



University of California
San Francisco

A Question of Hope: Reducing Latina Teen Childbearing in California

Background

In California and the US, teen birth rates have decreased dramatically over the past decade, but the pace of the decrease has been slower among Latina teens than among any other major racial/ethnic group. In 2006, 72 percent of all teen births in California were to Latinas. It is estimated that teen births (among all racial/ethnic groups) in California cost taxpayers over \$1 billion per year, due to lost revenue and public assistance costs. This does not reflect the human costs, e.g., schooling and hence employment opportunities cut short. Despite major teen pregnancy prevention efforts by California health and social service agencies, and tremendous declines in teen birth rates in all race/ethnic groups, Latina teen birth rates continue to be much higher than other groups.

A Question of Hope was commissioned by California's Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program and Office of Family Planning to provide information to guide local and state pregnancy prevention activities. The film aims to capture the insights, choices and opportunities of young Latina women in California. It is based on findings from a study conducted by the University of California, San Francisco that interviewed Latinas who would soon deliver their first babies. Half of those interviewed were teenagers and half were older, the latter having successfully delayed pregnancy until they were adults. The film is intended to be useful to policy makers, health and social services professionals, and other concerned with helping teens delay childbearing into adulthood.

Study Findings

Many California Latinas are misinformed about birth control and use it ineffectively.

- Misinformation about contraception and fertility, which often results in contraceptive misuse and discontinuation, are common reasons for pregnancy among Latinas.
- Most Latinas do not receive adequate sex education in school and do not discuss sex or birth control with their parents.

Parents and other family members play an important role in guiding the lives of Latino youth, but some have limited resources.

- Relationships with engaged and communicative parents help some Latinas defer childbearing until after adolescence.
- Many Latinas feel their family members generally support their goals, yet lack the knowledge and skills to help them access educational and job opportunities.



Many Latinas have – and perceive themselves to have – few socioeconomic opportunities; for some, pregnancy represents an opportunity for a brighter future.

- Many Latina teens come from families and have partners with low incomes and low educational attainment. Many live in dangerous neighborhoods that lack community resources and limit their mobility. Lack of success at school and lack of family and community resources make it difficult for these teens to finish high school and go on to college.
- Pregnant Latina teens are more likely to come from unstable homes or to have experienced severe distress during their teen years than Latinas who do not experience teen childbearing.
- Many Latina teens feel that pregnancy offers them a tangible opportunity and a meaningful pathway to adulthood, and therefore have pregnancies that are intended; strategies focused on unintended pregnancies will not be successful with them.

Conclusion

The findings of this study and film can be useful to program and policymakers in their continued efforts to reduce Latina teen pregnancy in California.

Since the filming of this video, funding for two of California’s five major Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs, including the Male Involvement Program (featured in this film) and the Teen SMART Outreach Program, was totally eliminated from the state budget. In addition, funding for one of the three remaining programs, the Information & Education Program, was reduced by approximately forty percent. These budget cuts impacted over 60 local programs, and approximately 250,000 adolescents served by these programs.

The Latina Teen Childbearing Study was funded by the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program and Office of Family Planning of the California Department of Public Health’s Center for Family Health. The research for this study was conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco. The Principal Investigators for this study were Dr. Paula Braveman, Director of the Center on Social Disparities in Health, and Dr. Claire Brindis, Co-Director, Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health. The film was produced by Ideas in Motion; Berkeley, CA.

For more information about California’s Family PACT and Teen Pregnancy Prevention programs see:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/OFP/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information about the UCSF study, please visit: <http://bixbycenter.ucsf.edu> and

<http://familymedicine.medschool.ucsf.edu/csdh>

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Suggestions for How to Use A Question of Hope

A Question of Hope aims to raise community awareness regarding the issue of Latina teen pregnancy and to support pregnancy prevention and youth development efforts. Community members are encouraged to use *A Question of Hope* to promote discussion across diverse groups concerned with the health and well-being of Latinos.

A community forum or discussion can help identify the community's priorities, views, and ideas for how to prevent teen pregnancy and promote youth development. It can also be an opportunity to distribute brochures about your program, factsheets (www.teenpregnancy.org), a list of local Family PACT and other health providers (see www.familypact.org), health education materials (see www.familypact.org and www.pub.etr.org), and/or other resources.

This film can be used to inform a range of audiences. Consider inviting the following audiences to view and discuss *A Question of Hope*:

- *Elected officials and representatives of local and state government*: to promote your teen pregnancy prevention and youth development policies, programs and initiatives
- *Community organizations that serve teens*: to develop and strengthen your collaborative teen pregnancy prevention and youth development efforts by building referral networks and facilitating teenagers' access to birth control and educational and career opportunities
- *Foundations*: to support their teen pregnancy prevention and youth development efforts
- *Family planning providers*: to facilitate your family planning referrals; to raise provider awareness of the need for greater efforts to inform teens of their birth control options and proper use; and to advise providers to encourage their clients to speak to their partners about birth control decision-making
- *Program staff*: to train them regarding the important issues surrounding Latina teen childbearing and increase their sensitivity to the needs of Latino youth
- *Youth and their parents*: to inform and generate discussion regarding the important issues teens face and the roles that parents can play in helping youth avoid teen parenthood and access educational and career opportunities