 1995
Let's Talk Month Proclamation*

Planning and carrying out a *Let's Talk Month* campaign

- Organize a community advisory board. Be sure to include representatives from all important community groups, including teens.
- Think about possible nontraditional partners, such as detention centers, group homes, child care centers, and foster parents. Send them promotional mailings.
- Encourage the mayor and city or county legislative body to endorse the campaign with an official proclamation.
- Involve the media as much as possible through press releases, feature stories, ads, interviews, and public service announcements.
- Develop a list of activities and a calendar of events.
- Schedule dates, times, and locations of all activities. Be sure to consider transportation limitations.
- Send a promotional mailing to schools, businesses, service clubs, social service agencies, religious organizations, and the local media.
- Post program listings throughout the community.
- Assess the effectiveness of each activity to the extent feasible and decide if that activity will be repeated during subsequent campaigns.
- Send a personal thank-you note to each program participant.
- Follow up with ads or a letter to the editor of the local newspaper thanking the community for its involvement.

Why involve other adults in teen pregnancy prevention? Because they make a difference one teen at a time

Parents do the best they can, but often teens need more adult involvement in their lives—particularly those kids in single-parent families or whose parents are not available to them. Studies show that involving adults in the lives of teens can be important. Teens who have adult role models are less likely to get pregnant, cause a pregnancy, or engage in substance abuse or criminal behavior.

Research also shows that even youth development programs whose primary goal is not teen pregnancy prevention may act to reduce teen pregnancy among participants (Kirby, 1997). For example, a poor, fifteen-year-old girl, whether she lives in a city or the rural American countryside, can feel powerless to make decisions that will positively influence her life. College is probably not even an option; just finishing high school will be a challenge. She has no money for transportation outside of her immediate community, and sees no alternatives for her future other than as a poor, teen parent. Who can help her and how? By focusing on education, employment, and life options, programs may reduce teen

pregnancy rates among girls like her, while helping them with other issues at the same time.

Program strategies for building relationships among teens and adults

Many of the programs working to bring adults and youth together use the following strategies to foster positive relationships. The examples mentioned here are described in more detail later in this chapter.

Offer positive role models to youth

Mentoring programs often work with teens who have few positive adult influences in their lives.

Cincinnati's **Project ASPIRE** helps teens think about the future by developing a positive relationship with a caring adult who has already been successful in starting a career. This strategy offers the student a chance to see that life holds options other than teen parenthood, crime, or a dead-end job. Project ASPIRE also focuses on helping all mentored students, even those who may not be planning on attending college, to set and meet academic goals.

Liability issues when working with adult volunteers

Safety and liability issues must be taken into consideration when developing programs that include adult involvement in the lives of youth. Screening the adults who participate in mentoring activities is necessary. Failure by a volunteer candidate to complete the screening process should be considered a red flag because it may indicate that the applicant has something to hide. The following recommendations are adapted from a guide on screening potential volunteers in youth development organizations, developed by the **National Collaboration for Youth**.

Assess the level of risk for child sexual abuse at the organization's activities based on factors such as location, frequency and duration of meetings, monitoring of activities, and parental involvement. For example, a mentoring program with activities and meetings that are held in public places, such as schools, would present a lower risk than a program with activities that occur in private homes.

FIELD NOTES

Decide what screening information is necessary to determine if a potential volunteer poses a risk for child sexual abuse:

- a past history of sexual abuse or conviction of any crime dealing with children
- a history of sexually exploitative behavior or violence
- termination from a paid or volunteer position because of misconduct with a child

Choose appropriate screening tools. Based on the level of risk, an organization may choose one of three levels of screening:

Basic screening

- information provided by the applicant
- references provided by the applicant
- personal interviews

Intermediate screening (may be necessary for programs that will involve a fair amount of unsupervised contact between volunteers and children)

- home visits
- checks against state criminal and sex offender registries

Comprehensive screening (probably not necessary for every volunteer or for every program)

- checks against FBI criminal records
- checks against national child abuse registries
- psychological evaluations

Encourage parents, adults, and schools to work together

Positive influence works best when all the sources of influence are working together.

