

Less Sex and More Contraception Result in Fewer Teen Births

The US teen birth rate has declined for the eighth year in a row, according to 1999 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since 1991, there has been a 20% decline in the US teen birth rate. The new rate of 49.6 births per 1,000 females age 15-19

is the lowest in the 60 years that such data have been recorded. The largest decline since 1991 has been among African American teens (30%) and the smallest was among Hispanic

teens (13%). However, between 1998-99 the largest decline was among American Indians. The CDC also reports a decline in the number of births to unmarried teens. New Mexico is also enjoying the positive trend, although, our rates are still among the highest in the nation and are not generally declining as quickly. This is especially true

for our Hispanic youth.

So what's happening? Actually, a number of things. Teens are being more cautious; they have taken on more conservative attitudes about sex, and they're being more responsible in their sexual activity. According to the Na-

delayed first intercourse and increased use of contraception are substantiated by an analysis of four national surveys that attempt to observe and understand the course of modern adolescent sexual and reproductive behavior. An analysis of the National Survey of Family

Growth, the National Survey of Adolescent Males, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health substantiates the trends of delayed sex and

better contraceptive use. The July/August issue of Family Planning Perspectives features the analysis of the CDC research that concluded, "the declines in sexual experience and the increase in condom use reported in these data indicate shifts toward safer and more self-protective behaviors among adoles-

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— *National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*

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The trends in the 1990s toward

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**NMTPC 2001 Conference To Be Held in Las Cruces, NM
Teen Pregnancy Prevention: New Tools and Best Practices**

April 19-20

Topics will include • Male Involvement • Medical Updates •
Media Literacy • Sexual Abuse Issues • Promising Programs and Approaches
• Drug and Alcohol Issues and much more.

Check our web site regularly for updates on presenters and workshops.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT IS NOW DUE

NMTPC membership runs from January to December. Individual membership is only \$25, organizational membership is \$50, and lifetime membership is \$150. Members receive discounts on conferences and trainings and important informational updates.

We need your support!

New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition

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We Want To Hear What Your Community is Doing in Teen Pregnancy Prevention!

Send us your stories.

Board Changes: Welcome & Thanks

Congratulations to John Stermer for being elected as Board President, Tim Lopez as Northern VP, Bernadette Jojola as Secretary, and Marc Davidson as Treasurer. New members include Leslie Andrews from Roswell, Naomi Hannah from Taos, and Leah Williams from Artesia.

Many thanks for their dedication and hard work go out to former Board members: Karen Hensley Ford, Robert Pacheco, Kristin Sharp, Alicia Moreno, and Gail Aguilar. You are all appreciated!

New Position Paper

The NMTPC Board of Directors has updated its position on the public dialog regarding *Abstinence-based vs. Abstinence-only Sexuality Education*. The 2000-01 Board wishes to acknowledge and be respectful of the differing opinions held on this sensitive topic. Considerable thought and research was invested in the creation of this document and it now stands as our organization's position on the subject. The entire position paper can be found on pages 9 and 10 and may be reprinted. You may also contact our office for additional copies.

We've Moved!

The NMTPC office has a new home with new phone and fax numbers, however **our mailing address will remain the same**. Here's the new information.
**540 Chama NE, Suite 5,
Albuquerque, NM 87108
Phone: 254-8737
Fax: 254-8741**

Do You Still Want to Receive NMTPC mailings? If so, you **MUST** contact us! See back page for details.

New Mexico's Challenge

At our February 2000 conference, NMTPC issued a challenge to the people of New Mexico to reduce teen births by 20% by the year 2005. With support from the New Mexico Department of Health/Family Planning Program, a publication was created that provides county-by-county statistics and information on existing programs. **Challenge 2005: Reducing Teen Pregnancy in New Mexico**, is available from NMTPC or through the Family Planning Office in Santa Fe (476-8595). For a quick look at your individual county data, check the map on page 6.

NMTPC is offering technical assistance to counties requesting support in reaching their individual goal. We are dedicated to supporting county-level teen pregnancy prevention efforts by providing training and resources. Call and let us know how we can help.

