A JSI White Paper

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# *Social Marketing: Effective Strategies for Dissemination*

**Prepared for:**

## Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, Adolescent Family Life Demonstration and Research Program

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*"Step right up, teens, and step right up! Get it here; get your pregnancy prevention information, state-of-the art, not available anywhere else…get it right here!"*

## Introduction

Since 1991, U.S. teen pregnancy rates have been declining. Trends have shown a steady reduction in teen birth rates for all 50 states.[1] Rates have declined for all adolescent age groups, for all racial and ethnic groups and for both first and second births to teens. Although these rates are decreasing, they still remain among the highest in the industrialized world, and birth rates for Hispanic, American Indian, and black teens continue to be substantially higher than those for non-Hispanic white and Asian or Pacific Island Youth.[2] Thus, the need to continue adolescent pregnancy prevention efforts must not be underestimated.

## Problem Statement

Adolescent pregnancy prevention programs are all focused on the same basic principle: change adolescents' behavior. However, it is important to realize these efforts are being carried out with very minimal funding. How can behavior change happen, specifically on a larger scale, if there is little to no funding available to support it? *Social marketing*, the approach of helping to change behavior as well as social and cultural norms, does not rely heavily on monetary assets.

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[1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). *Annual Report: A National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: 2000.

[2] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). *Annual Report: A National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: 2000.

## Social Marketing

***What Is It?***

In brief, social marketing is the application of commercial marketing techniques to social problems. For example, social marketing takes the same principles used in selling goods for the benefit of the marketer and uses these principles to convince people to change their behavior for the benefit of the individual and society as a whole.[3]

***Why This Approach?***

Social marketing can most easily be compared to business marketing. Successful business marketing campaigns have helped companies make millions of dollars by promoting their products and/or services to the public. Well-run social marketing campaigns, based upon the same fundamentals as well-run business marketing campaigns, can be effective in the same way because they can effectively reach their target audience.

***When Is A Good Time for This Approach?***

As a campaign, social marketing is most influential when it is focused on changing the behaviors of a large number of people over a lengthy period of time. As mentioned earlier, funding is not a vital part of social marketing because successful campaigns have been carried out on shoestring budgets. In these instances, campaigners were excited and willing to put extra effort into their work.

Social marketing has been used in the past to promote a variety of health-related concepts and improvement ideas, including teen pregnancy prevention. It has evolved from one-dimensional public service announcements to more sophisticated approaches based on sound marketing concepts.

***What Do Social Marketing Campaigns Do?***

In brief, social marketing campaigns: 1) identify the behavior they want to change; 2) identify the audience; 3) identify the barriers to change; 4) reduce those barriers; and 5) publicize both the benefits of change and the efforts to make change easier.

Ultimately, a social marketing campaign based on reducing teen pregnancy should be utilized to create "benefits" in the eyes of a teen. These benefits influence a teens' actions so they believe the advantages they receive through the adoption of preventive efforts will be greater than the costs they incur if they do not change their behaviors. This benefit is the key motivation that prevention programs must tap into. By relating teen behaviors to cause and effect relationships, prevention efforts will become more effective. This makes it crucial to learn more about what teens want and need.

Teens are seldom uniform in their perceptions and/or likely response. Thus, programs may need to segment or subgroup their target based on characteristics that influence their responsiveness.

***Does One Strategy Work For All Teens?***

Segmentation can be used to identify subgroups of teens that can realistically be reached with available resources, or it can be used to determine the best way to

[3] Social Marketing Institute. "Social Marketing." 29 October 2008. <http:// www.social-marketing.org/sm.html>.

reach particular groups of teens. Groups may differ regarding their opinions on: who/what is most attractive, the price they are willing to pay, the best place to communicate with them or to locate services, and/or their differential responsiveness to promotional tactics.

***What Is Included in Social Marketing?***
Social marketing efforts should include all of the "4Ps" found effective in business marketing.[4] The "4Ps" are:
1) creating an enticing *"Product"* or behavior, and creating a message or promotion that appeals to the teen's or subgroup's pre-existing values;
2) minimizing the *"Price"* of the existing behavior the teen or subgroup believes she or he must pay weighed against the cost of altering that behavior;
3) making the opportunities for alteration available in *"Places"* that reach the teen or subgroup and fit her or his lifestyle; and 4) *Promoting* the exchange opportunity with creativity and through ways and tactics that maximize desired responses. Promotion strategy usually includes *user* involvement from design to evaluation of the initiative.

## Effective Strategies of Social Marketing

Effective strategies of social marketing include these steps:

***1) Define The Health Problem and Your Goals***
Initially, it is important to define the problem and set goals before implementing a social marketing campaign. In relating this strategy to teen pregnancy prevention, the problem could be understood as trying to reduce the numbers of unwanted teen pregnancies within the target audience's geographical area. Epidemiological data could be interpreted to help campaigners better focus on the problem. Literature could also be reviewed to help campaigners identify what action/behavior changes are needed in order to reduce the problem.
*The first step to creating a successful social marketing campaign includes defining the problem and setting goals and objectives to alleviate it.* Once the problem has been thoroughly identified, the focus can then be shifted to finding solutions for that problem.

