Educating Public Leaders on Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Building Relationships in the Community to Benefit Young People

Casey R. Fields, MSW, MPA
Erin E. Johnson, MPH, CHES
Acknowledgements

The South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy gratefully acknowledges the time, effort and commitment required to complete this “Educating Public Leaders on Teen Pregnancy Prevention” toolkit. A very special thanks to authors Casey R. Fields, MSW, MPA of the SC Municipal Association and Erin E. Johnson, MPH, CHES of the SC Campaign for the insight and expertise they offered to the development, writing and oversight of the project from beginning to end to ensure it met the SC Campaign’s high standard of quality.

Numerous persons provided feedback and comment on various iterations of the document, but those who went above and beyond deserve additional recognition including Caroline Humphries (Kershaw County Teen Health Promotion Coalition; Kershaw, SC), Miranda Lambert (The Children’s Council; Lancaster, SC) and SC Campaign staff Forrest Alton, Gwen Baker, Angie Hinzey, Jen Kahn and Polly Edwards-Padgett. Additionally, a special thanks to Cayci Banks who contributed significant time and effort to this project specifically on the design of both the print and online versions.

Finally, it should be noted that this project was supported, in part, by Cooperative Agreement Number DP424971-04 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Copyright Pending. All rights reserved.

**ABOUT THE SC CAMPAIGN**

**MISSION**
To prevent adolescent pregnancy in South Carolina through education, technical assistance, public awareness, advocacy and research.

**BELIEFS**
- We believe the prevention of adolescent pregnancies is in the best interest of adolescents, their families and society.
- We believe parents should be the primary sex educators of their children.
- We believe that the most effective health and sexuality education is abstinence-first, age-appropriate and comprehensive.
- We believe the use of research proven curricula and programs will reduce adolescent pregnancy.
- We believe that communities play a key role in reducing adolescent pregnancy.
- We believe that youth should be recognized as assets and involved as equal partners in all aspects of prevention activities in their communities.
- We believe the prevention of adolescent pregnancies will improve the health and economic prosperity of South Carolina.

**PROMISES**
**COMMUNICATION:** We vow to communicate with and listen to parents, providers, key leaders and community members throughout South Carolina to gain an increased understanding of local needs and assets.
**CUSTOMIZATION:** We promise to customize approaches that combine evidence-based approaches with the unique fabric of every community we serve.
**CAPACITY BUILDING:** We will strive to increase the capacity of community members (parents, youth serving organizations, school staff, faith leaders and youth) to address the complex issue of teen pregnancy.
**COMMITMENT:** The Campaign is committed and fully invested in prevention for the long term.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- SC Campaign Board of Directors ................................................................. 5
- Importance of Educating Public Leaders ................................................. 6
- Five Easy Steps to Building Local Support ............................................... 7
- Developing a Key Leader List ...................................................................... 7
- Contacting Key Leaders ............................................................................ 8
- Top 25 Ways to be a Public Educator ....................................................... 10
- Get Started Now! .......................................................................................... 12
- Keep in Touch with the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy ........ 13
- How Do I? ..................................................................................................... 14
- What Can Key Leaders Do for You? .......................................................... 18
Elizabeth Barry  
Health Educator Consultant  
Healthier Generation  
Columbia, SC

Susan A. Brill  
Richland County Government  
Columbia, SC

Carol E. Burdette, vice-chair  
President  
United Way of Anderson County  
Anderson, SC

Judy Davis, J.D.  
Executive Vice President  
BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC

Dr. Lilly Filler  
Physician  
Palmetto Richland Memorial Hospital  
Columbia, SC

Rev. Don Flowers, chair  
Reverend  
Providence Baptist Church  
Charleston, SC

Lynne B. Ford, secretary  
Director of Resource Development  
United Way of Georgetown  
Pawley’s Island, SC

Marcous D. Gardner  
CEO  
Medical Ramp Systems  
Columbia, SC

Rozalynn Goodwin  
Director of Policy Research  
SC Hospital Association  
Columbia, SC

