

## Emerging Answers in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

In May of 2001, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy released the acclaimed report, *Emerging Answers: Research Findings in Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*. This is the latest publication of author Douglas Kirby, Ph.D. Dr. Kirby has spent over 22 years studying a variety of teen pregnancy prevention and youth programs.

*Emerging Answers* is a comprehensive review of evaluation research on programs designed to prevent teen pregnancy. It provides the latest information on “programs that work.” In addition to examining traditional sex education, the study covers abstinence-only education programs for teens, contraceptive and family planning services, early childhood programs, youth development, and service learning.

“The report offers good news for communities working to prevent teen pregnancy,” said Sarah Brown, Director of the National Campaign. “Clearly there is an ever-widening group of activities that communities can put in place that may help convince teens that pregnancy and parenthood are not in their best interest.”

### Key Findings:

- Several programs have now shown sustained positive effects on delaying the onset of sex, improving contraceptive use, or preventing teen pregnancy. There are eight programs identified as having strong evidence of success. Five of these are sex education programs, two are service learning programs, and one is an intensive program that combines sex education, comprehensive

health care and youth activities.

- The overwhelming weight of evidence reviewed in the report shows that sex education that discusses contraception does *not* hasten the onset of sex, increase the frequency of sex, or increase the number of sexual partners. To the contrary, some sex and HIV education programs delay the onset of sex, reduce the frequency of sex or reduce the number of sexual partners.
- Effective programs share two common attributes: (1) being clearly focused on sexual behavior and contraceptive use and (2) delivering a clear message about abstaining from sex as the safest choice for teens and using protection against STDs and pregnancy if a teen is sexually active.

- The jury is still out about the effectiveness of abstinence-only programs. At this time, there is no evidence of any overall effect on sexual behavior from abstinence-only programs. However, very little rigorous evaluation of these programs has been completed; only three studies met the criteria for this review. There is currently a federally-funded evaluation underway and more definitive results will be available in the future.
- The research indicates that encouraging abstinence *and* urging better use of contraception *are* compatible goals.
- Service learning programs may have the strongest evidence of any intervention that they reduce teen

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## What Is Service Learning ?

Two of the eight programs that were identified as having strong evidence of success are service learning programs. These programs combine the familiar concept of community service with group discussion and reflection. We’re not really sure why service learning appears to be so successful, but several possibilities seem plausible. First, participants develop relationships with program facilitators, they gain a sense of autonomy, and feel more competent in their relationships with peers and adults, and they feel empowered by the knowledge that they can make a difference in the lives of others. These factors may help increase motivation to avoid pregnancy. Also, participating in supervised activities, especially after school, may reduce the opportunity to engage in risky behaviors. All the service learning programs that were evaluated are intensive programs that lasted for months. Service learning does not necessarily focus on sexual issues.

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## Thank You, Laine!

It's with mixed emotions that we say goodbye to Laine Renfro Sedillo, our executive director for eight years. It's impossible not to be happy for her, as she and husband Joseph finally get to spend some retirement time together. But it's also hard to lose the person who has provided the guidance, direction, wisdom and the laughter for so many years. We were just a tiny little fledgling organization until Laine whipped us into a strong state-wide coalition ready to take on the teen pregnancy issue in New Mexico.

In October, the Board of Directors presented Laine with a specially made



hand-blown glass heart. Former Board President John Stermer expressed our feelings perfectly with the words, "To Laine, the heart of NMTPC."

Laine still maintains a presence at NMTPC through her active involvement in our committees and activities.

Never one to take retirement too seriously, Laine and Joseph will be working up at the Roundhouse this year during the legislative session.

Thank you, Laine, from NMTPC and everyone who cares about the future of youth and families in New Mexico.

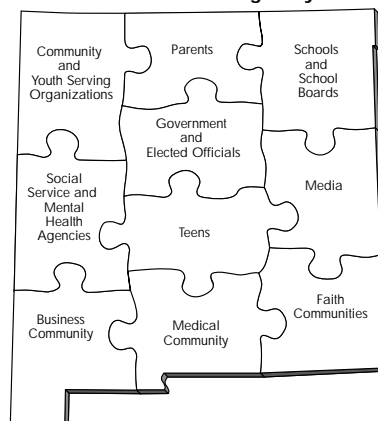
## Meeting the Challenge Manual

If you have a copy of NMTPC's *Meeting the Challenge* manual, now is the time to get your new insert pages. If you already sent in the registration form (in the Introduction section of the notebook), we will be mailing you the new pages by early February. If you haven't done this yet, you can mail or fax it to the NMTPC office and we'll make sure you get all updates for your notebook.

