

March 2005

To: **Individuals and Organizations Concerned
About Teenage Childbearing**

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Subject: Release of *Facts at a Glance* 2005, reporting trends in teen childbearing in the nation, states, and large cities

Teenage birth rates have declined continuously since 1991, and are at historic lows for each age group among teens. Preliminary data show that in 2003, there were 41.7 births per 1,000 15-19-year-olds, a rate that is one-third lower than the 1991 rate of 61.8 births per 1,000 15-19-year-olds and 18% lower than the 1985 rate of 51.0. Birth rates are continuing to decline among younger and older teens, among all racial/ethnic groups, and in all states. In particular, the birth rate for non-Hispanic black teens declined by 45% between 1991 and 2003, while the teen birth rate declined by 35% for non-Hispanic white teens and 22% for Hispanic teens.

The decline in the teen birth rate is accompanied by additional positive trends:

- There have been declines since 1995 in the percentage of teens who have ever had sex, and two-thirds of teens disagree or strongly disagree that it is all right for unmarried 16-year-olds to have sex.
- The proportion of Hispanic females aged 15-19 who are sexually experienced dropped by close to one-third between 1995 and 2002, exhibiting the largest decline in sexual experience of any group.
- Among teens who have had sex in 2002 compared with 1995, more teens report that they used a contraceptive method at first sex, and more teens report using any contraceptive method and dual contraceptive methods (hormonal and condom) the most recent time they had sex.
- The number of pregnancies and the number of abortions have declined, and the percentage of teen pregnancies that end in abortion has dropped dramatically—from 40% of all teen pregnancies in the mid-1980s to 29% of all teen pregnancies in 2000, the most recent year for which data are available (see Table 2).

Despite the positive strides made towards reducing the U.S. teen birth rate, there are important reasons to remain concerned about teen childbearing in this country: An estimated 17% of current 15-year-old girls will give birth before age 20, and 1 in 5 teen births are repeat births. The U.S. teen birth rate varies greatly by state and ranges from a low in New Hampshire of 20 births per 1,000 females 15-19 to a high in Mississippi of 65 births per 1,000 females 15-19 (see Table 2). In addition, fewer than one-half of the 50 states require that all providers of health insurance that cover prescription drugs also cover contraceptive methods and services (see Table 2).

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