



CALIFORNIA REPORT CARD 2011

SETTING THE AGENDA FOR CHILDREN

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: Grade

ADOLESCENT HEALTH

OVERVIEW

Adolescence is a period of increased independence and new opportunities for growth, education and enrichment. It also holds risks and unique vulnerabilities, including increased access to alcohol and drugs; developing sexuality and corresponding risks, such as dating violence, sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies; increased exposure to community and peer violence, such as bullying; and, for some, a diminished sense of opportunities in education and career. During this period, adolescents' relationships with adults may also recede as a result of their increased self-sufficiency and focus on peers.

One of the most serious risks for adolescents today is teen pregnancy. A recent analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth finds that, after adjusting for other risks, daughters of teen mothers are 66% more likely to become teen mothers themselves.³⁰⁵ Teen pregnancy substantially reduces life opportunities for young women. Roughly 66% of American girls who give birth at age 19 or younger earn a high school diploma or GED by age 22 compared to 94% of girls who do not give birth during adolescence.³⁰⁶

Due to the economic downturn, there are fewer positive opportunities for adolescents, greater stressors for families and more cuts to critical programs. In the 2009-10 state budget, Gov. Schwarzenegger cut all funding from the Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP), which sought to enhance the health, social, economic, and educational well-being of pregnant and parenting adolescents and their children. Although the Legislature tried to restore funding in the 2010-11 budget, Gov. Schwarzenegger again vetoed this funding, which means over 12,000 pregnant and parenting teens no longer will receive services to assist them in obtaining health and child care, nutrition, job training and new parenting skills.³⁰⁷

FACTS & FIGURES

Resiliency & Connectedness among Adolescents

- Resiliency is the ability to cope with adversity, such that when adversity does occur, one has the ability to recover or “bounce back.” Factors that promote resilience in adolescence include the ability to distance oneself from negative influences, the development of long-term purposes or goals, and good conflict resolution strategies.³⁰⁸
- School connectedness is measured in many ways. Each of the following indicators of connectedness is predictive of success in school: having a sense of belonging in one's school, participating in extra-

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curricular activities, and perceiving that teachers are supportive and caring.³⁰⁹

- Adolescents in continuation and community day schools are in greatest need of strong social ties at school. Only 42% of students in these schools report feeling they are part of their school compared to 49% of ninth-graders in traditional high schools.³¹⁰
- Approximately 19% of high school students report that they are “not at all” involved in music, art, literature, sports or a hobby.³¹¹
- Roughly half (54%) of California’s ninth-graders feel a teacher or some other adult “really cares” about them.³¹²

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Birth Rate among Adolescents

- Teen births are costly to young women and the state. For every teen birth that is prevented, taxpayers save \$13,809, if the young woman is a minor, or \$1,741, if she is between ages 18 and 19.³¹³ The costs associated with teen pregnancy are a result of decreases in incomes, and consumption following teen pregnancy, as well as increased social service utilization.
- California won \$2.2 million from a competitive federal grant to assist pregnant and parenting teens and women complete high school or postsecondary degrees and gain access to health care, child care, family housing and other critical supports. California is one of only 17 states to win this important funding.³¹⁴
- Between 1991 and 2008, the teen birth rate in California decreased by 50%, from 71 per 1,000 to 35.2 per 1,000. During the same period, the national teen birth rate dropped by 33%, from 61.8 to 41.5 per 1,000.³¹⁵
- Latinas have a higher teen birth rate than any other racial/ethnic group in California. Still, their teen birth rate declined by a remarkable 8.1 births per 1,000 between 2006 and 2008.³¹⁶

Adolescents’ Romantic Relationships & Reproductive Health

- Adolescents who receive comprehensive sex education, which includes both abstinence messages as well as information on birth control methods, are less likely to experience a teen pregnancy than adolescents who receive abstinence-only or no sex education. Moreover, comprehensive sex education does not increase adolescents’ likelihood of engaging in sexual intercourse or reporting a sexually transmitted disease diagnosis.³¹⁷
- One in five (20%) adolescents in California, ages 14-17, reports being sexually active.³¹⁸ Among those who are sexually active, the

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vast majority report having used a condom during their last sexual intercourse (91%).³¹⁹

- 6% of ninth-graders report that a boyfriend or girlfriend was physically violent with them within the last year. Physical violence includes hitting, slapping or causing bodily harm.³²⁰

Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco Use among Adolescents

- Binge drinking, defined as consuming five or more alcoholic beverages on the same occasion, is harmful to adolescents. Heavy drinking can have numerous adverse effects. Heavy drinkers are more likely to engage in a range of risky behaviors, such as drinking and driving and having unprotected sex. Moreover, heavy drinking can undermine health, increasing one's chances of having high blood pressure and becoming overweight.³²¹



Most children who begin smoking during adolescence are addicted by age 20.

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- 34% of California's adolescents report having consumed an alcoholic beverage.³²² Among adolescents who report having consumed alcohol, 14% report having engaged in binge drinking within the past month.³²³
- Most children who begin smoking during adolescence are addicted by age 20.³²⁴ Approximately 5% of California's adolescents report that they are smoking.³²⁵
- Substance abuse among adolescents places them at greater risk of engaging in delinquency, displaying anti-social attitudes and developing health-related issues,³²⁶ including drug addiction.³²⁷ 11% of California's adolescents report having tried marijuana, cocaine, sniffing glue or other drugs.³²⁸