Note for new readers: *Meeting the Challenge: How to Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Your Community* is a manual designed to assist New Mexico communities in their efforts to meet the Challenge 2005:

To reduce teen pregnancy in New Mexico by 20% by 2005. The manual will help you plan and implement a community-wide teen pregnancy prevention initiative. It's a "breathing" resource that will "inhale" new or updated information and "exhale" dated material. Since NMTPC will send out updates and additions to the notebook twice a year, it's important to send in the registration form.

The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Puzzle



## *From the Executive Director*

After 8 years of devoted service, Laine Renfro Sedillo stepped down from the Executive Directorship of NMTPC in August. I am honored to have the opportunity to follow Laine in this position and have been most impressed with the dedication and commitment of the NMTPC board, staff and supporters to the mission and goals of the organization. The strategic plan set by the Board of Directors for the organization is ambitious, but with the able guidance of the Board president, Tim Lopez, we will all work together to continue making a difference for the state. I have always welcomed a challenge and am energized by the opportunity to work for such a vital organization.

During these difficult times nationally, I find myself reflecting on the formidable tasks that we face here at home in New Mexico. Knowing that we rank 5<sup>th</sup> in the country with teen birth rates has long been a great concern of mine. With respect to adolescent sexuality it is our challenge as adults to engage in a continual dialog with our youth, to hear and address the concerns of community members and to provide research-based sexuality education and medically accurate information for our families and young people. This is a public service that NMTPC has successfully provided in the past, and we must redouble our efforts in the future.

Since moving to New Mexico in 1989, I have worked with adolescents (among others) as a licensed physician assistant, an educator at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine and mentor in middle and high school programs. My continued concern for adolescents contributed to my decision to apply for the executive directorship. I find the key to working with youth is truly listening to them.

As I have traveled to meetings in Washington DC, Atlanta and other locations outside New Mexico, I find that NMTPC is acknowledged as one of the outstanding state coalitions. It has been a continual reminder of the leadership role that NMTPC plays. We took the lead in challenging counties to decrease teen pregnancy by 20% by 2005 and providing a resource book of statistics by counties to help in this process (*Challenge 2005*). This was followed by development of the manual, *Meeting the Challenge: How to Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Your Community*. NMTPC conducted the first statewide surveys of adults on sexuality education for youth. Since this ground-breaking effort, we have been contacted by a number of states to be a resource in the development of similar surveys. The Young Fathers Project has generated a great deal of discussion about the need to include young fathers in teen pregnancy prevention and parenting. These important projects were the subjects of my presentation in November to health policy advisors at the National Governor's Association.

Finally, as president elect of the Society of Primary Care Policy Fellows, I intend to pursue issues which involve teen pregnancy and prevention. If we speak to these issues at every opportunity and maintain our strong commitment to youth, we will individually and collectively contribute to decreasing the teen pregnancy rates in our state. I am very thankful for the opportunity to participate in the coalition activities and welcome all of those who wish to join us in this important endeavor.

*Sincerely,*  
*Kirsten Thomsen, PA-C*

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pregnancy rates, at least during the time that youth are participating in the program.

- The programs that have changed teens' sexual behavior share ten necessary characteristics. The absence of even one of these characteristics appears to make a program appreciably less likely to be effective. (See sidebar)
- Family planning clinics probably prevent a large number of teen pregnancies – although there is remarkably little evidence to support this common-sense view. However, several rigorous studies have indicated that clinics can increase contraceptive use when they provide high-quality education about abstinence and contraceptives, discuss the adolescent patient's sexual and contraceptive behavior, and give a clear message about sex and contraceptive use.
- Many studies of schools with health clinics – and schools with condom-availability programs – have consistently shown that the provision of condoms or other contraceptives does *not* increase sexual activity. However, studies show mixed results about whether they increase contraceptive use.
- Early childhood programs may have an impact on teen pregnancy but only one evaluation study met the criteria for this review. The children in this program delayed childbearing by more than a year, in comparison with the control group.
- Effective teen pregnancy prevention programs *do* exist and should be expanded, but it's unrealistic to assume that community programs will solve a problem of this magnitude. All young people live in a larger culture that is influenced by such disparate forces as parents, peers, schools, the economy, faith institutions, and the entertainment media.