Have you checked out our web site lately? www.flash.net/~nmtpc

More Teens Just Say, “No”

By Tom Kean, Chair of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and former New Jersey Governor and Isabel Sawhill, President of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

The recent release of new government data showing yet another annual decline in the birth rates among teenagers was met with a collective yawn. Let's face it, reductions in teen pregnancy and teenage births are becoming old news. Starting in the early '90s, rates of teenage pregnancy and teenage births have been declining steadily – led by less sexual activity and better contraceptive use. But one critical question remains unanswered: Why are the rates declining?

New research suggests that one of the primary reasons is that teenagers are taking a more cautious attitude toward casual sex. A report recently released by the Urban Institute shows that today's high school students are taking fewer health risks overall than a decade ago – including an unprecedented decline in the '90s in the proportion of high school students who have had sex.

Not only are more teenagers delaying sex but those who are having sex are much more likely to use birth control. Both factors have contributed to the decline in pregnancy and birthrates. But it is more conservative attitudes about sex that are most newsworthy. If these attitudes spread, we could see further declines in teen births. Since half of first out-of-wedlock births occur among teenagers, and these births are the major contributor to the growth of single-parent families and to child

poverty, efforts by parents, faith-based communities and the media to reinforce this growing sense of responsibility should be welcomed.

The Urban Institute report is only the most recent entry in a growing body of evidence that more teenagers are saying, “Sex can wait.” Consider the following:

According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report released in June, the percentage of high school boys who have had sex plummeted from 61 percent in 1990 to 52 percent in 1999. The proportion of high school girls who reported having had sex dipped below half in 1999.

Older teenagers seem to share in this more cautious attitude. A record low 40 percent of college freshman (down from 52 percent in 1987) believe that “if two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've know each other for a very short time,” according to an annual survey conducted by University of California at Los Angeles.

Nearly two-thirds of teenagers who have had sex wish they had waited longer, according to a just released nationally representative poll conducted for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Perhaps most surprising, nearly 6 in 10 teenagers say sex is not acceptable for high school-age teenagers, according to a National Campaign poll. More-

over, 93 percent of teenagers say that it is important for teenagers to be given a strong message from society that they should abstain from sex until they are at least out of high school.

All of this may come as a shock to parents and others who are fed a steady diet of bad news about teenagers. For example, consider yourself forgiven if – in the din of reporting on school shootings over the past several years – you did not know that violent behavior among students in the 1990s is actually on the decline. Likewise with teenage sex. From what you read in papers and see on TV about teenagers and sex you would hardly know that kids today are more responsible than their older brothers and sisters.

Now for the caveat. As with most good news about difficult social problems, celebrations are often premature. Despite the heartening declines in rates of teenage pregnancy and childbearing, the United States is still first where we should be last – leading the industrialized world in both categories. In fact, 4 out of 10 girls still get pregnant in this country before the age of 20. Obviously, much work remains to be done. In the meantime, however, let's give teenagers the credit they deserve for increasingly making more responsible decisions about sex.

—From the *Washington Post*,
September 5, 2000

Teenagers in this country are not stupid. They know that there are only two ways to avoid pregnancy: Either don't have sex or use contraception every time. What we have, unfortunately, is a large culture of people who are not too worried about adolescent pregnancy and childbearing. And my urging to political figures and Americans in general is to stop fighting about whether it's abstinence or contraception, but rather to strengthen the resolve of Americans in a shared perspective that teen pregnancy is not OK.

—Sarah Brown, Director, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Sneak Preview of New Data Collection

New Mexico's Teen Parent Programs: Results from a Three-Year Data Collection Project

In 1997, The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition (NMTPC) began a three-year data collection of all programs for pregnant and parenting teens in the State. The goal was to determine what types of programs existed for this population and to examine the subsequent outcomes for both parents and babies. NMTPC contracted with Dr. Susan Philliber of Philliber Research Associates to create an evaluation tool, provide staff training, crunch data, report on outcomes, and in general, guide the process.

