

## *The California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom: Stop, Listen and Talk with Teens about Sex*

In March 1999, the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom (CCRF), a diverse coalition of 29 statewide groups that have been committed to protecting reproductive freedom for over 20 years, offered FowlerHoffman a daunting challenge. They wanted the firm to develop and implement a public education campaign to promote parent-child communication on reproductive health issues and to build public support for teen access to confidential reproductive health services. And time was of the essence: The year before, a ballot initiative requiring parental consent for minors' abortions failed to qualify for the November ballot, but anti-choice activists regrouped and vowed to try again for the 2000 ballot.

Research conducted by the polling firm Lake, Snell, Perry on behalf of CCRF showed that the issue of parental consent challenged even the most ardent pro-choice supporters who tended to view it as an issue of parental control rather than reproductive rights. Lake, Snell, Perry suggested that CCRF embark on a long-term approach to promoting parent-child communication about sex, thereby establishing the Coalition's credibility as a trusted resource and opening up opportunities to extend the dialogue to parental consent issues.

With the potential ballot initiatives looming FowlerHoffman set to work, conducting extensive message development research. The resulting project became known as **Family Communication: Stop, Listen and Talk with Teens about Sex**, with CCRF's own membership its first audience.

By the end of the first year, the project had met with much success, including the distribution of over 15,000 copies of the Family Communication: Stop, Listen and Talk with Teens about Sex brochure and Tips for Talking with Teens poster. This led to requests from member organizations for additional copies, resulting in a reprint of more than 140,000 brochures. In addition, more than 50 speakers were trained at five sites across California, a Web site was developed to house resource lists and downloadable materials, and existing teen pregnancy prevention educational programs approached CCRF with interest in their concepts for parent-child communication and access for teens.



In 2000, CCRF partnered with the San Mateo County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition and the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Network to develop a San Mateo Community Education Pilot Project based on Family Communication's concepts for parent-child communication and access for teens. This project was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and allowed CCRF to produce the Stop, Listen and Talk with Teens about Sex brochure and Tips for Talking with Teens poster in Spanish and Tagalog.

FowlerHoffman helped CCRF to develop a much-needed tool to encourage parents to talk with their kids about sex, and at a crucial time made great strides towards educating pro-choice supporters about the need to protect minors' access to confidential reproductive health services. Fortunately, the threat of new ballot initiatives never materialized, as anti-choice supporters failed to gather enough signatures for the 2000 election. Thanks to FowlerHoffman and CCRF, California's pro-choice community is better prepared to fight similar threats in the future.

For more information, please visit [www.familycommunication.org](http://www.familycommunication.org)