Joan Johnakin  
Retired  
Department of Social Services  
Bennetsville, SC

Dr. Janice Key  
Director of Adolescent Medicine  
MUSC  
Charleston, SC

Lori Lyles  
Physician  
Sullivan’s Island, SC

Senator Gerald Malloy  
South Carolina State Senator  
Hartsville, SC

Wendy Nance  
Director  
USC Development of Corporations and Foundations  
Columbia, SC

Erika Grace Powell  
Community Volunteer, Miss SC 2005  
Easley, SC

Martha Scott Smith  
State Director/Public Affairs  
AT&T South Carolina  
Columbia, SC

Jessalyn Wynn Story  
Director of Community Partnerships  
Wofford College  
Spartanburg, SC

Dr. Michael Stout, treasurer  
CEO  
Doctor’s Care  
Columbia, SC

Molly Talbot-Metz  
Director of Programs  
Mary Black Foundation  
Spartanburg, SC

Dr. Grant Warren  
Physician, OB/GYN  
Spartanburg, SC
WHY is it important to educate public leaders about teen pregnancy prevention? As one of the most critical issues of this era, teen pregnancy affects everyone at all levels of society. Public leaders, community activists, health care professionals and elected officials make decisions everyday that affect young people across the state. Access to medically-accurate information and services that are based on research and guided by science is critical to decreasing the number of teen pregnancies in South Carolina.

While implementing programs that have a direct impact on young people is and should be the primary focus of service providers and prevention professionals, educating public leaders and elected officials about the benefits of preventing teen pregnancy is just as critical. Oftentimes, however, many of us are left with questions about how exactly to do the latter. While it is a universal belief that we should all play a role in the education of public leaders, too often individuals are left with questions about what to do. In an effort to outline how community-based professionals can play a role in keeping local and statewide elected leaders informed about the importance of investing in prevention efforts, the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is providing this step-by-step guide to help service providers (1) become and establish a network of strong advocates at the local level and, (2) mobilize those advocates to effectively communicate with local and state elected leaders.

WHERE do I start? Educating public leaders can be a daunting and intimidating task; nevertheless, it is achievable if you are prepared. Keep in mind that your program, clearly documented successes and the youth affected by your efforts are your best resources.
5

EASY STEPS TO BUILD LOCAL SUPPORT

1. GATHER NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF ALL KEY LEADERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Keep in mind, this does not happen overnight. Building your database and gathering correct names, current addresses and e-mail addresses is an ongoing process that needs constant attention and work.

**TIP – Ask each of the members on your Board of Directors to submit names of five people who are key leaders in the community and describe their relationship with each.**

Identify all of the key players and leaders in your community. It is important that this list is comprehensive and exhaustive. Have you considered engaging your local faith leaders, business owners, teachers, nonprofit directors, high school student body presidents and nurses?

**Who should be on my Key Leader list?**

Be sure to send an information packet about teen pregnancy prevention and your program to:

- Your mayor
- Your town or county council members
- Your city council members
- Your local legislative delegation
- Your local media (television, radio and newspaper)
- Your local churches/faith leaders
- Local schools and education leaders/teachers
- Other community leaders (ex. local business owners, arts councils and bankers)
- Non-profit directors
- Donors/Funders (current and potential)
- Student leaders (student body presidents)
- Directors/Leaders of other youth groups
- Local health care providers (ex. physicians, OB/GYNs, nurse practitioners and school nurses)

2. SEND INITIAL HANDWRITTEN NOTES TO ALL OF THE KEY LEADERS ON YOUR LIST BY INTRODUCING THEM TO YOU, YOUR PROGRAM AND THE ISSUE.

Do not ask for anything initially. You want to introduce the key leaders in your community to this issue slowly and deliberately. Do not assume that anyone knows exactly what you do and how important your work is. Equally as important, do not assume that anyone is for or against you until they tell you. Be mindful that mass mailing is not appropriate for this type of key leader contact.
What do I need to send key leaders?