A statewide database was created to track the services of these programs as well as the characteristics and outcomes of their clients. During the past three years, New Mexico has had between 40 and 48 programs serving pregnant and parenting teens each year, with 53 different programs overall.

Philliber Research Inc. has now completed the report on this project.

Highlights from the report:

- The database includes information on 5,093 students who received services during the 3-year period.
- The average length of time a student spent in one of these programs was 8.8 months.
- The average student was a 16.7 year-old Hispanic female.
- Nearly 3/4 received prenatal care beginning in the first trimester of their pregnancy, a rate that is vastly better than the statewide average for pregnant teens.
- 6% had low birth weight babies, a rate that is lower than both the state and national rates.
- 84% of those who left school

before being recruited to these programs returned. 77% increased their education or stayed in school in the same grade during the period of program enrollment.

- An average of 4-6% of the young women became pregnant after enrollment, however only 2% of those enrolled in the program for 12 months or more had a repeat pregnancy. These rates are vastly lower than other national programs have achieved.

A summary report, *Future Voices II, Teen Parents and their Children in New Mexico* will be available in late January. To request a copy contact the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, or download a PDF version from our web site www.flash.net/~nmtpc.

This research project was made possible by funding from the New Mexico Department of Health/Family Planning Program, the New Mexico Department of Education, New Mexico Health Resources, and The Turner Foundation.

Hispanic Attitudes

According to a survey of 1,500 Hispanic adults commissioned by the magazine *People En Español*, 90 % of Hispanics think pregnancy among unmarried teenagers is a problem in their community. And, while 60% of Hispanic adults feel that parents must be involved in helping teens avoid pregnancy, only 48% say they have ever talked in-depth with their children about sex.

Lisa Quiroz, publisher of *People En Español* said, "The alarming rate of teen pregnancy in the Hispanic community weakens the core values of our community and hinders our future success. Our magazine is committed to raising awareness about the repercussions of teen pregnancy and to helping families address this issue constructively."

Wanted: Faith-Based Programs

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy wants to list your faith-based program in an upcoming publication. Send your information to Jim Hutchins at The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20036

Male Involvement Books

“If we want to reduce pregnancies among our daughters, we need to talk with our sons.”

—Sarah Brown, Director, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

A Baby Doesn't Make the Man: Alternative Sources of Power and Manhood for Young Men by Raymond Jamiolkowski, offers plenty of reasons not to become a teen father. Formatted for readers with limited English language skills, 1997.

Teen Dads: Rights, Responsibilities and Joy has been newly revised by author Jeanne Lindsay. The book is written for teen fathers and provides guidance on parenting from conception to age three. It is generously illustrated with photographs and written at a sixth grade level. Robert Pacheco, Program Manager at the Bernalillo County Juvenile Detention Center, wrote the for-

ward for this book. Robert is well known for his work with teen dads and is also a former NMTPC Board member. Available with revised workbook and Teacher's guide from Morning Glory Press. \$12.95 paper, \$18.95 hardcover. Contact Morning Glory Press at (714) 828-1998 or www.morningglorypress.com

Goodnight, Daddy by Angela Stewart is a children's book that illustrates the important role that fathers play, even if they are not with the child's mother. A poignant story for children whose absent father doesn't always follow through on his scheduled visits. The mother models the importance of

not speaking badly of the father, despite the situation. The book includes a section for single parents with suggestions on strengthening the child's relationship with the absent parent. \$7.98 paper, \$14.95 hardcover, 48 pages plus free study guide available upon request. Contact Morning Glory Press at www.morningglorypress.com

NOTE: If you're interested in learning more about working with young males, don't miss the NMTPC annual conference! There will be many sessions on male involvement and related topics. We'll be in Las Cruces this year on April 19 and 20.

Congratulations to our 2000 Scholarship Winners!

