

# GCAPP's Work & Teens' Mental Health: Where Social and Emotional Wellness Intersect with Quality Sex Ed & Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Comprehensive sex education and teen pregnancy prevention are critical in improving the social, emotional, and mental health of teens. Research shows this social trifecta is inextricably linked and our young people are better for it. Below outlines the significant mental and emotional wellness components deeply embedded in our adolescent sexual health work that many, parents specifically, may not be aware of.

## RESEARCH SHOWS THAT:

- When students avoid early pregnancy, STIs, and are not the subjects of sexual abuse and interpersonal violence/harassment, they are more likely to experience positive social, emotional, and mental health and achieve academic success.
- Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, suicidal ideation—the full range of other social, emotional, and mental health competencies and outcomes—are all improved by comprehensive sex education.
- Improvements in knowledge and attitudes related to healthy relationships, dating relationships as well as improved parent-adolescent relationship skills.
- LGBTQ-inclusive sex education is associated with lower reports of adverse mental health such as suicidal thoughts among all youth, and lower reports of bullying experiences among minority youth.
- Comprehensive sex ed impacts a range of social emotional outcomes across grade levels, including students' increased empathy, respect for others, improved communication, management of feelings, positive self-image, increased sense of self-control and safety, and more positive relationships.
- Not addressing adolescent sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention extends into adulthood and often into the rest of their lives and negatively impacting both physical and mental health and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.
- When age-appropriate sexual abuse prevention efforts are provided in early grades, young children can develop self-protective knowledge, skills, and intentions, including an increased likelihood of reporting sexual abuse and knowing how to respond in a dangerous situation.

Research compiled by Team GCAPP

