

“Are government funded abstinence programs just ‘pork’ or are they actually self-funding programs?”

Based on the following data, it is our conclusion that teens choosing the lifestyle of abstinence is directly responsible for over 50% of the dramatic drop in teen pregnancies. With the current rate of teen pregnancies dropping 5% annually, taxpayers are saving \$400+ million per year. This savings more than pays for federal abstinence education spending – currently less than \$200 million per year.

The following looks at the issue of teen pregnancy, its precipitous drop over the last decade and the cost-benefit analysis of abstinence education as it pertains to this single issue. The statistics and cost-benefit calculations are based primarily on studies from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, teen child-bearing in the US costs taxpayers \$9.1 Billion per year. Studies through the CDC show the rate of teen pregnancy has dropped approximately 35% from 1990 to 2002. (1) From 1990 thru 2000, the rate of teen pregnancy dropped 3% per year and from 2000 thru 2002 the drop in rate accelerated to 5% per year. (1)

The Journal of Adolescent and Family Health published a study that concluded 66% of the decrease in teen pregnancy was due to teens choosing abstinence.(2) The CDC commissioned a study which estimated 53% of the drop in teen pregnancy was due to teens choosing abstinence. (4)

Since teen pregnancy dropped 5% annually from 2000 to 2002 and teens choosing abstinence is responsible for 52% to 66% of that drop, then abstinence education should be given credit for delivering a \$237mm ($\$9.1B \times 5\% \times 52\%$) to \$300mm ($\$9.1B \times 5\% \times 66\%$) benefit per year back to the taxpayers. Funding for abstinence education is approximately \$200mm per year. Therefore abstinence education is a government funded program that not only works but is concurrently paying for itself. With teen virginity on the rise (2003 53% of high school students were virgins compared to 46% in 1990) (1) and teen pregnancy on the decline, it would seem to make sense to continue to fuel this positive health trend that is a win/win for taxpayers and teens.. What better vehicle to use than the current network of government funded abstinence education programs that encourage and empower our teens to delay sexual activity beyond high school, and ultimately until marriage.

This paper focuses only on the savings to taxpayers due to the reduction in teen pregnancies as more teens choose abstinence. It does not calculate the additional financial benefits realized by teens who chose abstinence and therefore avoided sexually transmitted diseases and the emotional trauma associated with teen sex (studies show an increased depression and attempted suicide rate among sexually active teens). (3) One can rightly conclude that if savings from avoidance of STDs and avoidance of emotional consequences were added to the savings from pregnancy reduction, the total financial benefit to society would be even more significant.

Prepared by:

Dan Bailey – Executive Director

Just Say YES

PO Box 670863

Dallas, TX 75367

972 437 0002

www.justsayyes.org

Just Say YES is a nonprofit educational organization with a mission to “Provide youth with relational and factual information, equipping them to lead healthy and successful lives.” Since March 2002, Just Say YES has reached 140,000 teens, parents and educators in 14 states through classroom education, parent programs, special assembly programs and staff development for teachers. Just Say YES does not receive any government funding and is currently funded through private foundations, corporations and the generosity of individual donors

- (1) Recent Trends in Teenage Pregnancy in the United States, 1990-2002 (The Guttmacher)://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/teenpreg1990-2002/teenpreg1990-2002.htm
- (2) (Mohn, J, Tingle LR, Finger R, An Analysis of the Causes of the Decline in Non-marital Birth and Pregnancy Rates for Teens from 1991 to 1995, Journal of Adolescent and Family Health, April, 2004, No.1, 39-47)
- (3) National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave II, 1996
Sexually Active Teenagers Are More Likely to Be Depressed and To Attempt Suicide, Robert Rector, Kirk Johnson, Ph.D. Lauren Noyes, The Heritage Foundation 6/2/03)
- (4) "Can Changes in Sexual Behaviors Among High School Students Explain the Decline in Teen Pregnancy Rates in the 1990s?" Journal of Adolescent Health May 11, 2004