

“What you learn is: Don’t do anything you’re not ready for or you can’t handle. A lot of people I know just do it until they run into trouble.”

—Khana, age 15

Why This Program?

Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood present formidable challenges for teens’ development into productive and fulfilled adults. In addition to the physical implications of adolescent pregnancy, the reality is that most teen mothers raise their children as single parents, which may lead to girls not completing high school and thereby being employed in a low wage job. Although the most recent decrease in teen pregnancy rates is promising, the U.S. continues to have the highest teen pregnancy rate among industrialized countries, with Canada’s rate less than half of that of the U.S., but still higher than many industrialized countries. Further, sexually transmitted disease rates among young women, especially young women of color, is still of great concern.

While communities and policy makers search for effective strategies to address adolescent sexuality issues, most youth and parents say that girls need more comprehensive information relevant to their lives. They not only need this information sooner rather than later—they need appropriate information throughout their development. Programs and efforts that deliver such information need to pay particular attention to gender-specific issues because young women have specific needs in managing sexual relationships and they deal most directly with the consequences of teen pregnancy.

About the Program: Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy®

Through Girls Inc. Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy®, girls acquire the knowledge and skills for taking charge of and making informed decisions about their sexual health. Exploring values, practicing responses in different situations, and thinking about their futures, help girls identify ways and reasons to avoid early pregnancy and prevent sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

- **Growing TogetherSM** (for girls ages 9 to 11 and a parent/adult; available in Spanish as Crecer juntasSM): Five interactive sessions jump-start crucial two-way conversations between girls and a trusted adult about sexuality issues, opening doors to future communication. Key topics include the role of parents as primary sexuality educators; changes during puberty; anatomy, physiology, and hygiene; adolescent sexual development and feelings; and values and expectations for teen sexual behavior.

- **Will Power/Won’t Power®** (for girls ages 12 to 14 and available in Spanish as Querer/Poder decir “no”SM): In this 10-session program, girls build skills and strategies for dealing with sexual situations as they enter the most pressure-sensitive adolescent years, while also receiving medically accurate information. Interactive sessions center on values, relationships, female health and hygiene, separating sexual myths from reality, assertiveness and communication skills, identifying and resisting sexual pressures from the media and peers, sexual decision-making, avoiding risky situations, the benefits of abstinence, and the power of a positive sister support system.

- **Taking Care of Business®** (for girls ages 15 to 18): Ten interactive sessions focus on recognizing and moving beyond limiting sex-role stereotypes for women; using values as a basis for positive decision-making; building assertiveness, refusal, and relationship skills; avoiding risky behavior, pregnancy, STDs, and HIV through abstinence and other smart choices; learning the facts about contraception and protection; strengthening communication skills; and thinking about life goals.

Ancillary Component:

Growing Up! Body Basics is a 3-hour workshop for girls ages 7 to 8, some of whom may already be experiencing signs of puberty. In this workshop, girls usually thought of as too young for these topics receive accurate, age-appropriate information on why and how their bodies are changing—with an emphasis on the fact that the changes are normal and okay, even if earlier than such changes among their peers.

About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. delivers life-changing programs that inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Research-based curricula, delivered by trained professionals, equip girls to achieve academically; lead healthy and physically active lives; manage money; navigate media messages; and discover an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math. The network of local Girls Inc. nonprofit organizations serves 150,000 girls annually at over 1,400 sites in 350 cities across the United States and Canada. Learn more about our programs and advocacy at: www.girlsinc.org.

