U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Dear Colleague:

In 2009, the number of births to teenage mothers was 409,840 – a birth rate of 39.1 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19. This indicates that the long-term downward trend in teen birth rates has resumed.

At the same time, considerable disparities exist in the rates of teen pregnancy and birth among the nation's racial and ethnic groups. Together, 57% of teen births were to African American and Hispanic youth, although they represent only 35% of the total population of 15-19 year old females.

Teen pregnancies can have immediate and long-term negative effects for teen parents and their children, as well as create substantial social and economic costs to our society. Pregnancy and birth are significant contributors to high school drop out rates among girls, and their children also are more likely to have lower school achievement and drop out of high school. Teen pregnancy continues existing cycles of social, economic and educational disadvantages in our communities.

Through our experience, we know that we can prevent teen pregnancies by promoting teen-friendly interventions aimed at both increasing the number of teens who abstain from or delay sexual activity, and, among teens who are sexually active, increasing the number who consistently and correctly use effective contraceptive methods. This can be accomplished by involving more teens in evidence-based programs and linking prevention programs to clinical services.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is committed to both reducing teen pregnancy and promoting health equity among youth. As part of the President's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, CDC is partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services to support nine state and community-based organizations including two Title X agencies, and five national organizations to: reduce the rates of teen pregnancies and births in the target area; increase youth access to evidence-based and evidence informed programs to prevent teen pregnancy; increase linkages between teen pregnancy prevention programs and community-based clinical services.

We look forward to collaborating with our federal, state and local partners to reduce teen pregnancy and improve the future outlook for thousands of teens in our country. Working together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention