

Teen Pregnancy in Greenville County

AN ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL TEEN PREGNANCY STATUS, CAUSES AND PREVENTION EFFORTS



SE CONSULTING, INC.



Acknowledgements

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United Way of Greenville County

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The Department of Health and Environmental Control

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Study Resources

SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

The study committee gratefully acknowledges that survey and focus group tools were adapted from previous studies conducted by the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Data Sources

The Department of Health and Environmental Control

South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

First Steps of Greenville



Introduction

As a community, we strive to motivate and support healthy, successful young people as well as to provide young people with the education, tools, and resources to become healthy decision-making adults. This means understanding the issues that affect our youth today and working together to develop promising approaches to help our youth gain the educational, social and responsible decision-making skills needed to set a path for life-long success.

As we seek to understand the issues our youth and community face today, teen pregnancy has surfaced as an increasing trend and challenge. According to the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, teen pregnancy rates nationally and locally are increasing after a 10-year decline from 1994 – 2004. Since 2004, the rate has increased by an alarming 8% and the trend appears to be continuing upward. This spike has raised red flags for those in the county working to increase child and adolescent health, early childhood development, school readiness, and high school graduation. This trend has indeed opened dialogue about the deeper effects of teen pregnancy on both the teen parent, the child throughout his or her life and the community as a whole.

In an effort to fully understand the extent and complexity of the issue of teen pregnancy in Greenville County and to gain insight into the best approaches to address it, the United Way of Greenville County (UWGC), along with the Children's Hospital of Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center and Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) have partnered to conduct a local study to assess:

- The current status of teen pregnancy incidence in the county,
- Local awareness and attitudes of county residents regarding teen pregnancy issues and prevention strategies,
- Root causes of teen pregnancy and barriers to prevention services, and
- Potential promising practices for teen pregnancy prevention.

Teen pregnancy is a complex problem that requires complex solutions. Each and every person in a community has a role to play – from parents, to schools, to faith leaders, to business leaders, to young people – if we want to return to achieving reductions in teen pregnancy rates. The hope for this study is that it will 1) inform the local community of the severity of teen pregnancy in Greenville County, 2) provide information that may lead to the development of successful strategies for preventing teen pregnancy and 3) encourage the community – parents, youth, community and faith-based leaders, educators – to get involved in local efforts to decrease teen pregnancies.



About the Research

Conducted by an independent consulting firm, a community-based approach was taken to complete the teen pregnancy assessment. County-specific data was collected from a broad population and encompassed a variety of geographic areas of the county. Efforts were made to ensure that the research was conducted in a manner that was truly representative of the entire county. Research methods were conducted in a 3-pronged approach:

1. Collection of **statistical data** at national, state and local levels.
2. Collection of **quantitative data** through a community-wide survey that was available both on-line and in hard copy paper formats at various community locations across the county. The survey was available in both English and Spanish.
3. Collection of **qualitative data** through a variety of focus groups including a broad range of populations.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- 12 one-on-one interviews conducted with community leaders and those involved with youth organizations

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

- 512 respondents
- English and Spanish
- statistically and geographically representative of the county

(with 95% confidence level, confidence interval of 4)

FOCUS GROUPS

- 10 focus groups
- 117 participants
- parents
- teens
- teen parents
- pregnant teens
- teen fathers
- professionals in youth-serving organizations
- health & social service providers
- Hispanic/Latino

Approximately 650 community residents had direct input to the study.

Survey and focus group tools provided by the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy were adapted and used for this local study.



Teen Pregnancy - Our State & Our County

SC has the 13th highest teen pregnancy rate in the Nation.

In 2007, 10,754 girls in South Carolina ages 10-19 became pregnant, including 977 girls from Greenville County.

From 2005-2007, there were 2,617 children born to teen mothers in Greenville County.

77% of Greenville County residents know a teenager who became pregnant (community survey).

The total cost to South Carolina taxpayers associated with teen child-bearing was \$156 million in 2004. (These cost include lost tax revenue, public assistance and incarcerations of sons of teen mothers.)

It is estimated that each year, teen child-bearing costs Greenville County taxpayers approximately \$12,991,350.

