

Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy



massachusetts alliance
on teen pregnancy

Teen Pregnancy: *What Do We Know and What Did We Learn*

April 27, 2010
Berkshire County



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Who We Are

Mission: to advocate statewide and mobilize communities to prevent teen pregnancy, to increase opportunities for youth and young parents, and to empower young people to make healthy decisions about relationships, sex, parenting, and life.



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What We Do

Public Policy and Advocacy

Promoting Best Practices

Youth Empowerment





Why Focus on Teen Pregnancy

- We believe that the inequity in Mass teen births creates ethical responsibility to engage on the issue
- We believe that youth gaining control of sexual choices are youth gaining control of their lives
- We believe that the strengths of communities and families can be brought to bear to address teen pregnancy

What do teens need to prevent pregnancy?

- Access to information
- Access to confidential contraceptive services for sexually active teens
- Perception of opportunity and hope for a bright future

Key Ideas for Community Efforts

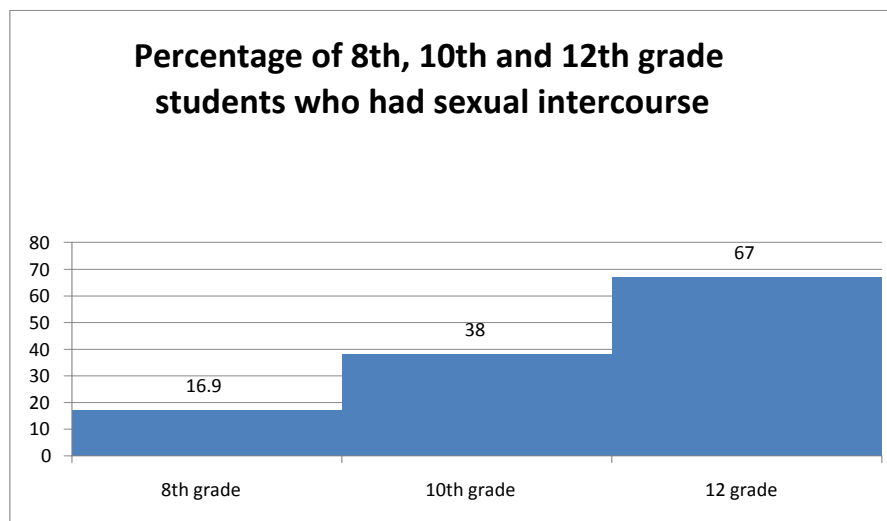
- Give teens something to say “YES” to besides sex and parenting
- No single strategy alone is sufficiently powerful to reduce teen pregnancy very much
- Make the commitment for the long-term--at least five years
- Target teens most at-risk--your geographic data mapping very useful
- Don't leave the community behind--tailor for culture, fit with values

Some Issues and Challenges facing Berkshire Youth



Berkshire Youth: Sexual Activity

2007 Berkshire County Prevention Needs Assessment Survey



Contraceptive Use

- In both the survey and the discussion groups the areas of greatest concern are the perceived lack of condom and contraceptive use among teens reflected on both the adult & youth responses.
- In the 2007 Berkshire County Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, 68% of all sexually active youth reported using a condom last time they had sexual intercourse.

Berkshire Youth: Teen Pregnancy



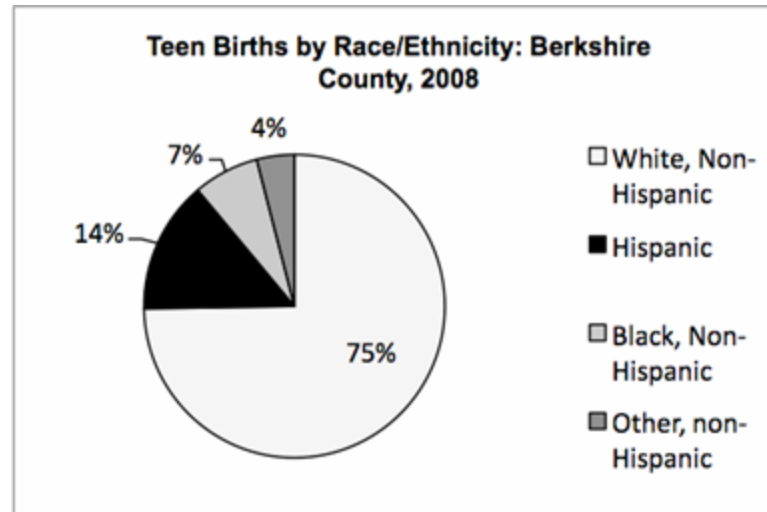
77% were to mothers ages 18-19

51% of teen births (60 births) in Berkshire County were to Pittsfield mothers. Pittsfield has the 12th highest teen birth rate in the state.

