

Visión y Compromiso™



# Families Talking Together/ Familias Hablando Unidas

**A PROJECT DELIVERED BY PROMOTORAS**



Information obtained from the project Families Talking Together.

**CENTER FOR**  
**Latino Adolescent**  
**and Family Health**

**NYU Silver**  
Silver School of Social Work



Vision y Compromiso thanks these agencies for their faith in Promotoras and for supporting our work.



## FINAL REPORT

Visión y Compromiso (VyC) is pleased to send this final report to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (“National Campaign” or “Campaign”). We are pleased to acknowledge, once again, the National Campaign’s critical support for this intervention for Latina teens and women. This Final Report addresses the Project’s accomplishments, challenges, revisions, lessons learned, and next steps associated with this project.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The “Families Talking Together” (Familias Hablando Unidas) Program, an evidence-based intervention targeting Latino adolescents and their parents, was a joint collaboration of VyC, the National Campaign and the Center for Latino Adolescent and Family Health (CLAFH).

The goal of the project was to recruit and train ten community-based Promotoras to deliver the Families Talking Together Program to 100 Latino families in Central California by conducting outreach to families with adolescents between the ages of 10-14 years of age in order to deliver the Families Talking Together curriculum to decrease or prevent risky sexual behaviors among this vulnerable population.

The geographic target for the intervention was California communities with sizable Latino populations and high rates of adolescent pregnancies.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Nine (9) Promotoras from 3 counties (Tulare, Kern and San Bernardino) were identified by the National Campaign to deliver the intervention.
- Outreach was conducted in these 3 counties to recruit 100 families to participate in the Project.
- Promotoras were extremely creative in their outreach efforts to reach families from different communities in parks, at community events, in hairstyling salons, farmers markets and more.
- Post survey results indicate that parents feel better equipped to set boundaries, rules and clear expectations about their teens’ sexual conduct.

## ACTIVITIES

- Nine Promotoras participated in a 4-day training during June 4th to June 7th 2014.
- Once trained, Promotoras conducted outreach and delivered the intervention to 100 families in various community settings in 3 counties.
- Pre- and post-surveys were administered to 100 families.
- Promotoras participated in weekly calls with VyC staff to problem solve and receive technical assistance and support.
- There was tremendous interest in this information. A detailed grid of Project activities is found in the Tables in Attachment 1.
- VyC staff sent regular progress reports and surveys as required to CLAFH.

## CHALLENGES

- Families with children outside the age established for this Project also wanted to participate. It was unfortunate that we could not provide this information/service to them within the program guidelines.
- Interest in this program was tremendous and it succeeded in addressing a topic that can be difficult for many families. We have a waiting list with names of families in each region who would like to participate in the training and program if the opportunity becomes available.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- This year we found many community members were more responsive to the information than previously and were eagerly waiting for the Project to begin.
- We found that the most effective way to ensure that parents felt ready and prepared to talk to their teens about sex was to implement the intervention one on one. However, group sessions to provide parents with general information helped parents realize that they wanted to have an individual conversation with a Promotora in order to create a plan for their family (See attachment #1 for more information about the materials used during the groups).
- Integrating Promotoras as key messengers was the appropriate approach for this Project. Promotoras are trusted by and have access to their communities. They adapt quickly and can deliver interventions on sensitive topics such as sexual and reproductive health. They can also talk to parents about teens' sexual behaviors. Furthermore, Promotoras developed skills in specific areas and strengthened existing networks. As a result of this Project, they are better equipped to approach parents and speak to them about difficult topics and can also apply those skills in their own families.

## NEXT STEPS

- Implement Families Talking Together with different groups, at conferences and in workshops across California.
- VyC will disseminate the findings through its website and in regional convenings in 14 regions across California, reaching allied agencies, collaborators and Networks throughout the United States. VyC would like to
  1. Join the National Campaign at a Washington DC briefing to share these findings and the potential for success by expanding the Project;
  2. Join the National Campaign to train cohorts of promotores across the nation building a powerful constituency for pregnancy prevention; and
  3. Incorporate the tenets of this Project into our local, state and federal policy and advocacy priorities.

