

Contraception & Abstinence Education Funding Compared to Unmarried Teen Birth Rates – 1940-2007

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- 1) The attached graphs provide information that compares Title X contraception funding with abstinence education funding, and compares that to the young unmarried teen birth rates (ages 10-14) and the unmarried teen birth rate (ages 15-19) with historical funding for contraception (Title X) and abstinence education (Title XX, Title V & CBAE). Data is available for the overall unmarried teen birth rate (ages 15-19) and young unmarried teen birth rate (ages 10-14) back to 1940. Data on the young black unmarried teen birth rate (ages 10-14) is available back to 1960. Funding numbers are available from inception through FY 2007.
- 2) The birth rate for unmarried teens and young unmarried teens has climbed steadily from 1940 when it was 8 births per 1000 unmarried teens, and 0.7 for young unmarried teens. Data for the black young unmarried teen birth rate is available from 1960 when the rate was 4.3. The unmarried teen birth rate reached its peak in 1994 at 45.8 per 1000 unmarried teens (ages 15-19). The young unmarried teen birth rate also reached its peak in 1994 at 1.4 per 1000 young unmarried teens (ages 10-14). The black young unmarried teen birth rate peaked in 1989 at 5.1 per 1000 10-14 year old black teens.
- 3) **Contraception funding on this graph includes funding provided to Title X grantees and no others. There is additional funding for contraception and comprehensive sex education in CDC, Medicaid, private insurance and state and local education funding respectively throughout the nation. Thus the contraception funding listed on this graph underestimates the resources the nation is putting into contraception and comprehensive sex education funding, much of it also done by Title X grantees. Note that the unmarried teen birth rate and the young unmarried teen birth rate steadily climbed in the face of Title X contraception funding and “safe sex” education programs until 1994.**
- 4) The first small abstinence education program began in 1981 with Title XX funding. \$4 million was devoted to the program in comparison to \$161.6 million in contraception funding. This small amount of funding coincides with reduction in the rate of increase of the unmarried teen birth rate. In 1995, Congress passed the first welfare reform bill. Though it was not enacted into law until the next year, it is evident that this propelled a change in thinking that began to reduce the unmarried teen birth rates in every category the following year. With the implementation of welfare reform and Title V funding putting abstinence education funding in virtually every state, the rate began to fall even more rapidly in every category. Since the inception of welfare reform, with its authorization of Title V and the funding of Community-Based Abstinence Education the unmarried teen pregnancy rate has fallen steadily from its peak of 45.8 per 1000 teens in 1994 to 34.7 per 1000 teens in 2004. **The young unmarried teen birth rate dropped to its lowest level since 1940, 0.7 and the young unmarried black teen birth rate dropped to the lowest level in recorded history, 1.8 per 1000 10-14 year old black teens.**

- 5) There is a direct link to the drop in young unmarried teens and young unmarried black teens that relates directly to abstinence education. Abstinence education targets teens ages 12-14 and there has been a significant effort to make these programs available in the inner cities, where the teen birth rates are the highest. Programs like Project Reality, Best Friends and the Abstinence Clearinghouse have been credited with the reduction in teen pregnancies and improving the lives of these young people.
- 6) Today contraception funding through Title X is at \$283.1 million for FY 2007, while abstinence education stands at \$176.4 million. Funding from all sources for comprehensive sex education is 10X more than funding for abstinence education.
- 7) Many people have wondered at why so little abstinence education funding can make such a huge difference, and why teen pregnancies had continued to climb in the face of great federal efforts to teach teens to have “safe sex.”
 - a) One of the fundamental principles of “safe sex” is for teens to be able to plan ahead. Unfortunately, it is well known from the Piaget maturity scale that only 30% of high school seniors have the ability to plan ahead. Dr. Piaget was a famous French child psychologist who classified maturity levels and conceptual learning abilities from infancy to adulthood. With only 30% of 12th graders having the ability to plan ahead, it is little wonder that America’s teens are “unprepared” when an opportunity for a sexual encounter happens.
 - b) On the other hand, the effective abstinence education programs stress having teens ask fundamental questions and provide life-skills education and character development.
 - i) For example, at 13, a teen is asked what they plan to do at 25. Most 13 year olds have never thought that far ahead, much less examined the steps necessary to plan to meet their goals. Thus the abstinence education programs teach life skills and increase maturity by developing the ability to plan ahead and make positive choices.
 - ii) In addition, the programs teach refusal skills and avoidance of other high risk behaviors that threaten a teen’s life goals.
 - iii) Teens also learn that “safe” sex has limitations. **Even used correctly, for example, condoms do not eliminate all risk.** Risks are reduced with condom usage, they are not eliminated.

It is important that abstinence education funding be preserved and that Title V funding be reauthorized in order to provide the full-range of education opportunities for our nation’s youth by stressing the true benefits of their choosing abstinence as the healthiest lifestyle. **It is clear that abstinence education funding has corresponded to rapid decreases in teen pregnancies and unmarried teen births. The more that funding has increased, the faster the rate of decline in teen pregnancies has been. It is even conceivable that we could get back down to the 1940 unmarried teen birth rate of 8 per 1,000 teens, as has been achieved with the young unmarried teen birth rate, when abstinence from sexual activity until marriage was the social norm in American society.**