



FLORENCE CRITTENTON

services

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Ida B. Wells Teens Tops in Health and Reproductive Survey

Data Underscores Teens' Wish for Improved Health Education Curriculum

San Francisco (CA) – Teens enrolled in a pregnancy prevention program at Ida B. Wells Continuation High School possess more knowledge about health and reproductive choices than other San Francisco youngsters, according to a recently released survey.

The Balboa Teen Health Center assessed health care needs at several city high schools. Specifically, it sought to determine students' thoughts and knowledge regarding 1) health care preferences and barriers to access; 2) knowledge of minor consent services; 3) and knowledge of and the level of importance of services on campus. Ultimately, it found an overwhelming demand for substantive information and positive effects of possessing such information.

When asked specifically whether a clinic can provide a pregnancy test to girls 12-17 without parental consent, youngsters at "Ida B Wells scored the highest at 93% correct responses," the needs assessment noted. "It is worth exploring what is happening at Ida B. Wells, as these numbers at a continuation school are enviable. There is a health/reproductive health program there that must be doing a great job!"

"It is no coincidence that Ida B. Wells is the only high school in San Francisco that has a mandatory teen pregnancy prevention program as part of its curriculum," explained Margaret Jerene, executive director of Florence Crittenton Services (FCS), which administers the program. "We adults must give youngsters all of the tools they need to make healthy, informed choices."

Called Get Your Stuff Together, the FCS program serves some of San Francisco's most at-risk teen-agers. It provides information about academics and GPA improvement, along with goal-setting and planning. Besides classroom skills, it teaches personal health; sexuality and delayed pregnancy/fatherhood; job skills; and financial independence. Essentially, youngsters are coached on how to create positive life patterns and are empowered to take charge of their lives.

"Knowledge and education are teenager's best defense against any potential disease, emotional breakdown, or other problems that may occur in result of a wrong decision, because youth can utilize their knowledge of consequences to make better decisions for themselves," said Belinda La, a delegate of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB).

The YAB serves Balboa Teen Health Center, a one-of-a-kind school-based health center. Last year, the YAB conducted the needs assessment, with clinical staff support and assistance from California School Health Centers Association and the Adolescent Health Working Group. The YAB also enjoyed support from the Student Advisory Council, whose representatives distributed the assessment to their peers.

Overall, 1,617 needs assessments were collected and analyzed. Currently, the YAB is drafting a resolution asking the Board of Education to require that students to be taught minor consent rights and access to services information as part of a health education curriculum.

FCS serves San Francisco's most vulnerable and impoverished communities, primarily in Bayview-Hunter's Point, Visitacion Valley and the Western Addition. Ninety-five percent of its client base is classified as "very low" income. It offer infants and toddlers nationally-accredited subsidized child care and development services; youth empowerment and pregnancy prevention programs; parent support services and job training with placement through several employer partners; culturally and linguistically specific mentorship to family child care providers, continuing a proud tradition of ending poverty one family at a time.

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