

What is Prevention First Colorado?

Prevention First Colorado is a program and coalition run by NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado Foundation. Our mission is to increase contraception use and reduce unintended pregnancies in the state of Colorado. We believe that every child should be a wanted child, and that everyone should have access to family planning services that allow for reproductive choice, greater economic self-sufficiency, and healthier families.

Prevention First Colorado Program Focus Groups

The third phase of the research process was a series of focus groups sessions. Each of the four focus groups consisted of five to eleven women and each one was conducted in Denver between April, 2008 and June, 2008. The focus group sessions were conducted by BBC Research & Consulting and followed the first phase research survey distributed through Colorado clinics and the second phase statewide randomized telephone survey. Two focus groups were held with women aged 18-33 and two with women aged 30-44. Women in the groups were not pregnant and were on Medicaid or had been on Medicaid in the past three years. The women were recruited by BBC Research & Consulting and were offered an incentive of \$75. Because the telephone survey had demonstrated a need to approach Latinas with questions worded differently, all women who participated in the focus groups were non-Latina.

Focus Group Findings

- The most reported barrier to contraceptive use was trouble with side effects. General references to “side effects” occurred 19 times over three of the four focus groups.
- Weight gain and bleeding were most often cited as specific side effects that deterred women from using contraceptives.
- Restrictions on smoking pertaining to certain contraceptive methods were reported as a barrier to contraceptive use in three of the four groups.
- Other side effects mentioned included moodiness, allergic reactions, cramping, risk of high blood pressure, headaches, irregular periods, bloating, clotting, dizziness, loss of appetite, loss of sex drive, nausea, pain, and discomfort.
- The second most often reported barrier to contraceptive use mentioned in all four focus groups was lack of motivation to use contraceptives that resulted in their inconsistent use. Also women mentioned inconvenience, “laziness,” and “just not thinking” as reasons for not using contraceptives.
- Other reasons for lack of motivation included forgetting, being too busy, contraception being a low priority, difficulty of using contraceptives, and difficulty maintaining a schedule. For example, women reported trouble remembering to take a pill at the same time every day.
- Often women expressed uncertainty as to why they were not motivated to use contraceptives.
- Trouble with side effects and lack of motivation to use contraceptives were often connected, as women who expressed frustration with side effects also reported that this contributed to their inconsistent use of contraceptives.
- Some women indicated a lack of education or a belief in myths about contraceptives; for example, their belief that withdrawal is an effective birth control method caused some women to not use other more effective methods of contraception.
- Cost and access were barriers for some women. Problems included lack of insurance, difficulty getting transportation to a place where they could obtain contraceptives, and difficulty finding a doctor who would accept their insurance.
- Some women had been deterred from using contraceptives by stories of negative experiences from their friends or family members or by their partner not wanting to use contraceptives.

- Some women expressed uncertainty or disgust about the idea of contraceptives, or described them as “not right in the moment”.
- Having sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol was another reason cited for not using contraceptives.