Data Sources: 1) SC Campaign for Prevent Teen Pregnancy
 2) SC Department of Health and Environmental Control
 3) Greenville County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Survey
 4) University of South Carolina Center for Health Services & Policy Research – Tell Them SC

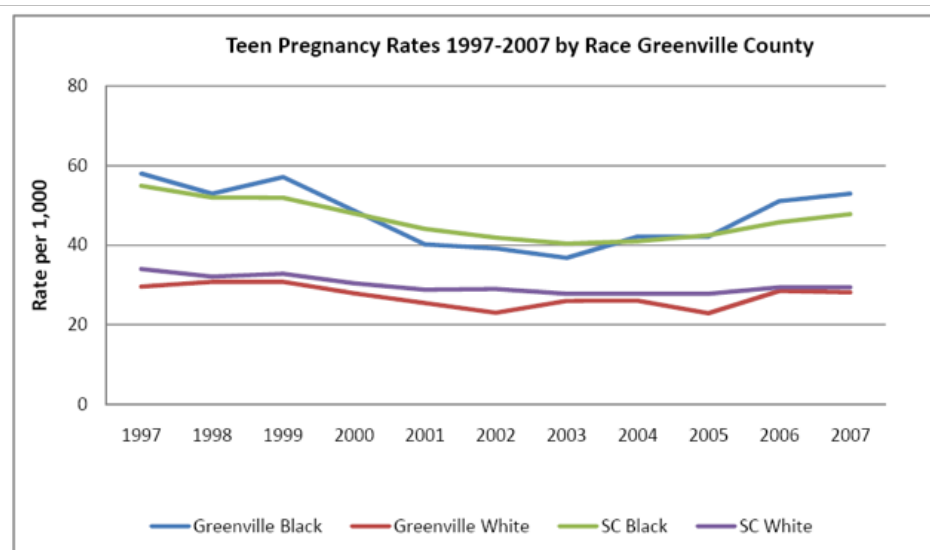
Teen Pregnancy Rates Are Climbing

According to the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, from 1997 – 2003, South Carolina teen pregnancy rates decreased by 22%. However, this downward trend reversed and between 2004 – 2007 the rate of teen pregnancy in South Carolina increased 10% from 33.1 to 36.5 (per 1,000 girls).

In Greenville County, the rate of teen pregnancy decreased by 21% from 1997 – 2003 and increased 15% from 2004 – 2007.

TEEN PREGNANCY IN GREENVILLE COUNTY 1997, 2004, 2007				
TOTAL NUMBER	1997	2004	2007	% CHANGE 2004-2007
Ages 10-19	826	807	977	+21%
INCIDENCE RATE PER 1,000	1997	2004	2007	% CHANGE 2004-2007
Ages 10-19	36.6	30.3	34.7	+15%
Black 10-19*	58	42.1	52.9	+26%
White 10-19	29.6	26.1	28.2	+8%
Ages 15-17	45.7	35.4	38.2	+8%
Ages 18-19	102.3	98.1	107.6	+10%

* The category "Black" includes African-American pregnancies and a small number of pregnancies occurring among other minorities.

