

Reducing Reproductive and Sexual Health Disparities among Latino Youth

Teen Birth Rates

- After plummeting 34% between 1991 and 2005, the national teen birth rate rose by 3% between 2005 and 2006 among 15-19 year old girls. (1)
- The national teen birth rate rose 2 % for Hispanic teens, 3 % for white teens and 5 % for African-American teens.(2)
- Nearly half of public high school students nation wide and in New York City say they have had sex. (3)
- At the national level, 51% of Latinas become mothers before the age of 20. (4)
- In New York City, more than half (52.4%) of all teenage mothers in 2001 were Latina. (5)
- Nationally, Latina teens were less likely than African-Americans and whites to use a method of birth control at first intercourse. (6)

HIV/AIDS and STIs

The data on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections among Latino youth are equally distressing and require urgent action.

- Nationally, one-quarter of new AIDS cases among adolescents age 13-19 occur among Latino youth. (7)
- In New York City, 90% of new HIV diagnoses in 2006 occurred among Hispanic (87%) and African-American (81%) men who have sex with men and are under 20 years of age. (8)
- The primary mode of exposure for Latino male and female adolescents is sex with HIV positive males. (9)
- Nationally, 15-24 year olds account for nearly half of all new STIs. (10)
- Latino and African-American youth have disproportionately high STI rates. (11)
- Latinos (48.3%) were less likely than white (55.8%) and African-American students (64%) to have used condoms during their last sexual intercourse. (12)
- While most STIs can be successfully treated, 70% of sexually active teens are not tested. (13)
- If left untreated, STIs will continue to be spread to others and can lead to reproductive cancers, infertility and other adverse health outcomes. (14)

Access to Information and Services

- Latino and white youth are less likely to talk about HIV/AIDS with an adult or family member than are African-American youth. (15)
- Nationally, most sexually experienced teens have never discussed sexually transmitted infections with a health care provider, although most report having been taught about HIV/AIDS. (16)
- Fewer Latino (81%) and African-American students (86%) report being taught about HIV/AIDS in school than non-Latino whites (91%). (17)
- Latino youth also have less access to health care coverage and services. For example, one in four Latino children lack health insurance. (18)
- Uninsured Latino youth (47%) are more likely than uninsured non-Latino whites (27%) to not have had a health care visit in the past year. (19)
- In 2002, New York City Latino Youth had the highest school drop out rates when compared to all groups. (20)

Quick Facts

In 2001 in New York City and nationally more than half of all teenage mothers in were Latinas.

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Nearly half of public high school students nation wide and in New York City say they have had sex.

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In 2002, New York City Latino Youth had the highest school drop out rates when compared to all groups.

One in four Latino children lack health Insurance.

Latino Reproductive Rights Project

The Latino Reproductive Rights Project, LRRP, is a unique collaboration between the National Institute for Reproductive Health and the Hispanic Federation. Acknowledging reproductive health disparities among youth is the first step in empowering our communities to organize and focus on the problem. Through the LRRP, we are collaborating with Latino community based organizations, health care and service centers to reach out to the community and to initiate conversations among community members, community leaders and legislative officials.

LRRP provides:

- 1) technical assistance to agencies by training and supporting their staff to integrate reproductive and sexual health information into their existing work; 2) informational workshops targeted to community members; 3) community forums to identify specific needs and strategies as expressed by the community; 4) opportunities to educate and involve legislative and community leaders to safeguard reproductive health and rights; 5) educational materials focused on Latino reproductive health issues; and 6) up-to-date information and resources for the media. We believe that an organized collaboration is key to reducing the range of reproductive and sexual health disparities facing Latino youth.

Opportunities for Addressing Sexual & Reproductive Health Disparities:

Policy

- Support mandatory comprehensive sex education in all public schools in New York City, and full implementation of the HIV/AIDS education mandate;
- Fund youth development programs and programs aimed at parents and adults to improve communication with youth about reproductive and sexual health;
- Improve access to reproductive health services for youth (i.e., free and accessible condoms, Emergency Contraception, contraception, etc.) in underserved communities ;
- Expand school based clinics with interdisciplinary health teams (i.e., medical, health educators, psychologists/social workers); and
- Protect and strengthen laws that ensure confidentiality and the legal right of youth to seek reproductive health services without parental consent.

Community-Based Solutions

- Develop public health messages that speak to teens, parents and the broader Latino community;
- Improve collaboration with local health departments;
- Provide technical assistance and training opportunities to agencies working with youth and health care providers to improve communication and meet the health needs of youth; and
- Educate our own communities and families about the importance of safe sex, pregnancy prevention and resources for reproductive and sexual health care information and services.

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