



## GCAPP PARENT TOOLKIT:

# GCAPP's Work & Teen's Mental Health:

## Where Social and Emotional Wellness Intersect with Quality Sex Ed & Teen Pregnancy Prevention

At GCAPP, we understand that teen mental health doesn't exist in a vacuum. Research shows a powerful connection between comprehensive sex education, teen pregnancy prevention, and the emotional and mental well-being of young people. These areas intersect in meaningful ways and when addressed together, they can dramatically improve the lives of teens.

What many don't realize, particularly parents, is how deeply social and emotional wellness is embedded in our adolescent sexual health work. Below are some key research backed insights that highlight this vital connection.

### What the Research Tells Us:

#### Preventing Early Risks Supports Mental Health:

Teens who avoid early pregnancy, STIs, sexual abuse, and interpersonal violence are significantly more likely to thrive academically and emotionally.

#### Building Core Social-Emotional Skills:

Comprehensive sex education enhances key competencies like self-awareness, emotional regulation, relationship skills, and even helps reduce suicidal ideation.

#### Improving Relationship Dynamics:

These programs improve teens' understanding of healthy dating behaviors and helps strengthen parent-child communication, both of which support emotional health.

#### LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education Reduces Harm:

Inclusive sex ed is linked to fewer mental health challenges across the board, including reduced suicidal thoughts and bullying, especially among LGBTQ+ and minority youth.

#### Positive Impact Across Grade Levels:

Students exposed to comprehensive sex ed show increased empathy, self-control, respect for others, a stronger sense of safety, improved self-esteem, and more positive relationships.

#### Long-Term Benefits:

Ignoring adolescent sexual health can have lasting consequences well into adulthood, impacting mental health, physical health, and life opportunities.

#### Early Intervention Matters:

When age-appropriate abuse prevention is introduced early, young children develop critical skills to protect themselves, recognize unsafe situations, and speak up when something isn't right.

### THE BOTTOM LINE:

Comprehensive sex education isn't just about physical health it's a powerful tool for supporting the whole child.

By addressing social and emotional wellness alongside sexual health, we give teens the foundation they need to thrive, not just now, but for life.

Research compiled by Team GCAPP



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