

# Briefly...

## United Way Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy

Nearly eight years ago, a group of passionate, dedicated women in Milwaukee dreamed about how they could help shift the odds for low-income girls by tackling the issue of teen pregnancy. United Way of Greater Milwaukee's Women Leadership Council acted on these aspirations, and invited business leaders and community members to join them in an effort to create a better future for the youth in Milwaukee.

Today, Milwaukee has the lowest teen birth rate in decades, with almost 50% fewer young girls having babies. The initiative is now a national model for community collaboration, recognized by the White House Council for Community Solutions.

All across America, United Ways are bringing people together to improve lives by improving education, financial stability, and health. But they're not just raising money for good causes anymore. Like in Milwaukee, United Ways are galvanizing people around community change. That means working with partners to:

- Frame community-wide conversations that tap into collective concerns and aspirations.
- Elevate critical issues.
- Create solutions in which everyone can take part.
- Enlist more people to join the cause.
- Invite people and organizations to take meaningful action to advance solutions.

Teen pregnancy is an issue that brings together the building blocks of opportunity, through its impact on education, financial stability, and health. The following are a few examples of how United Ways are working to reduce teen pregnancy.

### United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley: Boston, Massachusetts

The United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley strategically partners with the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy (the Alliance), the only statewide public policy and advocacy organization working on teen pregnancy. The Alliance

provides advocacy and support for youth, providers, researchers, policymakers, and communities to effectively address teen pregnancy through intersecting efforts on public policy, promoting best practices, and youth empowerment. With investment and support from the United Way in Boston, the Alliance is working in the public policy arena to:

- Advocate for teen parent and teen pregnancy prevention programs in the state budget;
- Advocate for state agency regulations and practices related to adolescent sexual health and teen parents;
- Advocate for relevant bills that impact adolescent sexual health and teen parents;
- Support local advocacy on teen pregnancy and related issues; and
- Create opportunities for youth to develop advocacy skills and use them to advocate for teen pregnancy prevention and support for young families.

Today, the state's teen birth rate is now less than half of the national rate, and is the second lowest teen birth rate in the nation.<sup>1</sup>

For more information, visit <http://www.massteenpregnancy.org/>.

### Berkshire United Way: Berkshire County, MA

An increase in the teen birth rate in Berkshire County between 1996 and 2009 motivated Berkshire United Way to tackle reducing teen pregnancy in the county. The effort started with a 2010 needs assessment that included a broad community survey and focus groups with high school and community college students, young men, and teen parents. Results suggested a focus in three areas: improving sex education in schools; increasing access to high quality reproductive health services; and increasing community awareness about teen pregnancy and potential solutions.

Called *Face the Facts – Reduce Teen Pregnancy*, the project is sponsored by Berkshire United Way, with additional funding from the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts, and is supported by

a broad community coalition representing business, education, youth, healthcare, and human service agencies. The group has put a stake in the ground, seeking to reduce teen births by 50 percent among the county's 15- to 19-year-old females by 2020.

Advocacy for evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention curricula in public schools has also been a major focus. To accompany school-based programs, the initiative also offers an eight-session *Let's Be Honest* curriculum for parents, which includes providing the book *It's Perfectly Normal* to participants. Training and financial support for the *Teen Outreach Program* (TOP), an evidence-based service learning curriculum is also provided and offered in after-school and summer programs.



To increase access to high quality reproductive health services, Berkshire United Way educates providers on best practices for communicating with teens, and provides birth control education kits to health teachers and nurses in county schools. United Way also works with teens to educate them on being confident and comfortable when talking to their doctor about their reproductive choices. Tapestry Health, a Title X clinic and member of the coalition, conducts outreach at high schools during lunch and in health classes, and is expanding to reach 18- and 19-year-olds at the local community college. Education about long-acting reversible contraception methods, the most effective methods to prevent pregnancies, has been an emphasis of outreach and education efforts.

A high-profile piece of the initiative is its public awareness effort. A robust public service advertising campaign includes radio PSAs, billboards, posters, a video, and a new effort targeting boys and men and the Latino community. Community events are held regularly, including an annual event marking the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

For more information check out [www.facethefactsberkshires.org](http://www.facethefactsberkshires.org).

### **United Way of Greater Milwaukee: Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

United Way of Greater Milwaukee's work began in 2006, with a

comprehensive report detailing the impact of teen pregnancy in Milwaukee—and setting out recommendations for action. The response from both the public and private sectors—including public health, business leaders, and the media—was significant.