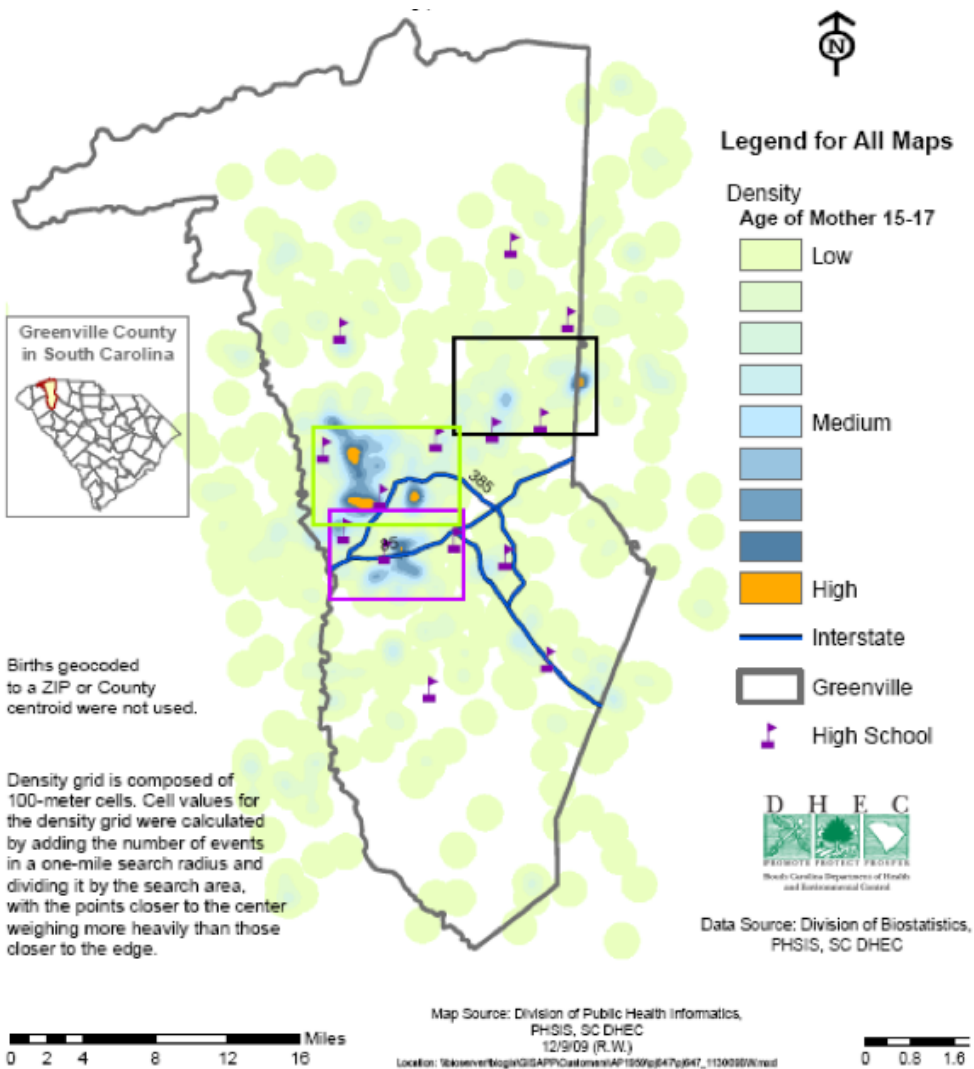


Most recent National data, released in April 2010, indicated that in 2008, the Nation experienced a small decline (2%) in teen pregnancy rates. While this provides hopeful information, this data reflects information from just one year, which cannot yet be considered a trend. Local data on 2008 teen pregnancy rates in Greenville is not currently available.

Teen Pregnancy - Our County



Density of Live Births to Mothers Age 15-17 Greenville County, 2005-2007



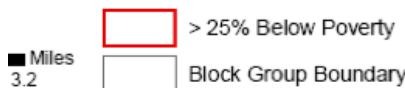
There are clear pockets in the county that have a high density of births to teen mothers. Identifying high density areas may assist in setting targeted strategies for specific neighborhoods or communities within the county.

At the zip-code level, high density areas include:

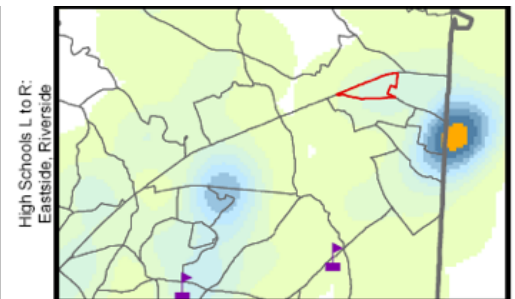
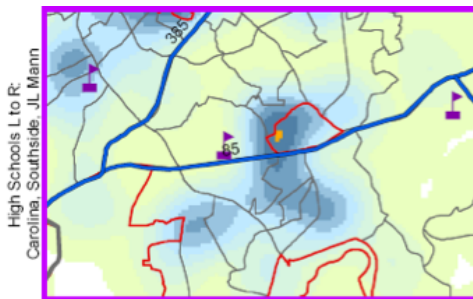
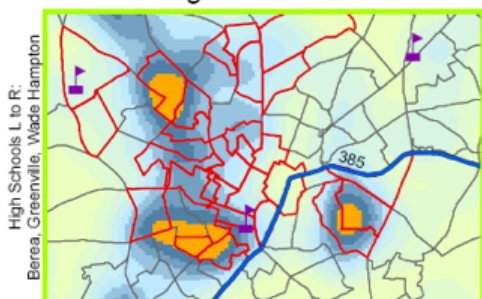
Chart C. 2007 Greenville County Zip Codes with highest number of pregnancies*	
29611	124
29605	116
29687	89
29617	74
29609	66

However, there can be much variation within zip code areas. Neighborhood and communities within each zip code should be assessed. The map on the left provides a more targeted view of the high density teen births.

Census Block Group Poverty Designation



Detailed View of Areas with Higher Densities





Complex Root Causes - Complex Effects

Causes of teen pregnancy are often complex, intertwined and very difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint to just one determinant. Throughout local focus groups, the most often identified and discussed “causes” of teen pregnancy fell into three categories including:

1. **Education** – education of both parents and youth regarding teaching or receiving appropriate information about abstinence, safe/appropriate sexual activity, contraception, teen pregnancy and consequences
2. **Poverty** – issues related to a cycle of poverty such as the youth’s mother was a teen parent; a reported perception that government assistance for women with children encourages having children; and youth in poverty may not think beyond the immediate (not considering life-long goals or going to college as an option)
3. **Culture** –teen pregnancy is becoming more common or accepted; some cultures are more accepting of teen pregnancy than others; today’s media culture creates inappropriate messages about sex; and youth are seeing and hearing too much, too soon from a variety of media outlets