EPIC in Buffalo, NY, helps parents and teachers work together to help children develop a positive sense of values and a strong sense of right and wrong.

The **Teen Outreach Program (TOP)** in Roanoke, VA, holds monthly family night out events to allow parents and mentors to come together in celebration of young people and their importance in the community.

Encourage long-term relationships between teens and adults

Most mentoring programs ask that mentors make a commitment of at least one year. However, many mentors and teens continue to have positive relationships long after the mentoring experience has ended.

Innovative adult involvement programs

With more and more children living in single-parent families, the involvement of an adult outside the family unit can be crucial. This section provides examples of programs that have worked in a variety of communities. Some seek to address

directly the problem of teen pregnancy; others focus on other related problems, like school failure, which are strongly associated with risk of teen pregnancy.

Cincinnati, Ohio: Project ASPIRE

In 1987, Procter & Gamble (P&G) decided to address the teen dropout rate in Cincinnati with an adult-teen mentoring project. With help from the local government, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, and the Cincinnati Public School System, P&G began its pilot project at Cincinnati's Woodward High School with 100 employees and students.

Project ASPIRE (which stands for *advise, support, prepare, inform, respect, and encourage*) is designed to "assist students in developing attitudes necessary to succeed in an academic program and to provide opportunities for personal development and success," through building self-esteem and cultivating a positive attitude toward learning. Project ASPIRE now matches over 150 students with mentors from both P&G and the community at large.

The program has a simple philosophy—one caring adult for every teen. Although a mentor's commitment is initially for one year, many mentors become

friends with their students and continue their relationship for a long time. Mentors must be confident, enthusiastic about the program, and genuinely interested in the student, and they must meet with their student at least once a month. Primary responsibilities include helping the student with study habits and school assignments, working with the student to overcome difficulties standing in the way of future success, showing the student how to use outside resources, and guiding the student in setting and reaching short- and long-term life goals.

Mentors are also in contact with the student's parents, teachers, and counselors and may receive a copy of the student's report card, attend school functions, participate in academic activities, and go to other outside events with their student. They document a

student's progress on a quarterly basis with simple forms that record specific goals set and attained, offering important feedback and encouragement.

Project ASPIRE has developed specific mentoring components to meet the needs of three different types of students—high-risk teens, career-oriented youth, and college-bound students.

For high-risk teens, mentors:

- meet with parents and teachers to set goals for the student;
- help encourage good study habits;
- offer tutoring and counseling when necessary; and
- periodically evaluate goals to attaining specific skills and attitudes.

MEASURING SUCCESS IN NUMBERS

Since Project ASPIRE began:

- **the dropout rate and the number of discipline referrals at Woodward High School have declined**

In 1990:

- **86% of ASPIRE students graduating from high school went on to college, while only 25% of non-ASPIRE students went to college**

MEASURING SUCCESS IN WORDS

“...what I like about my mentor is that I can trust him and he can help me with any problem I have.”

Terrell Larkin, a Project ASPIRE student

For work-oriented youth, mentors:

- encourage the student to participate in job-preparation programs;
- offer information on careers;
- help the teen select a course of study in high school;
- assist in developing work habits and good conduct;
- help the teen build a resume; and
- encourage the student to dress neatly and use proper language.

For college-bound students, mentors:

- help the teen prepare admissions and financial aid applications;
- visit or arrange visits to college campuses and information sessions;
- assist students in study skills and test preparation; and
- help with decisions on courses of study.

BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS WORKS

According to a rigorous evaluation, mentored teens were:

- **46% less likely to start using drugs**
- **27% less likely to begin using alcohol**
- **33% less likely to hit someone**

and they demonstrated better:

- **school attendance**
- **school performance**
- **attitudes toward completing schoolwork**
- **peer and family relationships**

than unmentored teens

Public/Private Ventures, 1996

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America is the country's oldest mentoring organization and currently maintains 100,000 active mentoring relationships nationwide. Each local Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America agency is autonomous. Affiliates adopt a set of national standards governing the screening of mentors and youth, the training of mentors, the matching process, required meeting frequency, and ongoing supervision.