## VISION Y COMPROMISO'S GAINS FROM THIS WORK

VyC is grateful to have been part of such an important Project. We know that Promotoras are natural “boundary spanners, experts in the field.” This Project complemented the natural skills and abilities of Promotoras and their enthusiasm and excitement for the new information and skills, was exceeded only by their appreciation for new techniques that are helping them to navigate family relations. Their humility is heartfelt and they want to continue. This Project is a natural vehicle to express their leadership and desire to help their community and affirms the important role of Promotoras in community education and outreach.

The project offered VyC the opportunity to continue to build upon our evaluation knowledge and skills in partnership with professionals of the highest caliber.



## ATTACHMENT 1

# Families Talking Together/Familias Hablando Unidas

The adolescent years are a period of change for your children. They are in the process of leaving childhood to become adults. This can be a difficult process for you and your children.

## *Parents Can Make a Difference*

Parents play a very important role in helping their children/adolescents to stay healthy. Having sex at an early age can result in negative outcomes for the health of your children. We present a few facts in this handout to help you think about your children and sex.

### **ADOLESCENTS ARE SEXUALLY ACTIVE**

- ✓ The majority of parents are not aware that their children are sexually active.
- ✓ Many adolescents begin having sex between 11-14 years of age.
- ✓ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 46% of adolescents in middle schools have had sex.

### **HEALTH RISKS FROM HAVING SEX AT AN EARLY AGE**

#### **Unintended pregnancies**

- ✓ Approximately 50% of minority youth report having had an unintended pregnancy before the age of 20. That is twice the national average.
- ✓ Many unintended pregnancies in adolescents result in births; this creates financial and social difficulties for families.

#### **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS**

- ✓ Almost half of all STIs occur among youth between 15-24 years of age.
- ✓ African-Americans and Latinos make up the majority of HIV/AIDS cases.

#### **School Drop-Outs**

- ✓ Paternity among adolescents is the main cause for dropping out of school.

## You Can Make a Difference

- ✓ Face your worries
- ✓ Overcome barriers to talking about sex

The great majority of adolescents feel that their parent's approval is important when deciding whether or not to have sex. Parents have expressed the following worries about talking to their adolescents about sex.

*“What I tell them will not make a difference.”*

What YOU say can really make a difference! Keep in mind that parents may have a great impact in their children's and adolescents' behavior and the decisions they make.

*“Talking about sex with my child is going to make him/her want to have sex.”*

Talk to your children about sex. Studies have shown that talking to your children about NOT having sex decreases the possibility that he/she may have sex and increases their ability to make healthy decisions.

*“I feel ashamed when talking about that and do not know what to say.”*

Practice by talking. Many parents are ashamed or nervous when talking about sex, this is normal. Try to practice your role with a friend to feel more comfortable. (Revise these points in Families Talking Together)

*“I had sex when I was an adolescent and I don't know how to talk about that with my son/daughter.”*

Be sincere. If you had sex in your adolescence, do not be afraid to admit it but make sure to tell your son/daughter why that is was a mistake.

*“My son/daughter gets enough information from their friends in school. He/she does not need to hear it from me. My child tells me that he/she knows everything.”*

Parents need to talk. Studies show that children do not receive enough information in school about how not to have sex. Many of your adolescents' friends may have incorrect information regarding sex and the adolescents that claim to know do not really know enough. DO NOT let this keep you from talking!



## How Can Parents Make A Difference?

- ✓ Establish clear rules and expectations about not having sexual activity.
- ✓ Know where your son/daughter is, with whom, and what they are doing.
- ✓ Discourage relationships with older adolescents.
- ✓ Encourage friendships instead of formal relationships

### COMMUNICATION: “TALKING THE TALK”

- ✓ Choose a moment when there are no other activities and you and your son/daughter is not thinking about doing something else.
- ✓ Remind your adolescent of an event.  
“Sarah, do you remember that program we saw on TV where the girl decided to have sex with her boyfriend? It has gotten me thinking and I would like to talk to you about that.”
- ✓ Ask your son/daughter for advice. “Juan, I have a friend who is troubled because she found out that her daughter is having sex. She asked me for advice and I wanted to know what you think and what you think I should tell her.”