It is important to incorporate multiple levels of sustainability into your communication with key leaders.

1. Issue sustainability: teen pregnancy is an issue that deserves their attention.
2. Organization/Program sustainability: your organization is positioned and ready to address teen pregnancy prevention in your community through the implementation of research proven interventions.

Other materials you can send with or as a follow-up to your handwritten note include:

- Copies of a current newsletter or annual report
- Positive newspaper articles about your program and teen pregnancy prevention (editorials in major newspapers, opinion columns from other business and community leaders, and articles)
- County Epidemiological profiles (visit www.teenpregnancysc.org for a copy)
- SC Campaign fact sheets or fact sheets specific to your programs and community that you have developed
- Awards that your program has received (mini-grant from SC Campaign, other grants, community certificates, staff admitted to the APP Certificate Program, etc.)
- Evaluation summaries from a successful youth program
- List of your current programs (calendar of events) including a short description and how many youth you are serving
- Needs and resource assessments you have formally conducted within the last five years
- Success stories from youth and parents

Keep in mind that you do not have to send all of these materials at once. Set up a monthly mailing schedule to your key leaders so they get important newspaper articles, annual reports and updated fact sheets on a regular basis. But, make sure to keep it simple! Don’t overwhelm your key leaders with facts, paper, e-mails, etc.

Add those key community leaders to your mailing and e-mailing list.

As mentioned above, do not inundate key leaders with e-mails. You want them to be included and informed about what you are doing, but you do not want them to feel overwhelmed and pressured. This is the best way to scare them away.
3. **REMEMBER THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH OR HOW LITTLE THE COMMUNITY LEADER DOES FOR YOU, ALWAYS EXPRESS YOUR GRATITUDE IN PERSON WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND WITH TIMELY, HANDWRITTEN THANK YOU NOTES.**

*TIP - Include key leaders on your mailing list for monthly newsletters and annual reports.*

4. **INVITE KEY LEADERS TO YOUR EVENTS.**

   Save the date cards and early invitations **coupled with** a follow-up phone call will get better participation than a last minute invitation. This group of leaders is inundated with requests to attend events. The earlier you are on their calendar the better. Engage key leaders in events centered around young people and their parents.

   *TIP - Ask key leaders to speak at an event or honor them with an award in the community they serve.*

   Consider these key leader friendly events:
   - Ribbon-cuttings
   - Graduation ceremonies for your program
   - Open houses
   - Church services
   - SC Campaign Road Show events
   - Community Forums

5. **OFFER KEY LEADERS OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED AND BECOME INVESTED.**

   Remember that investments are not financial at this point. Community leaders invest first through participation, information and education. You are still building relationships and educating key leaders about your program.

   *TIP – Building an ongoing relationship before you ask for something is critical.*

   Have you considered inviting key leaders to tour your facilities, work with you on community service projects or organize meet-and-greets? Have you considered attending community events yourself? Partnering with other community organizations to accomplish positive goals in your community is critical in developing key leaders.
ways to be a public educator for teen pregnancy prevention

The goal is to establish yourself as the go-to person in your community on teen pregnancy prevention and the use of research-proven approaches. To that end, be proactive and aggressive about your communication strategies. The tips below will help you on your way. Not every strategy is appropriate for every community, but we encourage you to use the ones that work for you.

1. Write letters to key business leaders in the community introducing them to your program and its purpose.
2. Keep current advocates and community leaders informed year round.
3. Have your talking points ready and information always available – even in non-traditional locations like at the grocery store, at church, at school and at work.
4. Reach out to parents and educate them on the importance of talking to their kids.

**TIP:** Consider creative ways to reach parents such as inserting parent brochures into local newspapers.

5. Speak to your local church group about preventing teen pregnancy. Remember, Carol Singletary (csingletary@teenpregnancysc.org), Outreach Coordinator at the SC Campaign, can help you work with your local faith leaders.
6. Send a staff member from your organization to an advocacy training sponsored by the SC Campaign or other training entity.
7. Commit to write one handwritten note a week to a new community leader and policymaker.