In Pittsfield, the teen birth rate **increased 21%** between 1996 and 2008. In the same time period, there was a **30% decrease** in the state rate.

Berkshire Youth: Teen Pregnancy

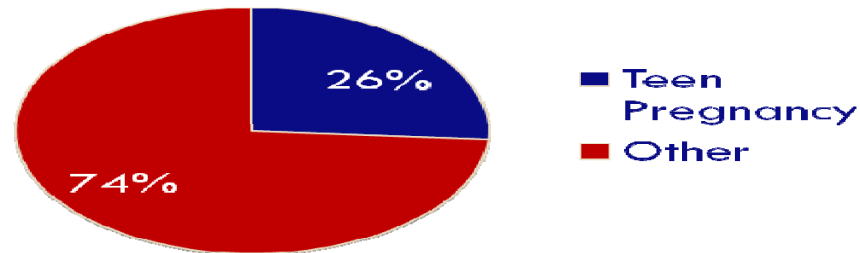
In 2008, 117 births to youth ages 15-19 in Berkshire County



- As is true for Massachusetts in general, Berkshire County birth rates were highest among Hispanic youth (120 per 1,000), followed by Black, non-Hispanic youth (49 per 1,000) and White non-Hispanic youth (33 per 1,000).
- In Pittsfield more than 2 in 10 Hispanic girls and 1 in 10 Black girls give birth each year.

Education Impacts

Leading Reasons for High School Dropout in the U.S.



Source: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2006)

- This accounts for approximately **2,600 MA high school students** who leave school each year.
- Teen parenthood is **the primary cause** of dropout among girls.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2006, March). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Seattle, WA: Bridgeland, J.M., Dilulio, J.J. & Morison, K.B.

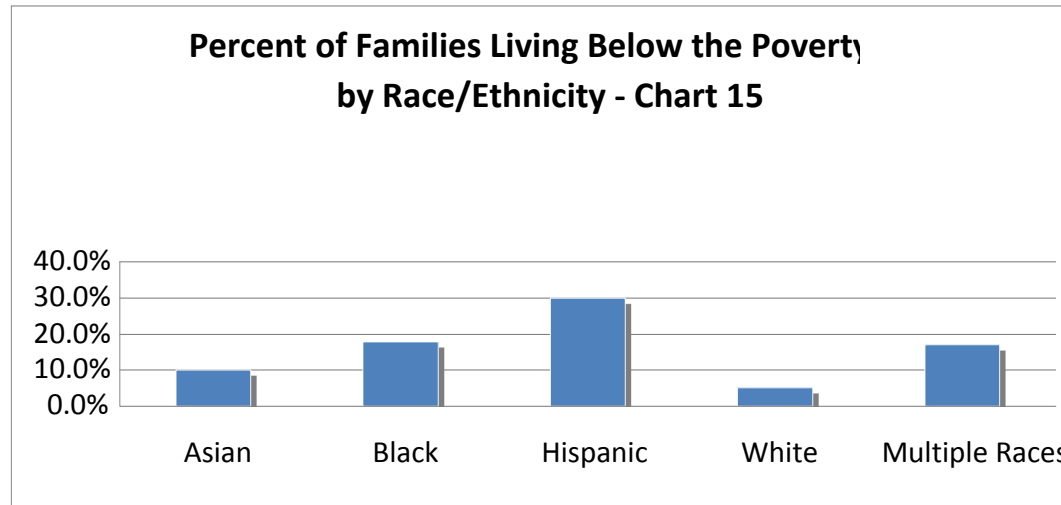
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2009). High school dropouts 2007-08 Massachusetts public schools.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (n.d.). *Why it matters: Teen pregnancy and education*. [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. *Why it matters: Teen pregnancy, poverty, and income disparity*. [Fact sheet].

