



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
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Talking With Your Teen is Key to Preventing Teen Pregnancy

May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month – Take the Test May 7th

MADISON - State health and workforce development officials are encouraging parents and teens across Wisconsin to talk about making responsible and healthy decisions to build on progress already made in reducing teen pregnancies. According to the *Wisconsin Youth Sexual Behavior and Outcomes 1993-2007* report, the number of teen births age 15-19 decreased from 7,057 in 1993 to 6,008 in 2006.

“We are pleased with our overall progress, as well as our ability to help reduce disparities in teen pregnancy, but we still face challenges ahead, particularly with birth disparities for African Americans and Hispanics,” said Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Karen Timberlake. “Community efforts help promote healthy decisions and these collaborative efforts can help reduce teen pregnancy – yet parents should know they play a crucial role in their teen’s sexual activity decisions.”

According to the Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman, “Teenage girls should be focused on the virtually unlimited education and career opportunities available to them, especially now with the Wisconsin Covenant and increasing financial aid. Unfortunately teen pregnancy severely limits these options and creates barriers to higher education, economic stability and upward mobility. That's why it is so important to educate all teens early about the need to make healthy decisions, avoid teen pregnancy, and look ahead to the opportunities awaiting them.”

The National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is May 7th. On that day, teens can take an online quiz called “*How Do You Score*” that presents them with real life scenarios involving sex and asks them to make a choice in how they’d handle the situation. The quiz is appropriate for teens ages 13 and up and is available at dhfs.wisconsin.gov.

Teenagers need accurate information and strong support systems in order to make healthy decisions. Parents are more influential than they think and clear, consistent communication may help your teen to make healthy decisions to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Parents should:

- Be clear about your own sexual values and attitudes.
- Talk with your children early and often about sex – and be specific.
- Help your teenagers understand they have options for the future that are more attractive than early pregnancy and parenthood.
- Let your children know that you highly value education.

It is realistic to assume that some teens will be sexually active. Therefore, it is important that they know the risks and how to protect themselves and their partner from pregnancy and diseases. Anyone who is sexually active can get sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) from intercourse, oral sex, anal sex and some forms of mutual masturbation.

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The Department of Public Instruction has released the results of the 2007 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey which notes that fewer students are having sex. Among students who are sexually active, more are abstaining longer before their first sexual intercourse experience and more youth are using condoms.

The magnitude of community and public health initiatives cannot be minimized. A comprehensive approach is needed to help our youth make healthy decisions. This includes the importance of parent-teen communication, the promotion of delayed sexual activity and increased access to confidential contraceptive and related reproductive health services to prevent unintended pregnancy among sexually active adolescents.

Below are some of the actions the Department of Health and Family Services has taken to help address teen pregnancy and adolescent reproductive health:

- The Brighter Futures program focuses on preventing and reducing teen pregnancy. It targets at-risk youth through programs that increase academic achievement, self-esteem, and inter-personal communication skills.
- Implemented The Milwaukee Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Partnership (MAPPP). This innovative project utilizes a Milwaukee driven, community-based partnership to increase the Medicaid Family Waiver enrollment for African Americans, ages 15-19.
- Supported the implementation of the new the Dual Protection Partnership Initiative in Milwaukee. This partnership establishes collaboration between contraceptive care providers and STD services to find new ways to provide information to help adolescents make deliberate decisions to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and reduce the risk of STDs.
- Collaborated with the City of Milwaukee Health Department on the Plain Talk Initiative, which is an evidenced-based grassroots strategy that teaches families how to talk to their kids about sex and its consequences.

In addition, in 1997, the Department of Health and Family Services and the Department of Workforce Development established the State Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Committee that includes a broad range of public and private stakeholders in the areas of abstinence education, HIV/STD intervention and teen pregnancy prevention.

For more information about Wisconsin's efforts to reduce teen pregnancy, go to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/teenpregnancy/index.htm>

To view the *Wisconsin Youth Sexual Behavior and Outcomes 1993-2007* report, go to <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/stats/s-behyouth.htm>

To view the Department of Public Instruction's *Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, go to <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbsindx.html>

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