



## Effective and Promising Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs for Latino Youth

### Introduction

Despite a 22% decline in the Latina teen pregnancy rate between 1990 and 2005, it is still the case that one in two Latina teens (52%) get pregnant at least once before age 20.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Latinas have the highest teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, there is growing interest in programs that are effective with Latino youth in delaying sex, improving contraceptive use for sexually active teens, and reducing teen pregnancy.

For those at the federal, state, and local levels interested in addressing the high rate of pregnancy among Latino teens, it is important to carefully consider which programs have the best evidence of success among Latinos, to promote new and innovative strategies based on the common elements of these proven programs, and to evaluate the results.<sup>3</sup> Although the number of programs designed to serve Latino youth is increasing, to date relatively few have been carefully evaluated and shown to be effective in changing Latino teens' sexual behavior, and even fewer have been developed specifically for Latino teens.

This research brief details eight programs that have been shown through careful evaluation (see details below) to either delay sex, improve contraceptive use, and/or reduce teen pregnancy. Some of the programs were designed specifically for Latino teens and some were not; those that were not designed specifically for Latinos either included Latino teens in the program evaluation population or were found to be particularly effective among Latino teens.

Because there are such a limited number of programs designed for Latino youth, five additional programs—those that have not been evaluated as rigorously but have shown some encouraging

results—are also briefly discussed. While these programs do not yet have strong, documented evaluation evidence, this list provides several other programmatic options for consideration by practitioners and others interested in helping Latino teens avoid too-early pregnancy and parenthood. Clearly, more effective programs designed specifically for Latino youth are needed in order to continue making progress on teen pregnancy prevention among these youth. Additional strategies for reaching parents, families, policy makers, and other community leaders are also critical in making a difference on this important issue.

### Data

- Latinas have the highest teen birth rate and teen pregnancy rate of any major ethnic/racial minority in the United States.<sup>4</sup>
- The Latina teen pregnancy rate is declining at half the pace of the national teen pregnancy rate.<sup>5</sup>
- Latinos are now the largest minority group in the United States. It is projected that by 2025, almost one-quarter of the youth population will be Latino.<sup>6</sup>
- Among sexually active high school students, Latino teens are less likely than their non-Hispanic white or non-Hispanic black counterparts to have used a condom the last time they had sex.<sup>7</sup>
- Among sexually experienced teens aged 15-19, Latinas (35.2%) were more likely to report that their first male partner was four or more years older than were non-Hispanic black (19.0%) and non-Hispanic white girls (19.6%).<sup>8</sup>

- More than seven in ten (72%) sexually experienced Latino teens say they wish they had waited longer to have sex.<sup>9</sup>
- Latino teens (21%) report that the most common reason teens do not use contraception is because they are afraid their parents might find out. The second most common reason cited by Latino teens (15%) is lack of knowledge or education about contraception.<sup>10</sup>
- Over two-thirds (69%) of Latina teen moms drop out of high school, compared to 58% of teen moms overall.<sup>11</sup>

### Inclusion Criteria

The programs described briefly below have been carefully evaluated and have met several criteria. Specifically, each of these program evaluations must include *at least* the following characteristics:

- Were completed and published in 1980 or later;
- Were conducted in the United States or Canada;
- Were targeted at middle and/or high school aged teens, approximately aged 12-18;
- Included baseline and follow-up data (for at least 3 months);
- Measured impact on behavior;
- Included at least 75 people in both the treatment and the control groups;
- Used sound statistical analyses;
- Used an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation design; and
- Were specifically targeted to Latino teens, or had a large sample of Latino teens in the evaluation group.

### Effective Programs

The following eight programs have been carefully evaluated. Seven of the programs have been rigorously evaluated using an experimental design—that is, participants are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups—and have been shown to delay sexual initiation, reduce the frequency of sexual intercourse, reduce the number of sexual partners, increase the use of contraception, and/or reduce teen pregnancy among Latino teens. One of the programs, *Poder Latino*, was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design and, therefore, provides less robust evidence of success. More information about these programs can be found in detail in other resources listed below.

