

AFTERSCHOOL ALERT

ISSUE BRIEF



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Afterschool and Pregnancy Prevention

Though teen pregnancy rates in the United States have dropped within the past decade, the teen birth rate in the U.S. is still higher than any other developed nation.¹ A recent study has found that youth who do not spend time in extracurricular activities after school are 37% more likely to become teen parents than are youth who spend time in afterschool programs, and that the most common time for youth to have sexual intercourse is in the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.² Afterschool programs help prevent teen pregnancy by encouraging good decision-making and providing youth health education and positive role models in a supervised setting after school.

Promoting Sound Judgment

Many programs help reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy by encouraging youth to make good decisions and providing them with positive role models.

Chattanooga, Tennessee

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department and the Tennessee Department of Human Services partnered to create the Harriet Tubman Express afterschool program as a way to reduce teen pregnancy. The program encourages pregnancy prevention and the development of life skills through activities which teach youth about sexuality, increase self-esteem and provide alcohol and drug abuse education. An important component of the program is providing youth with positive role models who encourage achievement and alternatives to teen pregnancy.³

Forest Grove, Oregon

Four middle schools have started Wise Guys afterschool clubs which educate boys on healthy relationships and reproductive health. The abstinence-based program engages boys in discussions on values and sexuality. Wise Guys clubs started in Greensboro, North Carolina, where many boys who went through the program now say they are abstinent.

When kids are healthy, and they have goals for the future, they're less likely to engage in high-risk behavior.

-Conrad Sieber, psychologist, Forest Grove School District⁴

Offering Health Education

Several programs aim to raise youth awareness about the risks of sexual involvement through education and discussions about health.

Taunton, Massachusetts

Taunton Reaching Youth, a community-based teen pregnancy prevention program comprised of educators, police officers, doctors and parents, have created an afterschool program called "Hot Topics" for middle school youth. High school-age peer leaders guide youth through small group discussions to educate them on topics such as HIV prevention, teen parenting and drug and alcohol avoidance. The program was designed to address high teen pregnancy rates in Taunton.⁵

Plainview, Arkansas

The Plainview-Rover 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool program allows youth to experience the realities of caring for infants as part of the program's abstinence curriculum. Youth participate in the "Baby Think it Over Program," in which youth care for a doll programmed to need diaper changing, feeding and burping just as a real baby would. The program also includes open discussions on reproductive health with program staff and a "Messages from the Heart" scavenger hunt in which youth search for abstinence and drug-free messages in the media. Since implementing the program in 1997, teen pregnancy rates have dropped dramatically. In 1998, there were six teen pregnancies in the high school, in 1999 there were only three, and in 2000 there were none reported.⁶

Providing Positive Alternatives

Many communities have responded to high teen pregnancy rates by creating afterschool programs to provide supervised activities for youth after school.

San Antonio, Texas

The Martinez Street Women's Center organizes Girl World, an afterschool program exclusively for girls. The program was created as an answer to the high teen birth rate in San Antonio, which is among the highest in the nation. The program is located within walking distance of a middle school and offers girls a place to go afterschool for snacks, homework assistance and fun.

Sexual activity is a choice that 10-14 year-old girls in San Antonio are making. Girl World is trying to offer them other alternatives.

-Suzanne Martinez, Girl World program director⁷

New Orleans, Louisiana

Officials in Louisiana attribute the state's decline in teen pregnancy rates to afterschool programs such as that run by the Kuji Center, a community-based organization in New Orleans. The program targets youth ages 9- to 18-years-old who live in three nearby public housing sites. Their parents are required to sign a contract committing themselves to be active participants in the program, which meets daily. In addition to providing activities such as dance, drama and homework assistance, the program offers classes in family life and sexuality.

Children have a tendency of getting into trouble after school when parents are not at home. Our focus is on keeping them busy. We have kids here who are sure they'd be (sexually active or pregnant) if they didn't have the center in their lives.

-Jerolie Chisom, Director, Kuji Center⁸

¹ Manlove, Jennifer et al., "Preventing Teenage Pregnancy, Childbearing, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: What the Research Shows," *Child Trends Research Brief*, May 2002.

² Westat, Inc., "Adolescent Time Use, Risky Behavior and Outcomes: An Analysis of National Data," September 1995: The After-School Corporation, "After-School Programs: An Analysis of Need, Current Research, and Public Opinion," 1999.

³ Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department, "Community Health Services," 17 June 2002, <http://health.hamiltontn.org/chs/HTProg.htm>.

⁴ Parker, Paige, "Sexuality Discussion Tailored for the Boys," *The Oregonian*, 9 May 2002.

⁵ Taunton Reaching Youth, "About TRY," 3 July 2002, <http://www.tauntonreachingyouth.org/about.html>.

⁶ Blair, Leslie, "'Date Nite' Takes on a Whole New Meaning at Plainview-Rover School," *SEDLetter: Changes and Challenges for Rural Schools* 13, no. 1 (2002): (4-5).

⁷ Schement, Elisa, "It's A Girl's World: Healthy, Educational After-School Fun Offered to Youngsters," *San Antonio Express-News*, 21 March 2001.

⁸ Bronston, Barri, "Premature Parenthood," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 22 October 2001.