Other concerns noted from local focus groups and survey respondents include:

- the perception that “in today’s society we are losing our morals and values”
- teens today are having to deal with a myriad of complex and difficult issues, including media messages, peer pressure, anger, self-esteem, needing to feel loved, drugs and gangs
- lack of positive male influence/single parent households

Teen pregnancy is closely linked to a host of critical social issues — poverty and income, overall child well-being, out-of-wedlock births, responsible fatherhood, health issues, education, child welfare, and other risky behavior. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, children born from unplanned pregnancies face a range of developmental risks as well. For example, these children report poorer physical and mental health compared to children born as the result of an intended pregnancy. And an analysis from Child Trends indicates that, at age 2 years old, children who were born as the result of an unplanned pregnancy have significantly lower cognitive test scores when compared to children born as the result of an intended pregnancy. In addition, the majority of children from an unplanned pregnancy are born to unmarried women. Children raised in single-parent families face more challenges in a variety of areas than do children raised in two-parent, low-conflict married families. Children in one-parent families are more likely to be poor, drop out of high school, have lower grades, lower college aspirations, and poorer school attendance records.

In a recent study conducted by First Steps, it was found that 43% of children in South Carolina “not succeeding by the 3rd grade” had teen mothers (under 18) and another 37% of those children had mothers age 18-20.

Other cited consequences of teen pregnancy include:

- Teens mothers have lower levels of educational attainment and are more likely to drop out of high school.
- Teen mothers have reduced earning potential and are more likely to live in poverty.
- Fathers to children of teen mothers also tend to achieve less in education and have lower earnings.
- Teen mothers have more pregnancy-related complications and have less healthy babies.
- Children of teen mothers are more likely to experience abuse and neglect and to enter foster care.
- The sons of teen mothers are more likely to be incarcerated.
- The daughters of teen mothers are more likely to become teen mothers themselves.

Community Awareness



Most people in the Greenville community understand the issues related to teen pregnancy.

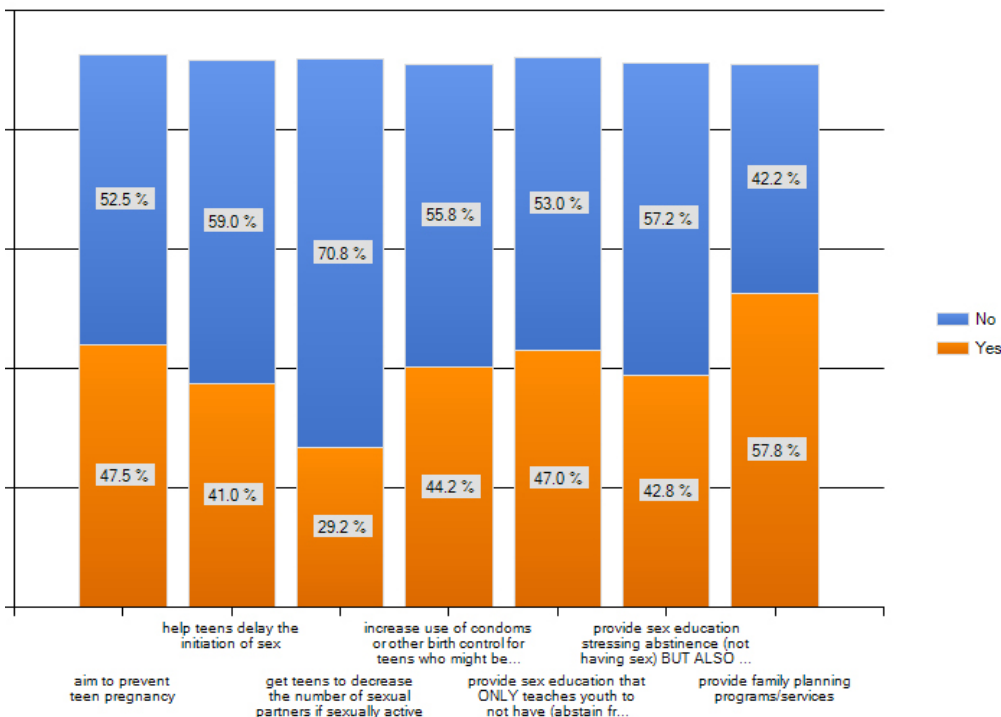
- 90% of survey respondents reported being aware that children of teen parents are at greater risk of becoming a teen parent and approximately 70% reported being aware that 1/3 of teen mothers never finish high school.

However, many are not aware of the breadth of teen pregnancy locally.

