

***Real Life. Real Talk.*®: Creating Engagement in Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Parents, Teens, Families, and Communities**

BY REBECCA BROOKES, THOMAS C. LEHMAN, SUSAN MAGUIRE, PETER MITCHELL, VIKINA A. MEJIA, TIM JOHNSON-ARAMAKI AND ESTELLE M. RABONI

Abstract

From 2004 to 2008, in four U.S. test markets, Planned Parenthood® Federation of America implemented *Real Life. Real Talk.*®, an initiative designed to foster open, honest, and balanced communication about sex and health among parents/caregivers, their children, and the general public. Funded by private donors and foundations, including the Ford Foundation, *Real Life. Real Talk.* combined community organizing and collaboration, education, community events, and promotion in an intervention that addressed the entire marketing mix. Through building local grassroots partnerships and providing a host of coordinated local educational events, including repeated offerings of *Sex Ed for Parents*™, *Real Life. Real Talk.* sought to reduce the public's level of shame, intolerance, and avoidance and, subsequently, to increase openness, acceptance, and engagement about issues of sexual health. Parents who participated in *Sex Ed for Parents* reported that these events were useful, and nearly all participating parents said they would recommend *Sex Ed for Parents* to a friend. Results from community-wide surveys show modest program awareness and several promising trends that correspond with the goals of the initiative. *Real Life. Real Talk.* is an example of community-level social marketing that evolved for continual improvement. *Real Life. Real Talk.* maintained an iterative design and implementation process. It allowed each community to embrace engagement on its own terms, and, as a result, each community contributed unique cultural elements.