

# TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION: PROVEN PROGRAMS

## Implications for TANF Reauthorization

**THE 1996 LAW:** Among the four purposes of the 1996 law, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), three focus on family formation. These purposes promote marriage, “the formation and maintenance of two-parent families,” and seek “to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies.” The law also provides a bonus to up to five states that decrease their non-marital birth rate along with their abortion rate.

**BACKGROUND:** Teen pregnancy prevention (of first and subsequent births) is a vital strategy in addressing family formation issues. The reason is straightforward: 80% of teen births are non-marital and 57% of all non-marital births are to teens or to older women whose first birth was as a teenager. [See CLASP’s **Reauthorization Issues: Teen Pregnancy Prevention: A Key Strategy in the Family Formation Debate** for details and cites]

A critical question is whether we know how to reduce teen pregnancy. The answer is yes. The ability to point to programs that can reduce adolescent risk-taking and pregnancy is relatively new. While the field is “emerging,” an overview of rigorous research that identifies successful programs and what they can accomplish was published in mid-2001. Without abandoning innovation, communities could replicate and adapt these proven approaches in efforts to reduce non-marital birth rates.

**RESEARCH SUMMARY:**

- ❑ The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy [<http://www.teenpregnancy.org>] has published a review of experimental research entitled, *Emerging Answers: Research Finding on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*, by Dr. Douglas Kirby (May 2001).
- ❑ The Kirby research review concludes that “we now know it is possible [‘to design or operate programs that actually reduce adolescent sexual risk-taking and pregnancy’] and we have clearer guidelines for how to do it.”
- ❑ Kirby identified three different strategies with effective programs; the spectrum allows communities to select among different ideologies:

- ❖ Sex and HIV Education:

*Accomplishment:* “delay the onset of sex, reduce the frequency of sex, reduce the number of sexual partners, or increase the use of condoms and other forms of contraception”

*Specific programs:* (1) Reducing the Risk (2) Safer Choices (3) Becoming a Responsible Teen: An HIV Risk Reduction for African-American Adolescents (4) Making a Difference: An Abstinence Approach (5) Making a Difference: A Safer Sex Approach

❖ Service Learning Programs

*Accomplishment:* “reduce teen pregnancy rates”

*Specific programs:* (1) Teen Outreach Program [TOP] (2) Reach for Health Community Youth Service Learning

❖ Comprehensive Youth Development and Reproductive Health

*Accomplishment:* “substantially reduce teen pregnancy and birth rates among girls over a long period of time”

*Specific programs:* (1) Children’s Aid Society-Carrera Program

❑ Proven, effective primary prevention programs should be replicated:

- ❖ While communities could design new programs that share the proven programs’ characteristics or could design wholly new strategies, the Kirby report notes that, “The best option is to replicate with fidelity (that is, carefully copy) programs that have been demonstrated to be effective with similar populations of teens.”

❑ Prevention of second or higher order births has also been effectively demonstrated

- ❖ A nurse home visitation model researched by Dr. David Olds and colleagues has been found to delay and prevent repeat pregnancy among young women. Specifically, at the 15-year follow-up of the Elmira, New York project, unmarried women who were home-visited averaged fewer subsequent births, and a longer time between the births of their first and second children. In Memphis, two years after the birth of their first child, nurse-visited women reported fewer second pregnancies and fewer subsequent live births. Both results are significant. The program is being replicated and evaluated at several sites. [“Pre-natal and Infancy: Home Visitation by Nurses: Recent Findings” *The Future of Children*. Vol. 9 No. 1; The Packard Foundation. ]

**CLASP RECOMMENDATION:**

The 2002 TANF reauthorization is an opportunity for policy changes that reflect new teen pregnancy research findings. CLASP believes that the \$100 million awarded annually in “illegitimacy” bonuses should be redirected into a Family Formation fund and that the monies should, in part, be tapped for replication and adaptation of proven best practices related to teen pregnancy prevention (first and subsequent births). Funds should also be available to test new teen pregnancy prevention initiatives. [See CLASP’s **Reauthorization Issues: Out-of-Wedlock Bonus.**]