



YOUNG WOMEN OF COLOR and PROPOSITION 85

Teens of color are more likely to live in poverty, are more likely to become pregnant and are less likely to have health insurance than their white counterparts. As a result, the passage of Proposition 85 will have a disproportionate effect on the health and safety of these young women.

Perpetuating Poverty Through Unwanted Pregnancies

- Among women, 27% of African Americans, 26% of Hispanics, 21% of Native Americans and 13% of Asian/Pacific Islanders live in poverty. Only 9% of Caucasian women live in poverty.¹
- Latina teens give birth at a rate three times higher than that of white non-Latinas and Asian/Pacific Islanders. And African American teens give birth at rates two times higher than those of white non-Latinas and Asian/Pacific Islanders.²
- The probability that a teenager will graduate from high school is 90%, but the probability that a teenage mother will graduate is only 60%. And 28% of teen mothers are poor into their 20s and 30s and more likely to have lower family incomes later in life.³
- Daughters of teen mothers are 83% more likely to become pregnant in their teens.⁴

Lack of Access to Comprehensive Health Care

Because teens of color are less likely to have health insurance, they often receive all their health care through the window of family planning services made available through federal and state funding. Obstetricians and gynecologists, who routinely detect breast and cervical cancers, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes, hypertension and other diseases while providing family planning services, have become the effective primary care provider for many women, especially low-income and undocumented women.

- Approximately 19% of California's uninsured are under 18.⁵
- Latinos are much more likely to be uninsured than other ethnic groups and about 2.5 times as likely as whites. Of the uninsured in California, 31.8% are Latino, 19% are African American, 18.4% are other and 12.2% are white.⁶
- Planned Parenthood reports that 74% of its clients are at or below the 150% of the federal poverty level.⁷

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, Women's Health Databook, *Highlights for Women of Color*, at <http://www.kff.org/womenshealth> (last visited Aug. 29, 2005).

² *Id.* at 8.

³ NARAL, Facts & Issues Briefs, *Government-Mandated Parental Involvement in Family Planning Services Threatens Young People's Health*, at <http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/facts/parental.cfm> (last visited Aug. 29, 2005).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ SNAPSHOT CALIFORNIA'S UNINSURED (CALIFORNIA HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION) 2004.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Planned Parenthood Federation, *Planned Parenthood by the Numbers*, at <http://www.plannedparenthood.org> (last visited Aug. 29, 2005).

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Confidentiality is Crucial for Teens

Teens desire confidentiality in matters of reproductive health above all and if they are forced to tell their parents about their reproductive habits, they are more likely to cease getting the help they need. Lack of preventive reproductive health care is particularly dangerous for young women of color as they have higher rates of STDs and HIV/AIDs than their white counterparts.

- 47% of minors seeking reproductive healthcare services would completely stop seeking these services if parental notification was mandatory – While only 1% said they would stop having sex.⁸
- In 2002, girls represented 51% of HIV cases among 13-19 year olds.⁹ 65% of those were African American and 20% were Latina.¹⁰
- Women of color have higher rates of Chlamydia than white women. African American women have Chlamydia at a rate 9 times over that of white women. Native American women's rates are 6 times that of white women.¹¹

Lack of Cultural Competency of Providers and Distrust of Judicial System

Because most health providers are white, women of color often experience the problem of a lack of cultural and linguistic competency when accessing health care. Requiring health providers to become “informants” will only exacerbate this problem. And finally, low-income youth of color do not, in general, have positive experiences with the judicial system. As a result, the option of judicial by-pass for seeking an abortion will be daunting for many teens - particularly undocumented teens, those who have a family member in the judicial system or those in the judicial system themselves.

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⁸ “Reddy, Diane M., *et al.* (2002), “Effect of Mandatory Parental Notification on Adolescent Girls' Use of Sexual Health Care Services.” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 288(6), 710-14.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ NARAL, *The Devastating Impact of HIV/AIDS and STDs on Women of Color.*