

BREAKING THE CYCLE

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School Policy Changed to Reduce Sexually-Transmitted Diseases, Teen Pregnancy

In an effort to reduce the high numbers of sexually-transmitted diseases and pregnancy among Hartford teens, a policy change to expand the health education curriculum and reproductive health services was approved by the Hartford Public Schools. The recommendations were presented to the Hartford Public Schools Board of Trustees at their June 2001 meeting by School Superintendent Anthony Amato, and approved, following public comment, during a second reading at the July 10 meeting. The recommendations were the result of an AIDS/STD/Teen Pregnancy Prevention committee initiative formed by *Breaking the Cycle*.

"The numbers of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) are at alarming levels among adolescents in Hartford," said Superintendent Amato. "Research shows that more than half of Hartford youth are sexually active by ninth grade. The school system can, and should, play an important role in educating and protecting our youth."

In Hartford during 2000, youth ages 10-19 accounted for 633 cases of Chlamydia out of 1620, and 211 cases of Gonorrhea out of 688, with Gonorrhea cases among teens increasing 44% from the previous year. Many Hartford teens may have an STD and not know they are infected because they have not been tested. A recent study at one community health center in Hartford showed that nearly 60% of those who tested positive for Chlamydia *did not have any symptoms*. One third of the study participants were adolescents. Youth who are at risk for STDs such as Gonorrhea and Chlamydia are also at risk for HIV/AIDS.

The foundation for the committee's recommendations is based upon the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' *Healthy People 2010* objectives (see sidebar), a comprehensive, nationwide health promotion and disease prevention agenda. *Healthy People 2010* contains 467 objectives designed to serve as a road map for improving the health of all people in the United States during the first decade of the 21st century. The committee's recommendations for Hartford include:

Health Education

- All ninth grade students will be required to have a minimum of a half-year of health education;
- All middle school students will take a minimum of a half-year of comprehensive health education in both the 7th and 8th grades. This half-year course will be offered separately from the special subjects (art, music, physical education, etc.)
- The Hartford Public Schools will provide for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the health education curriculum and will make modification, as necessary, to achieve results.

School Based Health Clinics

- Medical services offered through all the school-based clinics will include comprehensive reproductive health and mental health services including contraception. Counseling will be provided to assist young people in making decisions about their health.

Parental Involvement

- Parents will be given the opportunity to receive training on how to communicate with their children on issues of sexuality.
- Parents will have the opportunity to review all health education curriculum.
- Reproductive health care will only be provided to students who have written parent permission to receive clinic services.

For more information about these policy changes, or to obtain a full copy of the committee's report, contact *Breaking the Cycle* at (860) 236-4872.



Left: *Breaking the Cycle* and staff from the Health Education Department at the Hartford Public Schools met recently with experts from the Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers University to review the health education curriculum that has been designed for HPS middle and high school students, and to discuss the development of elementary school health education programs. Shown left to right: Barbara Dennis, *Breaking the Cycle*; C. Danene Sorace, Rutgers; Jack Cullin, *Breaking the Cycle*; Susan Wilson, Rutgers; and Vic Neumann, Hartford Public Schools.

Healthy People 2010 Objectives

- 7 Educational and Community-Based Programs**
- 7 – 1 Increase high school completion.
- 7 – 2 Increase the proportion of middle, junior high, and senior high schools that provide school health education to prevent health problems in the following areas: unintentional injury; violence; suicide; tobacco use and addiction; alcohol and other drug use; unintended pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and STD infection; unhealthy dietary patterns; inadequate physical activity; and environmental health.
- 9 Family Planning**
- 9 – 1 Increase the proportion of pregnancies that are intended.
- 9 – 2 Reduce the proportion of births occurring within 24 months of a previous birth.
- 9 – 3 Increase the proportion of females at risk of unintended pregnancy (and their partners) who use contraception.
- 9 – 5 (Developmental) Increase the proportion of health care providers who provide emergency contraception.
- 9 – 7 Reduce pregnancies among adolescent females.
- 9 – 10 Increase the proportion of sexually active, unmarried adolescents aged 15 to 17 years who use contraception that both effectively prevents pregnancy and provides barrier protection against disease.
- 9 – 11 Increase the proportion of young adults who have received formal instruction before turning age 18 years on reproductive health issues, including all of the following topics: birth control methods, safer sex to prevent HIV, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and abstinence.
- 25 Bacterial STD Illness & Disability**
- 25 – 1 Reduce the proportion of adolescents and young adults with *Chlamydia trachomatis* infections.
- 25 – 2 Reduce gonorrhea.
- 25 – 3 Eliminate sustained domestic transmission of primary and secondary syphilis.
- 25 – 8 (Developmental) Reduce HIV infections in adolescent and young adult females aged 13 to 24 years that are associated with heterosexual contact.
- 25 – 11 Increase the proportion of adolescents who abstain from sexual intercourse or use condoms if currently sexually active.
- 25 – 16 (Developmental) Increase the proportion of sexually active females aged 25 years and under who are screened annually for genital chlamydia infections.

Source: *Healthy People 2010*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 2000

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Speakers Available

What can be done to prevent teen pregnancy in Hartford? Will the problem ever be solved? What programs and services are available for youth and adults?

Breaking the Cycle has a Speakers Bureau for groups that would like to know more about the challenging issue of teen pregnancy and what Hartford is doing to address it. Presentations are free and can be tailored to your organization's needs.

If you would like to arrange a presentation for your group, or sign up for the Youth Speakers Bureau training, call Laura Stone, Public Awareness Coordinator for *Breaking the Cycle*, (860) 236-4872.

KIDS: WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS WEEKEND?

