

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications

CONTACT: Caren Halbfinger

(914) 813-5013

(914) 813-5000 (After Hours)

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FINDING STRATEGIES TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

You're sixteen years old and your best friend says you'd better sleep with your boyfriend or he will leave you for another girl. How would you respond? And what would you do if your boyfriend wants to wait until marriage for sex, but your friends brag that they had sex already?

These are the kinds of questions hundreds of thousands of teenagers will answer through an online quiz on National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, May 7th. The self-test is designed to help teenagers reflect on the consequences of their attitudes about sex.

After a fifteen year decline to historic lows, the rate of teenage pregnancies in the United States increased three percent between 2005 and 2006. There were 1,452 pregnant women under age 20 in Westchester in 2005, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of school, have poor earnings prospects, and engage in delinquent behavior. They are less likely to seek prenatal care. The overall cost to the national economy from teenage pregnancy was estimated to be about \$9 billion in 2004.

“Through TeenAWARE, we help young people understand the healthy and responsible choices that are available to them, and the consequences that can result from poor choices,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “The online quiz fits in well with what TeenAware has done for years.”

MORE

In recognition of National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the Westchester County Health Department's TeenAWARE program encourages teenagers in the county to take the online quiz. The quiz is available in both English and Spanish and will be posted at StayTeen.org on May 7th. Printable versions can be downloaded for distribution to those without computer access. Last year, 350,000 teenagers throughout the nation participated in a similar online quiz.

TeenAWARE has been working to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies and cases of sexually transmitted disease among youth in Westchester. The program trains teen peer educators to reach out to teenagers in schools, community organizations, and wherever they typically meet to help empower teens with the tools they need to avoid early pregnancy, STDs and HIV infection, and to make healthy lifestyle choices.

For more information on the TeenAware program, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit www.westchestergov.com/health.