Economic Impacts

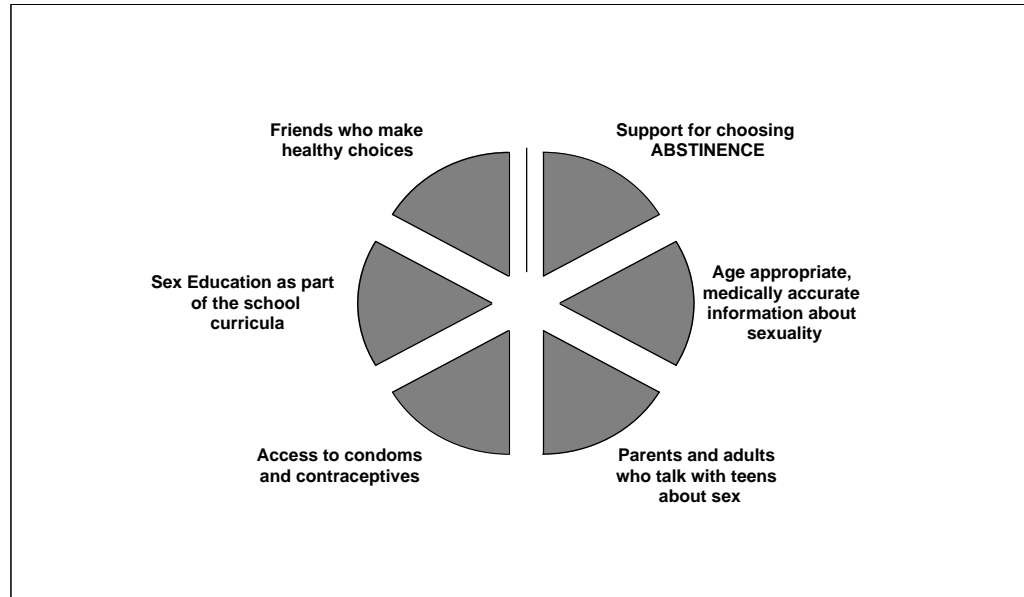
Poverty Status of Massachusetts Families in 2006



- Unplanned pregnancy is also a serious obstacle for those trying to get additional education and training at the community college level.
- Six in 10 community college students who have a child after enrolling fail to complete their education—65% higher than the rate for those who don't have children.

Promoting Comprehensive Pregnancy Prevention for ALL Teens

What teens **NEED** to make positive decisions about sexuality that protect their health, safety and futures.