Most local agencies recruit and screen volunteer mentors, screen and accept youth candidates, and carefully match youth with mentors based on background, stated preferences of youth and adults, and geographic proximity. Most matches meet for three to four hours every week. The adult volunteer is asked to commit at least one year to the match. Many agencies have alternative programs for volunteers who

cannot meet the traditional time requirement.

Boys and Girls Clubs of America

Boys and Girls Clubs of America has a long history of helping teens reach their full potential. First established in 1860 as the Boys Club, this nationally recognized organization expanded its focus to serve the needs of all youth in 1990 when it became the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Boys and Girls Clubs of America now serves some 2.8 million youth annually in over 2,000 clubs across the country.

The Clubs' **Skills Mastery and Resistance Training (SMART Moves)** and **Skills Mastery and Resistance Training for Girls (SMART Girls)** programs focus on primary prevention of drug and alcohol use and premature sexual activity among youth ages 6-15. SMART Moves is based on a team approach to prevention. Its six-component curriculum stresses life skills enrichment, resistance skills, stress reduction, parent-child communications, and community involvement. Club staff, volunteers, and community leaders are trained to provide guidance

Ten innovative ideas for involving adults with teens

1. Ask faith communities, service clubs, and employers how an organization can get involved with area youth.
2. Encourage adults to volunteer at a local school as tutors, mentors, coaches, or advisors to clubs.
3. Meet with the school district's administration to ask them how they are promoting adult involvement and teen pregnancy prevention.
4. Organize a Career Day for youth at worksites, religious institutions, schools, or service clubs.
5. Institute an internship program through worksites, religious organizations, or service clubs.
6. Help youth organizations (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, YWCA, schools) implement career planning programs.
7. Provide financial contributions to youth/teen programs or offer a scholarship to teen parents through a local community college.
8. Develop opportunities for youth to meet with adults in social settings, at schools, faith communities, and youth community centers.
9. Help develop a community center where youth and adults can meet. Arrange for intergenerational activities, community campaigns, or skills exchange programs.
10. Encourage adults to be a role model in the life of the child of a close friend or relative.

Starting and maintaining an adult-youth mentoring program

- Collect information on mentoring programs in this and other communities to learn from their experience.
- Organize a steering committee that includes parents, business leaders, youth, and other members of the community.
- Contact the local school administration to help design a program that meets the community's specific needs.
- Develop program plans, goals, and objectives.
- Establish procedures to ensure the safety of all participants.
- Choose a program coordinator who can skillfully recruit students and mentors, provide materials, suggest activities, help resolve conflicts, and evaluate the program. This person will be crucial to the program's success.
- Begin recruiting mentors.
- Recruit student candidates. Work with school administrators and teachers to target those who will benefit most from a mentoring relationship.
- Inform parents and get their permission for students to participate.
- Develop lists of suggested activities for participants.
- Set goals for program meetings.
- Develop goal-setting and feedback forms.
- Build into the program opportunities for sharing experiences, both mentor-to-mentor and student-to-student.
- Include opportunities for older students to mentor younger students.
- Offer volunteer opportunities for those who want to become involved but who may not feel comfortable entering into a mentoring relationship. These opportunities can include:
 - tutoring;
 - judging a science fair;
 - serving on a school committee;
 - speaking in a classroom; or
 - answering the phone for a student hotline.
- Check in regularly with mentors and students.
- Conduct program evaluation.

In 1983, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. adopted a resolution including sexuality education and human sexuality programming as components of the Girl Scout program.

on offering the clear and consistent “Say No” message to teens.

The similar SMART Girls program helps young girls ages 10-15 develop healthy and positive attitudes, useful life skills, and enriching lifestyles, and helps them make sound, positive decisions. Female mentors play an important role in the SMART Girls program.

