

PARENT POWER in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

It's good news! Families matter—in fact, they matter a lot.

Whether they believe it or not, parents have a very strong influence on whether their teenagers become pregnant or cause a pregnancy. Two decades of research makes it clear that parents are much more influential than they think. Their influence has **not** been lost to peers and popular culture. Even in a culture that bombards young people with conflicting, confusing and downright inaccurate information about sex — parents remain powerful.

Teens say that parents influence their decision about sex more than anyone else (45% said parents, 31% said friends). But parents tend to think that those statistics are reversed.

While parents clearly can not *determine* their children's decisions about sex, the quality of their relationships with their children can make a real difference. Overall closeness, shared activities, parental presence in the home, and parental caring and concern are all associated with a reduced risk of sexual activity and pregnancy. Teens who are close to their parents and feel supported by them are more likely to abstain from

sex, wait until they are older to begin having sex, have fewer sexual partners and use contraception consistently.

Teens whose parents are clear about the value of abstinence and/or about the dangers of unprotected intercourse are more likely to delay sex and to use contraception. 88% of teens said it would be easier for them to postpone

connectedness has been shown to influence numerous adolescent health indicators including, depression, academic achievement, HIV infection, depression and eating disorders.

True connectedness is a “two way street” — that is, it is experienced by both the parent and child. The behaviors required of parents and their children to

establish connection will differ depending on the child's age. For example, behaviors necessary to establish trust between a parent and a one-year old (like touch, feeding, comforting) are different than the behaviors that would be used with a 16-year old (like sharing

thoughts/ideas, problem solving together, autonomy granting).

Researchers believe that the parenting style most supportive of this type of connectedness is one that combines high levels of warmth with moderate levels of behavioral control (i.e., monitoring and supervision) and the granting of psychological autonomy to a child. Very strict monitoring of behavior is associated with a greater risk of teen pregnancy. Not surprisingly, young people who grow up in abusive families are

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sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents. Almost 60% consider their parents to be role models for healthy responsible relationships.

ETR Associates, a non-profit research and education organization, has spent over a year studying the factors that create “parent-child connectedness.” They define this as an emotional bond between a parent and child that is both mutual and sustained over time. In addition to pregnancy, parent-child con-

New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition

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PARENT POWER in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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more likely to be sexually active and not use contraception consistently.

Those parents who are most successful at raising children who avoid a host of risky behaviors, including pregnancy, tend to do the following.

- 1) clearly communicate their values and expectations to their children
- 2) express their concern and love for them early and often
- 3) exercise supervision, including their child's selection of friends and role models

Other important elements for strong parent-child connectedness include a climate of trust that includes support, openness, protection, guidance and encouragement – along with time together for fun and play.

It's important for parents to talk directly with their children about sex, love and relationships and to do so in a clear and candid manner. Popular media can provide good opportunities to bring up these subjects. But talk is not enough. Communication is only one determinant of parent-child connectedness. Similarly, parental involvement (such as being active in the child's school or health services) can be mistaken for connectedness. It is the overall quality of the relationship that appears to be more "protective" than any specific conversation.

Parents should not be afraid to be more parental. It is their role and responsibility to teach their children about life's choices and the consequences of those choices. And don't forget the boys! They need the same level of involvement from both their mother and father. In fact, "female parenting" and "male parenting" – or "mothering" and "fathering" each make unique and positive contributions to connectedness within families.

For more information on this topic, we recommend the following publications from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy at www.teenpregnancy.org

- *Parent Power: What Parents Need to Know and Do to Help Prevent Teen Pregnancy*, a 32-page booklet
- *Parental Influence and Teen Pregnancy*, a 4-page report
- *The Parent Gap: Teen Pregnancy and Parental Influence*, a September 2003 Survey Report

For more information about ETR Associates research on parent-child connectedness go to www.etr.org/recapp/column/column200401.htm

NEWS FLASH: The Best Way To Stay Up-To-Date

Are you getting NMTPC's monthly electronic NEW FLASH? If not, just email us at nmtpc@nmtpc.org and we'll put you on the list. You can access past issues of NEWS FLASH at our (new and improved) website www.nmtpc.org

The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition

Mission:

To Reduce Teen Pregnancy and the Negative Consequences of Teen Pregnancy and Parenting in New Mexico

We work closely with community organizations and state agencies to encourage an ongoing, coordinated and well-planned approach to teen pregnancy prevention.

We have been the statewide non-profit organization committed to reducing teen pregnancy in New Mexico since 1989.

We provide New Mexico with the best and latest information, training and research through:

- Conferences, Trainings, and Networking
- Statewide Technical Assistance to Communities
- Publication: Reports, Data, Directories and Newsletters
- Monthly Electronic NEWS FLASH
- Hispanic Community Outreach
- The New Mexico Young Fathers Project
- Youth Art & Video Contest
- Website:
www.nmtpc.org

New Mexico Young Fathers Project

New Mexico
Young Fathers Project
A Project of the
NEW MEXICO
TEEN PREGNANCY COALITION



Mission: to promote social and family stability by improving the quality of father/child relationships in young families and by preventing repeat pregnancy.

