Healthy Teen Network Launches Center for Evidence & Innovation
Training & Resources Will Fill Vacuum Left by Trump Administration’s Termination of Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services pulled over $210 million in funding for teen pregnancy prevention efforts. Over 80 institutions—including Healthy Teen Network—will be forced to prematurely end critical projects that support healthy sexual and reproductive behaviors among youth. Many hundreds of thousands of young people across the nation will stop receiving the quality sex education they need to thrive.

We’ve made great strides in the past decade and teen births in the U.S. are at an all-time low. A number of factors have contributed to this downward trend, most significantly declines in the number of teens who have ever had sex, and among sexually active teens, increased use of effective contraception. This progress is the result of a commitment to both relying on what we know works—the evidence—as well as using that evidence to support research and development of new solutions—innovation—in the pursuit of continued access to quality sex ed and reproductive health services.

However, despite the downward trend in teen births, the U.S. teen birth rates are still the highest of all industrialized nations, about half of all new cases of STIs each year in the U.S. are in young people, and great disparities persist among racial/ethnic groups in this country. Yet we face a constant onslaught from the current administration, threatening the health and well-being of our nation’s youth. This month’s events underscore the reality that we can no longer rely on public funding to ensure youth-supporting professionals receive the critical training and resources they need to ensure we are using the best evidence and fostering innovation to provide quality sex ed for our nation’s young people.

Why do these supports matter? Research tells us that teachers, social workers, health-care providers, and other professionals who receive such supports are better able to do their jobs. And when professionals are better prepared, we see more positive outcomes for young people.

Thus, Healthy Teen Network announces the launch of the Center for Evidence and Innovation. Building on our existing professional services, the Center will fill the vacuum left in the absence of public funding, providing the necessary trainings and resources to ensure our nation’s young people continue to receive quality sex education and access to services and are empowered to lead healthy sexual and reproductive lives.

Healthy Teen Network President and CEO, Pat Paluzzi, declares, “We are poised to step in and fill this void. The health and well-being of our youth hangs in the balance. Public health issues shouldn’t be political issues.”

The Center will support the use of evidence and foster innovation. We will expand our existing Evidence-Based Resource Center. We already possess a wealth of learning materials and trainings, and we will leverage these to develop more tools and elearning opportunities to be made available for our members.

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Healthy Teen Network envisions a world where all adolescents and young adults lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Founded in 1979, we promote better outcomes for adolescents and young adults by advancing social change, cultivating innovation, and strengthening youth-supporting professionals and organizations. We serve as a leading national membership organization (501c3) for adolescent health professionals and organizations, promoting a unique and holistic perspective—we call it Youth 360°—to improve the health and well-being of young people.