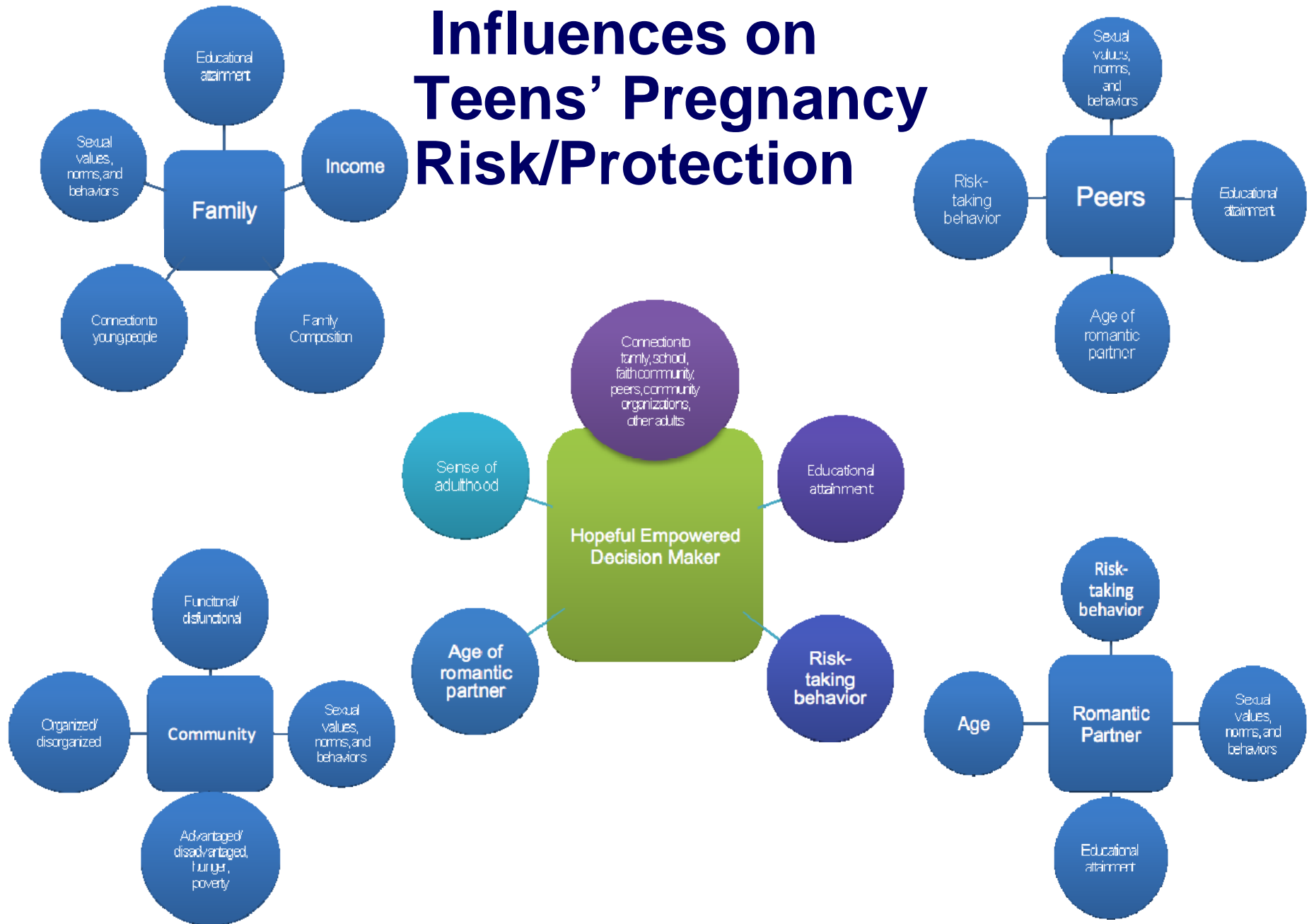


Behaviors and Outcomes We Want to Influence

- Delay of initiation of sex
- Increase consistent use of contraception and condoms
- Increase assertive and respectful communication skills

Risky sexual behaviors are influenced by a number of risk and protective factors in teens' lives; risk factors increase the likelihood that teens will engage in these behaviors and protective factors decrease the likelihood that teens will engage in these behaviors.

Influences on Teens' Pregnancy Risk/Protection



Teens and Adults Perceptions: What does it mean to be ready?

- **Why are teens having sex?**
 - *teen is in love, peer pressure, curiosity, to secure a relationship, pressure from partner, “heat of the moment”, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, “it just happens”*
- **Why do teens get pregnant?**
 - *the top three reasons were: unplanned, didn't have protection in the moment, did not want to use protection.*
- **How do young people determine readiness? For sex, for parenting...**

Teens and Adults Perceptions: Sex Positive Messaging

The Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP) defines **Positive Sexuality** as:

- an understanding of sexuality as a natural and healthy aspect of human life;
- knowledge of human sexuality and reproductive rights with which to make responsible choices;
- respectful communication and exchange of personal thoughts and feelings between partners; and
- practice of safe and mutually consensual sexual activity.

Caring Adults Matter



Parents and caring adults can make a difference;

- stay **positively** connected and present in their teens' lives
- supervise and monitor
- have clear expectations about delaying sexual involvement
- have clear expectations about use of contraception for sexually active youth
- talk to their kids about sex

Access to sexual health information

Berkshire youth and adults recommend:

- Comprehensive sexuality education in schools
- Parent education
- Peer education and learning from older youth
- Incorporating sexual health education into youth programming
- Positive youth and adult communication about sex

Access to contraceptives for sexually active youth

Berkshire youth and adults recommend:

- More access to reproductive health services for youth.
- Condom availability in schools
- Reproductive health services in schools
- Overcome barriers of cost, transportation, confidentiality
- Youth need to know where they can go for services

Perception of opportunity and hope for a bright future

Berkshire Youth and Adults Recommend

- Safe space that is youth friendly that teens can go to and talk about these issues
- Positive youth development programs that are attractive to teens
- Teens need to learn from people with experience
- Youth employment
- Community engagement

What's Happening Now?





Agreements

Have a "kitchen table" conversation

Everyone participates; no one dominates.

There are no "right answers"

Draw on your own experiences, views and beliefs — you do not need to be an expert.

Keep an open mind

Listen carefully and try hard to understand the views of those who disagree with you.

Help keep the discussion on track

Stick to the questions: try not to ramble.

It is okay to disagree, but don't be disagreeable

Respond to others how you want to be responded to.

Have fun!

Contact Information

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