***2) Identify Your Audience***
Next, the campaigners must identify which groups (or individuals) will need to act to solve the problem. Is it important to target different groups of teens in different ways (segmenting)? What are the important factors for the group(s)? Answers will differ based on the fact that every community, and the available resources within that community, is different.

***3) Understand Your Audience Through Formative Research***
Once the target audience has been identified, it is important to try and understand where the target group is coming from. What are their opinions, ideals and values? Utilizing public resources such as Census records, school surveys and library materials can often be a good starting point. Next, it is important to find out what the target audience thinks about the problem; in this case, finding out teens' needs, hopes, fears, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, risks, and, most importantly, their wants. In short, what will convince teens to change?

[4] Social Marketing Institute. "Social Marketing." 29 October 2008. <http:// www.social-marketing.org/sm.html>.

This information is crucial for success and can be obtained in different ways, including observation, surveys, interviews and/or focus groups.

***4) Choose Specific Strategies With Measurable Objectives***

Next, it is important to come up with a list of possible strategies that will help campaigners address the problem. Once several ideas have been made clear, the best strategy can be determined by determining the following: 1) which strategy is most attractive for behavior change; 2) which strategy decreases the cost of the behavior change; 3) which strategy improves the teens' ability to adopt the change; and 4) which strategy decreases the attractiveness of competing behaviors. [5]

***5) Design Appropriate Message***

After the ideal strategy has been selected, the focus must be shifted toward determining how to make the target audience aware of the message. Teens can be a great help in deciding what to say based on the campaign strategies, including offering suggestions about what to say and who to say it to. It is also important to consider the most receptive message(s) and if language should be different when trying to target different groups.

***6) Select Communication Strategies with Pretesting***

Campaigners can then determine the best way to reach their audience by considering all of their options. Some communication methods include: newspaper, expert testimony, word of mouth, TV and radio. When choosing a medium to spread the message, remember to be cautious of the campaign's budget limitations.

Pretesting is also vital to an effective social marketing campaign. Pretesting can help campaigners determine if their message is effective, ineffective for reasons they had not thought of, or insulting to the intended audience. It is important that campaigners do not embarrass their organization by trying to implement their campaign without pre-testing. Social marketing campaigns should only run messages with the assurance that the messages say what they were intended to say.

***7) Implement and Evaluate***

Is the campaign doing what was planned? Social marketing is a continual process, so monitoring for effectiveness is important. By setting well-defined goals and establishing a related tracking system that will measure campaign progress, the campaign's success can be evaluated along the way. *Was the ideal target audience reached? Did the promotion have an impact? Did the desired outcome occur? Why/Why not?* If something is not working the way it was originally planned, campaigners can always make adjustments. Also consider the target audience when evaluating the campaign's success, as teens' thoughts on improvements can prove very useful.

[5] Social Marketing Institute. "Social Marketing." 29 October 2008. <http:// www.social-marketing.org/sm.html>.

## Barriers in Social Marketing

Competition is defined from the user's perspective, rather than that of the marketer's.[6] What alternative choices do teens face in selecting and using prevention information? Campaigners must be aware of the variety of choices so that they can steer teens toward awareness and behavior change. Programs must listen carefully to teens in order to identify the competition and understand its influence.

## Summary

Most social marketing campaigns focused on changing unhealthy behaviors or cultural norms take time to have long-term cumulative effects on social attitudes and behaviors; therefore, they should not be seen as a quick-fix. A social marketing approach is aimed at large groups and long-term behavior change in the community. Eternal vigilance and patience are parts of the program, and effective efforts have been shown to make big differences. Hopefully, this brief paper has shed some light on social marketing and how it may be implemented when focused on the topic of teen pregnancy prevention.

## Resources

Below you will find resources that you may find useful in researching more and implementing social marketing within your initiatives.

[6] Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). "Adapting the Marketing Concept to the Dissemination and Utilization of Disability Research." 29 October 2008. <http://www.ncddr.-org/products/researchexchange/v05n01/adapting.html>.

### *Social Marketing Informational Websites*

- http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/sub_section_main_1321.htm
- http://dhs.dc.gov/dhs/cwp/view,a,3q,492684.asp
- http://www.emprc.org/jan98/social.html
- http://www.etr.org/recapp
- http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca.hppb/socialmarketing
- http://www.jointtogether.org/sa/resources
- http://www.social-marketing.com/library.html
- http://www.social-marketing.org/aboutus.html

### *Print Resources*


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- Kotler, P & Lee, NR (2008). *Social Marketing: Influencing Behavior for Good.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
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### *Listservers*

- http://archives.higheredcenter.org/drughied/3088.htm
- http://socialmarketingpanorama.com/social_marketing_panorama/georgetown-social-marketi.html
- http://socialmarketing.wetpaint.com/page/Discussion+Lists?t=anon
- http://wordpress.com/tag/social-marketing-listserv/