If you're looking for something interesting to do, where you can learn and have fun too, then join

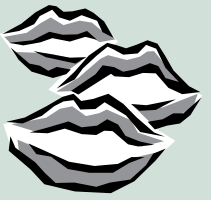


A **free** teen pregnancy prevention program and activity group for boys & girls ages 9-14

Meets every Saturday from 10-12:30 at Albany Ave. library

For registration forms contact Alice Leibowitz (860) 236-4872

iHablemos! Let's Talk!



Training Program Helps Adults Talk to Kids

Let's Talk, Encouraging Families to Communicate About Sexuality, offers free training to help adults communicate with children about sexuality. Training is also available in Spanish. *Let's Talk* can help adults:

- Increase their knowledge of sexuality issues including sexual development, puberty, birth control, sexually-transmitted infections and more;
- Learn how to communicate effectively with children from birth to age 19;
- Practice their newly-learned communication skills in a safe environment.

The program is perfect for parents who would like to communicate with their children but don't know where to start. *Let's Talk* can be scheduled in one 4-hour or two 2-hour sessions at your Hartford location. Trained facilitators conduct the sessions and will work with you to tailor the program to meet your needs.

Other Let's Talk News

A big welcome to new trainers Vanessa Gervais, Laura Dean Verberg, Tina Shumpert-Sweeney, Michelle McFarland and Maritza Falcon.

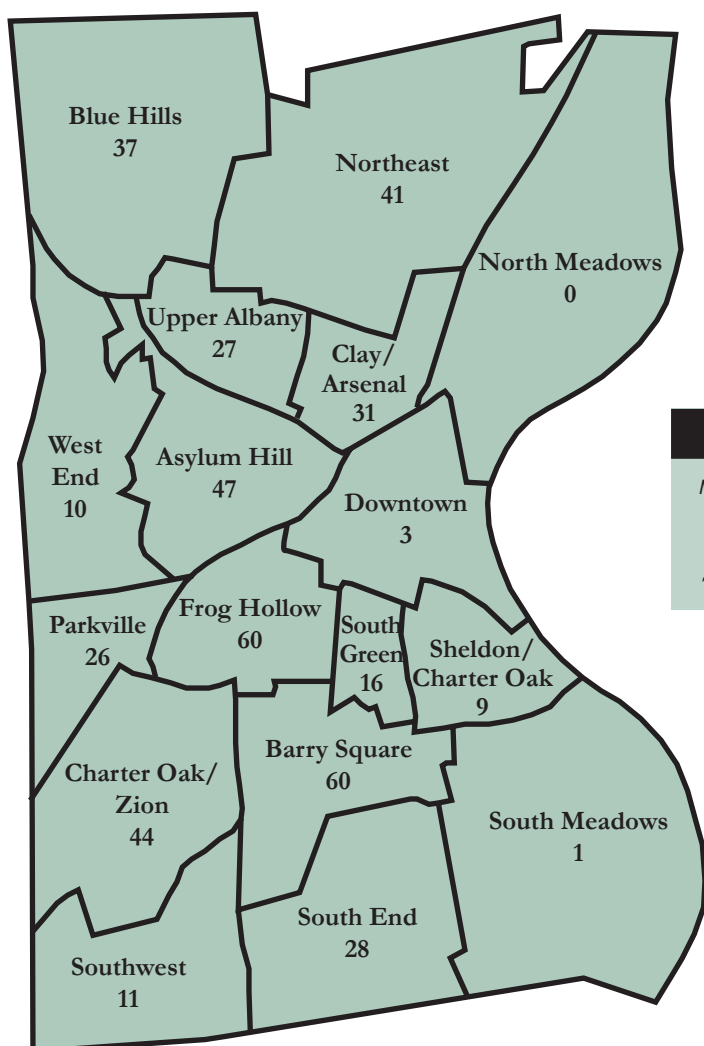
The *Let's Talk* curriculum has been modified for youth workers and is being delivered to youth serving organizations throughout Hartford. This training is ideal for adults who might need to be comfortable with issues of sexuality that arise in their daily interaction with youth.

If you would like to arrange a *Let's Talk* training for a group of parents or youth workers, contact Alice Leibowitz, at (860) 236-4872.

See us on the web at www.teenpregnancyhartford.org

BIRTH STATISTICS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Teen Births in Hartford, January 1 - December 31, 2000



Total Teen Births City of Hartford	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	20
15 - 17	176
18 - 19	262
Total	458

Numbers on map at left represent total teen births for each neighborhood. For more detailed information, see charts below.

Asylum Hill	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	20
18 - 19	27
Total	47

Frog Hollow	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	4
15 - 17	26
18 - 19	30
Total	60

South Green	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	1
15 - 17	4
18 - 19	11
Total	16

Barry Square	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	2
15 - 17	25
18 - 19	33
Total	60

North Meadows	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	0
18 - 19	0
Total	0

South Meadows	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	1
18 - 19	0
Total	1

Blue Hills	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	13
18 - 19	24
Total	37

Northeast	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	3
15 - 17	15
18 - 19	23
Total	41

Southwest	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	6
18 - 19	5
Total	11

Charter Oak/Zion	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	1
15 - 17	17
18 - 19	26
Total	44

Parkville	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	2
15 - 17	10
18 - 19	14
Total	26

Upper Albany	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	2
15 - 17	7
18 - 19	18
Total	27

Clay/Arsenal	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	2
15 - 17	13
18 - 19	16
Total	31

Sheldon/Charter Oak	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	2
15 - 17	2
18 - 19	5
Total	9

West End	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	1
15 - 17	3
18 - 19	6
Total	10

Downtown	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	1
18 - 19	2
Total	3

South End	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	10
18 - 19	18
Total	28

N'hood not Specified	
Mother's Age	#Births
14 & under	0
15 - 17	3
18 - 19	4
Total	7

Source: Preliminary data from the City of Hartford Department of Vital Records