The New Mexico Young Fathers Project provides services to fathers under age 26. Participants receive individual case management, mentorship and learn life skills in groups with other young fathers. Services also include training in parenting, relationship skill, decision making and employability. Young fathers also learn to navigate the many social and legal systems that impact their families. Some participants are trained to become peer mentors/educators and make presentations to other young fathers in schools and community programs.

For more information contact: Carl Dellinger, Project Director at 266-6334, yfp@nmtpc.org, or visit the web site at www.youngfathers.org

May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

The annual online "quiz" for teens will be unveiled on May 5, 2004 and runs until the end of the month. Last year almost 300,000 teens around the country took this quiz.

You can help insure that New Mexico teens get involved in this important opportunity. The quiz includes real-life scenarios and storylines that will prompt teens to carefully consider how they would react in risky sexual situations.

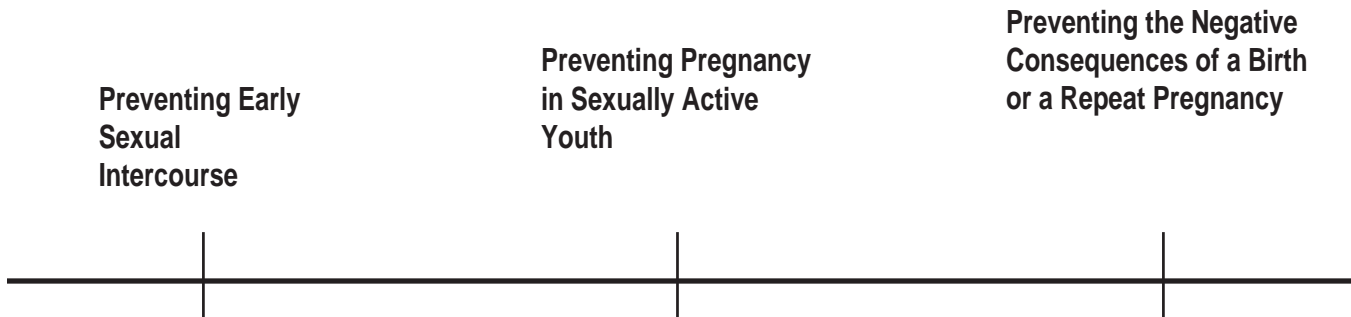
More information and quiz access is available at www.teenpregnancy.org
For more information on New Mexico activities for May, visit NMTPC at www.nmtpc.org



Corrected County Chart

The county data chart on page 6 has been edited since its publication in our Fall/Winter 2003 newsletter. The NM Department of Health has notified us that there was an error in calculations for Sandoval, San Juan and San Miguel counties. Some other rankings have also changed. Please discontinue use of the chart that was published earlier.

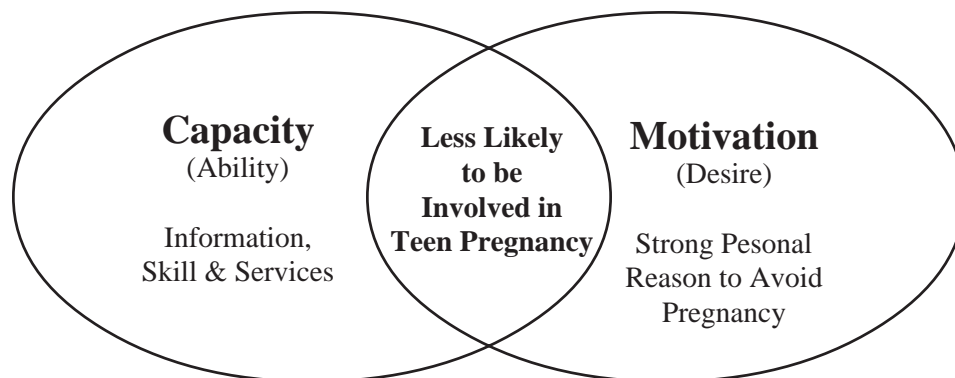
The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Continuum



Teen pregnancy can be reduced by implementing effective interventions anywhere along the continuum.

The continuum demonstrates that there is a place for everyone to play a role in reducing teen pregnancy and the negative consequences of teen childbearing. Individuals should work at whatever point along the continuum they are most comfortable and have the most expertise. However, it is critical to insure that the *full* continuum is provided in order to meet the needs of *all* youth in your community.

Motivation/Capacity



In order to prevent a teen pregnancy, young people must have **both** the capacity (ability) to prevent a pregnancy and the motivation (desire) to do so. Capacity is achieved by providing teens with the ability to prevent a pregnancy through accurate information, skills and reproductive health services. Motivation is achieved by supporting a strong personal desire to avoid a pregnancy. Neither of these elements alone is a strong enough intervention, but when they come together the result is young people who are less likely to be involved in a pregnancy.

Replacement Article for Page 5—

We regret that an error was made in recognizing Doña Ana County as being "on target" for reaching the **Challenge 2005**. In fact, Dona Ana County experienced a 16.6% increase in teen birth rates between 1998-2002. The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition apologizes for this error.

