



Key initiatives

Early Intervention

Programs like Postponing Sexual Involvement, a core program of *Breaking the Cycle*. PSI has been delivered to Hartford fifth grade students since 1996. The program trains role models from the three high schools to teach a five-week curriculum that includes lessons on self-esteem, provides the skills to resist or handle peer pressure and encourages responsible decision-making. Over the years the availability of the PSI program has been expanded to every 5th grade classroom and more than 9,000 students have been trained.

Comprehensive Health Education

In 2000, the Hartford Public Schools, a partner in *Breaking the Cycle*, did groundbreaking work to pass a policy that expanded the health education curriculum, making it more comprehensive and offering it earlier. Prior to this policy change, a semester of health education was taken during the 11th or 12th grade. That is too late. It is now mandated for delivery in 9th grade. This is supported by Hartford residents – 90% of whom believe that teen pregnancy is a problem in the community and that sex education is part of the solution. Seventy-nine percent also support sex education for middle school aged students.

Access to Reproductive Health Care Services

Youth need access to confidential, affordable, teen-friendly clinics so they can be proactive about their health. *Breaking the Cycle* is working with the health care community to ensure the availability of such services throughout Hartford. In addition, as part of the policy work done in 2000, the Hartford public schools expanded the reproductive health care services available in the school-based health centers to include exams, pregnancy and STD testing, counseling and access to contraception. These on-site clinics remove many of the logistical and confidentiality barriers that prevent youth from seeking reproductive health services. They are also in line with the beliefs of Hartford residents.

Long term programming

Initiatives such as the Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health's *Always on Saturday* program, which offers a teen pregnancy prevention curriculum for youth ages 9-18 every Saturday during the school year at several sites throughout the city. Continued reinforcement of prevention messages has been proven to be more effective than single-shot "inoculation" type approaches. Over 550 youth have participated in *Always on Saturday* since its inception in 1984. The *Always* curriculum has also been packaged for delivery to other youth-serving agencies in Hartford that wish to add a teen pregnancy prevention component to their programming. Several organizations, including the Hispanic Health Council, the Urban League, YO Hartford, and the Hartford Neighborhood Centers have been trained in the *Always* curriculum and have adopted it at their organizations.

Adult Involvement

Research shows that youth want to get information about sexuality and guidance in developing healthy relationships from their parents. Unfortunately, many parents are reluctant to have these conversations or don't know where to start. *Let's Talk*, a free program developed by *Breaking the Cycle*, trains parents in how to talk to their children about sexuality. The 4-hour program is also offered in Spanish.

Religious leaders have become increasingly involved in the planning and execution of programs, especially those designed for parents. Two specially trained outreach leaders worked for 10 months with pastors of Catholic, Pentecostal, Baptist, and Congregational churches to encourage them to offer training to parents.

Community Leadership

The responsibility for preventing teen pregnancy is not for youth alone. It is a community problem, and the community must provide opportunities and resources for teens to succeed. *Breaking the Cycle* works with neighborhood groups, youth, funders and the health care community to examine the teen pregnancy prevention issue from all angles, and to intensify the commitment to ending this problem.

In two neighborhoods with the highest teen pregnancy rates, youth ages 14 to 18 have been working together for over two years to devise ways to reach youth with health-services-resource information. These youth have approached business owners and community service organizations to assist them in their efforts and have produced a television public service announcement that airs during programs that other teens watch.

Three specialized leadership action conferences... for the medical community, youth workers and Latino youth, have been presented through funding secured from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. These conferences have engaged and energized people throughout the community to keep this issue in the forefront.