United Way created a community-wide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Oversight Committee, working closely with local agencies, business, and community leaders (and co-chaired by the head of the city's health department and local newspaper publisher). The Committee set an ambitious goal to reduce teen births in Milwaukee among 15- to 17-year-olds by 46 percent by 2015—a goal that was considered one of America's most ambitious. But Milwaukee surpassed the goal three years ahead of schedule, and is now celebrating an unprecedented 50 percent decline in teen births.

Other community activities include providing evidence-informed interventions in school-based and after-school settings, engaging faith leaders, cultivating a collaborative fund to make more direct service funding available in the community, and engaging champions among diverse city leaders. In addition, edgy marketing campaigns, created by Serve Marketing in Milwaukee, deliver a strong message to community members, teens, and parents. In one of the most recent campaigns, the message to parents is clear—if you're not talking to teens about sex, someone else is. This particular campaign features an interactive YouTube quiz and website [GetTheSexFacts.com](http://GetTheSexFacts.com) and heavy social media promotion on Facebook and Twitter. The videos depict popular myths that have been circulating for years. Bus shelter ads and a television public service announcement program are also part of the campaign. Teens and their parents are encouraged to contribute to the discussion using the hashtag #SexMyths.

United Way's Healthy Girls Initiative provides funding for the implementation of evidence-based curricula that reaches over 3,000 boys and girls a year. Programs such as *Making Proud Choices!* (MPC) help youth understand the consequences of teen pregnancy while also teaching them the skills needed to cope with social pressures, with the goal of delaying sexual activity and avoiding pregnancy. In 2013-2014, United Way of Greater Milwaukee partnered with 13 community-based organizations to implement curricula in the community, and some \$4 million has been invested to date.

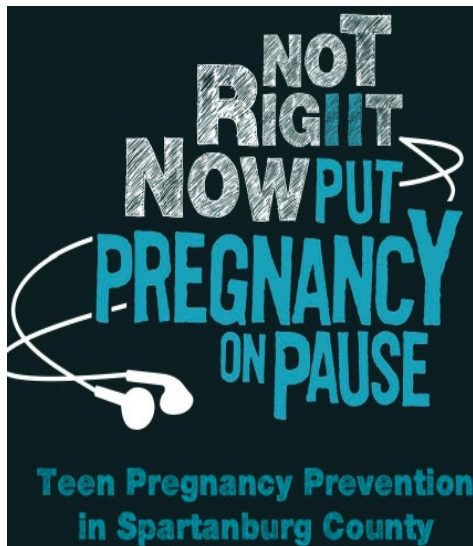
A newly developed strategy focuses on teen pregnancy prevention among youth in foster care, led by Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Community Services. *Healthy Kids, Healthy Choices* offers education, tools, and resources to foster parents and child welfare staff serving youth age 11-18 in out-of-home placements.

An oversight committee of child welfare and medical providers focus on continuous improvement, including integrating the program into case management.

Get details at <http://www.unitedwaymilwaukee.org/TeenPregnancyPrevention>.

### **The United Way of the Piedmont: Spartanburg, SC**

Spartanburg, SC has seen an 18 percent drop in teen births in the city since 2010. Part of the reason is *Not Right Now Spartanburg*, a comprehensive approach to combatting adolescent pregnancy designed to help build a stronger community and encourage kids to stay in school. An adolescent pregnancy prevention officer has been hired to coordinate efforts, support program development, and encourage policy change.



*Not Right Now Spartanburg* is an initiative created by the Joint Funders, which includes United Way of the Piedmont, the Spartanburg County Foundation, Mary Black Foundation, and Spartanburg Regional Healthcare Foundation. The Joint Funders have partnered with the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy to implement research-proven strategies to reduce teen pregnancy.

The roots of this work reach back to 2003, when United Way of the Piedmont partnered with The Spartanburg County Foundation to convene hundreds of citizens to examine community challenges. Teen pregnancy emerged as one of the biggest concerns. In response, these two organizations joined with the Spartanburg County Government and the University of South Carolina Upstate to create the Spartanburg Community Indicators Project in 2009. The goal of this project was to identify and engage local agencies

to lead in one or more of the indicator areas. Several organizations, including REACH Upstate, were selected as local groups with the power to reduce teen pregnancy in the county.

United Way supports REACH Upstate in their mission to promote healthy lifestyles for teens through pregnancy prevention education. With a primary focus on outcome based curricula, United Way of the Piedmont supports REACH Health Educators in implementing evidence-based programs that include *Making Proud Choices*, *Making a Difference*, *Be Proud Be Responsible*, and *What Could You Do?* In 2013 REACH Upstate served over 1,000 youth in the Spartanburg, SC community with these programs.

United Way of the Piedmont also supports other groups in implementing these evidence-based programs through the state health department and in school districts across the county.