### ADVICE FOR DISCIPLINING

- ✓ First, take it easy: Do not discipline when you are annoyed.
- ✓ Reprimand in private: It is humiliating for adolescents to be reprimanded in front of others; when this happens, they become resentful and get angry at you.
- ✓ Express your reasons: Make sure that your son/daughter understands why they are being punished.
- ✓ Make sure the punishment fits the “crime.”
- ✓ Follow-through: Do not make threats you are not going to carry out. Follow through and be flexible and just.

### QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS

- ✓ Respect for one another
- ✓ Consideration for each other’s feelings
- ✓ Trust between one another
- ✓ Caring for each other’s well-being
- ✓ Understanding who each person is, what they want and their likes and dislikes

Suggestions for a good relationship:

- ✓ Keep in contact. Get close to your son/daughter on a regular basis, even when things aren’t going well.
- ✓ Spend time together. Even if it is just a walk together. Your son/daughter will realize that you are making time to be with them.
- ✓ Be attentive. Remind them of special days. It does not have to be with a present; just let them know that you remembered.
- ✓ Recognize their special efforts. Compliment your son/daughter.
- ✓ Tell them they matter to you: Make this a habit!
- ✓ Serve as support. When your son/daughter has had a bad day, offer a shoulder to lean upon.

## When Your Adolescent Wants to Have a Sexual Relationship, What Do You Say?

How would you respond? After each adolescent described below, we give an example of a response you could use. Some of these responses may not be acceptable to you, or perhaps you would use other words. That's fine, these responses will help you think about what you could say and how you can respond in your own words.

### ADOLESCENT REASON:

*"I am mature enough for a sexual relationship."*

The teen years are a time when your child feels a need to assert his/her independence. Your teen may think that by having sex, he/she will feel or seem more grown-up.

### PARENT APPROACH:

"If you are mature enough to have sex, are you also mature enough to be a parent? It is important for you to think about what the consequences would be on our entire family if you began having a sexual relationship. If you really think about it, I think you would agree that you are not ready for a pregnancy, either emotionally or financially. Our family would really struggle if you made that kind of decision. There is no way to be completely certain that you will not get (get someone) pregnant should you decide to have sex. I think that having sex now would be a mistake."

### ADOLESCENT REASON:

*"I'm curious. I just want to find out what it's like."*

Teens are naturally curious. And, after seeing so many sexual images in the media and hearing about sex from friends, it's understandable that teens might want to try it out for themselves.

### PARENT APPROACH:

"Your curiosity is natural. But just as I would warn you against trying any other dangerous activity just out of curiosity, I must caution you against having sex, too. There are too many risks involved and too many bad consequences for you to try it out just to satisfy your curiosity. I strongly feel that you should not have sex now."





## ADOLESCENT REASON:

*“If I don’t have sex with him/her, I’ll lose him/her.”*

It may be difficult to remember what it was like to be a teen and to be concerned about being loved and accepted. Some teens believe that having sex is one way to keep a partner who otherwise might lose interest. Girls sometimes date older guys, which may make girls feel as if they need to have sex in order to keep their boyfriends interested. Although it happens less often, boys sometimes date older girls with similar problems.

## PARENT APPROACH:

“I know that your relationship is important to you. But good relationships are built on trust and respect. Anyone who likes you just because you are willing to have sex is not worth being with. If you focus on being yourself and refuse to give in to pressures like this, I’m sure you will find someone who values you for the special person you are.”

