Kiss and Tell:
What Teens Say about Love, Trust, and Other Relationship Stuff

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Overview of Remarks

★ About the National Campaign

★ Research and publications

– Kiss and Tell: What Teens Say about Love, Trust, and Other Relationship Stuff (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008)

– Kane and Lichter, Reducing Unwed Childbearing: The Missing Link in Efforts to Promote Marriage (Brookings Institution, 2006)


★ Implications for policy and practice
About the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
The Campaign’s Mission

🌟 Our mission is to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation.

2 in 10 by 2015!
The National Campaign’s First 11 Years: Teen Pregnancy

• Good News
  – Teen pregnancy/birth rates down one-third since early 90’s.
  – Progress is widespread: all 50 states, all ethnic/racial groups

• But there is still much work to be done…
  – One in three
  – 51%
  – 3%
  – $9.1 billion
Why focus on teen relationships?

- Teen years are where “habits of the heart” are formed.
- Most teens want healthy relationships now and good marriages later.
- The sexual and relationship choices they make in teen years have lasting consequences for them and their children.
Connection between Teen Pregnancy, Relationships & Marriage

★ Half of all first out-of-wedlock births are to teens.
★ Four-fifths of teen births are out of wedlock.
★ Teen mothers are unlikely to marry the fathers of their children.
★ Young unwed mothers dramatically reduce their chances of ever marrying:
  • Only 30% of unwed teen mothers who get married are still in their first marriages at age 40.
  • Teen marriage is not the answer: Teens who marry are two to three times more likely to divorce than people who marry in their twenties.
Teens Have High Aspirations for Relationships and Marriage

- The vast majority of high school seniors believe that marriage is extremely important and that they will marry in the future.

- 85% of teens believe:
  - Sex should only occur in a long-term, committed relationship.
  - Teen pregnancy prevention programs should teach young people to be married before having children.
Marriage and birth patterns among teens have changed over time.

Two-thirds of teens think it is okay to have sex with someone they have strong affection for and to live with someone outside of marriage.

Nearly 60% of girls aged 15-17 and 73% of those aged 18-19 approve of unwed childbearing.
Glass Half Full or Empty?

- 19% of teen say most of their friends are in unhealthy relationships.
- 17% don’t know anyone who serves as an example of healthy relationships.
- One-quarter say it’s hard to talk to their parents about relationships.
Current Actions have Lasting Consequences

A powerful “success sequence” – A child is nine times more likely to be poor if born to a mother who is...

- A teen,
- Has not finished high school, and
- Is not married

...than if born to an adult who has finished school and is married.
Emphasize Relationships, Not Just Biology

- Teens are instructed on how to reduce the risk of pregnancy and STDs.
- Teens rarely are given guidance about how to successfully navigate teen and young adult relationships.
- We need to appeal to teens aspirations rather than continue to only help them manage risks.
Related Resources

- Science Says #34: Unplanned Pregnancy and Family Turmoil (April 2008)
- Science Says #16: Teens’ Attitudes Toward Marriage, Cohabitation, and Divorce, 2002 (July 2005)
- Science Says #15: Teens’ Attitudes Toward Nonmarital Childbearing, 2002 (May 2005)
- Science Says #11: The Relationship between Teenage Motherhood and Marriage (September 2004)
- With One Voice 2007: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy
- Ten Tips for Parents
Questions? Comments?

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Visit our websites:

www.thenationalcampaign.org

www.stayteen.org

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