



the campaign to prevent unplanned pregnancy

PREP at a Glance: Pregnancy Prevention Among Youth in Foster Care

Since the early 1990s, the teen birth rate in the US has declined rapidly, and this progress has accelerated in recent years with the teen birth rate falling [41%](#) since 2010 alone.¹ In spite of this progress, disparities persist by race/ethnicity and geography.² In addition, youth in foster care face unique challenges when it comes to sexual health and are twice as likely to get pregnant by age 19 than teens not in care.³ In fact, by age 19, nearly half of all teen girls in foster care have been pregnant at least once. The Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) provides important resources to address this issue among youth in care, as well as with other high-risk populations, such as adjudicated youth, minority youth, pregnant or parenting teens, and youth residing in geographic areas with high teen birth rates.

Through PREP, the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) funds evidence-based programs dedicated to educating adolescents on both abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).⁴ PREP also educates youth on adulthood preparation topics such as healthy relationships, educational and career success and financial literacy.

Authorized at \$75 million annually through fiscal year (FY) 2023, PREP includes formula grants to states (or competitive grants to organizations in the states that decline the formula grants), grants to tribes and tribal organizations, and grants for research and demonstration projects to implement and evaluate innovative strategies (referred to as Personal Responsibility Education Innovative Strategies or PREIS grants).

Many experts recommend tiered evidence-based policymaking and PREP is a strong example of this approach. Most of the funding is dedicated to projects that replicate effective, evidence-based program models or substantially incorporate elements of projects that have been proven to delay sexual activity, increase condom or contraceptive use for sexually active youth, or reduce pregnancy among youth. A smaller portion is dedicated to developing and rigorously evaluating promising approaches. For more information about PREP, see *PREP at a Glance*.⁵

Many states, including Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia focus PREP funding toward youth in the foster care system.⁶ This has inspired important cross-system collaboration among state health and child welfare agencies, as well as with local partners. The examples below highlight PREP's work with foster youth.

***State PREP Grantee:
Georgia Division of Family and
Children Services***

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services uses some of its State PREP funding to provide connected caregiver trainings (CCT), which are designed specifically to connect caregivers of youth in foster care and other youth serving professionals to information and resources on healthy relationships and sexual health. CCTs teach the skills necessary to become a “Connected Caregiver”, including strategies for starting conversations about these sensitive topics.

***Competitive PREP Grantee: Health
Care Education and Training (HCET)***

In 2013, HCET received a three-year Competitive PREP grant for the Indiana Proud and Connected Teens Project (IN-PACT). IN-PACT provides evidence-based programming with the goal of preventing adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections to youth age 12–19 who are in foster care; are in the juvenile detention system; or identify as LGBTQ. HCET partners with community-based organizations who implement the programs and HCET provides program monitoring, training and technical assistance, grant management, and conducts overall outcome and implementation evaluation. In 2015, HCET was awarded a three-year extension of their Competitive PREP grant.⁷ Over five years, IN-PACT has reached more than 2,200 youth.

***PREIS Grantee: The Oklahoma
Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA)***

In 2010, OICA received a five-year PREIS grant for the *Power Through Choices* (PTC) Demonstration and Evaluation Project. PTC is a curriculum written specifically for youth in out-of-home care, and the challenges that they face. The PTC project was conducted with over 1,000 system-involved youth in foster care and juvenile justice from Kern and San Luis Obispo counties in California, seven counties in Maryland, and statewide in Oklahoma, from 2010–2015. The evaluation findings provide strong evidence of the program’s effectiveness, including significant changes in knowledge, attitude, intention, and behavior. Young people age 17–19 who participated in PTC had lower rates of sexual activity, and were both less likely to have sex without effective protection or be involved in a pregnancy compared to teens of the same age in a control group.⁸

***State PREP Grantee:
Ohio Department of Health***

The Ohio Department of Youth Services, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Health, uses PREP funds to provide evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programming for youth between 14-19 years of age residing in foster care and the juvenile justice systems. Through a train-the-trainer model, local staff who work with foster care and incarcerated youth are trained in *Reducing the Risk* (RtR). In addition to participating in this evidence-based program that teaches about abstinence, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections, youth receive education about healthy relationships, financial literacy, and educational and career success to help them prepare for adulthood. Over the past five years, approximately 6,000 youth have been served in 70 of 88 counties across Ohio.

What Can Policymakers Do?

- Ensure that PREP continues to be administered in ways that maintain its high-quality evidence-based approach.
- Support efforts to address the high rates of teen pregnancy and childbearing among youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system, through targeted efforts to build knowledge about effective approaches within the systems that serve these young people and coordination among these efforts. Over half of states with PREP are using some or all of their funds to address the need in these populations.

¹ Power to Decide. (2021.) Federal Policy Agenda 2021-2022 retrieved from <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/resource-library/federal-policy-agenda-2021-2022>.

² Power to Decide. National data retrieved from <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/national-state-data/national>.

³ Power to Decide. *Why it Matters: Teen Pregnancy*. Retrieved from <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/why-it-matters>.

⁴ More than 95% of youth served by State PREP received an evidence-based program from the HHS list evidence-based models. See Family Youth Services Bureau. (2015). *How States Planned and Implemented Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Programs: State PREP Performance Measures of Structure, Cost, and Support for Implementation*. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fysb/prep_pm_brief_20151216.pdf.

⁵ Power to Decide. (2020). *PREP at a Glance*. Retrieved from <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/resource-library/prep-at-a-glance>.

⁶ Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Service. (2018). *Inputs and Outcomes: PREP Programs Serving Youth in Foster Care* Retrieved from

https://teenpregnancy.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/prep_snapshot_fostercare_508.pdf. While Georgia is not covered in the previous report, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services confirmed they were continuing to serve youth in foster care over email in April 2021.

⁷ The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 extended PREP for two years, through FY 2019, with level funding (\$75 million annually) with two changes: 1) continuing existing competitive PREP grants that were awarded for FY 2015 - 2017 through FY 2019 and 2) adding victims of human trafficking as a priority population. See P.L. 115-123, Sec. 50503.

⁸ A 2016 study of *Power Through Choices* was submitted to the HHS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review and subsequently added to the list of evidence-based program models for demonstrating evidence of effectiveness on a reproductive health outcome (12 months after the program ended, adolescents in the treatment group were significantly less likely to report ever been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant than the adolescents in the control group). Retrieved from

https://tppevidencereview.youth.gov/pdfs/Summary_of_findings_2016-2017.pdf