



**EMBARGOED UNTIL  
FEBRUARY 24, 2000, 11:30 AM**

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**DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
Launches Movement to Cut DC's Teen Pregnancy Rate in Half by 2005**

**Public Opinion Research Reveals Stunning Consensus for Action among District Residents**

Washington, DC-----Community leaders including former Howard University President Dr. Joyce Ladner, DC Mayor Anthony Williams, philanthropist Vicki Sant, Roosevelt High School senior Eme Edoho, Marian Urquilla of the Columbia Heights/Shaw Neighborhood Collaborative, and UDC freshman Vincent McBride will officially launch DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy during a press conference on Thursday, February 24, at 11:30 AM at the Reeves Municipal Center. DC Campaign is a new non-profit organization with the mission of cutting the city's teen pregnancy rate in half by 2005.

The District of Columbia's alarming rate of teen pregnancy---currently, one in six --compared with the national average of one in ten is what drives DC Campaign.

“Common Sense: Teens and Adults Speak Out About Teen Pregnancy in the District of Columbia” will be released at the press conference. This report of the provocative results gleaned from extensive public opinion research reveals District residents are unified in their view that teen pregnancy ranks with violence, drug use and poor public schools, as one of the most troublesome problems facing young people in the District today.

The research, conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, included a poll of 1,600 residents of all ages. It found remarkably universal support for a broad teen pregnancy prevention strategy that encourages teens to postpone sex while at the same time providing all teens with accurate and complete information about preventing pregnancy and disease. The polling results also indicate that:

- teens rank teen pregnancy second in the list of concerns in their lives, just behind violence and ahead of drug use and poor public schools,
  - teens and parents disagree on the frequency and comfort of their actual discussions about sex,
  - the low rate of birth control use among teens has more to do with stigma than availability.
- (For a more detailed list, please see attached “Key Findings.”)

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There is clear understanding among all residents that a combination of approaches to preventing teen pregnancy only makes sense:

- parents want to help their children avoid teen pregnancy, but may need help doing so,
- all teens need positive out of school activities, and lots of them,
- sexually active teens need information on birth control, where to get it, and how to use it,
- entertainment media should reach teens with pregnancy prevention messages.

“We can be proud that our city is not polarized about these issues, nor are our citizens fatalistic about changing the situation,” said Dr. Ladner, a prominent writer and community leader on children and families, who chairs the board of DC Campaign. “This survey demonstrates a fundamental pragmatism about what it takes to prevent teen pregnancy. Many parts of the community are ready to be mobilized, and looking for leadership.”

According to Rev. Leon G. Lipscomb Sr., Pastor of Allen Chapel AME in Southeast Washington, and a DC Campaign board member, “No matter how often we talk about teen pregnancy, we can never talk about it enough, so long as the numbers are as high as they are. We must galvanize a movement throughout our city to help all children so they will stop getting pregnant.”

The new DC Campaign builds on the many programs working with young people as well as national research about workable solutions. This new locally based research about attitudes and strategies endorsed by District residents will be a key ingredient in mapping future efforts.

“DC residents know teen pregnancy is an obstacle that doesn’t have to be there. They’re ready to solve the problem and DC Campaign is ready to work with anyone who wants to make teen pregnancy a thing of the past.” said Brenda Rhodes Miller, director of DC Campaign. “It’s time to change the conversation to focus on the reality that pregnancy is less likely to occur if teenage boys and girls are connected to their families, schools and neighborhoods, have safe places to interact with their peers, and have access to health care including family planning information and services. DC Campaign wants every teen to have good reason to make a deliberate decision to avoid pregnancy by postponing sex or using contraception effectively.”

Other DC Campaign launch activities include a reception on February 23<sup>rd</sup> honoring five exemplary local programs: Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Generations, Covenant House, Mary’s Center and Teen Life Choices.

The night before the press conference, teens from all over DC will hold a town hall meeting at Children’s Hospital. There, teens will discuss their strategies for helping their peers avoid teen pregnancy. DC Mayor Anthony Williams is expected to attend to hear from and talk with the young people.

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DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a non-profit organization with the mission of cutting the teen pregnancy rate in the District of Columbia in half by 2005. Acting as a catalyst for improved services across the spectrum of the city's teen pregnancy prevention initiatives, DC Campaign shines a high voltage spotlight on teen pregnancy prevention, and is a transfer agent for skills, a lever to increase financial support for effective programs, a convener of experts and networks, a promoter of best practices, and a training resource for parents, community leaders and health professionals.

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