We’ve Come a Long Way in 25 Years — We Keep Doing the Impossible!

The following is adapted from Douglas Kirby’s presentation at the 25th Annual Healthy Teen Network Conference. Dr. Kirby will give the keynote address at MOAPPP’s 15th Annual Conference on May 4, 2006.

Teen pregnancy prevention has progressed greatly over the past 25 years. Much has been learned about what works…and what doesn’t. Below is a sampling of our beliefs over the years and what we have subsequently learned is reality.*

25 years ago…

Belief: If we increase teens’ knowledge about contraception, pregnancy and consequences, they are more likely to use contraception.

Reality: Nearly all sex education programs increase knowledge, but programs that focus primarily on knowledge do not change behavior. Many other factors such as attitudes and norms play more important roles.

10 - 15 years ago…

Beliefs:
- Sex education programs should not focus on delaying the initiation of sex because programs can’t stop teens from having sex.
- If programs talk about sex, provide accurate information about contraception and where to get it, and encourage teens to use contraception if they have sex, they will be more likely to have sex.
- If programs encourage teens to be abstinent and to use contraception if they do have sex, it will only confuse teens and not improve either of these behaviors.

Reality: None of these beliefs is true.

10 years ago…

Beliefs: There are 10 characteristics that distinguish effective from ineffective sex and HIV education programs.¹

Reality: Most of the 10 characteristics continue to be supported by recent research but there are other characteristics now known to impact program effectiveness.

Today…

Belief: We are a divided nation and it is exhausting to try to achieve common ground in the abstinence-only versus condom/contraception debate.

Reality: We have been divided, we remain divided and it is exhausting, but we probably can find common ground. Groups at the local, state, national and even international levels are beginning to recognize the need to find common ground, however difficult the process may be. Commonly quoted is the old proverb, “When the elephants are fighting, the grass gets trampled” or in more contemporary terms, “While the adults are arguing, the teens get pregnant.”

Belief: There are too many factors affecting teen sexual behavior that we cannot control (e.g. the media, desire for intimacy, etc.) and therefore, we cannot dramatically reduce teen pregnancy or childbearing.

Reality: We can dramatically reduce teen pregnancy and childbearing. In the US, between 1990 and 2000, the teen pregnancy rate declined by 28 percent and the teen birth rate declined by 30 percent - remarkably large decreases during a single decade.

In the past 25 years, we have learned how to design more effective programs. We have learned that:
- a focus on both abstinence and condom and contraceptive use has positive effects.
- addressing sexual or non-sexual risk and protective factors changes teen sexual risk behavior - and that when we effectively address both, we have the greatest impact.

Together we can continue to do the impossible, just as we have done for the past 25 years!

* For the complete presentation, go to www.healthyteennetwork.org.


MOAPPP’s Teen Pregnancy Puzzle illustrates the complexity of the issue and the need for comprehensive solutions based on research.
Dear Friends,

In June, MOAPPP celebrates its 15th anniversary as Minnesota’s primary resource for teen pregnancy information. Anniversaries offer an opportunity to reflect on how far we’ve come, and to think about where we still want to go.

As this anniversary approaches, it seems only right that the theme of this year’s annual MOAPPP conference be “15 Years of Bringing the Pieces Together.” In its early years, MOAPPP developed the Teen Pregnancy Puzzle to illustrate the complexity of the issue and the need for comprehensive and research-based solutions.

In keeping with the conference theme, we decided to “bring the pieces together!” for this issue of the Monitor rather than highlight one piece of the puzzle as we usually do. We are showcasing a variety of articles written by some of the presenters who will be participating in this year’s conference.

Dr. Douglas Kirby highlights in the cover article the cumulative efforts that have led to a better understanding of what works - and what doesn’t- to prevent teen pregnancy. Dr. Sharon Cooper addresses an emerging issue in the field - the prevalence of sexual violence in our young people’s lives — and shares an unsettling review of some of the current youth culture trends. Michelle Fallon of the Center for Early Childhood Education at the University of Minnesota, reminds us of the competing developmental agendas of an adolescent mother and her child and offers a framework for program interventions.

As I reflect on how far our field and MOAPPP have come over the past 15 years and when I think of where we still want to go, I am heartened by Dr. Kirby’s words, “together we can continue to do the impossible!” See you at the conference!

