

December 30, 2010

Forget the Birds & Bees, Focus on the P & L

Educators are tackling teen pregnancy with new economic driven approaches. There are two programs originating out of Texas schools, PAPA (Parenting and Paternity Awareness) and No Kidding trying novel and more pragmatically driven arguments against pre-marital and/or unprotected sex.

The programs have tossed the old sex ed model of "Safe Sex" or "Abstinence Only." Instead, the programs focus on the financial consequences of teenage pregnancy. The new economics driven arguments seem to be taking old.

The USA Today article reporting on the programs noted that Texas had the third highest rate of teen pregnancy. The virtual crisis in Texas teen pregnancy led to the new approaches. Remarkably, New Mexico had the second highest rate of teen pregnancy trailing only Mississippi.

The programs might just as well be called "Scared Safe/Celibate." The focus is on the costs of teen pregnancy, not to society, but to the teens themselves. Most kids have little concept of financial responsibility. However, when they see the numbers in concrete terms, they seem to get the message.

To get the point across, the program has a "Price is Right" portion where kids learn the costs of child rearing necessities such as diapers, formula, baby cribs, car seats, onesies, clothes, medicine, doctor visits, daycare and so on. The program might also address what every parent knows is that kids just get more and more expensive as they grow older with clothes, extracurricular activities, electronics, games, mobile phones, braces and so on.

The programs focus predominantly on fathers since they are typically the non-custodial parent. Young would be fathers should understand all the costs above. In addition, they should understand that a casual sexual encounter can and will lead to 18+ years of child support. This includes child support enforcement through garnishment, bank account seizures, tax refund intercepts and driver's license revocations among other means at the disposal of Child Support Enforcement Division.

In many cases involving young parents, the kids have also signed on for 18+ years of court hearings to address child custody and time-sharing. Kids that "meet" casually are not always completely compatible after the fact. Likewise,

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they and their families may have very different views of how the child should be raised. The possible areas of contention are endless from the mundane such a haircuts to recreational activities to the sports the kids play to vacation to schools to religion and on and on and on.

Oh yes, the last thing that a kid might want to know in the cost benefit analysis leading up to the casual sexual encounter, he or she can expect to pay a lawyer a minimum of \$1000 every time one of these issues ends in court. Let's just say this can add up over 18 years.

An economically minded youth should see clearly that teen pregnancy is bad for the profit and loss statement. Where the birds and bees have failed us repeatedly, perhaps the P&L will have some success.

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