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### 10 Characteristics of Effective Sex and HIV Education Programs

The most effective sex and HIV education curricula share ten common characteristics. The absence of even one of these characteristics appears to make a program appreciably less likely to be effective. These programs:

1. Focus on reducing one or more sexual behaviors that lead to unintended pregnancy or HIV/STD infections
2. Are based on theoretical approaches that have been demonstrated to influence other health-related behavior and identify specific important sexual antecedents to be targeted
3. Deliver and consistently reinforce a clear message about abstaining from sexual activity and/or using condoms or other forms of contraception. This appears to be one of the most important characteristics that distinguishes effective from ineffective programs
4. Provide basic, accurate information about the risks of teen sexual activity and about ways to avoid intercourse or using methods of protection against pregnancy and STDs
5. Include activities that address social pressures that influence sexual behavior
6. Provide examples of and practice with communication, negotiation, and refusal skills
7. Employ teaching methods designed to involve participants and have them personalize the information
8. Incorporate behavioral goals, teaching methods, and materials that are appropriate to the age, sexual experience, and culture of the students
9. Last a sufficient length of time (i.e. more than a few hours)
10. Select teachers or peers who believe in the program and then provide them with adequate training

See *Emerging Answers* for detailed descriptions of these characteristics.



## New Study Says Virginitly Pledge Delays Sex, But Also Raises Concerns

A study funded by the National Institute of Child Health and several other federal agencies shows that teens who pledged to remain abstinent until marriage were successful in delaying sex almost 18 months longer than comparable teens who did not take such a pledge. Although, pledging did not produce abstinence until marriage.

The effectiveness of pledging depended on the student's age. Pledging had the most effect on 16-17 year olds and no measurable effect on teens 18 and older. Among the youngest teens, the social environment of the teen's school was a very significant factor in the pledge's effectiveness.

Virginitly pledges were found to work only in those school contexts in which the pledge essentially constituted minority behavior. As the proportion of pledging students rises, the effectiveness decreases. In other words, students are attracted to virginitly pledges precisely because they offer them a shared group identity that sets them apart from their peers – a counter-culture of sorts – that loses its allure once it becomes normative. The authors of the study stated, "If most adolescents were to pledge, there would be no pledge effect."

Virginitly pledges also had a serious unintended effect – they actually placed some teens at a higher risk of unintended pregnancy and STDs. Among those teens who eventually did have intercourse, individuals who had pledged were 1/3 less likely (than non-pledgers) to use contraception. It was not a part of the pledge programs to also prepare the teens with information on contraception and safer sex.

The results of this study give us much to ponder. How can we capitalize on the positive results and minimize the negative? How do we encourage the postponement of sex while preparing teens for the time when they will become sexually active? This is essential since almost 2/3 (65%) of teens have had sex by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Can we employ the pledge concept but also provide complete, medically accurate information about contraception?

Regina Firpo-Triplett of ETR Associates recommends creating pledges that use language such as "I believe abstinence is the best choice for me right now. At some point in the future I may feel that the time and relationship are right for me to have a sexual relationship. When this time comes, I will begin a new contract to have a safe and responsible sexual relationship." ETR's

brochure, *The Abstinence Contract*, contains two sample contracts – one for individuals and another for couples. These contracts provide positive approaches to ending an abstinence pledge. For example, "I know I can change this decision at any time after careful thought. I promise to review this contract before I change my decision."

It is critically important that we help young people make conscious, intentional and thoughtful decisions about abstinence and/or having sex. By reducing feelings of guilt or failure when choosing not to abstain, teens may be less likely to denying the possibility of sexual activity and thus, prepare for preventing pregnancy. This approach can result in the ability to plan ahead for a different phase of life.

For more information about ETR Associates materials, contact them at PO Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, (800) 321-4407, or visit their resource center for adolescent pregnancy at [www.etr.org/recapp](http://www.etr.org/recapp)

For more information about the virginitly pledge research, see *Pregnancy Prevention for Youth: An Interdisciplinary Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 2000, Virginitly Pledges and the Transition to First intercourse, Peter Beerman and Hannah Bruckner.

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FROM TEEN PARENTS

## Teen Parents on Love, Learning, and Success

How has becoming a parent while still a teenager had a positive impact in your life? How have you learned, coped, loved, and grown? I'm seeking unapologetic and honest personal essays of courage, determination, and resourcefulness for an anthology about young

women's and men's positive experiences as teenage parents.