#### **Programs Evaluated with an Experimental Design:**

- ***Children’s Aid Society-Carrera Program.*** This after-school program is a long-term, intensive program that includes the following components: family life and sex education, academic assessment, work-related activities, free and compre-

## A NOTE OF CAUTION ABOUT EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Even those programs that have been shown to be effective in changing teen sexual behavior may have relatively modest results. This is due in part because programs often serve only a fraction of the adolescents in the area who are at risk, and is particularly true when a program is poorly funded. Consequently, it is important to think carefully about what an effective program actually can accomplish. Some things to consider:

- How do you define effective? For example, is a program effective if its good results last only a relatively brief amount of time or only among boys? In other words, pay careful attention to the specific results of program evaluation and think carefully about what constitutes success. Is a 10% improvement enough? What if a program helps on one issue (i.e. increases contraceptive use) but not on another (i.e. no impact on age of first sex)?
- Consider the magnitude of success. For example, if a program is successful at delaying participants from having sex, how long was the average delay? An effective program may only change things a bit.
- Pay attention to the criteria used to define “effective.” The criteria used for these charts are described in detail below. Note that there are no national standardized criteria for identifying effective programs so lists may vary.
- Keep in mind that there may very well be a number of creative programs, including the promising programs listed in this document, that are effective in helping young people avoid risky sexual behavior that simply have not yet been evaluated.

hensive health care, sports, and arts activities. Tested in an urban setting, the program has been shown to significantly delay the onset of sex, increase condom use, and reduce pregnancy and birth rates among girls in the program, but not boys.<sup>12</sup> Some 39% of program participants were Latino, but the results pertain to all teens in the program. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.

- ***¡Cuidate!/ Take Care of Yourself: The Hispanic Youth Health Promotion Program.*** This HIV prevention intervention is an adaptation of the *Be Proud! Be Responsible!* program, and

was specifically designed for Latino teens. The program includes a focus on the importance of family in teens' lives, and uses these themes to encourage teens to take care of themselves. It emphasizes abstinence and condom use as effective methods for stopping the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Twelve months after baseline, adolescents were less likely to report having had sex recently or having multiple partners.<sup>13</sup> Adolescents in the intervention group were also almost half as likely as their peers in the control group to have had unprotected sex, and were almost twice as likely to have consistently used condoms compared to teens in the control group. Furthermore, Spanish speakers in the intervention group were almost five times more likely to have used a condom the last time they had sex compared to Spanish speakers in the control group. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.

- **Draw the Line/Respect the Line.** This school-based program for youth in middle school focuses on helping students set sexual limits and teaches them that not having sex is the healthiest choice. The program also includes information on condom use. The topics discussed are based on school grade. The program has been found to delay sexual initiation among boys, but had little effect among girls. Program evaluators suggest this might be due to the fact that the program did not address the issue of young girls dating older boys. A 36-month follow-up survey found that 19% of boys in the program had sex compared to 27% in the control group.<sup>14</sup> Fully 59% of program participants were Latino, but results pertain to all teens in the program. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English.
- **It's Your Game: Keep it Real.** This school-based program for middle school youth is a theory-based intervention designed to reduce participants' risk for HIV, STIs, and teen pregnancy. The program, which was implemented in an urban setting, consists of 12 lessons in both 7th and 8th grade to help students learn to set personal limits regarding risky behavior, to recognize situations that might challenge these limits, and to use refusal skills to protect these limits. Topics covered over the two year program include healthy friendships and dating relationships, risky behavior in general, setting limits, refusal skills, puberty, reproductive health, STIs, and training on condom and contraceptive use. The program also includes activities that involve parents to encourage discussion about these topics at home. An evaluation of the program determined that it successfully delayed the initiation of sexual activity 24 months after baseline.<sup>15</sup> More specifically, 30% of the students in the control group had initiated sex by 9th grade compared to 24% of the students in the intervention group. Approximately 44% of students in the intervention were Latino, but results pertain to all teens in the program. Program materials are available in English only.
- **Positive Prevention.** This school-based curriculum for middle and high school students consists of six 45-minute lessons. The focus of the program is for students to identify, avoid, and/or manage risky sexual behavior. The program includes small group activities focused on improving skills needed to avoid HIV infection, including delaying the initiation of sex and using condoms correctly and consistently. Among those students who had not yet had sex before starting the program, those who received the intervention were significantly less likely to start having sex six months after the program compared to similar students who did not receive the intervention.<sup>16</sup> Nearly 60% of the students in the intervention were Latino, but results are for all teens in the program. Program materials are available in English only.
- **Safer Choices.** This school-based HIV prevention program for 9th and 10th graders has been used in both urban and suburban settings. The program encourages abstinence as the safest way to avoid pregnancy and/or STIs and includes five main components: school organization, curriculum and staff development, peer resources and school environments, parent education, and links between school and community. The program has been shown to delay sexual initiation among Latino teens and improve contraceptive use.<sup>17</sup> At the 31-month follow-up, Latino teens in the program were 43% less likely to have initiated sex when compared to Latino teens in the control group. Latinos in the program who were sexually active were 65% more likely than Latinos in the control group to have used a condom at last sex. Program materials are available in English only.
- **Reach for Health Community Youth Service (RFH-CYS).** This school-sponsored program combines service learning and skills-based health instruction, allowing for meaningful opportunities for community engagement. The two core program elements are a classroom health curriculum and a service learning component, which includes approximately 90 hours of community service in a year. While this program did not focus solely on Latino youth, they did comprise a large proportion of participants in the original evaluation site. When participants were surveyed in 7th grade and again in 10th grade, students who had completed both core components of the program were less likely to have initiated sex by 10th grade than their peers who only participated in the health curriculum component.<sup>18</sup> Program materials are available in English only.

