



## The Need for Evidence-Based Sexual Health Education

ETR's work in sexual and reproductive health is based on our belief that everyone deserves access to trusted information and services related to their sexual health and development. For over 41 years we have been deeply engaged and committed to researching, developing, evaluating, and disseminating programs and strategies to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

### Why is there an emphasis on using evidence-based pregnancy and STI prevention programs?

Despite continued declines in the United States teen birth rate, disparities still exist by race and ethnicity<sup>1</sup>, and the teen birth rate (17.4 teen births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) is higher in the United States than in other Western industrialized nations<sup>2</sup>. Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that based on STI reporting data from 2018, young people ages 15-24 account for nearly half of all new cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the United States.

Evidence-based pregnancy and STI prevention programs are programs that have been shown, in at least one program evaluation, to have a positive effect on reducing unplanned pregnancy or associated behavioral risk factors, such as delaying sexual activity, or increasing condom or contraceptive use. Providing young people with evidence-based pregnancy and STI prevention programs is one strategy to help address the disparities that persist in the United States. With schools and service organizations facing limited time and resources, these programs serve as an effective option for reducing risk behaviors. Evidence-based programs play a central role in large Federal initiatives aimed at promoting optimal health for young people, including initiatives led by the Office of Population Affairs and Family and Youth Services Bureau. Similarly, state departments of health and/or education and school districts across the country rely on them to support the health of their young people.

These programs address inequities in access to critical information young people need to make healthful decisions. The programs feature medically accurate information that allows young people (often middle and high school age) to learn and use strategies to maximize their health and reduce their risks. Topics typically include abstinence, consent, contraceptives, healthy relationships, HIV and other STIs, parent/guardian-child communication, refusal skills, and sexual boundaries. Other topics may include anatomy, reproduction, sexual identity and orientation, and pregnancy options.

## What is ETR's role in developing and disseminating evidence-based programs?

ETR is committed to improving health outcomes and advancing health equity for youth, families, and communities. We are a national content expert in developing, implementing, evaluating, and adapting science-based pregnancy and STI prevention programs. We also are the nation's largest nonprofit health publisher and distribute a substantial portfolio of highly respected and popular health education resources, including over 25 evidence-based teen pregnancy and STI prevention programs. We disseminate evidence-based programs to support school districts and community-based agencies across the country in addressing health disparities and promoting access to science-based, medically accurate information for young people in their communities.

## How can you learn more about ETR's work in sexual and reproductive health curricula?

ETR [provides supporting information](#) on the programs we disseminate to help school districts and communities assess the appropriateness of the programs for the young people they serve. We also provide training and technical assistance to support sites with quality implementation of evidence-based sexual health programs.

For more information on ETR's curricula or services, please contact ETR customer service at [customerservice@etr.org](mailto:customerservice@etr.org)

1. Martin, J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Osterman, M.J.K., & Discroll, A.K. (2020). *Births: Provisional Data for 2019*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr-8-508.pdf>. [back to top](#)
2. Sedgh G, Finer LB, Bankole A, Eilers MA, Singh S. *Adolescent pregnancy, birth, and abortion rates across countries: levels and recent trends*. *J Adolesc Health*. 2015; 56(2): p. 223-30.