


## Working with Diverse Communities Update July 2014

Greetings from JSI!

In recent months, some Part A grantees have been reaching out to faith-based organizations (FBOs) in their service area, in an effort to enhance community-wide networks of support for local teens, and to help supplement and sustain their teen pregnancy prevention activities.

This [tip sheet](#) from the ACT for Youth Center of Excellence offers practical strategies for engaging and partnering with FBOs around teen pregnancy and STD/HIV prevention efforts.

**Engaging Faith Communities in Teen Pregnancy, STD/HIV Prevention Efforts**



**Why Connect with Faith Communities?**

Faith communities may share your vision and goals. Many religious communities are committed to making the world a better place for children, developing youth leadership, and making a difference at the local level. Many have a social justice focus that is expressed through service in local communities. Some faith-based organizations will be able to work with you directly on teen pregnancy prevention; others will be able to join your efforts to prepare youth for adulthood.

It's good to have Faith on your side. When you are advocating for community change, it's good to have the doubt and strong community ties that many faith communities bring to the table.

Faith communities are connected to youth. Many religious organizations sponsor youth groups, and frequently these groups are active or interested in social change and community service. Some congregations offer safe spaces for LGBT+ youth or runaway/homeless youth. Congregations like these have a wealth of experience and connections to bring to your initiative. Some are already offering positive sex education programs to youth in their congregations (for example, the "Our Whole Lives" curricula offered in many Unitarian churches).

**Which Faith Communities might Respond to Your Mission?**

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice lists its members on its website. While individual religious organizations will have their own approach to teen pregnancy and sexual health, these groups may be more open to the topic.

<http://www.rcrcoalition.org/about/rcrcoalition.cfm>

**Talking Points for Engaging Faith Communities**

**Describe Who You Are Succinctly**

"Your initiative [brings people together] to help youth stay healthy, avoid pregnancy, and achieve their goals. We need our community to be a place where teens have the support they need to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. We [have/are creating] a plan to reduce our community's high teen pregnancy rates by expanding access to proven education programs, health services, and youth development opportunities."

**What's in it for the Faith Community?**

**Making a difference:** "In our community, teen pregnancy rates are higher than the state average. We believe we can help teens change those statistics. It turns out that when young people have genuine opportunities to work toward fulfilling their dreams, they're motivated to stay healthy and avoid pregnancy. By becoming involved, you can help us create those opportunities in our community."

**Community outreach:** "Participation in our effort may help your faith community develop new community connections."

**Your services:** You may find that religious organizations are interested in a variety of education services that you can provide.

- **Cherry and lay leader professional development:** Religious leaders help members of their congregations cope with all kinds of personal matters, but they are not necessarily experts in sexual health services and counseling. They may be interested in an in-

If you are interested in technical assistance related to expanding community partnerships in teen pregnancy prevention initiatives, please [contact JSI](#).

For more tools and resources on working with diverse communities, visit our [website](#).

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