## Programs Evaluated with a Quasi-Experimental Design:

- **Poder Latino.** A Community AIDS Prevention Program for Inner City Latino Youth. This school- and community-based program was designed for urban, Latino youth aged 14-20. The program incorporates TV and radio public service announcements (PSAs), workshops held in school and in health and community centers, community-wide and parent education, and neighborhood distribution of informational condom kits. An 18-month follow-up showed that male participants were 92% less likely to have initiated sex than those in the comparison group.<sup>19</sup> However, similar results were not found with girls in the program. Program materials are available in English only.

For more information on these programs from The National Campaign, please visit [www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/effective\\_programs.aspx](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/effective_programs.aspx) or click the links below:

- [What Works 2010: Curriculum-Based Programs That Help Prevent Teen Pregnancy](#)
- [Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases](#)
- [No Time to Waste Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy among Middle School Youth](#)
- [Not Yet: Programs to Delay First Sex Among Teens](#)
- [It's a Guy Thing: Boys Young Men and Teen Pregnancy Prevention](#)
- [A Good Time: After-School Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy](#)

Additional Resources:

- [www.itsyourgame.org](http://www.itsyourgame.org)
- [www.stopteenpregnancy.com/ourprogram](http://www.stopteenpregnancy.com/ourprogram)
- [www.positiveprevention.com](http://www.positiveprevention.com)

Program Materials:

- PASHA Archive: <http://www.socio.com/pasha.php?partner=campaign>
- Select Media: [www.selectmedia.org](http://www.selectmedia.org)
- ETR Associates: [www.etr.org](http://www.etr.org)

## Promising Programs

The following five programs may have evaluations with weak designs, use less rigorous analyses, do not meet the inclusion criteria outlined above, or have not yet been evaluated at all. As a result, evidence of their success is not as strong as that cited for the programs noted previously. Even so, these programs have demonstrated some promising results and, therefore, provide a greater

number of programmatic interventions for consideration to those interested in addressing the high rate of teen pregnancy among Latinos.

## Evaluated Programs with Limited Evidence

A program targeting Mexican-American teen girls was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design, but is not included in the section on effective programs because the follow-up time was only two months. While this program does not meet the inclusion criteria detailed above, it was found to increase condom use among girls in the program.

- **SHERO.** This program is a nine-session, interactive, group-based intervention that is tailored to urban, Mexican-American adolescent girls aged 12-21. The program uses a variety of strategies including providing information, skill building, interactive games, group discussions, role-plays, and mini-lectures. The program was delivered through community-based organizations to groups of 15-20 girls, and the sessions were facilitated by a Mexican-American female staff member and other young women of color from local organizations. Two months after the program, participants reported using a condom more often during sex compared to peers who did not receive the intervention.<sup>20</sup>

## Other Important Programs

The following four programs have not been evaluated using an experimental or quasi-experimental design:

