



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Gillian Conrad
(269) 927-5624
gconrad@bchdmi.org

Berrien County Health Department Recognizes Sexual Health Awareness Month Teen health educators release awareness video drawing attention to clinical services

(Benton Harbor, Michigan) - As health organizations around the country recognize September as Sexual Health Month, the Berrien County Health Department reminds residents of its programs and services that emphasize the importance of an individual's sexual health.

"We strive to be a community resource for accurate, reliable information on sexual health - and a host of other issues that affect residents of all ages," said Candi Gabrielse, clinical and community health services manager. "September gives us an excellent opportunity to have frank, candid and open conversations about sexual health." After some operational disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Berrien County Health Department's Sexual Health Clinic is fully open and has appointments available for sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, those seeking birth control, and annual wellness exams and for men and women.

To highlight the clinical sexual health services available in Berrien County, a group of teen health advocates, who have participated in the Taking Pride in Prevention (TPIP) program, has [released an awareness video](#) to educate their peers on the importance of the topic. Since 2018, the Berrien County Health Department has offered the Taking Pride in Prevention program for adolescents aged 12-19 educate adolescents on both abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. Goals of TPIP include reducing the rate of teen pregnancy and STIs in Michigan.

Despite improvements in the teen birth rate across all race and ethnicity groups, large disparities between racial groups persist. Whereas white females ages 15-19 years in the state of Michigan have a teenage pregnancy rate of 17.4 per 1,000 females in their age group, Black teens ages 15-19 years in the state have a teenage pregnancy rate of 59.9 per every 1,000 females in their age group. Kyna King, family programs manager for the Berrien County Health Department said, "Our programs are focused on creating trusted community environments that support abstinence for sexually inexperienced youth to condoms/contraception for sexually active youth that will ultimately help to reduce rates of teen pregnancy, STIs, and HIV."

The Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) offers accessible, non-judgmental, and supportive services to women, men, and teens regardless of income, insurance status, background, or sexuality. BCHD offers a wide range of programs and services to residents, including:

- [Sexual Health Clinic](#), which provides accessible, nonjudgmental and supportive services to women, men and teens at a no- or low-cost basis regardless of insurance, background or sexuality. These include annual wellness exams, STD testing and treatment, pregnancy testing, birth control, immunizations and education.

- The [Taking Pride in Prevention \(TPIP\)](#) program, which educates adolescents, 12-19 years, on both abstinence and contraception through the implementation of evidence-based programs to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.
- [HIV Testing](#), which offers confidential or anonymous rapid HIV testing and consulting in a nonjudgmental manner.
- [Wear One Campaign](#), which works to increase free condom availability while creating awareness to healthy relationships and promoting acceptance of condom use.

To learn more about the Berrien County Health Department's programs regarding sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention, visit bchdmi.org. The Taking Pride in Prevention video can be found at the Health Department's [YouTube page](#).

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