

Iowa's Youth Focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health

Across the United States, young people are at risk for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV. Iowa's teen pregnancy and HIV rates are lower than the national average. However, Iowa's minority youth are at disproportionate risk for negative sexual health outcomes, and there are alarming trends in HIV, STI, and teen pregnancy rates among young people of color. Comprehensive sexuality education and access to contraception are more important than ever to the health of Iowa's youth.

Iowa's Youth Population: Growing More Diverse

- Over 226,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 19 live in Iowa.
- Almost a quarter of Iowa's population is under age 18.¹
- The great majority of Iowa's population is white, with Hispanics/Latinos making up four percent, African Americans making up three percent, Asian/Pacific Islanders making up 1.6 percent, and American Indians/Native Alaskans making up less than one percent.¹
- However, Iowa's Hispanic/Latino population is growing quickly and has tripled in size since 1990.¹

Iowa's Minority Youth Suffer Increasing Rates of Teen Pregnancy

- Iowa's teen pregnancy rate is 55 pregnancies per 1000 young women ages 15-19, lower than the national rate of 84 pregnancies per thousand.²
- Between 1992 and 2000, the teen pregnancy rate in Iowa dropped by 18 percent, less than the nationwide drop of 24 percent.²
- Between 1991 and 2005 the teen birth rate dropped by 23 percent, less than the nationwide drop of 34 percent.²
- For Hispanics and Asians, the teen birth rate **rose significantly** between 1991 and 2005 – by 37 percent for Hispanics and 39 percent for Asians, compared to an overall drop for both groups nationwide.²
- Although they make up less than four percent of the population, fourteen percent of teen births were to Hispanics.²

HIV Disproportionately Affects Iowa's Minorities and Is Becoming a Growing Problem among Young People

- Forty-five of every 100,000 people in Iowa are living with HIV.³
- African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos are at highest risk for HIV in Iowa – in 2005 there were 13 times as many new HIV cases among African Americans as among whites, and twice as many new cases among Hispanics/Latinos as among whites.³
- Youth ages 18-24 make up eighteen percent of those living with HIV in Iowa.
- While Iowa experiences relatively low HIV rates in comparison to the national rate, in 2005 **there was a significant rise in diagnoses among youth ages 15-24**, which the Iowa Department of Public Health characterized as an “alarming situation.”³

Iowa's Youth, Especially Young Women, Are at Risk for STIs

- Youth ages 15-19 experienced **more than one-third** of the total number of chlamydia cases in Iowa in 2005.⁴
- Youth ages 15-19 experienced **25 percent** of the total number of gonorrhea cases in Iowa in 2005.⁵
- In this age range, young women were most at risk for STIs, experiencing 84 percent of chlamydia infections and 71 percent of gonorrhea infections.^{4,5}

Iowa's Sexuality Education Policies Are Among the Best in the Nation

- Iowa law mandates science-based, comprehensive sexuality education for all students enrolled in a school.⁶
- In February 2008, Governor Chet Culver announced he would reject federal funding for the state's abstinence-only education program provided under Title V of the Social Security Act, starting in Fiscal Year 2009.⁷
- Iowa did not receive Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) funding in Fiscal Year 2006, but in Fiscal Year 2007, received 1.2 million in CBAE funds.^{6,8}
- Iowa's students are supposed to begin learning about STIs, including HIV, in grade seven.⁶ Students are required to take one year of health education in high school, which must include information on the prevention and control of STIs, including HIV.⁶

Iowa is Succeeding in Some Areas, But Needs Improvement In Others

- According to the Guttmacher Institute, almost 50,000 Iowan young women ages 13-19 need publicly funded contraceptive supplies and services.⁹
- Yet, while Iowa's laws are supportive of sexual health services, the state ranked 48 out of 50 for lack of service availability.⁹
- In 2007, 66 percent of Iowa youth reported using a condom at last intercourse, up from 48 percent in 1997 – a much higher increase over a decade than the nation's as a whole, from 56.8 in 1997 to 61.5 in 2007.⁸
- Due to policies which discriminate against or neglect gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth, Iowa received a grade of F from the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network in protecting the GLBTQ youth safety.¹⁰

Conclusion

While Iowa's HIV and teen pregnancy rates are lower than the national average, youth of color are at disproportionate risk for negative sexual health outcomes. Research shows that comprehensive sexuality education and access to contraceptive services can help young people protect their health and well-being.¹¹ Further, there are a number of culturally relevant science-based programs that can successfully assist youth of color to reduce sexual risk taking.¹²

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