The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition awarded \$500 scholarships to eight promising New Mexico post-secondary students. The awards will help pay for tuition, books, or childcare. Scholarships are made in two categories: I) parenting students and II) students involved in pregnancy prevention activities. Congratulations to:

Nicole Atencio from Sandia High School, attending UNM, category I

Dolores Duran from Ocate High School, attending New Mexico State University, category I

Carleen Gomez from Magdalena High School, attending TVI Community College, category I

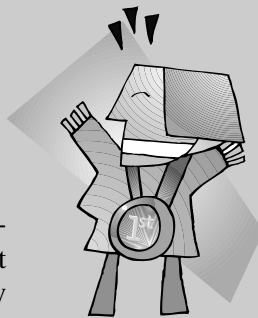
Sandi Hernandez from Deming High School, attending New Mexico State University, category I

Michael Romero from Robertson High School, attending New Mexico Highlands University, category II

Nancy Sepulveda from Albuquerque High School, attending UNM, category I

Sarah Terrazas from Pojoaque High School, attending UNM, category I

Matthew Utrup from Sandia High School, attending UNM, category II



Listen Up... Youth Voices on Teen Pregnancy

NMTPC hosted six focus groups throughout the State in order to hear what young people have to say about teen pregnancy – and did we ever get an earful! The most common theme running through the focus groups was that young people want to talk openly and honestly about sexual issues. They experienced the groups as a positive, if rare, opportunity to share thoughts and feelings.

When asked what they thought were the major causes of teen pregnancy, they identified: alcohol, embarrassment, boredom, lack of parent and/or significant adult involvement, communities not investing in youth and feeling invincible. Participants also said they need more activities and places where young people can gather. They want their opinions to be respected and valued and want to be recognized for the positive contributions of youth. School-based sexuality education was identified as a need but not on a one-shot basis or by adults who aren't comfortable with the subject. While there was strong support for abstinence education, they also indicated that students need contraceptive information and services.

You can get the four page report, **Listen Up... Youth Voices on Teen Pregnancy**, by calling the NMTPC office or on our web site.

Resources You Can Use

Resources for Working With Pregnant or Parenting Teens

Parents and the Law (PAL) is a curriculum for teaching young parents practical law and life skills. It is designed to help young parents strengthen their families and prevent child abuse and neglect. Consisting of 23 lessons housed in two three-ring binders, it focuses on:

Access to Community Resources – lessons include “Where to Go For More Information”

Life Skills – focus on student skill development using mock trials, role-plays, case studies

Practical Laws – like parental rights and responsibility, custody law, domestic violence, etc.

The PAL program was developed by Street Law, a project that grew out of Georgetown University Law Center. It can be taught as a separate class or integrated into existing programs at schools, community based programs, and juvenile correctional facilities. The binder also features evaluation tools. The cost is \$197.50. For more information check out the PAL web page at www.Streetlaw.org/tpalpage.html, or contact Street Law Inc., 1600 K Street, NW, Suite 602, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 293-0088

Working With Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents: Request a copy of this catalog/brochure from the Child Welfare League of America. It contains

some helpful publications for those of you working with this population. Contact CWLA at 1-800-407-6273. They also can be reached online at www.cwla.org/pubs

Mama, listen! Raising a Child without Violence, by Ruth Beaglehole is a handbook written for teen moms that talks about the struggles of everyday life and how to handle issues like toilet training, eating, discipline, self-esteem, cultural identity and non-violence. Available in English or Spanish, also with a teachers guide, 1998, \$25. For more information call (323) 661-9123 or email beaglehole@earthlink.net

New Resources from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Parents Matter: Tips for Raising Teenagers, an 11 page pamphlet, one copy free, \$1 each for up to 100 copies, or \$.70 each for over 100.

The Next Best Thing: Helping Sexually Active Teens Avoid Teen Pregnancy, a 27 page pamphlet that highlights what the Campaign considers the most compelling issues in convincing sexually active teens to use contraception consistently and carefully. \$5

Imagine: A look at the Reality of Teen Pregnancy is a new five-minute video where teen parents describe the reali-

ties of life. Suitable for adults and teens, \$19.95 plus \$2.99 s/h.