Boy Scouts of America

Founded in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America provides educational programs to boys and young men that build character, citizenship, and personal fitness. Community-based organizations that have goals similar to those of Boy Scouts of America can receive a national charter to become a part of the Boy Scouts of America program. Starting with Tiger Cubs in first grade, Boy Scouts of America has family and community-based programs for boys up to young adulthood, offering participants outdoor activities, life skills training, and character education.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., the world’s largest organization for girls, is open to ages 5 to 17. Its membership totals over 2.5

million girls and over 850,000 adult members, including volunteer leaders, consultants, board members, and staff specialists. Its goal is to meet the special needs of girls in partnership with adult volunteers. Adult troop leaders help young girls live up to their full potential through self-discovery activities in science, the arts, the outdoors, and with people.

Recognizing that teen pregnancy is a serious problem, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. developed a booklet called *Contemporary Issues: Preventing Teenage Pregnancy—Decisions for Your Life*, which outlines specific teen pregnancy prevention activities for troops. These activities include:

- offering factual information to young girls about pregnancy prevention and abstaining from sexual activity; and
- fostering self-esteem and peer support among girls.

The booklet also discusses risk factors for teen pregnancy and various approaches that may help troop leaders in their prevention activities.

Other booklets in the *Contemporary Issues* series offer program suggestions for girls who may be having problems with family conflict or difficulties

in developing a positive self image. *Growing Up Female—Girls are Great* helps troop leaders deal with eating disorders, self-esteem issues, the media, school and social roles, stress, sex roles, and stereotypes. *Facing Family Crises—Caring*

and Coping offers suggestions for dealing with poverty, homelessness, divorce, remarriage, or a death in the family. Both booklets help adult troop leaders develop positive interactions with young girls.

Parents and other adults working together to benefit youth

The two programs highlighted below work to involve both parents and the broader community in the lives of children of all ages, including teens.

EPIC combines the efforts of parents and other adults

Founded in Buffalo, New York, **Every Person Influences Children, Inc. (EPIC)** is a non-profit organization that sponsors community programs throughout New York State and in other areas of the country, including North Carolina, New Jersey, Texas, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania.

EPIC seeks to draw communities together, positively influencing children and strengthening families to prevent teen pregnancy, substance abuse, crime, and juvenile dropout. EPIC offers workshops for parents and training for teachers and support staff, and it encourages collaboration among social service agencies, faith communities, governmental agencies, local businesses, and health care providers.

Workshops, led by EPIC-trained facilitators, are centered around supportive discussions that

WORKING ACROSS THE AGES AND ACROSS THE COMMUNITY TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

EPIC sponsors:

- workshops for parents
- workshops for fathers
- training for teachers and support staff
- efforts to promote collaboration among community groups

allow parents to exchange experiences and techniques. Information on child/youth developmental stages and ideas to help parents build skills are offered in manuals provided in both English and Spanish.

EPIC offers a range of workshops, in both English and Spanish, for parents of children of all ages—from toddlers to teenagers. It even offers a “Just for Fathers” workshop. For example, workshops for parents of children offer information on:

- communicating with teachers;
- structure and limits;
- coping with daily conflicts;
- rewards and punishments;
- sexuality education in the home;
- sibling rivalry;
- coping with the guilt and stress of working while parenting; and
- building character, conscience, and values.

Workshops for parents of adolescents cover:

- character development;
- communications problems and strategies;
- peer groups and friends;

- identity and independence;
- making and revising rules;
- school issues;
- teen value systems;
- emerging sexuality and teen pregnancy; and
- self-destructive thoughts and actions.

EPIC teacher and support staff training emphasizes character and life skills development. It tries to build strong home/school partnerships and help teachers identify and overcome barriers to parental involvement in the education of their children. EPIC also offers programs for child care providers of very young children.

One innovative example of EPIC’s work took place in Westchester County, NY, where the Department of Corrections recently asked EPIC to work with teens who had had their first run-in with the law. EPIC is providing its workshop for parents of young adolescents to the youths’ parents, as well as specialized joint parent-teen workshops to help the Department reach its goal of reducing recidivism by at least 15 percent.