—Sylvia Ruiz, Executive Director

New Mexico's Challenge to Reduce Births to Teens

In February of 2000, NMTPC and the NM Department of Health issued the *Challenge 2005: To Reduce Births to Teens By 20% by 2005*. We are now in the 4th year of this Challenge and there are 10 counties that are "on target" for meeting this goal. This means that they have reduced their teen birth rates by at least 16% for the most recent years' data (2002).

Based on preliminary data for 2002, the counties listed below can be very proud of their successful efforts to reduce teen pregnancy. All reductions shown here were made between 1998 – 2002 for girls 15-19 years.

Unfortunately, the state as a whole has only achieved a 9.9% reduction over the last 4 years so we all have a lot of work ahead of us.

Counties "On Target" for Reaching the Challenge 2005: To Reduce Teen Births by 20% by 2005

County	% Reduction in Teen Birth Rates 1999-2002 ¹	Number of Teen Births in 2002	2002 Teen Birth Rate*	2002 Rank**
Cibola	-42.0%	51	48.5	24
Colfax	-29.1%	23	49.4	21
Eddy	-28.2%	151	74.3	9
Grant	-19.1%	65	55.4	20
Guadalupe	-16.8%	14	89.1	1
Lea	-27.1%	187	75.1	7
Los Alamos	-16.3%	11	16.4	33
Luna	-21.1%	89	85.8	2
Sierra	-65.0%	11	31.2	32
Torrance	-41.6%	30	43.4	29
NM	-9.9%	4,503	62.3	

* 2002 birth rates are still provisional and may change later in the year

** Of NM's 33 counties, 1 represents the highest birth rate and 33 the lowest.

Not tested for statistical significance

Data Source: The State Center for Health Statistics, Office of NM Vital Records and Health Statistics, NM Department of Health

Important Notes:

- Birth rates are calculated by dividing the number of births to girls 15-19 years by the total number of females in that age group and then multiplying that by 1,000. This results in the number of births per 1,000 girls in any given population. Birth rates, rather than actual numbers of births, allow us to compare counties with small populations to those with larger populations. However, in counties with very small populations it doesn't take much of an increase or decrease to make a large change. For instance, a county that had reduced its teen births from 6 to 3 would have made a 50% reduction.
- These statistics may not always match with previously reported data since different sources of population.

10 TEEN PREGNANCY FACTS

- 1.** The US has the highest rate of teen pregnancy, birth and abortion in the industrialized world.
- 2.** Nearly 4 out of 10 girls will become pregnant at least once before age 20.
- 3.** New Mexico has the 3rd highest teen birth rate in the nation. About 4,500 teens gave birth in 2002. That's more than 12 each day.
- 4.** Teen pregnancy results in serious education and health problems for the mother and father.
 - teen mothers are more likely to have serious complications during pregnancy and delivery
 - teen mothers and fathers are less likely to earn a high school diploma
- 5.** Babies born to teen mothers are more likely to:
 - have health problems at birth
 - be physically abused, abandoned, or neglected
 - do poorly in school
 - do time in jail
 - also become teen parents
- 6.** The law can require that a boy or man take a test to determine if he is the father of a child. If he is the father, he must pay child support for 18 years (even if he is under 18). If payment is not made, he can be arrested, have his possessions confiscated (such as his car), and have his wages docked.
- 7.** In order to receive welfare support, a mother must identify the father of her child and she must attend school or work.
- 8.** The cost of teen childbearing to New Mexico taxpayers is over half a billion dollars per year.
- 9.** Nationwide, teen childbearing costs taxpayers over \$38 billion per year.
- 10.** It's better for everyone when babies are born to adult parents.

TEEN PREGNANCY COALITION

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Winners of the NMTPC 2nd Annual Youth Art & Video Contest

The decision making process was difficult – but the winners of NMTPC’s 2nd Annual Youth Art & Video Contest have been chosen. Thanks to all the talented youth who submitted entries and also to our volunteer judges who made the tough choices. Congratulations to the following winning artists!



Art/ Photo Winners: \$100 each

- Brianna Joy Sleeper, American School, Roswell
- Susan Shelley, Clovis High School, Clovis
- TJ Vandever, Wingate High Opportunity School, Wingate
- Mac George Bahe, Wingate High Opportunity School, Wingate
- Julianne Flores, West Mesa High School, Albuquerque
- Symmo Hasteen, Wingate High Opportunity School, Wingate
- Alex Handley, Valmora High School, Valmora
- Eve Denison, Valmore High School, Valmora
- Chenoa Garner, West Mesa High School, Albuquerque
- Iris Hernandez, West Mesa High School, Albuquerque
- Jeremy E. Kinter, Silver City High School, Silver City
- Phil Hughes, Dominic Lovato, Georgine Sandoval, YDI Teatro Consejo, Albuquerque

Video Winners: \$500 to each organization

- SER Career Academy GRADS Program, Santa Fe
- Youth Development Inc., Teatro Consejo, Albuquerque
- Gadsden High School GRADS, Anthony

