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Talk First Battles Rise in Teen Pregnancy

By Jordan Smith

On Jan. 16, Austin's **Planned Parenthood** launched **Talk First**, a new parent-education program featuring free hourlong workshop sessions in which groups of eight or more parents learn how to talk with their kids about sex.

According to research conducted by the family-planning group, kids actually prefer to learn about sex from their parents – without sex education, says Planned Parenthood, kids are left to gather information about sex on their own, and that can lead to inaccurate information. To illustrate the dangers of leaving sex education off the table, local Planned Parenthood officials unveiled their own Top 10 list of bad information parents tell kids, including that "the stork brings babies."

The risks in not educating children about sex "are high," said **Ken Lambrecht**, president of Planned Parenthood of the Texas Capital Region, "and parents can make a difference."

According to a new report from the **Centers for Disease Control**, the teen birthrate climbed in 2006, reversing a 14-year decline – among the states with the highest teen birthrate, Texas is in third place (behind only Mississippi and New Mexico), with 63.1 births per 1,000 teen girls. Moreover, according to the CDC, incidences of sexually transmitted infections – specifically syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea – are also on the rise. After years of decline – that is, consistent decline since 1941 – the incidence of syphilis has been on a near-steady rise since 2001. Texas ranks ninth in the number of reported syphilis cases.

There is, of course, one decent way to buck the disturbing upward trends: comprehensive sex education. "These reports are further evidence of the need for medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sex education," said **Cecile Richards**, Planned Parenthood Federation of America president. "Abstinence-only programs have failed to teach young people how to prevent unintended pregnancy and [STIs]."

For more info about the new Talk First program, go to www.ppaustin.org.