Latinas Have Higher Rates of Teen Pregnancy

May 2, 2011

Teen pregnancy may be hitting all-time lows—but it remains highest among Latinas and blacks, according to a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and reported by *The Orlando Sentinel*.

In 2009, teen pregnancy rates in the United States fell to its lowest point, part of a 37 percent decline during the past two decades. The report covered 1991 to 2009 and found that more than 400,000 teen girls gave birth in the United States each year. Although the teen pregnancy rate has declined, the U.S. rate is still nine times higher than other developed nations.

Within the United States, Latina and African-American teen girls are two to three times more likely to give birth than white teens and are more likely to report higher rates of sex than their counterparts. For example, more than 50 percent of Latino teen boys report having sex compared with 40 percent of white teen boys. And almost 60 percent of African-American teen girls say they've engaged in sexual intercourse compared with 45 percent of white girls.

"Though we have made progress in reducing teen pregnancy over the past 20 years, still far too many teens are having babies," said Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH, director of the CDC. "Preventing teen pregnancy can protect the health and quality of life for teenagers, their children and their families throughout the United States."

The CDC points out that the effects of teen pregnancies seep into the emotional, physical and financial realms: about half of teen mothers do not get a high school diploma before the age of 22, children of teen parents are more likely to fall behind in school or become teen parents themselves, and teen pregnancies cost U.S. taxpayers an estimated $9 billion each year.

According to the report, in order to make better choices, teens need sex education, chances to discuss sex with their parents, and access to affordable and effective birth control. The CDC recommends using two forms of birth control—condoms and birth control pills, hormone shots or IUDs—as the best way to prevent teen pregnancy.

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