What Teens Want, a new fact sheet developed by the Campaign's Youth Leadership Team. Download at www.teenpregnancy.org/fctsht.htm

Order from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Department #6021, Washington, DC 20042-6021, (202) 478-8500 or at www.teenpregnancy.org

Check out the National Campaign's publications in Spanish. www.teenpregnancy.org/espanol.htm

KIDS COUNT Data Book 2000

New Mexico ranks 46th on the national report card that tracks states' progress in caring for children. That's a slight improvement from last year's ranking of 48th. The book compares how states treated children from 1990 to 1997. For copies of the national KIDS COUNT or the New Mexico KIDS COUNT books, contact the New Mexico Advocates for Children and Families at (505) 244-9509. The national book is also available on-line at www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc2000/

"Between 1995 and 2010, the number of girls aged 15-19 is projected to increase by 2.2 million. The hard truth is that yesterday's news about declining teen pregnancy and birth rates won't mean much to the boys and girls who turn 13 next year. For them, we must redouble our efforts to make sure that they benefit from the successes that their older brothers and sisters have begun to see. ... Consequently, adults and teens alike must renew their commitment to making sure that babies are born to adult parents who are ready to care for them. Now more than ever, we need to guard against complacency."

—Sarah Brown, Director, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Less Sex and More Contraception

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cents. The fact that several surveys show these changes increases our confidence that these trends are real.”

According to Jennifer Manlove, senior research associate for Child Trends, this decline in teen birthrates was preceded by a sharp increase that took place between 1987 and 1991. Factors associated with the increase in teen birthrates during that time included negative changes in family environments, as well as a rising proportion of teens having sex at an earlier age. The recent decline in teen birthrates is attributed to positive changes in family environments, improved maternal education, formal sex education programs, discussion with parents about sex, a

stabilization in teen sex and improved contraceptive use. The study argues that these are the areas that programs must address to continue the reductions. The study also points to the increasing risk levels among sexually experienced teens, suggesting that current programs may well be reducing sexual activity among those already at low risk of pregnancy, without focusing on high-risk teens.¹

But there is still another important question. Why are teens changing their behavior? While we don't know for sure, Dr. Susan Philliber, a nationally recognized researcher on teen pregnancy, notes that teen births are dropping in most developed countries and

that it's very possible that birth rates are driven by the economy. Could it be that the sense of optimism resulting from a prosperous economy provides young people with that truly magical contraceptive ... the hope for, and belief in, a promising future.

A reduction in teen births is really good news for everyone. We all benefit when teens postpone pregnancy until they are at least 20 years of age and ready to assume the responsibility and joys of parenthood. Everyone benefits – the teens, the families, the communities, taxpayers, but most of all the babies.

¹ Family Planning Perspectives, July/August 2000

Parents and Kids Need to Talk

If mum's the word at home, kids aren't likely to have an accurate perception of their parents' sexual attitudes and they are far less inclined to share those views. That's the message from a CDC study of 907 black and Hispanic teen/mother pairs from New York, Alabama and Puerto Rico. The 14-16 year olds were interviewed sepa-

rately from the moms about communication and sexual attitudes.

Young teens most likely to share their parents' (generally conservative) views on sex:

- Said their parents had talked frequently about many sex-related topics, such as birth control, HIV, puberty, normal sexual development, menstruation and

reproduction.

- Reported their parents were skilled and open in discussing sex, and they felt comfortable during the talks.

The CDC reports that programs designed to provide parents with skills and strategies to talk with their children about sexuality are of great value.

And Speaking of Families Talking ...