- **Pathways/Senderos** is a “neighborhood-based, child-focused, and family-centered” program in New Britain, Connecticut that serves primarily low-income Latino youth. The program, based on the Carrera program (mentioned above), is offered after school and throughout the summer and includes three primary components—education, career, and family life/sexual health. The program includes several other minor components such as the opportunity to work in a small business, the opportunity to start a savings account, and parental outreach through monthly meetings. While there has been no formal evaluation of the program comparing the teens in the intervention to those without the intervention, the program has captured process and outcome measures. Nearly all program participants (96%) have avoided a teen pregnancy since the program was started in 1993, and 100% of the program participants have graduated from high school. Half of the youth also continue onto higher education. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. More information is available at [www.pathways-senderos.com](http://www.pathways-senderos.com).
- **Plain Talk/Hablando Claro** is a neighborhood-based initiative developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that is

designed to increase adult and teen communication about sex and increase sexually active teens' access to contraceptives, thereby decreasing unplanned pregnancy, STIs, and HIV/AIDS. *Hablando Claro* is the program name used in the Spanish-speaking sites. The program is currently operating in 10 states and Puerto Rico and is under consideration in several other states. Evaluations have found that after participating in the program, participants reported increased communication between adults and youth. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. For more information, visit [www.plaintalk.org](http://www.plaintalk.org).

- **Make A Life for Yourself/Como Planear Mi Vida** focuses on establishing goals for the future, exploring the steps needed to achieve those goals, and how making decisions about sex and relationships can affect those plans. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. More information is available at [www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/cpmv.pdf](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/cpmv.pdf).
- **Wise Guys/Jóvenes Sabios** is a comprehensive 10-12 session program that targets Latino boys aged 11-17. The program encourages abstinence, provides information on contraception, and works to promote responsible decision making. Facilitators discuss such topics as values, future goals, and sexuality. Evaluations of this program have shown some increase in parent and teen communication, a more positive attitude towards women, and an increased knowledge of reproduction and safer sexual behavior. Program materials are available in both Spanish and English. More information is available at: [www.wiseguysnc.org/jovenes.htm](http://www.wiseguysnc.org/jovenes.htm).

### Advice from Latino Teens, Adults, and Experts in the Field

In addition to considering evaluated and promising programs, there is much to learn from survey data of Latino teens and adults themselves as well as practitioners who work directly with Latino teens. Since 2000, The National Campaign has gathered information from teens, parents, and leaders of Latino-serving organizations to learn more about ways to effectively work with Latino youth, their families, and the community at large. Selected findings are presented below:

- **Emphasis on Education and Support of High Aspirations.** Given that about half of teen pregnancies occur after an individual has dropped out of school, and given that Latino teens are more likely to drop out of high school than non-Hispanic white or non-Hispanic black youth, keeping Latino teens connected to school is an important step toward reducing teen pregnancy among Latino teens.<sup>21</sup> Many practitioners suggest that it is important to give teens a reason not to get pregnant until later in life, and that one of the primary messages to teens should be one of timing—education now, family later. Latino

teens themselves say higher education and career success are a priority over starting a family. In fact, more than 8 in 10 Latino teens (84%) say that either graduating from a college or university or having a promising career are the most important goals for their future.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, more than three-quarters of Latino teens (77%) agree that planning for their future is important and within their control.<sup>23</sup>

- **Parent and Family Involvement.** Latino teens are less likely than other teens to have talked to their parents about sex, love, and relationships. About three-quarters of Latino adults admit—and teens agree—that they don't know what to say when it comes to talking about sex. Moreover, fully one-third of Latino teens say they have never had a helpful conversation with their parents about sex.<sup>24</sup>
- **Recognize and Respect Cultural Values.** Practitioners note that many cultural values shared by Latinos—the importance of and connection to family and faith in marriage to name just a few—are values that can and should be used help teens delay sexual activity and avoid early pregnancy and parenthood.
- **The Role of Boys and Men.** Many of those who work with Latino youth underscore the importance of addressing male roles and responsibilities. For example, it is important to confront what we often hear described as a double standard that encourages Latina girls to not have sex while offering little to discourage sexual activity among Latino boys. Three-quarters of Latino teens (74%) believe that parents send one message about sex to their sons and a different message altogether to their daughters.<sup>25</sup> Those working to reduce Latino teen pregnancy should also consider encouraging fathers—not just mothers—to provide guidance and to convey positive expectations about sexual behavior.

### In Sum

Despite declines, Latino teen pregnancy and birth rates remain stubbornly high. At present, there are a handful of interventions that have been shown through careful evaluation to delay sexual activity, improve contraceptive use for those who are sexually active, and/or reduce teen pregnancy. However, there is an increasing need for even more evidence-based interventions for this diverse population that are culturally sensitive, inclusive of families, and sensitive to gender differences. More information about Latino teens and young adults and The National Campaign's Latino Initiative is available at [http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org/espanol/default\\_eng.aspx](http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org/espanol/default_eng.aspx).

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