- Only 30% of Greenville County residents report being aware that the number of teen pregnancies in Greenville have increased by 11% after a 10-year decline.
- Less than 50% reported awareness that the US rate had increased after a 14-year decline and that SC has the 13th highest teen pregnancy rate in the Nation.

When asked about a variety of teen pregnancy prevention programs or efforts in Greenville County, less than 50% reported knowledge of programs in Greenville County, with the exception being family planning programs, of which 58% of respondents indicated awareness.

Do you know of any programs in Greenville County that:



“Top-of-Mind” Programs:
Programs mentioned most often when residents were asked to list any specific teen pregnancy prevention programs they knew about:

- Health Department/Family Planning
- School Sex Education Classes
- Planned Parenthood
- AID Upstate
- Birthright
- Greenville Women’s Clinic
- Piedmont Women’s Clinic
- Greenville Family Partnership
- Churches
- Little Steps
- Nurse Family Partnership

While most people in Greenville County are aware of the issues or consequences teen pregnancy brings, many in the community are not aware of the breadth of teen pregnancy in Greenville County.



Messages and Communicating Information

Where and what information teens receive is critical. Most commonly reported avenues of information for teens regarding sex include friends, older siblings, tv, internet and school.

There is much concern in the community about inappropriate media messages to teens. Even youth agree that media (tv and movies) send mixed messages regarding sexuality, roles of women and acceptable sexual activity at early ages.

When asked about sex education in school, teens in focus groups said that they should be taught more than just about the physiology. They felt they should also be taught about:

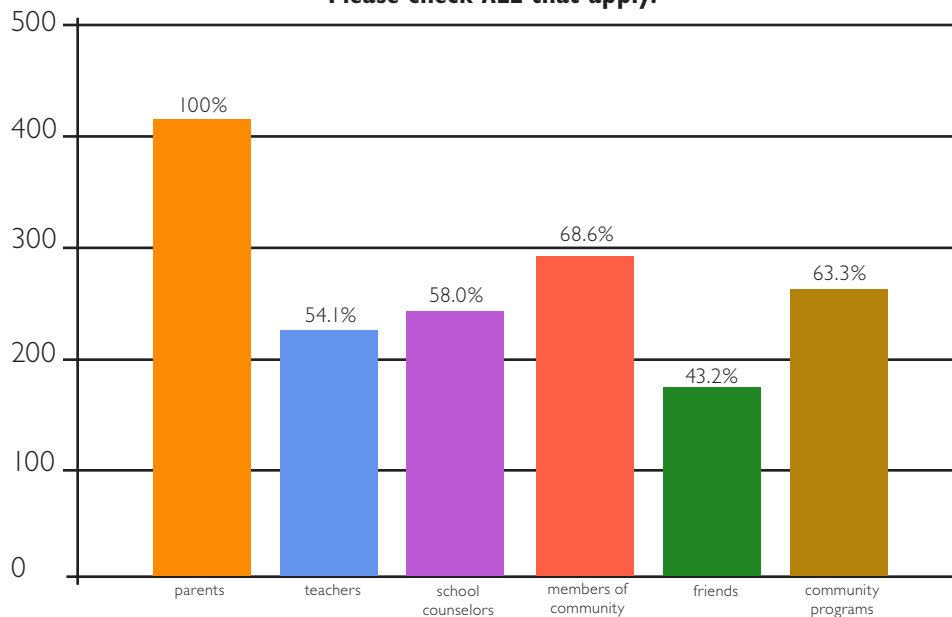
- Consequences of sex
- “Real life” consequences of teen pregnancy, and
- About appropriate birth control and protection from STDs

Parents Are Still #1

Feedback from focus groups indicate that parents are still the most important and respected messenger to teens. Teens report their parents or other trusted adult as being the best source of information about sexual activity, consequences, protection and values. However, most teens reported that their parents have not talked to them about sex.

Parents report feeling that information should come from themselves, however, many parents struggle to know when and how to discuss sex with their children. Many parents indicated a desire for resources or programs to give them information on how to best approach the subject with their children. Parents also reported feeling that just spending time with and having conversation with their children on a regular basis is very important, but may not happen as often as it should.

Whose responsibility is it to educate about pregnancy prevention.
Please check ALL that apply.



There is a disconnect between where teens are getting their information and where they actually believe they should be getting their information.

While teens report getting most of their information from friends, school, tv and the internet, they report that they believe they would get better, more accurate information from their parents.

Quotes from Teens at Focus Groups:

“I get my information from my friends, but I know they don’t really know what they are talking about.”

“My mother never talked to me about sex. I wish she would have...she should have.” (pregnant teen)

“They teach sex ed in school, but no one listens in school... my parents, I would listen to and take more seriously.”



