

About the Division of Adolescent and School Health

National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Facts about Adolescent Sexual Health

- Far too many young people continue to be infected with HIV. In 2010, an estimated 9,800 persons aged 13–24 years were diagnosed with HIV infection, representing about 21% of all diagnoses that year.
- From 2007 to 2010, HIV infection diagnoses increased 10% among persons aged 15–19 years and 33% among those aged 20–24 years.
- Teens and young adults have the highest rates of many STDs of any age group. Approximately half of the 19 million STDs that occur annually are among those under age 25.
- Teen pregnancy, although declining, remains higher in the U.S. than in nearly all Western industrialized nations. Approximately 368,000 U.S. teens aged 15–19 years gave birth in 2010.

Mission

The mission of CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) is to prevent HIV, other STDs, and teen pregnancy and promote lifelong health among youth.

Youth Focus

DASH's work focuses on children and adolescents aged 5–19 years, particularly youth aged 10–19 years.

DASH works to improve the health and quality of life of all children and adolescents. In addition, DASH places special emphasis on those who are disproportionately affected by HIV, other STDs, and pregnancy.

Working through Schools and Other Settings Central to Children and Adolescents

Improving the health of youth requires working through settings in which youth can easily be reached. DASH works with state, tribal, local, and territorial education agencies to reach young people through schools. DASH also works with organizations that serve youth who might not be adequately reached through schools, such as runaway and homeless youth and those in foster care or the juvenile justice system.

Key Strategies

To achieve its mission, DASH uses the following key strategies:

- Using **school-based surveillance systems** to measure the prevalence of health risk behaviors among adolescents and monitor school health policies and practices to prevent them.
- Fostering the delivery of **high-quality, evidence-based sexual health education**.
- Providing **scientific guidance** on effective policies and programs to prevent HIV, STDs, and teen pregnancy.
- Increasing youth **access to sexual health services**, including contraceptives and HIV and STD counseling, testing, and treatment.
- Establishing **healthy school environments where all youth feel safe and supported**.
- **Helping children and adolescents become more resilient** by promoting factors that can protect them from risks, such as effective parenting and strong family and school connections.

Key DASH Activities

School-Based Data Collection and Analysis

DASH's three major school-based surveillance systems—the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), the School Health Policies and Practices Study (SHPPS), and School Health Profiles (Profiles)—provide the most comprehensive national, state, and local data about the behaviors of young people, including sex risk behaviors, and the steps schools are taking to improve student health. These data enable health departments, education agencies, and community organizations to identify programmatic needs, target resources, establish measurable objectives, and monitor progress and improvement over time.

Support for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Education Agencies and National Organizations

DASH provides funding and technical assistance directly to state, tribal, local, and territorial health and education agencies to help schools implement effective HIV, STD, and pregnancy prevention programs that are based on the best science available. DASH also funds a network of national nongovernmental organizations to provide guidance and support for sexual health efforts in education agencies, health departments, and other organizations serving children and adolescents.

Research Synthesis and Evaluation

DASH scientists analyze research on program and policy effectiveness and develop science-based guidelines for effective HIV, STD, and pregnancy prevention practices. DASH also examines the impact of various protective factors—individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events—on helping children and adolescents avoid behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes. In addition, DASH supports evaluation research to identify the types of programs and practices that are most likely to have a positive impact on adolescent sexual risk behaviors.

Creation of Resources, Tools, Education, and Training Materials

To ensure that youth sexual health programs are grounded in the best science available, DASH translates its data and research findings into free, easy-to-use educational tools and resources for schools and communities. For example, DASH's *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* helps schools assess health education curricula and select or develop a curriculum that is most likely to have a positive impact on sexual risk behaviors among the youth they serve. The *School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide* helps schools identify the strengths and weaknesses of their health and safety policies and programs, develop action plans for improving student health, and engage teachers, parents, students, and community members in the process.

DASH offers these and other free tools, data summaries, guidelines, training materials, and fact sheets on the Adolescent and School Health Web site at www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth.

For More Information
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www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth
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