Sincerely,

Brigid Riley
Executive Director
Shelby Knox is excited to welcome Shelby Knox as a keynote speaker and workshop presenter during our annual conference on May 4 and 5. Ms. Knox will also lead the post conference training for youth, Advocacy Lessons from Shelby Knox. At this training, youth will be inspired to be advocates for comprehensive sexuality education as well as other issues they feel passionately about. Please see the lower part of this page for more information about this dynamic training.

Shelby Knox is the subject of the nationally acclaimed documentary “The Education of Shelby Knox” by Rose Rosenblatt and Marion Lipschutz. The film outlines the importance of comprehensive sexuality education. It focuses on Lubbock Texas, which offers abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education to its students, even though the town has some of the highest teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates in the nation. This film also follows a group of teens in Lubbock who are trying to create a Gay-Straight Alliance at their high school. This documentary is an excellent tool to initiate discussion with adults and youth about adolescent sexual health issues.

We recommend that the film and accompanying discussion guide be used to generate dialogue and interest in your community. Copies of both will be available to purchase during the MOAPPP conference.

An Advocacy Lesson with Shelby Knox

May 5, 2006, 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.
Earle Brown Heritage Center, Immediately after the MOAPPP Conference Youth Only!
Cost: $15.00 per person or $50.00 for a group of five.

Youth can be powerful advocates! Bring your youth group to this training to find out how to be an effective advocate for comprehensive sexuality education. Rebecca Fox of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) and Shelby Knox, a nationally recognized youth advocate, will lead this dynamic session immediately following the MOAPPP Conference. To register for this event, contact Leah Sweet at 651-644-1447, ext. 12 or Leah@moappp.org.

Top Five Action Steps You Can Take to Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Minors’ Consent

1. Sign up for the Sexuality Education for Life - Minnesota Coalition e-mail alert, and make sure your organization is a member of SEFL. To sign up, contact Leah Sweet at Leah@moappp.org.

2. Find out who represents you in the Minnesota House and Senate at:
http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/Districtfinder.asp or call House Information at 651-296-2146 or 800-657-3550 and Senate Information at 651-296-0504 or 888-234-1112.

3. Tell your elected official that you support comprehensive sexuality education and minors’ consent.

4. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. For tips, check out the Winter 2006 issue of the Monitor at www.moappp.org

5. Attend the MOAPPP Conference on May 4 and 5, 2006 to learn more!

Responsible Sexuality Education

1. Would you fund abstinence-only-until-marriage programs that have never been proven effective in reducing the rates of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections or HIV?

2. Do you support teaching responsible, age-appropriate, medically accurate sexuality education, including information about both abstinence and contraception in public schools in Minnesota?

3. Would you support a comprehensive sexual health education bill that includes offering both abstinence and contraception as ways to prevent pregnancy?

Health Services for Minors

1. Do you support minors’ access to confidential health services, including testing for sexually transmitted infections, access to contraception, drug and alcohol counseling and initial mental health services?
The Normalization of Exploitation in Popular Teen Media: Glamorous Myths and Sad Realities

Sharon W. Cooper, M.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Medicine. Dr. Cooper will be the keynote speaker at MOAPP's 15th Annual Conference on May 5, 2006.

Numerous articles, editorials, books and policy level discussions are emerging regarding the increasing amount of sexually graphic and misogynistic media that is flooding our entertainment venues. Common themes of this type of media include violence against women, sexual promiscuity, and the normalization of sexual exploitation through prostitution frequently referred to as the “pimps and hos” culture. Of particular concern is the spreading societal impact of these media messages which has pervaded numerous industries, such as music and associated videos, apparel, jewelry, automotive advertising, wireless telephones, cable programming, cinematic entertainment, videogames, cosmetics and particularly advertising industries. Television is teeming with sexualized programming, as well as commercials which frequently depict women and teenage girls as sexual commodities best suited for the pleasure of a lascivious spectator.

The promotion of “sexploitation” by popular rap hip hop artists and teen icons such as Nelli, Snoop Dogg, 50 Cents, Brittanay Spears, Christina Aguilera and Destiny’s Child is extremely troubling. Research on entertainment education underlines the fact that such role models can clearly impact values and belief systems among teens. Research funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Emory University has revealed that watching several hours per day of rap and hip hop music has been associated with aggressive behavior towards teachers, an increased incidence of arrests, multiple sexual partners, and an increased incidence of sexually transmitted infections in a teen study population.

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Teenage vernacular today includes the word “pimp” as a slang synonym for anything that is current, desirable and highly acceptable. Television programs such as MTV’s Pimp My Ride help promote the concept that if something (or someone) is undesirable and in need of transformational upgrading, the process involves “pimping.” The inferred concept isn’t even subliminal, and easily influenced teens are at risk for exploitation through prostitution leading to unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, intimate partner violence, substance abuse and juvenile justice consequences.

Researchers are beginning to notify us that the Internet is playing the greatest role imaginable in changing the sexual expectations of men. Technology makes media omnipresent in our society and women and girls are at great risk of changing their self perceptions regarding sexuality, relationships and commitment. As research on violence in media has illustrated, frequent exposure to exploitive images on the Internet, television and music leads to tolerance and desensitization of sexual harm that is persistently promoted. This conditioning leads to what law enforcement now describe as the teenage compliant victim.

Another important aspect of sexploitation is seen in videogames. It is troubling to recognize that one of the most popular games of this decade is Grand Theft Auto Vice City, a game in which points are achieved by players who are able to obtain a woman exploited through prostitution and viciously beat her while stealing back the proffered payment.

Teen pregnancy prevention professionals must be aware of the values and belief systems of the young people they serve. The better they understand the factors that influence sexual risk taking behaviors in teens, the better they will be able to help young people avoid compliant victimization through exploitation, which often leads to physical trauma, depression, post traumatic stress disorder and unwanted pregnancy.
SAVE THESE DATES

MOAPPP’s 2006 Annual Conference
15 Years of Bringing the Pieces Together

May 4-5, 2006
Earle Brown Heritage Center, Brooklyn Center, MN

Join us for two days of dynamic speakers, challenging workshops and plenty of opportunities to network with Minnesota professionals committed to teen pregnancy prevention and support for pregnant and parenting teens.

For more information or to register, please contact MOAPPP at 651-644-1447 x10 or visit our website, www.moappp.org to download a conference brochure.

May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

YOU are part of the solution.

May is National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month (NTPPM)? Observed each May by states and communities throughout the country, the goal of NTPPM is to involve communities in promoting and supporting effective teen pregnancy prevention initiatives. Advocates for Youth recently updated its National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month (NTPPM) Planning Guidebook. This guidebook provides strategic tips and examples to help local communities plan and implement activities for NTPPM. It also includes fact sheets, guidance for involving youth, working with the media and sample forms. The guidebook can be downloaded at http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/ntppm.pdf.

MOAPPP recognizes NTPPM by scheduling its annual conference and annual benefit event during the month of May. These two events provide MOAPPP with a platform to bring attention to the importance of teen pregnancy prevention in Minnesota. MOAPPP also attempts to secure media interest and coverage of teen pregnancy prevention during the month of May in order to increase community awareness and education. Watch MOAPPP’s website for more information about NTPPM.
Promoting Healthy Attachment Between Teen Parents and Their Babies: Challenges of Competing Developmental Agendas

Michele Fallon, LICSW, BABY’s SPACE Partnership, Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota. Michelle Fallon will be a presenter at MOAPPP’s 2006 Annual Conference on May 5, 2006.

Miranda is the 16-year-old mother of 18-month-old Trinity. Now that Trinity walks, Miranda refuses to pick her up stating, “She knows how to walk, she’s just trying to manipulate me!” Trinity’s wandering away from Miranda during parent-child interaction time is interpreted by her mother as “See, I told you she doesn’t care about me.”

This all-too-common scenario demonstrates the conflict caused by the often-competing developmental agendas of the teen parent and child.

Though adolescent parents are not a homogeneous group, they do share the primary developmental tasks common to all adolescents - identity formation and need for autonomy. Identity formation includes figuring out, “Who am I in relation to my family, my peers and the world-at-large?” The quest for identity is often characterized by experimentation with perceived adult behaviors such as sexual activity, drugs and other risk-taking behaviors, as well as the development of one’s own value system. Striving for autonomy often includes challenging authority. Even the healthiest teen is likely to have conflict with her family, driven in part by her ambivalence about her emerging independence (the world is an exciting but scary place). The teen strives for autonomy at a time when parenting an infant results in increased dependence on others for assistance.

According to current research on adolescent brain development, the region of the brain that carries out “executive functions” - planning, goal-directed behavior, judgment, insight, accurate reading of emotional cues - is not yet fully developed in the teen brain. As a result, teens tend to be present-oriented, interpret the emotions of others from an egocentric point of view and regress from abstract to concrete thinking when under stress.

