



Journal of Marriage and Family

Child Support Enforcement Reduces Sexual Activity in Teen Males

Male Adolescents Aware of the Costs, Obligations of Fatherhood Engage in More Responsible Sexual Behavior

Camden, N.J. – July 12, 2007 -A new study in *Journal of Marriage and Family* indicates that male adolescents educated about the legal and financial obligations of parenthood are likely to reduce their sexual activity, and to use birth control when sexually active.

The study focused on non-white teenagers, and teenagers from low-income neighborhoods, as these populations are most at risk of teenage pregnancy. Young men in both groups exhibited fewer sexual partners, lower frequency of sexual activity and higher rates of contraceptive use after child support education.

“Most previous studies on adolescent sexual activity and pregnancy have focused on women’s characteristics, despite the fact that decisions about heterosexual intercourse and contraception usually involve the man as well,” say study authors Chien-Chung Huang and Wen-jui Han. “The findings of this paper indicate that strengthening child support enforcement is associated with reductions in male adolescents’ sexual activity, suggesting that the male role should be considered in policy and program intervention on adolescent sexual activity and pregnancy.”

The authors also emphasize the importance of law enforcement in the effectiveness of such a program. “For teens to be impressed with the gravity of the legal and economic consequences of fatherhood, they must see that the legal system is strongly enforcing existing child support laws,” say the authors. “Enforcing measures such as universal wage withholding, spending sufficient amounts of money on establishing paternity and locating non-resident fathers, and improving the degree of collecting child support payment from non-resident fathers would all strengthen the message of responsibility.”

This study is published in the August issue of *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Media wishing to receive a PDF of this article please contact

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