



Engaging Young Men

July 2020

Young men are critical to efforts aimed at reducing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Yet prevention education activities and health care services often fail to target them, let alone include them. Young men have been historically excluded from health care services and prevention programs for many reasons, both political and ideological. However, including them in these services and programs is a best practice. Although the research demonstrating best practices for engaging young men is much less robust than the research for engaging young women, there is adequate support to guide professionals in selecting approaches to maximize positive results.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING YOUNG MEN

Young men have an important role to play in promoting sexual and reproductive health. Their involvement can be crucial to the decision-making process related to having sex and using contraception. The following are best practices for engaging young men that will help to create a male-positive environment (Marsiglio et al., 2006; Sonenstein et al., 1997):

- Intentionally create services that address young men's needs. Do not make them an "add-on." For example, offer integrated care in school-based or school-linked health centers so young men can seek confidential services for sensitive issues.
- Ask young men what they want and need.
- Address gender norms and how they can influence young men's access to abstinence and contraceptive services.
- Make teen pregnancy prevention relevant to other aspects of their lives, such as incorporating sexual health education sessions into sports programs.
- Include a cultural component, such as integrating language and communication styles that refer to a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal patterns and behaviors.
- Collaborate with other agencies to broaden services.


- Be creative with recruitment strategies; engage young men where they are. Using schools to help recruit young men is a great start; however, it is not the only avenue. Incorporate recruitment strategies that leverage community partners with history and knowledge of the local neighborhood dynamics to engage young men in program activities.
- Get to know young men and their communities. Study the social factors and physical conditions of the environment in which they live, learn, work, and play. What expectations and stigma are they facing?
- Incorporate mentoring opportunities by connecting young men with other men. Male mentors play a pivotal role in helping to reduce high-risk behaviors by establishing a trusting relationship in a safe and supportive manner, which is an important aspect to developing healthy behaviors (California School-Based Health Alliance, 2014).





BARRIERS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE FOR YOUNG MEN

Young men and women mature in stages. Both can benefit from education and preventative services to increase their understanding of their changing bodies and to detect developmental or health issues. However, young men may not recognize the need for such services or how they may benefit from them. Furthermore, health care professionals may not recognize young men’s needs. The following are common barriers that males may encounter in accessing health care services (Lindberg, Lewis-Spruill, & Crownover, 2006; Marcell et al., 2017):

- Services are often female focused.
- Components of care for young men may not be clearly defined, so most young men do not know what care they should receive.
- Young men influenced by male stereotypes may experience fear or stigma that inhibits their utilization of health care.
- Young men may not know where to go for services.
- Young men may feel embarrassed or ashamed, specifically as it relates to the reason for seeking sexual health services.
- Providers may show a lack of respect.
- Young men may feel a lack of privacy or confidentiality.
- Young men may experience prolonged wait times.
- Insurance or public funding may be lacking.
- Young men may have difficulty accessing or navigating the health care system.
- STIs and other health issues may be asymptomatic.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS DESIGNED FOR YOUNG MEN

Program	Description
Guy Talk 	A 10-hour intervention delivered to males aged 14–17 years in small group sessions through a technology-supported curriculum. Topics covered include gender-role expectations, managing emotions, positive peer groups and leadership skills, managing relationships, making responsible decisions, understanding healthy sexuality, obtaining help and accessing resources, and developing life skills (CDC, 2019).