The Teen Outreach Program

The Association of Junior Leagues International developed the nationwide **Teen Outreach**

Program (TOP) to offer at-risk youth the opportunity to volunteer their services to others in a school-based setting.

TOP offers volunteer opportunities through partnerships with the local health department, area schools, faith communities, local nursing homes, preschools, museums, area businesses, and service clubs such as the Junior League. These partners provide participants, places for volunteer activities, mentors, tutors, role models, and support in celebrating the contributions of youth.

One of the most important elements in TOP Roanoke's program is its family involvement component:

- It plans monthly celebration activities, called "Family Night Out Events," where student participants make presentations showcasing their volunteer activities to their families.
- It works to bridge the gap between home and school by encouraging parents to attend parent-teacher conferences (providing transportation and child care if necessary) and by helping families who might be struggling to communicate

MEASURING A PROGRAM'S SUCCESS BY A TEEN'S SUCCESS

J.T., a young man who often struggled with the temptation to become involved in drug dealing, volunteered with TOP to read to kindergartners in his neighborhood elementary school. His ability to inspire confidence in a shy kindergartner became his motivation to finish high school and begin a career in the military.

with school personnel. Parental ideas are always sought, from opinions on curriculum content to suggestions for volunteer activities.

One of TOP's main goals is opening lines of communication between teens and their parents. TOP Roanoke empowers parents to share personal values with their children while showing respect for their teens' decisions and values.

TOP Roanoke has a strong mentoring element as well. Adult supervisors from TOP or at the volunteer site act as mentors and role models to teen participants, offering encouragement and guidance in everyday life as well as on the job. Mentors often stay in contact with the young people long after the volunteer experiences have ended.

Conclusion

There are many ways that programs can support increased communication between parents and children and foster stronger connections between adults and young people. One thing that most successful programs have in common is that they help adults make their values known while still respecting young people's values and concerns. At the same time, they convey to youth participants the need to respect and listen to the views of the parents or adults

involved. This mutual respect, seemingly missing from the media's portrayal of youth-adult interaction, is absolutely vital for healthy communication and for healthy youth development. As research affirms, this solid foundation can help teens achieve their full and positive potential and avoid a host of problems, including too-early sexual activity, pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse.

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Public/Private Ventures. (1996).
*Executive summary: Making a
difference. An impact study of
Big Brothers/Big Sisters.*
Philadelphia, PA: author
[<http://epn.org/ppv/ppbbbs.html>].

Programs mentioned in this chapter

Advocates For Youth

Barbara Huberman
Director of Training and Sexuality
Education
1025 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 347-5700

Ask about:

- Let's Talk Month
- *Open Up, Listen Up! Family Communication about Sexual Health*
- *Talking with TV: A Guide to Starting Dialogue with Youth*
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Clearinghouse

Big Brothers/Big Sisters Of America

230 North 13th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107-1510
(215) 567-7000
www.bbbsa.org

Ask about:

- Mentoring

Boys and Girls Clubs Of America

Jan Still-Lindeman
1230 West Peachtree St., North
West
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 815-5700
Fax: (404) 815-5757

Ask about:

- SMART Moves
- SMART Girls

Boy Scouts Of America

Marilyn Herrington
1325 West Walnut Hill Ln.
Irving, TX 75015-2079
(972) 580-2224

EPIC, Inc.—Every Person Influences Children

Vito Borrello, President
State University College at Buffalo
1300 Elmwood Ave.
Cassety Hall, Room 340
Buffalo, NY 14222
(716) 886-6396
Fax: (716) 886-0221

Ask about:

- Parent and teacher communications materials
- EPIC can be purchased as a fully integrated program with training, materials, and technical assistance.

Family Guidance Center

Anne Douglas
910 Edmond St.
St. Joseph, MO 64501
(806) 364-1944

Ask about:

- Parent-child sexuality course materials
- *The Human Sexuality Game*

Girls Inc.