An infant brings her own developmental needs to the relationship. Infancy (0-3 years) is a “sensitive period” of brain development in which the infant’s experiences contribute to brain architecture and lay the foundation for attachment, emotional regulation and language. The infant is completely dependent on her caregivers for meeting her basic needs. She needs sensitive, responsive care and age appropriate stimulation to develop a sense of self. She needs consistency, predictability and routine to feel that the world is a safe place in which to explore and learn.

The teen’s egocentrism impedes her ability to understand the infant’s perspective and accurately interpret and respond to her cues. Both the teen parent and infant are learning to regulate emotion and both need to feel cared for and loved, with the teen often expecting the child to meet these needs. Toddlerhood is especially challenging as both parent and child work towards autonomy (I want to be big and little at the same time).

Acknowledging the competing developmental agendas of the infant and adolescent offers a framework for intervention. Optimal strategies help the young parent understand the child’s perspective, encourage recognition of the infant’s individuality and facilitate appropriate developmental expectations. Specifically, we should use strategies, such as home visiting and videotaping, that provide the opportunity for teen parents to:

• Form a trusting relationship with a consistent adult; this parallel process facilitates the teen’s capacity to build a relationship with her baby.

• Spend structured time with their babies to focus on the parent-child relationship.

• Connect their experiences of being parented with their hopes for themselves as parents.

It is important that all those who work with teen parents support the interests and needs of BOTH the teen and child, have a thorough understanding of child and adolescent development, listen with empathy and without judgment, have access to regular reflective consultation and support, and keep a sense of humor in the process.
RESEARCH


RESOURCES

Advocates for Youth
Advocates for Youth provides information, training and strategic assistance to youth-serving organizations, policy makers, youth activists, and the media in the United States and the developing world. Advocate’s Programs that Work: Science & Success series identifies evaluated programs that have been proven to reduce teenage pregnancy, STIs or sexual risk behaviors.
www.advocatesforyouth.org

Healthy Teen Network
Healthy Teen Network’s mission is to provide leadership, education, training, information, advocacy, resources and support to professional individuals and organizations in the field of adolescent health, with an emphasis on teen pregnancy, pregnancy prevention and teen parenting.
www.healthyteennetwork.org

Kaiser Family Foundation
Kaiser includes a focused Youth and HIV/STDs project which includes national surveys on adolescent behaviors, research and resources. Kaiser daily and weekly e-mails provide current news and research on reproductive health.
www.kff.org

Minnesota Department of Education - Coordinated School Health
Assists school personnel and local public health providers in providing prevention and education services aimed at reducing the short and long term impact of negative health behaviors including sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Provides resources and trainings on evidence-based sexual health curriculum and youth behavior data with the Minnesota Student Survey.
www.mnschoolhealth.com

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
The Campaign is a national clearinghouse on research and resources for teen pregnancy prevention. The Putting What Works to Work (PWWTW) project translates research on teen pregnancy prevention and related issues into user-friendly materials for practitioners, policymakers and advocates. The Campaign also provides state and national data on teen pregnancy.
www.teenpregnancy.org

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States
SIECUS provides training, information and resources for educators, health professionals, parents and policy makers across the country to ensure that people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds receive high quality, comprehensive education about sexuality.
www.siecus.org

Stop It Now! Minnesota
Stop It Now! Minnesota is an online information resource with the goal of preventing the sexual abuse of children.
www.stopitnow.com/mn

ETR - Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention
ReCAPP provides practical tools and information to effectively reduce sexual risk-taking behaviors. Teachers and health educators will find up-to-date, evaluated programming materials for their work with teens, including a listing of evidence-based curriculum.
www.etr.org/recapp
SAVE THE DATE!
Thursday, May 11, 2006, 6:00 - 9:30 p.m.
The Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant

A benefit event for MOAPPP recognizing 15 years as Minnesota’s resource for teen pregnancy information.

Evening “celebrity” emcees: Lori and Julia, “Drivetime Divas” of FM 107
Buffet dinner prepared by Chef Jack Riebel
Entertainment provided by Ginger Commodore and the GCQ quartet

Visit www.moappp.org to learn more about the event and to order tickets.
Contact Lisa at 651-644-1447 ext. 16 or