

General Information

Background¹

Women in the U.S. spend nearly 40 years, from menarche to menopause, at potential risk of pregnancy. Because most women are pregnant or trying to become pregnant for only a small portion of this time, women typically spend about three-quarters of their reproductive years trying to avoid pregnancy. Women who can plan the number and timing of the birth of their children enjoy improved health, experience fewer unplanned pregnancies and births and have lower rates of abortions. In addition, women who have control over their fertility have a chance to attain more education and find employment.

Size

San Diego County²

- In 2003, 59.9% of students in grades 9-12 within the San Diego Unified School District who had sexual intercourse during the past three months reported using a condom during last sexual intercourse. Moreover, 16.1% of students who had sexual intercourse during the past three months reported using birth control pills during last sexual intercourse.
- No additional data on family planning in San Diego County are currently available.

California

- Low-income women represent 38% of California women of reproductive age, but account for nearly two-thirds of births in the state.¹
- In California, over 4.2 million women are in need of contraceptive services and supplies.³
- Unmarried women account for 33% of all births in California.³
- In California, an estimated 40% of high school students are sexually active.¹
- Nearly 80% of teen pregnancies in California are unintended.¹
- Of the approximately 113,000 teen pregnancies each year in California, 49% result in live births, 37% result in abortions and 14% result in miscarriages.³

National³

- In the U.S., an estimated 34.5 million women are in need of contraceptive services and supplies.
- Unmarried women account for 34% of all births in the U.S.
- Of the over 800,000 teen pregnancies each year in the U.S., 57% result in live births, 29% result in abortions and 14% result in miscarriages.

Healthy People 2010: There are 13 objectives related to family planning with the overall goal of improving pregnancy planning and spacing and preventing unintended pregnancy.⁴

Seriousness

Health Care Impacts

- Without contraception, the average woman would have 12 to 15 pregnancies throughout her lifetime.¹
- Only 55% of women carrying unplanned pregnancies to term receive early prenatal care, compared to 72% of women with planned pregnancies.¹
- Children of unwanted conception are at greater risk for being born at low birth weight, of dying in the first year of life, of being abused and for having developmental disabilities than children of wanted conception.¹
- Access to family planning services that include testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can help prevent adverse reproductive health outcomes such as ectopic pregnancy, sterility, pelvic inflammatory disease and HIV transmission.¹
- A woman with an unintended pregnancy is less likely to seek early prenatal care and is more likely to expose the fetus to harmful substances such as alcohol and tobacco.¹
- Births from unintended pregnancies are more likely to occur to mothers who are adolescent, unmarried, or over age 40 - characteristics that carry special medical risks and socioeconomic burdens.¹

Seriousness (continued)

Economic Costs

- Nationally, every dollar spent on family planning services saves \$3 in Medicaid costs that would otherwise be needed for prenatal and newborn care.¹
- A 1995 study that measured the cost of contraceptive methods compared to the cost of unintended pregnancies when no contraception was used found the total savings to the health care system to fall between \$9,000 and \$14,000 per woman over five years of contraceptive use.⁵
- Women who become mothers in adolescence are more likely to need public assistance than women who postpone childbearing.¹
- Parents of children of an unwanted conception may suffer economic hardship or failure to reach educational or career goals.⁵

Community Concern

Focus Group Discussion Points

Participants in the adolescent focus group expressed concern about the lack of available information about contraception and STDs.

Key Informant Scoring

Overall, key informants scored family planning as fourteenth most important out of 14 health issues considered. However, key informants identified family planning as the seventh important issue among individuals aged 15 to 24.

*Please note that focus groups and key informant surveys are qualitative in nature and findings presented may not be representative of a larger population.

References

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