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**Press Release  
For Immediate Release  
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**PARENTS AND TEENS ON LOVE, SEX, AND RELATIONSHIPS:  
RESEARCH, PARENTS TIPS, AND POLLING DATA  
RELEASED TODAY**

**Teen Winners of National Public Service Campaign Contest Also Announced**

*Press Conference and Public Forum*  
**Thursday, April 30 - 12:30pm**  
**1302 Longworth House Office Building, Capitol Hill**

April 30 — Teenagers want to hear from their parents about sex, love, and relationships. And parents have far greater influence on their children's sexual decision-making than they might think. These are just two of the *findings of new research and polling data* released today at a Capitol Hill press conference by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The National Campaign also released *ten practical tips for parents* to help their children avoid teen pregnancy.

“At a time when the daily news makes parents feel increasingly out of control—fearful that they have lost the battle for their children's hearts and minds to peers and popular culture—it is vital for parents to know that their children want to hear from them and that they can make a real difference,” said Sarah Brown, Director of the National Campaign.

In recognition of its first anniversary—and to kick off Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month in May—the National Campaign released new research, resources, and polling data at a Capitol Hill press conference and public forum hosted by the Campaign's House Advisory Panel Co-Chairs, Reps. Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Mike Castle (R-DE).

## Some of the Research Findings

Over two decades of research was reviewed for the National Campaign by Brent C. Miller, Ph.D., Utah State University. Some of his findings in *Families Matter: A Research Synthesis of Family Influences on Adolescent Pregnancy* include:

- Families—and particularly parents—are an important influence on whether their teenagers become pregnant or cause a pregnancy.
- Teens who are close to their parents are more likely to remain sexually abstinent, postpone intercourse, have fewer partners, and to use contraception.
- Strong parental attitudes and values disapproving of adolescent sexual intercourse and pregnancy—or about the dangers of unprotected intercourse—are related to lower adolescent pregnancy risk.
- Parental supervision and regulation is also related to lower adolescent pregnancy risk. Teens whose parents closely supervise them are more likely to be older when they first have sexual intercourse, to have fewer partners, and to use contraception. However, some studies indicate that *very strict* parental monitoring by parents is associated with *greater* risk of teen pregnancy, suggesting that less intrusive supervision may be more effective.
- Of course, all these things taken together—parent/child connectedness, parental supervision, and parents’ attitudes and values about teen sex—have important interactive effects on reducing teen pregnancy risk. For instance, parent/child communication about sex is much more likely to reduce adolescent pregnancy risk when parents and children have close relationships and when parents disapprove of teen sex.

## Some of the Polling Findings

A public opinion poll of teens and parents of teens was conducted in April for the National Campaign by the International Communications Research polling firm. Some of its findings include:

- Well over half of teens and parents of teens agree they are not comfortable discussing sex with each other.
- Almost one-fourth of parents (24 percent) say the biggest barrier to effective communication between parents and teens about sex is that *parents* are not comfortable talking to their kids about sex. Interestingly, only 17 percent of teens feel that is the biggest barrier.
- Nearly one in three parents of teens says that the biggest barrier to effective communication between parents and teens about sex is that most teens “think they know it all already.”
- Teens and parents of teens disagree on when steady, one-on-one dating should begin.
- Teens say they want to hear from their parents about more than just “body parts.” A clear plurality of teens say they want their parents to talk to them about a wide variety of issues—from contraception to dating, from sexually transmitted diseases to knowing how and when to say “no” to sex.