Effective Strategies

There are a variety of strategies for addressing teen pregnancy prevention.

The Top 3 strategies that Greenville County residents have indicated they feel are most effective include (most effective listed first):

1. Programs that help parents talk to their children about sex and sex values
2. Programs that focus on youth development (goal setting, leadership activity, etc.)
3. Programs that provide safe, structured after-school activities

Strategies the community has indicated as least effective include (least effective listed first):

1. Sex education programs that teach abstinence only
2. Media campaigns to educate the public on the issue
3. Programs that increase access to birth control or condoms

Location or place of delivery of certain strategies is important as well. Community residents were asked which places were acceptable locations to deliver specific strategies.

Acceptable Strategies for Various Locations

(listed if 70% respondents indicated they felt the strategy/activity was acceptable in each of the given locations)

After School or Community-Based Programs (out of school)	Church/Faith-based Organizations	School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs that help parents talk to their children about sex and sex values • Programs that focus on youth development (leadership, goal setting, etc.) • Safe, structured after-school activities • Programs that provide one-on-one counseling to teens • Sex education that stresses abstinence but also teaches about birth control methods • Programs that increase access to birth control/contraception • Media/public awareness campaign • Advocating to public officials to support teen pregnancy prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs that help parents talk to their children about sex and sex values • Programs that focus on youth development (leadership, goal setting, etc.) • Programs that provide one-on-one counseling to teens • Sex education that teaches abstinence only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs that focus on youth development (leadership, goal setting, etc.) • Safe, structured after-school activities • Media/public awareness campaign

It should be noted that 20% of the population indicated that providing access to birth control was not acceptable at any of the above locations. 68% believe sex education that stresses abstinence but also teaches about birth control methods is an acceptable activity for schools.



Abstinence-Only vs. Birth Control Education

There continues to be mixed feedback regarding the effectiveness and acceptance of abstinence-only programs versus those that also teach about birth control.

Feedback from both the focus groups and community survey indicates that the community does believe programs that include education regarding birth control are more effective than abstinence-only programs.

- 60% of Greenville County residents believe sex education programs that stress abstinence BUT ALSO teach about birth control methods are effective to very effective in preventing teen pregnancy.
- Only 29% of Greenville residents believe abstinence-only programs to be effective to very effective in preventing teen pregnancy.

What does this mean for our school curriculum?

- 68% believe education inclusive of teaching about birth control methods is appropriate for the school setting
- however, there is still sense from some that abstinence-only programs are better suited for the school setting

Providing access to birth control was regarded as somewhat effective. In the survey, 59% rated it as effective or very effective. However, in focus groups it was often suggested that the provision of birth control absent of additional programming or education may not be very effective. Teens in focus groups indicated that merely providing increased access to birth control would not mean that more teens would use it. Teens indicated that youth may often forget to use it, don't understand how to use it appropriately, opt not to use if there is a cost involved, and would be too embarrassed to ask for it. For those who do access birth control, the most often noted places that teens get birth control are the health department and drug stores.

The only location the community indicated as appropriate places to offer programs that increase access to birth control is through community-based programs. Survey and focus groups indicated that providing birth control is not appropriate for the school or church setting. Furthermore, 20% of the population believes providing birth control is not appropriate for any of the settings listed in the survey.