Program	Description
Wise Guys 	A 9-hour intervention delivered to male 9th through 12th graders in 10–12 weekly, small group sessions (45 minutes each). Topics covered include reproductive anatomy and pregnancy, values, fatherhood, goal setting, decision making, communication, healthy relationships, intimate partner violence, HIV and other STIs, contraception, and abstinence (CDC, 2019).
Achieving Condom Empowerment Plus 	A 2-hour intervention administered one-on-one by trained foster care staff. The intervention teaches males in foster care who are aged 16–20 years about correct and consistent condom use, as well as engagement with female partners to obtain and use contraception (CDC, 2019).
Promoting Awareness through Live Movement and Sound-Teen Pregnancy Prevention	A 10-hour intervention delivered in small groups during four 2.5-hour sessions. The intervention, which is for males aged 15 to 22 years, is a theater-based, trauma-informed, small-group intervention. The sessions include a short play depicting real-life situations that young people face and are intended to convey messages related to reproductive health and pregnancy and STI prevention (CDC, 2019).
Healthy U	An innovative teen pregnancy prevention program delivered through a tablet application and geared toward male youth in juvenile justice facilities who are aged 14–19 years. Modules cover puberty, birth control, teen pregnancy, STIs, HIV, healthy relationships, and condom negotiation (CDC, 2019).
Computer-Assisted Motivational Interviewing (CAMI) Intervention	An intervention conducted during 12 weeks with young men aged 15–24 years with a trained health coach and a mobile application. Topics include increasing condom use, supporting female partners’ contraceptive use, and completing a reproductive health visit with STI testing (CDC, 2019).
Fathers Raising Responsible Men	A two-session course delivered to fathers of adolescent males aged 15–19 years by trained father coaches. Fathers Raising Responsible Men focuses on motivating fathers to communicate with their sons about sexual and reproductive health and consistent condom use and assists fathers to support their adolescent sons’ link to sexual and reproductive health services (CDC, 2019).
Manhood 2.0 	A community-based intervention delivered to groups of young men aged 16–22 years. Manhood 2.0 aims to create a safe space for young men to take a critical look at what it means to be a man and redefine healthier versions of manhood for themselves (CDC, 2019).
Coaching Boys Into Men 	An evidence-based prevention program that trains high school coaches to teach their male athletes about healthy relationships, dating violence, sexual assault, and harassment.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Educating and Engaging Young Men in Reproductive Health
www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/about/educating-engaging-young-men-reproductive-health.htm

- Advancing Men’s Reproductive Health in the United States
www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/ProductsPubs/PDFs/Male-Reproductive-Health.pdf
- Let's Hear about the Boys: Male Engagement in Teen Pregnancy Prevention
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWflu69dh9w&index=2&list=PLn20L8SdKOA98YWamzb0oNhzuIpbOW_yZ&t=0s
- Engaging Young Men of Color in Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Context Matters
<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/sites/default/files/may28slidest1.pdf>
- Engaging Young Men in Pregnancy Prevention: Making Referrals for Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
www.jsi.com/resource/engaging-young-men-in-pregnancy-prevention-making-referrals-for-sexual-and-reproductive-health-services-1-day-training-trainers-manual/
- Connecting Young Men to Reproductive and Sexual Health Services: A Toolkit for Trusted Adults
https://publications.jsi.com/JSIInternet/Inc/Common/download_pub.cfm?id=21636&lid=3
- Young Men’s Experiences in a Pregnancy Prevention Program for Males
<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/young-mens-experiences-in-a-pregnancy-prevention-program-for-males>
- The Reproductive and Sexual Health of Young Men of Color
www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage//advfy/documents/Factsheets/the%20reproductive%20and%20sexual%20health%20of%20young%20men%20of%20color.pdf
- Supporting Young Male Involvement in Pregnancy Prevention & Parenting
www.healthyteennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Fast-Facts-Supporting-Young-Male-Involvement-in-Pregnancy-Prevention-and-Parenting.pdf
- Bedsider: Guy’s Guide to Birth Control
www.bedsider.org/features/277-introduction
- Men Can Stop Rape: Healthy Masculinity Action Project
<https://mcsr.org/healthy-masculinity-action-project>

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This tip sheet was developed by Power to Decide, a subcontractor to RTI International under contract #HHSP233201500039I/HHSP23337003T Task 4 with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau.

Suggested Citation:

Anderson, J. M. (2020). *Engaging young men*. Washington, DC: Administration on Children Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau.



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