## Tips for Parents

Having reviewed research about parental influences on children's sexual behavior and consulted with many experts, including teens and parents themselves, the National Campaign offers "ten tips" for parents to help their children avoid teen pregnancy. In abbreviated form, these tips are:

1. Be clear about your own sexual values and attitudes—communicating with your children about sex, love, and relationships is often more successful when you are certain in your own mind about these issues.
2. Talk with your children early and often about sex, and be specific! Initiate the conversation and make sure it is a dialogue, not a monologue.
3. Supervise and monitor your children by establishing rules, curfews, and standards of expected behavior, preferably through an open process of family discussion.
4. Know your children's friends and their families; welcome your children's friends into your home and talk to them openly.
5. Discourage early, frequent, and steady dating. Group activities among young people are fine, but allowing teens to begin steady, one-on-one dating much before age 16 can lead to trouble.
6. Take a strong stand against your daughter dating a boy significantly older than she is, and don't allow your son to develop an intense relationship with a girl much younger than he is. The power difference between younger girls and older boys or men can lead girls into risky situations.
7. Help your teenagers to have options for the future that are more attractive than early pregnancy and parenthood. Help them set meaningful goals for the future, talk to them about what it takes to make future plans come true, and help them reach their goals.
8. School failure is often the first sign of trouble; let your kids know that you value education highly.
9. Be media literate—know what your kids are watching, reading, and listening to. Remember, you can always turn the TV off, cancel subscriptions, and place certain movies off limits. You may not be able to fully control what your children see and hear, but you can certainly make your views known.
10. These first nine tips work best when they are part of strong, close relationships with your children that are built from an early age. Express love and affection clearly and often, listen carefully to what your children say, spend time with your children engaged in activities that they like, be supportive and interested in what interests them, and help them build self-esteem. Remember, it's never too late to improve a relationship with a child or teenager.

## Additional Items Released

The following items were also released:

- Selected new data from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health—the largest survey on adolescent health ever conducted—on *what mothers say they actually*

- *do* with their kids in the area of communication about sexuality and related issues.
- *Focus group research* on what parents and other adults think about the issue of teen pregnancy and how to reduce it.
- A brief description of several *programs around the country* that are increasing the involvement of parents and adults in preventing teen pregnancy.

Also announced at the event were the teen winners of a national public service campaign contest to raise awareness about teen pregnancy. The contest is part of “The More You Know About Teen Pregnancy” campaign, a unique partnership among NBC, the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Ad Council, and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, that is working to reduce teen pregnancy. Close to 1,000 entries were submitted by teens in grades 7 to 12 during the three-month contest period. Entries were reviewed and scored by a panel of judges that included educators, reproductive health experts, teen counselors, advertising professionals, and teens.

The students who took the two grand prizes were: Julie Biewerts and Jessica Belha, 8th graders at Riverdale Middle School in Port Byron, Illinois, and Lena Ann Beavin, an 11th grader at Franklin County High School in Frankfort, Kentucky.

### **Press Conference Participants**

Press conference and public forum participants included:

- Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE)
- National Campaign Chairman, Thomas Kean, former governor of New Jersey and President, Drew University
- Isabel Sawhill, President of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
- Sarah Brown, Director of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
- Brent C. Miller, Ph.D., author of *Families Matter: A Research Synthesis of Family Influences on Adolescent Pregnancy*
- Robert Blum, M.D., Ph.D., principal researcher, National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health
- Rosalyn Weinman, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, Broadcast Standards and Content Policy, NBC
- Felicia H. Stewart, M.D., Director of Reproductive Health Programs, the Kaiser Family Foundation
- Teen winners of “The More You Know About Teen Pregnancy Prevention” contest

### **For More Information**

For more information, contact Bill Albert, Communications Manager of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy at 202-857-8591.

## **DHHS Secretary Donna Shalala Recognizes National Campaign Honorees in Separate Ceremony**

In a ceremony earlier in the day, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala recognized the eight 1998 National Campaign honorees, a group whose work embodies the National Campaign's diverse approach to preventing teen pregnancy. A complete list of honorees is included elsewhere in this packet.

### **About the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy:**

*The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, founded in 1996, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 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, and its goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third by 2005.*

*The Campaign's strategy has five primary components: taking a strong stand against teen pregnancy and attracting new and powerful voices to this issue; enlisting the help of the media; supporting and stimulating state and local action; leading a national discussion about the role of religion, culture, and public values in an effort build common ground; and making sure that everyone's efforts are based on the best facts and research available.*