**TIP:** Have your youth write handwritten notes about your program and its success!

8. Make a short presentation at your local city council or county council meeting about your program (call your city or town clerk to request five minutes on the agenda).

**TIP:** Consider having a young person, who is trained and comfortable with the topic, present with you.

9. Implement a science-based program with fidelity and then, tell others about your success.
10. Co-host a Business After Hours event with your local Chamber of Commerce.
11. Host a media breakfast and briefing to update local reporters on the issue of teen pregnancy prevention.

**TIP - Consider working with other teen pregnancy prevention or HIV/STD agencies in the community to build partnerships and off-set costs or meet one-on-one with reporters to update them on your issue.**

12. Ask a volunteer board member to write a letter to the editor to your local newspaper.

13. Share evaluations and statistics on your science-based programs with your legislative delegation. Contact Shannon Flynn, sflynn@teenpregnancysc.org, for help with your evaluation results.

14. Sign up for a booth or table at a local health fair.

15. Host a back-to-school informational meeting for parents. Remember, some of your most effective key leaders are also parents!

16. Ask the SC Campaign to write an opinion column for your board chair to submit to your local newspaper. Use materials on the Advocates for Youth (www.advocatesforyouth.org) and National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (www.thenationalcampaign.org) Web sites.

17. Attend a Regional Roundtable to get the latest information available and network with colleagues.

18. Develop a monthly e-newsletter to keep community members involved and informed—affordable Web site services include Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) and Graphic Mail (www.graphicmail.com).

19. Host a Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month event in May in partnership with SC Campaign activities.

20. Host a Let’s Talk Month event in October.

21. Start a Facebook (www.facebook.com) and/or MySpace (www.myspace.com) page for your program. Both are free social marketing Web sites and a great way to reach young people directly!

**TIP – Capitalize on free or cost-effective marketing opportunities.**

22. Start a blog for your program. A blog is a Web site that includes regular commentary or calendar of events from an individual or organization. Visit www.blogger.com/start for more information on starting your free blog.

**TIP – Key is to update regularly with time-sensitive information.**

23. Encourage youth in your community to participate in the SC Campaign’s Teen Expressions contest and then share copies of the publication with local teachers, school administrators and legislators.

24. Give awards, certificates or plaques to local leaders who have been advocates for teen pregnancy prevention.

**TIP – You do not have to spend a lot of money on awards. People appreciate simple recognition.**

25. Involve your Board of Directors as volunteers; they are more effective than paid staff and may have unique access to key leaders.
Get Started Now!

Now that you have some concrete ideas, it’s time to take action! Getting the word out isn’t as hard as you think. Just doing some simple things can greatly increase the outreach impact you have with key leaders in your community.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

TODAY........................................................................... put together 10 packets of information on your program.
THIS WEEK..............................................................................send a handwritten note to a local business leader.
THIS MONTH................................................collect 10 names of community leaders from your board members.
THIS QUARTER.......................................................................................contact the mayor of your city or town.
THIS YEAR.................build relationships with local reporters and get a positive article printed in the newspaper.

If you have already established relationships with local leaders and want to keep them engaged and invested in your program, the following check list will keep you on task:

✓ Keep them informed with newsletters and e-mails.
✓ Send them evaluation summaries at the end of programs and grant awards.
✓ Reach them with letters of success written by youth/parents who have participated in your programs.
✓ Invite them to attend board meetings and speak to your board.
✓ Ask them to write or co-author opinion columns for your local daily newspaper.
✓ Ask them to make presentations to your local city or county council.
✓ Encourage them to speak on behalf of your program on local radio programs.
✓ Gather feedback from them on ways to improve your program and reach more youth in the community.
✓ ALWAYS say thank you and recognize their efforts!

TIP: Establish yourself as the best source of honest and accurate science-based information on teen pregnancy prevention. You want legislators, mayors, council members and newspaper reporters to contact YOU FIRST with a question or a comment on this issue.