## ADOLESCENT REASON:

*“I want to have a baby.”*

Some teens say they want to become pregnant (or get someone pregnant) and begin a family even while they are still in school. Some see parenthood as a way to be recognized as an adult. Others may think that having a baby would bring them a sense of accomplishment or give them someone to love them. Latinos highly value children and motherhood and teens may think that having a child is a way of being recognized as a woman or a man. Also, some Latino girls and boys do not think they will be successful in school. They may feel that having children is a way to have a meaningful life rather than continuing with their education.

## PARENT APPROACH:

“Think about how difficult your life would be right now if you had (or fathered) a child. Talk with a teenage mom or dad and ask them what it’s like, how they manage to have enough money, how hard it is to stay in school, and how the child affects their relationship with each other. Then you’ll see the whole picture. From the outside, it may look easy to have a family, but the responsibilities are huge. The chances that teen parents will make it financially are small. Please promise you’ll wait until much later to start a family. I think it would be a serious mistake. You will have plenty of time and opportunity to have children further down the road. We would like to see you continue with your education.”

## Sexual Risks

When you talk to your adolescent about sexual topics, you will need to be well informed.

### **A girl can get pregnant the first time she has a sexual encounter.**

Some teens believe that they can't get pregnant the first time they have sex. They are wrong. A girl can get pregnant the very first time she has sex. It is true that many girls do not ovulate when they first start having a period. But it does happen for some. So it is better to assume that once a girl has had her first period, she can get pregnant anytime after that.

### **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).**

There are about 25 different sexually transmitted infections that infect millions of people. Every day, thousands of adolescents become infected. The best known is HIV. Others include the hepatitis B virus, the herpes virus and the human papillomavirus (HPV). Syphilis and certain forms of gonorrhea also are increasing. Some sexually transmitted infections are incurable.

### **Girls and STIs: Special risks.**

Sexually active girls are at high risk for pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which is often caused by a sexually transmitted infection called chlamydia. The rate of chlamydia among teens is very high. In general, women suffer more negative consequences from sexually transmitted infections than men do. These infections can make a woman infertile and cause lifelong pelvic pain and even cancer.

### **HIV and AIDS.**

The best-known sexually transmitted infection is AIDS. AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). When the virus is first present in the body the infected individual shows no symptoms. But over a period of time, the person starts to develop the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). The interval between contracting HIV and the onset of AIDS can be long, as many as 10 years or more. There are drugs that help people with HIV feel better and live longer, but there is no cure for AIDS.

### **WAYS FOR YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER TO SAY NO TO HAVING SEX**

*"That's not for me."*

*"We are too young  
to have that  
responsibility."*

*"I have goals for  
my future that are  
more important  
than having sex  
at this time."*

*"I don't feel like  
doing it."*

*"Why do you keep  
insisting if I already  
said no?"*

*"My mother would  
really be angry."*

*"I could get sick  
or get pregnant."*

*"It is against  
my religion."*

**"NO!"**



## *A Note Regarding the Meaning of “L-O-V-E”*

Many teens justify sex by saying they are in love. But teens sometimes confuse love with physical attraction. Parents should not deny that love often expresses itself in touching. But parents also need to help their teens understand that love involves long-term commitment. Love is like a deep friendship that, over time, grows into a strong devotion to the other’s happiness. It involves a great deal of knowledge about the other person and that person is respected and cherished.

### **KEEP TALKING!**

Although your son/daughter may be an adolescent, he/she depends on your wisdom and support to help him/her make good decisions in life.

Latino adolescents say that they trust the advice and guidance of their parents above all others. Therefore, take advantage of this by keeping your adolescent well-informed and aware so he or she can make the most healthful decisions. You are not doing your adolescent any favors by not talking to them about topics regarding sex and you can cause them not to be prepared or aware of the possible consequences. Show them your love and interest, keep in touch and continue talking to them about the different ways they can keep themselves safe and healthy. By breaking the silence and taboos that sexual topics carry, you can become a great role model for your adolescent and also for other parents who also may have problems having these conversations. You can help your adolescent assume responsibility for controlling their reproductive options and sexual relationships.

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