Get details at <http://www.strategicspartanburg.org/> or <http://www.reachupstate.org/> and [www.uwpiedmont.org](http://www.uwpiedmont.org).

### **United Way of Tulsa: Tulsa, Oklahoma**

Oklahoma has the second-highest teen birth rate in the United States., a primary reason why the Tulsa Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was launched in 2013. The Tulsa Campaign approaches Teen Pregnancy Prevention from a system-level. The Campaign's four prongs are school and community education, health center capacity-building, public awareness, and data collection and distribution.

In 2014, the Tulsa Campaign will oversee the implementation of evidence-based sex education in all Tulsa Public School middle and high schools. It will also work closely with local health centers to attract and retain teen patients, will become a hub of teen pregnancy prevention resources and public awareness in the Tulsa area, and will produce timely and accurate data related to teen pregnancy prevention in the community.



The Tulsa Campaign is supported by the Tulsa Area United Way, along with several local foundations and the Community Service Council of Tulsa.

More details at [www.PreventTeenPregnancyOK.org](http://www.PreventTeenPregnancyOK.org).

## The United Way of Greater Atlanta: Atlanta, Georgia

In 2010, the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential (GCAPP) teamed up with the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Division of Family and Children Services to host a funders roundtable to discuss a potential state teen pregnancy prevention strategy. The United Way of Greater Atlanta attended the meeting and was intrigued by the conversation. Several meetings later, the Georgia Public Private Partnership for Teen Pregnancy Prevention (P3) was established and P3 became part of United Way's *Ready By 21* initiative to improve the odds that all children and youth will be ready for college, work, and life.

P3 uses a collective impact approach to address teen pregnancy and has united over 20 state public agencies, non-profits, and foundations from multiple arenas to come together and address issues related to teen pregnancy prevention. Activities have focused on aligning the work of major state systems and strengthening the capacity of youth-serving professionals, teachers, and clinicians to implement high-quality, evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs and sexual and reproductive health practices.

These changes are not just about bureaucratic process; teen pregnancy prevention efforts are very different in Georgia because of P3. Agencies that typically worked in isolation are seeking ways to work together to build capacity and increase services to young people, and are strengthening their internal policies to support P3's strategy.

P3 had unprecedented outcomes in just three years and was recognized as the Outstanding Emerging Innovation by Healthy Teen Network in 2014.

For more details, visit: <http://www.gcapp.org/p3>.

In addition, as part of the *Ready By 21* initiative, United Way is partnering with GCAPP to reduce unplanned pregnancy among college students through the *PEER UP* program. *PEER UP*, which stands for Peer Education and Encouragement to Reduce Unintended Pregnancy, is a multi-faceted program at Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) that brings together faculty, peer educator students, and students to reduce unplanned pregnancy on campus.

The goal of *PEER UP* is to increase graduation rates by improving students' knowledge, awareness, and behavioral intentions related to preventing unplanned pregnancy. The program collaborates with faculty to encourage students to complete the Online Lessons created by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. The lessons are designed to help students explore the effects that unplanned pregnancy can have on their education, relationships, social lives, and future goals. Students also learn about various birth control methods; select the most

appropriate method(s) for their values, lifestyles, and relationships; and create an action plan to prevent unplanned pregnancy. The program aims to reduce risky behavior while enhancing students' knowledge of contraceptive choices and clinical resources, helping them achieve academic success while reducing the barrier of unintended pregnancy.

During the 2012-2013 school year, *PEER UP* reached 1,385 students through campus events and completion of the Online Lessons. During the 2013-2014 school year, *PEER UP* reached 851 students through campus events and completion of the Online Lessons.

With support from United Way of Greater Atlanta, GCAPP and *PEER UP* trained 16 students who served as peer educators in 2012-2013 school year and trained seven students who served as certified peer educators in 2013-2014 school year. These peer educators served as a resource to answer student questions; promoted campus, community, and online resources; encouraged utilization of low-cost health services; and helped support students in developing healthy relationships. These students were also given opportunities to serve on panels and present at conferences as well as network with business leaders in their fields.

Going forward, GCAPP and *PEER UP* will continue to strengthen their partnerships with student groups and campus health and social centers, which is a key factor in the success of the program. They plan to expand their outreach and host additional campus-wide events in the coming year.

For more details, visit [www.gcapp.org/peer](http://www.gcapp.org/peer).

## Conclusion

The examples included here are not an exhaustive list, but spotlight how United Ways are supporting community-based efforts to reduce teen pregnancy. If you are interested in doing something in your community and want help getting started, please contact Rebecca Griesse at The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy at [rgriesse@thenc.org](mailto:rgriesse@thenc.org) or 202-478-8556.

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## SOURCES

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