“Remember that the work of educating key leaders is never done. Even if you have reached out to this group before, now is a great time to do it again.”

Educating Public Leaders Toolkit 12
Keep in Touch with the SC Campaign!

The SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy offers many different ways to stay informed on the latest information related to teen pregnancy prevention.

- Friday Broadcast
- Press Releases
- Regional Roundtables
- Summer Institute
- Curriculum Trainings
- You Tube Channel
- E-mail Updates
- Facebook Cause
- My Space Page
- Fact Sheets
- Reports and Research
- Road Shows
- Technical Assistance Calls and Visits
- Teen Expressions Contest
- Forrest’s Blog on the Campaign’s Website

Also, visit www.teenpregnancysc.org to download materials from the SC Campaign’s new “What Can YOU Do” series, which provides detailed information on how you and other members of your community can get involved in teen pregnancy prevention efforts.
1. **Write a Short Handwritten Note to a Local Leader.**

This note will establish your “first impression” with this key leader. A handwritten note should:

1. Be on your program or personal stationary.
2. Be written in legible handwriting with black or blue ink.
3. Include an introductory sentence (for example, my name is and this is what I do).
4. Include a sentence or two about your program and who you serve (teens, their parents, teachers, etc.).
5. Include an informal invitation to your next board meeting to find out more information.
6. Thank them for their leadership in your community.
7. End with your signature.
8. Be written only on one side of the notecard.
9. Include your business card in the envelope.

*Note: Some of the content in the letter below may help you craft a handwritten note.*

2. **Write a Monthly Letter to a Local Leader.**

Use the template below to start your letter to local key leaders to update them on your program each month. Do not copy this letter verbatim and do not send form letters that include an electronic signature. Include the same information, but make each letter personal and unique. Tailor letters to key leaders’ profession and background.

Mr. John Doe  
President, Local Bank of South Carolina  
Post Office Box 111  
Anytown, South Carolina 29202

Dear Mr. Doe:

Did you know that every 50 minutes a SC teen gets pregnant? This costs our state…. [Include more local statistics and research on teen pregnancy].

The Anytown Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program is here to decrease the numbers of teen pregnancies and give young people a chance for a future. [Include brief information on your program and what you do.]

Enclosed is the latest copy of *Teen Expressions*, a publication that showcases the thoughts and opinions of teens on love, sex and peer pressure. [Use this part to include new statistics, research, or invite them to an event.]

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith  
Director, Anytown Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program
3. **MAKE A PRESENTATION TO MY LOCAL CITY COUNCIL.**

If you are interested in increasing awareness of teen pregnancy prevention among local elected leaders, make a short presentation to your city or town council members.

- Call the town or city clerk by looking up your hometown’s contact information on the Municipal Association of SC Web site at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).
- Ask the clerk when the next meeting is and ask for five minutes on the agenda to make a presentation on your local program. You might consider contacting a member of city council to ask for time on the agenda on your behalf; in fact, contacting a council member is a great way for one of your board members to get more involved.
- Schedule your presentation around key times such as when new data, statistics or research is published and/or during teen pregnancy prevention month (May).
- Use your local epi profile as a one page handout. You can find your counties epi profile at [www.teenpregnancysc.org](http://www.teenpregnancysc.org).

**TIP: Invite all of your council members to a Road Show event.**

- The same strategy applies for presentations to county councils.
- Ask your city or town council to pass a proclamation during key national observances like National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month (May) and Let’s Talk Month (October). Contact Cayci Banks, Director of Communications at the SC Campaign, for a sample proclamation.