National Headquarters
30 East 33rd St.
New York, NY 10016-5394
(212) 509-2000
www.girlsinc.org

Ask about:

- *Growing Together* materials

Girl Scouts Of The USA

420 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10018-8000
(212) 852-8000
Fax: (212) 852-6514

Ask about:

- *Contemporary Issues: Preventing Teenage Pregnancy—Decisions for Your Life*
- *Contemporary Issues: Facing Families in Crisis—Caring and Coping*
- *Contemporary Issues: Growing Up Female—Girls are Great*

Plain Talk Seattle

Howard Martin
Manager
Park Lake Neighborhood House
10041 6th Ave., SW
Seattle, WA 98146
(206) 767-9244
Fax: (206) 767-7671
howard@neighborhoodhousewa.org

Ask about:

- *Plain Talk for Parents* curriculum and parent guide
- Plain Talk training packet and training

Project Aspire

Paula S. Long, Manager
Contributions and Community Relations
The Procter & Gamble Company
P.O. Box 599
Cincinnati, OH 45201-0599
(513) 945-8457
Fax: (513) 945-8979

Ask about:

- Project ASPIRE brochure and mentoring materials

Teen Outreach Program—Roanoke

Dr. Cheri Hartman
Family Service of Roanoke Valley
3208 Hershberger Rd., NW
P.O. Box 6600
Roanoke, VA 24017
(540) 563-5316
Fax: (540) 563-5254

Zero Adolescent Pregnancy (ZAP)

Andrea Rankin
Jacobus Center for Reproductive Health
60 Central Ave.
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 753-5088
Fax: (607) 756-3488
Andrear@co.cortland.ny.us
www.cortlandny.com/zap

Ask about:

- *How to Talk With Your Teens about Sex* program information

Other useful resources

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition

Adolescent Pregnancy and Related Health Issues Committee
409 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20024-2188
(202) 863-2458
Fax: (202) 554-4346

Ask about:

- *Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention: A Compendium of Programs*

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

Ask about:

- *Unlocking the Secret: A Parent's Guide to Communicating with your Teens*

One-To-One/The National Mentoring Project

Gail Manza, Executive Director
2801 M St., NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 338-3844
www.mentoring.org

Ask about:

- National Collaboration for Youth guide: *Screening Volunteers to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Community Guide for Youth Organizations*
- *ABCs of Mentoring Kit*
- *Partnerships for Success: A Mentoring Program Manual*
- *The Mentoring Training Curriculum*

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

2100 M St., NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 261-5655
www.teenpregnancy.org

Ask about

- *Ten Tips for Parents to Help Their Children Avoid Teen Pregnancy*
- *Families Matter: A Research Synthesis of Family Influences on Teen Pregnancy*
- *Snapshots from the Front Line II: Lessons from Programs That Involve Parents and Other Adults in Teen Pregnancy Prevention*

Project Taking Charge

American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
1555 King St., 4th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 706-4600

Ask about:

- The *Project Taking Charge* family life curriculum for young adolescents

Search Institute

700 South Third St., Suite 210
 Minneapolis, MN 55415-1138

(612) 376-8955

Fax: (612) 376-8956

www.search-institute.org

Ask about:

For parents—

- *150 Ways to Show Teens You Care*
- *Creating Intergenerational Community*
- *Ideas for Parents*
- *It Takes More Than Love*
- *Living with 10- to 15-Year-Olds*
- *Parenting with a Purpose*
- *Starting Out Right*
- *What Teens Need to Succeed*

For other adults—

- *101 Asset-building Ideas*
- *All Teens Are Our Teens*
- *A Portrait of Young Adolescents in the 1990s*
- *Working Together for Youth*
- *Understanding Early Adolescence*

SIECUS

Sexuality Information Catalogues

SIECUS Publications

130 West 42nd St., Suite 350

New York, NY 10036-7802

(212) 819-9770

www.siecus.org

Ask about:

- *How to Talk to Your Children about AIDS booklet*
- *Talk about Sex*
- *Now What Do I Do?*

(These resources are also available in Spanish.)