

Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy[®]

Why This Program?

Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood present formidable challenges for teens' development into productive and fulfilled adults. Although the nation's teen pregnancy rate declined throughout the 1990s, sexually transmitted disease rates have increased among young women. The United States still has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and teen births among industrialized nations.

While communities and policy makers search for effective strategies to address adolescent sexuality issues, most youth and parents say that teens need more comprehensive information relevant to their lives—and they need this information sooner rather than later. Programs and efforts that deliver such information need to pay particular attention to gender-specific issues, because young women have specific needs in managing sexual relationships and because they deal most directly with the consequences of teen pregnancy.

About the Program

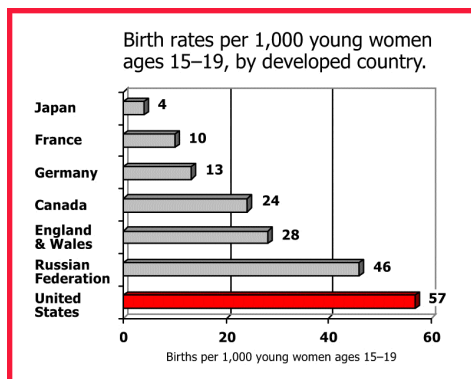
Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy

is a research-based and evaluated program that provides girls and young women with the skills, insights, values, motivation, and support to postpone sexual activity as well as to use effective protection to avoid

pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The program is composed of three developmentally appropriate components (two of which are translated into Spanish):

- **Growing TogetherSM** (also available in Spanish as *Crecer juntasSM*) for girls ages 9 to 11 and a parent/adult: Five interactive sessions jump-start crucial two-way conversations between girls and a trusted adult about sexuality issues, opening doors to future communication. Key topics include the role of parents as primary sexuality educators; changes during puberty; anatomy, physiology, and hygiene; adolescent sexual development and feelings; and values and expectations for teen sexual behavior.
- **Will Power/Won't Power[®]** (also available in Spanish as *Querer/Poder decir "no"SM*) for girls ages 12 to 14: In this 10-session program, girls build skills and strategies for dealing with sexual situations as they enter the most pressure-sensitive adolescent years, while also receiving medically accurate information. Interactive sessions center on values, relationships, female health and hygiene, separating sexual myths from reality, assertiveness and communication skills, identifying and resisting sexual pressures from the media and peers, sexual decision-making, avoiding risky situations, the benefits of abstinence, and the power of a positive sister support system.
- **Taking Care of Business[®]** for girls ages 15 to 18: Ten interactive sessions focus on recognizing and moving beyond limiting sex-role stereotypes for women; using values as a basis for positive decision-making; building assertiveness, refusal, and relationship skills; avoiding risky behavior, pregnancy, STDs, and HIV through abstinence and other smart choices; learning the facts on contraception and protection; strengthening communication skills; and examining life goals.

Complementing these three components is **Health BridgeSM**, a concept and process for linking girls ages 6 to 18 to community healthcare providers, including providers of age-appropriate reproductive health services. The revised guide for Health Bridge is expected to be available in 2005. When revised, the Health Bridge guide will center on the "whole girl" and provide affiliates with strategies



"What you learn is: Don't do anything you're not ready for or you can't handle. A lot of people I know just do it until they run into trouble." —Khana, age 15

to facilitate access to a wide range of girl-friendly health services, including reproductive health and contraceptive services for sexually active young women.

A supplemental piece for girls ages 7 and 8, **Growing Up! Body Basics**, is a 3-hour workshop designed to provide information about puberty and menstruation for an age group usually thought of as too young for these topics, but which may already be experiencing secondary or even primary characteristics. In this workshop, girls receive accurate, age-based information on why and how their bodies are changing—with an emphasis on the fact that the changes are normal and okay, even if they come earlier than such changes among their peers.

Evaluation Results

Young women who participated in one or more components of Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy were significantly less likely to become pregnant than nonparticipants (5.9% versus 12.3%). Young women who participated in most sessions of one or more components were less likely to initiate sexual intercourse and more likely, if they had sexual intercourse, to use contraception.

Investment in Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy is cost-effective. Quality implementation of Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy results in monetary savings to society as well as personal benefits to young women who postpone pregnancy past their teen years. A minimal estimate of the savings to society is approximately \$9,000 per pregnancy prevented or delayed.

Girls Incorporated and its subcontractor Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. are conducting the Girls Shape the Future Study, a rigorous longitudinal evaluation of the effectiveness of the Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy program at helping girls delay sexual intercourse, avoid pregnancy, and stay in school.

Funders

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The Annie E. Casey Foundation; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; The David and Lucile Packard Foundation; Smith Richardson Foundation, Inc.; Turner Foundation, Inc.

Girls Incorporated

Girls Incorporated[®] is a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls through research-based programs and public education efforts that empower girls to understand, value, and assert their rights. In 2004, Girls Inc. reached nearly 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational publications.

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