4. **SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH A LOCAL LEGISLATOR.**

- Before you schedule the meeting, ask your board chairman to accompany you. If your chair is unavailable, ask another board member to attend. Also, consider calling on the SC Campaign and have a member of the staff join you at the meeting.
- Look up the legislator’s contact information on [www.scstatehouse.net](http://www.scstatehouse.net).
- Call your legislator’s office in Columbia.
  - If the call is being made from June until December, ask the administrative assistant if your legislator visits his Columbia office regularly. If not, ask for his home district phone number (probably a business number) to schedule the meeting. If so, ask the administrative assistant to schedule a meeting for you in Columbia.
  - If you call from January through early June, you can schedule the meeting in your legislator’s State House office.
Very Important: Be patient, be flexible and arrive early. Come prepared with talking points, a packet of information and a board member who lives in your legislator’s district. Contact Cayci Banks (cbanks@teenpregnancysc.org) at the SC Campaign office for assistance preparing for a meeting with your Legislative Delegation.

5. **Use a Press Release to Generate Media Attention.**

Press releases alert the media to important information about your program, current statistics, research and data and can lead to media appearances for your organization.

- Before sending a release, coordinate your efforts with the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Oftentimes a press release has already been generated on a topic of interest to your community and local media.
- When sending your own release, be sure to include your name, office and cell phone number and e-mail address. You never know when a reporter will call you and need information for a story; usually this occurs on a short deadline.
- Establish a good relationship with reporters by being available, accurate and honest.
- The release should be well-written, one page in length and include the “who, what, when, where and why” of your story.
- Tie your local information to a national trend or story. This coordination will increase your chances of getting something in print or covered by a television or radio station.
- Ask someone in your office or at the Campaign office to proofread your press release.
- E-mail a PDF of your release to your local newspaper editors, health reporters, television station newsrooms and news radio stations.

Remember you have to sell yourself! Even if your program is wonderful, you still have to prove that to the media who is interested in covering current and attention-grabbing stories.

**TIP:** If you don’t get a response the first couple of times you e-mail a press release to a reporter, don’t give up. Contact that reporter and ask how you can improve your releases for future coverage.
6. **Ask my board of directors to gather names of community leaders.**

At your next Board of Directors’ meeting, provide your members with five index cards. Ask each Board member to write down five names of people who they think would be interested in getting more involved and/or who would like more information on your program. Be sure to ask for current contact information including mailing address, e-mail address and cell phone number. Thank them profusely!

Some Board members will be leery about what you will do with the list of names. Providing reassurance that outreach to key leaders is an important part of your organization’s strategy will help them. Do not abuse the privilege of receiving this list of names from your Board – use it only for the intended purpose!

💡 Remember: An organization’s Board of Directors has specific tasks as the governing entity. These tasks include fundraising for the organization, speaking on behalf of the organization and advocating for the mission and purpose of the organization. Do not hesitate to ask your board for help.

7. **Ask for help.**

AFTER you have established a strong, solid relationship with key leaders, then you can make “the ask” for help on an issue. Remember that relationship-building does not happen overnight.

However, you might already have key leaders in your community who are willing to advocate on your behalf and they do not need any more education. Use these people to help encourage others to become involved.

The “Ask” involves asking your key leaders to call legislators, write letters of support for grant applications and speak to others on your behalf.

You might say, “Hey John, this is Jane from the local teen pregnancy prevention organization. We are applying for a grant from a foundation and need a letter of recommendation from a community leader. Would you be willing to write a letter of support for our organization? Thank you so much for your help.”

*TIP: Be specific with your request, be clear on what you want the leader to do, and make it clear that they can have an impact on the issue.*
WHAT can your key leaders do for you? Advocate on Your Behalf!

Once you have your grassroots network in place—remember, this does not happen overnight or even in one weekend—there are specific times that you need to activate your base of support. During the legislative session, key educational months (May and October), budget decisions and grant awards, your key community leaders can represent your organization with accuracy from a different, valuable viewpoint.

Ask them to advocate on your behalf by:

1. Requesting budget allocations at the local and state level
2. Supporting legislation at the state level
3. Building community awareness
4. Writing editorials
5. Joining your board
6. Making private donations
7. Sponsoring a young person in your program
8. Supporting science-based approaches in your school and community

To download additional copies of this publication and for more information on the SC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, visit www.teenpregnancysc.org.