

The Black Church and Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy:



VALUES
PARTNERSHIPS



The National Campaign
to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

7 Keys to Success

1. Create time and space.

Create a concrete space for teens or young adults to talk. This may be a special Saturday session at church, or a Friday teen night.

Focus the conversation around relationships. Discussions should be grounded in the true connection between teens and adults, mutual respect and love—and that's why the church is one of the best possible places for these conversations.

2. Create an environment where people can be candid.

Make sure you have an environment that lends itself to openness and honesty. This may mean limiting the number of adults in the room so that teens can freely share their thoughts and feelings.

3. Listen first.

Young people often hear adults teaching, preaching, or talking about teen and unplanned pregnancy. What they don't often have is someone to listen to them. Build relationships with the young people in your life/congregation by listening to their thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

Some questions to kick things off might include:

- *How do you define your self-worth? What makes you special?*
- *What are some of your dreams in life? What is your passion, and what do you think your purpose might be?*
- *How can we, as a church, help you fulfill your purpose?*
- *How might having an unplanned pregnancy impact your purpose?*
- *How can I pray for you?*

4. Balance instruction with compassion.

It is possible to address the moral standard that the Bible has on sexuality and at the same time extend compassion to those who have not always met that standard. Remember to avoid shaming teens and speak truth in love.

Conversation points might include:

- *"It is important to delay sex until marriage. The Bible says this and your parents say this. If you do not delay, or have not delayed already, it's important to avoid pregnancy—because pregnancy really does impact your life in ways you may not see."*
- *[For those who are already pregnant] "We support you and we want you and your child to thrive. Let's talk about resources to help you, and let's talk about making a plan to delay future pregnancies as well to give you and your baby the best possible shot."*

5. Lead with personal vulnerability.

It is perfectly okay to let young people know in appropriate ways that the teacher has not always been perfect—and that the teacher has also had the same questions at some point in his/her life.

- *"I have not always been perfect. In fact, I have had the same questions that you have at one point or another in my life. You are not alone."*

6. Point to concrete resources.

Don't leave young people hanging! Whether or not teens or young adults are pregnant, there are concrete resources they need to succeed. It is important to provide a next step when beginning this conversation.



Consider providing resources specifically on:

- Helping young people think about delaying sexual activity.
- Contraception (if your church supports teaching on this topic).
- Supports for teen and young adult parents.

A few helpful resources include:

- www.StayTeen.org: A resource for teens (and their parents) with information about relationships, abstinence, and contraception.
- www.Bedsider.org (if they are over 18): A resource for young adults about contraception
- The Office of Adolescent Health, Teen Parenting and Early Childhood Resources (<http://bit.ly/oahpaf>)

7. Help teens control their futures!

Teen and unplanned pregnancy has an enormous impact on young people and our communities. Help teens take control of their own futures by helping them make decisions that are in the best interest of their future.

Some of the following numbers might be helpful in sharing the reality of teen and unplanned pregnancy.

- Remember: fewer than half of all high school students have had sex. If they are not having sex, they are not alone!
- Births among Black teen girls have declined 49% since 2007 and 73% since 1991.
- But nearly one in 10 Black teen girls still get pregnant every year, which is higher than other racial/ethnic groups. Let's make more progress together.