

Teen Pregnancy

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PRESERVATION

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**Headline: NEW GUIDE TO HELP LOCAL COMMUNITIES
ESTABLISH TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala released a new guide today to help communities and non-profit organizations establish successful local teen pregnancy prevention programs. The comprehensive guide, developed by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, will be distributed nationwide for local health organizations' use.

Titled *Get Organized: A Guide to Preventing Teen Pregnancy*, the publication stresses a localized approach, a long-term commitment, and careful evaluation. It also provides novel approaches for addressing teen pregnancy, including ways to involve faith leaders and the business community, suggestions on how to target young men in prevention efforts, and mechanisms for channeling community views on pregnancy prevention into effective, localized strategies for addressing the overall issue.

"We've seen a continued decline in teen pregnancy and teen birth rates in the last several years, which has been very encouraging," Secretary Shalala said. "But we can't afford to stop our efforts now-too many teenagers are still jeopardizing their futures. By making this guide available to local communities, we hope to strengthen existing teen pregnancy prevention programs-and build others-that will coach girls and boys with common sense guidance, positive alternatives and the emotional support it takes to stand up to peer pressure."

According to a new report released today by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), the teen birth rate is at its lowest level since 1987. After years of rising rates, teen births began to decline in 1991, continuing to decline every year and falling another 2 percent in 1998. Declines have been particularly marked in younger teens, with the birth rate for teenagers 15-17 years dropping 5 percent for 1998 to a record low of 30.4 per 1,000.

Despite this decline, however, four out of 10 American girls get pregnant at least once before they turn 20, leading to more than 900,000 teen pregnancies a year. Today's guide is a three-volume publication that includes strategies for collecting basic data, reaching out to religious leaders, raising money and conducting program evaluation.

"The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was created in response to

the President and Vice President's challenge to parents and leaders all across our country," Secretary Shalala said. "The message was clear: winning the fight against teen pregnancy isn't the sole responsibility of parents, religion, school or the government. Winning this crusade is everyone's job--and the only way we'll win is if all of us join together."

The NCHS report also contains state-by-state data for 1991-1997. That data show that teen birth rates have declined in every state and the declines have exceeded 20 percent in ten states and the District of Columbia.

Founded in 1996, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a nonprofit, non-partisan initiative supported almost entirely by private donations. The campaign's mission is to prevent teen pregnancy by supporting values and stimulating actions that are consistent with a pregnancy-free adolescence. The campaign's goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third between 1996 and 2005.

Copies of today's report can be viewed or downloaded on the NCHS Home Page at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>.

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