Your stories have the power to dispel myths about teen moms and inspire young parents and others who know or work with them. New and hesitant writers welcome, as long as you have a

willingness to revise!

Deadline for submissions: April 1, 2002. For more information and writers' guidelines, please visit [www.teenmombook.com](http://www.teenmombook.com) or contact Deborah Davis, Anthology Editor, at [editor@teenmombook.com](mailto:editor@teenmombook.com).

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### So what should New Mexico communities do with this information?

*Emerging Answers* suggests three strategies for employing promising approaches.

1. The best option is to replicate with fidelity (that is, carefully copy) programs that have demonstrated effectiveness.
2. The next best option is to select or design programs that have the common characteristics of programs deemed effective.
3. If # 1 or #2 are not possible, use a careful and deliberate process to select or design new programs and not just rely on accustomed ways of doing things. Development of a logic model is strongly recommended. Kirby details this process.

A logic model (also called a causal or program model) is a concise, causal description of exactly how certain program activities can be expected to affect particular behaviors by teens. At minimum, a logic model requires that we be specific about what behavior we want to change. A logic model identifies in the following order:

- (a) the behaviors to be changed
- (b) the precursors or antecedents of these behaviors (the individual, family, social and community factors that predispose teens to risky behaviors).
- (c) the particular program activities designed to change these antecedents.

This way of thinking and planning usually results in programs that have clear goals with orderly and plausible plans for reaching those goals.

Copies of the full, 200-page report, which includes the summary, are available from the National Campaign for \$15 plus shipping and handling. A separately-bound summary is available for \$5 (plus shipping and handling), or can be downloaded for free from the National Campaign's website. All publications can also be ordered online at [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org)

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
1776 Massachusetts Ave.,  
NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: (202) 478-8500

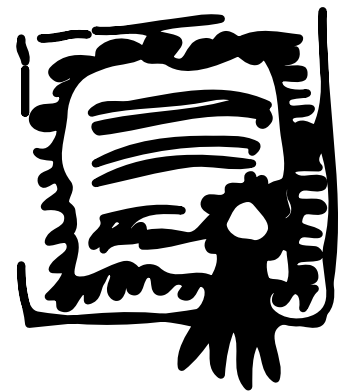
## Young Fathers Project Gets Awards!

The New Mexico Young Fathers Project (YFP) has recently received two major awards.

On behalf of the Young Fathers Project, NMTPC accepted the National Organization for Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, & Parenting's award for Outstanding Intervention Program. The award was given at their national conference in Arlington, VA. The conference program made the following statement.

The New Mexico Young Fathers Project, collaboratively developed and managed by the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, the Father & Family Center, and Planned Parenthood, is meeting the real needs of a grossly underserved population. Through this project the young male participants – who may be either the biological father of the child born to a teen mother or the person now in the father role – receive services including parenting skills, sexuality and contraceptive education, life skills training, vocational education, mentoring, outreach, case management and support groups. The program has demonstrated that it has a very real impact on the lives of its participants, especially in terms of participants' engagement in activities that reduce problem behaviors and promote positive self-development.

The Santa Fe Community Foundation has honored the Young Fathers Project with \$1,000 and it's Pinon Award. The New Mexican, a Santa Fe newspaper, ran a great story about the project and the award. Accepting for YFP were project director, Carl Dellenger with local staff and participants from the YFP site. Thanks Santa Fe Community Foundation!



## TEEN PREGNANCY COALITION

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P.O. Box 35997  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87176-5997  
(505) 254-8737 • Fax (505) 254-8741  
<http://www.flash.net/~nmtpc>  
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## Congratulations to our 2001 Scholarship Winners!

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

- Mary Lou Espinoza of Hatch now attends Olympian University of Cosmetology
- Dezarai Hanway of Albuquerque now attends T-VI
- Nikki Moyer of Rancho de Taos now attends UNM/Taos
- Yvette Martinez of Carlsbad now attends NMSU/Carlsbad
  - Sarah Moore of Tucumcari now attends ENMU
  - Marie McClard of Albuquerque now attends UNM
- Samantha Saiz of Hagerman now attends ENMU/Roswell

Applications for 2002 scholarships are now being accepted. Call the NMTPC office if you need an application form. All completed applications must be postmarked by April 5, 2002.