Congratulations to the three New Mexico communities who were chosen to receive training grants from the National Education Association/ Health Information Network. Doña Ana, Torrance, and Rio Arriba counties were funded to implement **Can We Talk?**, a program designed to help parents talk with their mid school age children about topics like drugs, violence, HIV/AIDS, and sexuality. NEA has provided these communities with training, materials, and support in organizing and implementing **Can We Talk?** for parent groups. For more information about programs in your area, please contact:

Beverly Wood, Torrance County Maternal & Child Health Council, 832-0332

Joan Murphy, Rio Arriba County Maternal & Child Health Council, 753-3143

Esther Devall, NMSU Family & Consumer Sciences Department, 646-1185

Editorial: Supporting the Abstinence Choice

As you can see from the research presented in this newsletter, teens have experienced substantial attitudinal and behavioral changes regarding sexual activity. This situation provides us with a powerful opportunity to support and encourage abstinence among teens. Young people want to be like their peers, and we can now clearly and honestly tell them that “everyone is NOT doing it.” In fact, according to the 1999 national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS), half of all high school students have had sex (down from 54% in 1991). And, even among those, only a little over a third had sex in the three months preceding the survey. Although, by 12th grade, 65% have had sexual intercourse.

We know that preventing teen pregnancy requires young people to have the capacity (ability) to prevent the pregnancy – but that they must also have the motivation. One way to build motivation is to make sure that teens get the message that the “norm” has changed and that delaying sex is both a realistic and a common choice. They also need to know that many teens have regretted becoming sexually active. Teens need to feel supported in their choice to ab-



stain and you can provide that by using this new information as a teaching tool.

Using the teen surveys from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and/or the Kaiser Family Foundation to demonstrate (and “prove”) these facts can start a terrific group discussion among teens. The best way to access this information is through their web sites, but if you don’t have internet access, contact NMTPC and we will send you the information.

- www.teenpregnancy.org (go to their Polling Data page)
- www.kff.org (look for Reproductive and Sexual Health/Adolescent Sexual Health)

Keep in mind that motivation is only half the battle – don’t forget the capacity (ability) part. In order to continue increasing the number of teens who choose to abstain, we must also teach the critical social skills necessary to strengthen their resolve and ability. Research on “promising approaches” makes it very clear that young people need extensive training in communication skills as well as lots of opportunity to practice and rehearse their newly learned abilities.

Teen Surveys

- Nearly 2/3 of teens who have had sex wish they had waited. ¹
- 64% said teens shouldn’t have sex until they’re out of high school, but if they do, they should be certain to protect themselves against pregnancy and STDs. ¹
- Almost 60% said sex for high school-age teens is not acceptable, even if precautions are taken against pregnancy and STDs. ²
- 93% said teens should be given a strong message to abstain until they’re at least out of high school. ²
- Half of teens surveyed said that fear of pregnancy and STDs is the main reason why teens don’t have sex. One-quarter said the main reason is because of religion, morals, and values. ²

¹ Not Just Another Thing to Do, survey by National Campaign

² The Cautious Generation, survey by the National Campaign

New Coordinator at the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention

Welcome to Sophia Thomas, the new Coordinator of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention at the New Mexico Department of Health/Family Planning Program. She will oversee the department’s teen pregnancy preven-

tion sites in Raton, Santa Fe, Taos, Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Sophia has taken Lisa Romero’s place and can be reached at 476-8595 or SophiaThomas@doh.state.nm.us

Coming Soon From NMTPC!

A report on our groundbreaking statewide survey of adult attitudes about teen pregnancy, sexuality education and a host of other topics. Available after 1/20/01

TEEN PREGNANCY COALITION

PREVENTION • PARENTING

P.O. Box 35997
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87176-5997
(505) 254-8737 • Fax (505) 254-8741
<http://www.flash.net/~nmtpc>
e-mail: nmtpc@flash.net

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Although your financial support is important, we are happy to keep you on our mailing list if you are interested in receiving our materials, even if you are not a paid member. But you must contact us. Don't miss out on upcoming conference information! Contact us at:

NMTPC
PO Box 35997
Albuquerque, NM 87176
Phone: (505) 254-8737
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**NMTPC 2001 Conference
To Be Held in Las Cruces, NM
Teen Pregnancy Prevention:
New Tools and Best Practices**

April 19-20

Topics will include • Male Involvement •
Medical Updates • Media Literacy •
Sexual Abuse Issues • Promising Programs
and Approaches • Drug and Alcohol Issues
and much more.

Check our web site regularly for information
about presenters and workshops.