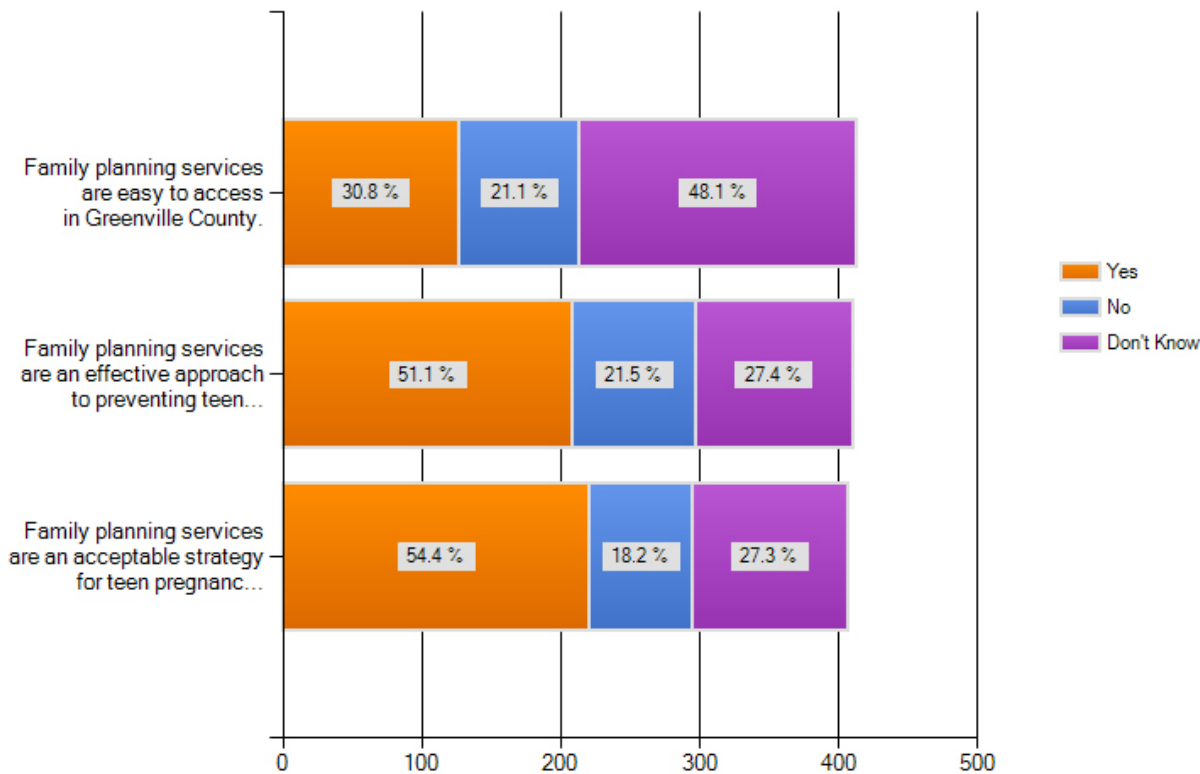
Greenville County residents believe sex education programs that stress abstinence BUT ALSO teach about birth control methods to be more effective in preventing teen pregnancy than abstinence-only programs.



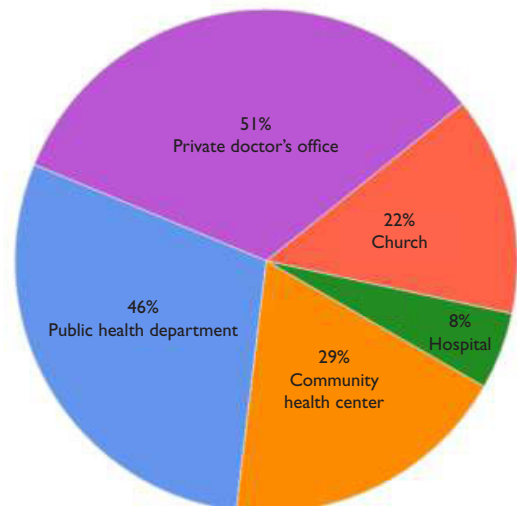
Family Planning

Approximately half of Greenville County residents believe family planning services are both acceptable and effective strategies to prevent teen pregnancy. However, over a quarter of the population is not aware of family planning services, their accessibility or effectiveness.

Do you agree with the following statements regarding family planning services? note: Family Planning Services can be defined as medical and educational services aimed at preventing unintended pregnancies (such as education and counseling, physical/medical assessments, pregnancy testing, and provision of birth control medications or devices).



If you were seeking family planning services for a teenager, where would you most likely go?



In focus groups, about half the teens indicated that they were aware of family planning services, mainly through the health department, and some had utilized services. However, many would not go because of transportation, being embarrassed, not knowing where to go or reported feelings of not being welcomed or being “looked down upon” at the health department.



Resources & Gaps

Community resources and gaps that surfaced most often through the stakeholder interviews and focus groups were noted and include:

Resources and Assets

- SC Campaign for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy
- Churches and faith-based coalitions
- Already existing youth programs that could serve as trusted avenues for prevention programming
- Community/neighborhood centers
- Healthcare entities
- Services for teen parents (teen parent program, Little Steps, Nurse Family Partnership, etc)

Gaps

- No unified voice or message against teen pregnancy
- No visible presence of a local prevention organization, coalition or effort that has a specific focus on teen pregnancy prevention
- Resources for parents
- Lack of safe, organized activities for youth
- Lack of services for teen parents

General Recommendations

- Parents are the most important and respected source of information and guidance for youth. Focus campaigns and programs on assisting parents in connecting with and talking to their children.
- Develop a local coalition to create a unified message or campaign to the community.
- Utilize resources of and expand upon the presence of the SC Campaign for Teen Pregnancy.
- Utilize the power of faith-based organizations to rally around the prevention of teen pregnancy prevention and policy changes where appropriate.
- Target key neighborhoods that have a high density of teen births. Understand culture of those communities and develop culturally sensitive strategies. Engage respected or trusted leaders from those communities to lead.
- Continue to support successful after school youth programs and activities.
- Utilize current youth programs as a venue to for teen pregnancy prevention activities.
- Teen pregnancy prevention programming should include elements that focus on not only sex education (inclusive of birth control methods) but also focus on life goals and real-life consequences of becoming pregnant as a teen.



Community Survey Demographics

Respondent Category Characteristics Compared to Greenville County Population

DATA SET	Greenville County (Pop. 438,000)	Community Survey Respondents (n= 512) 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of 4
GENDER	Male: 49% Female: 51%	Male: 14% Female: 86%
AGE	Median age = 41.4	Median Age Range of Respondents = 30-39
RACE*	White: 78%	White: 59%
	AA: 18%	AA: 27%
	Hispanic: 7% (reported as a separate category)	Hispanic Origin: 9%
	Other: 4%	Other: 5%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	Median = \$48,147	Median Household Income Range of Respondents: \$55,000 - \$65,000
EDUCATION	No High School Degree: 17%	No High School Degree: 5%
	High School Degree: 28.2%	High School Degree: 6.7%
	Some College: 25.8%	Some College: 17.1%
	College Degree: 19.5%	College Degree: 42.7%
	Graduate Degree: 9.3%	Graduate Degree: 26.8%

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008, www.census.gov

- 43% of respondents have school-age children
- 80% of those attend public school in Greenville County

PROFILE SUMMARY: Community Survey respondents compared to Greenville County Population— a higher proportion of females are represented in the survey; age and racial diversity are fairly representative, with a higher % of African American and lower % of White/Caucasian; income and education levels of respondents are slightly higher than the general population

Greenville County, SC Teen Pregnancy Assessment

Focus Group Summary 3/29/10 • Total # Focus Groups: 10 • Total Participants: 117



Common Themes/ Agreement Across All Focus Groups

Groups Included:

- Parents
- Health and social service providers
- Professionals in youth organizations
- Faith-based professionals
- Hispanic parents
- Fathers who had children as a teen
- Teen parents
- Pregnant Teens
- Teens
- Hispanic Teens

Parents:

- Youth believe their parents are the most important source of information regarding sexual activity; they want their parents to be talking to them and believe they should be talking to them; youth report that the information they get from their friends and media is not reliable
- Parents want to talk to their children, yet are uncomfortable and want assistance in knowing what to say, how and when
- Spending time with and talking to children on a regular basis is important to building an open relationship where parents and youth talk

Messages/Information:

- Youth get information from media and other youth; however, they report knowing it's often not accurate information
- Media messages are inappropriate for children and youth; media messaging is pushing sexuality on youth too soon; media is a big issue and is reportedly causing loss of values
- Youth report they also get information from school, but it is limited information (abstinence-only)
- The community needs to create a unified message against teen pregnancy
- Parents remain the most important messenger

Access to Birth Control:

- Increasing availability of birth control won't ensure teens will actually use it or use it correctly; it may or may not be an effective strategy

Reasons/Causes of Teen Pregnancy:

Lack of education; teens wanting to feel loved; culture; their mothers were pregnant; not thinking into the future; poverty issues

Current Community Programs:

- Groups could identify programs available for teens after they become pregnant, but could not identify community programs that focused specifically on teen pregnancy prevention

Potential Strategies/Programs:

- Unified community messaging
- Programs focused on encouraging and helping parents talk to their children
- Programs that include both parents and youth
- Programs that teach about real-life consequences; need to hear from teens who have been through it; mentors
- Programs that include setting life-long goals and understanding how pregnancy will affect goals

Other:

Teen pregnancy is becoming more accepted; all groups felt that as a society we are losing our morals and values

Areas of Mixed Feedback

Education in Schools

- While all groups felt what is taught in the schools was not adequate, there was disagreement as to if schools should be teaching more about birth control; most, but not all, indicated that the school should teach more than just abstinence
- Teens reported not feeling comfortable asking questions in the school sex ed. programs; they are too embarrassed in front of their peers
- Most groups felt as though schools should NOT give out contraception
- All agreed life consequences of teen pregnancy should be taught

Perception of Teen Pregnancy Among Teens:

- Some teen groups reported being pregnant is some groups as acceptable or "trendy"; others reported it as "embarrassing" and not acceptable; all teen groups agreed that teen pregnancy was NOT good

Other Notable Feedback

- Faith-based organizations appear open and feel it is important to provide teen pregnancy prevention programs to parents and teens; however,
- teens report not feeling comfortable talking about sex or pregnancy at church; pregnant teens report feeling "judged" at churches
- Some groups reported not feeling welcome at the health department when going for birth control; some felt they were not treated well