



Information Packet

Pregnancy Prevention for Youth in Foster Care

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Overview

Teenage pregnancy and child bearing has been a pressing concern in the United States for many years. While the numbers of teenage birthrates have been decreasing (there were 273,105 teen births in 2013 – a -10% change from 2012), the numbers are still alarmingly high and the result is costly for children and families as well as for American tax payers. Proactively preventing teen and unplanned pregnancy, as well as other serious social problems (such as poverty, child abuse and neglect, father-absence, low birth weight, school failure, and poor preparation for the workforce) can and should be improved.

Females in foster care are 2.5 times more likely to become pregnant at an early age than their peers not in foster care. This is in part because foster youth have inconsistent relationships with adults, experience less stability in their living arrangements, might have a history of trauma, and generally have less access to information regarding prevention. There are not any consistent policies or any guidance for child welfare workers - which presents a challenge to the children, youth, and families' field.

There is a cyclical trend that occurs – females who become pregnant at a young age often were raised or born from a teenage mother as well. Teenage pregnancy may also begin a life trajectory with fewer opportunities for educational success, which can hinder career success, and exacerbates conditions of poverty. In order to see the numbers of teenage birth rates and teenage pregnancies decrease substantially, it is important to prevent pregnancies through education and supportive services – particularly for children in foster care. Currently, there are no evidence-based sexual health interventions uniquely tailored to the needs of youth in or at risk for foster care.

Fact Sheet

- In the United States, in 2010 there were approximately 614,000 pregnancies to women younger than age 20 and the pregnancy rate was 57.4 per 1,000 women ages 15-19 (The National Campaign, 2014).
- The teen pregnancy rate has declined by 51% since its peak in 1990, and by 15% since 2008. In 2013, among high school students who were sexually active, 86% reported using any method of contraception the last time they had sex (The National Campaign, 2014).
- In the United States, a teen girl that is in foster care is 2.5 times more likely to become pregnant by the age of 19 compared to her peers that are not in foster care (Leonard, Dixon, Fantroy & Lafferty, 2013).
- Approximately half of 21-year-old males transitioning out of foster care have impregnated a partner in comparison to only 19% of peers not in foster care (Leonard, Dixon, Fantroy & Lafferty, 2013).
- Repeat pregnancies are more common for foster youth (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010).
- Young girls that either: stay in foster families for a longer period of time, are in group care, and/or have fewer total placements have less probability of becoming pregnant (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010).
- Teenage pregnancy and childbirth is frequently associated with poverty, unemployment, and dependence on public services – additionally many teenagers who become pregnant have mothers who gave birth as teenagers and/or were raised in single-parent home (Smith, Gilmer, Salge, Dickerson & Wilson, 2012).

Best Practice Tips

- A dual emphasis on abstinence and on use of protection for those who do have sex can be effective (Kirby & Laris, 2009).
- Sexual health prevention programs should include skills related to contraception and prevention, but also include general life skills such as decision making, problem solving, and communication (Boustani, Frazier, Hartley, Meinzer & Hedemann, 2015).
- Many adolescents may engage in more than one risky behavior at a time. By identifying common elements across effective prevention programs, we can begin to identify theoretical and programmatic components that allow for greater synthesis of knowledge collected over decades of research (Rotheram-Borus, Swendeman & Chorpita, 2012).
- Because sex education and teen pregnancy can be controversial, developing a broad base of community involvement in assessment, planning, and implementation enhance the likelihood of community buy-in and program effectiveness (Harris & Allgood, 2009).
- New motherhood can be an opportunity to heal and renew oneself for young women aging out of foster care by increasing a sense of purpose and agency within a family relationship – however, support is needed in order for this time to not turn into an increased risk (Pryce & Samuels, 2010).
- In order to have successful transition of youth out of the foster care system, there needs to be, among many things, stability in housing and personal relationships as well as additional parenting assistance since they are less likely to have a family to provide helpful consultation about successful parenting (Svobida, Shaw, Barth, & Bright, 2012)

Model Practice

Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential (GCAPP) Second Chance Homes

<http://www.gcapp.org/second-chance-homes>

The Second Chance Homes Network (SCH) is a program in Georgia that helps teen mothers become self-sufficient by providing them a stable living environment, educational support to complete high school, parenting skills, and life skills. The ultimate goal is the avoidance of a repeat teen pregnancy and to put the young mothers on a firm path of long-term economic independence. Other services are available through partnerships with community agencies in areas such as mentoring, financial education, volunteerism, career support, and employment. In addition to SCH, GCAPP received funding for an Intensive Transitional Living Support program which serves 40 homeless pregnant and parenting young women (ages 16-21) who need housing and other transitional living support. Participants of this program will receive comprehensive case management services, and parenting and life skills instruction.

Websites & Other Resources*Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*

<http://hiltonfoundation.org/>

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation supports foster youth as they transition to adulthood. The foundation has partners in Los Angeles and New York City. The support by the Conrad Hilton foundation helps agencies strengthen their services and increase best practice research in child welfare – pregnant and parenting teens are one of their populations targeted for services and funding.

Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential

<http://www.gcapp.org/home>

This website is specific to Georgia residents – but has a lot of information regarding programs that promote the development of healthy children and families. Included in the various programs are Second Chance Homes, Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) which educates high risk youth on both abstinence and contraception for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and other education programs to spread knowledge.

Inwood House

<http://inwoodhouse.com/>

Inwood house is a non-profit organization in New York City serving teenagers with preventive pregnancy services, as well as services for teenage parents and teenagers who are pregnant.

Inwood house offers a wide range of resources: education, mental health and employment help for young parents as well as adolescents who are not parents.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

<http://thenationalcampaign.org/>

This website is full of information regarding current statistics on teenage pregnancy in the United States. The National Campaign regularly publishes information on their work – and one can subscribe to their newsletters online or purchase information resources. Additionally, The National Campaign Fund provides a limited number of grants to support activities that advance the mission of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

Office of Adolescent Health

<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/>

The office's purpose is to promote the health and wellbeing of adolescents to enable them to become healthy and productive adults. The website offers resources for adolescents seeking information regarding mental health, reproductive health, and physical health. The site also offers tips on healthy relationships and information regarding substance abuse. The site includes links for professionals who work with this population as well.

St. Anne's

<http://www.stannes.org/>

St. Anne's is an organization in Los Angeles that serves the needs of at-risk pregnant and parenting young women and children. The organization works with the most abandoned, abused and neglected young women and their children. Most of the women they serve come from the foster system or have been in abusive homes. The goal of the organization is to educate and break the cycles of homelessness, poverty abuse and neglect. The site offers many resources available to these young women.

Policies and Legislations

In December of 2009, President Barack Obama signed a \$114.5 million dollar teen pregnancy prevention initiative into law. This initiative is a revolutionary change and replaces many rigid and non-effective abstinence-only programs. The new piece of legislation opens the door for more effective preventive services for teenagers. The law will be administered by the Office of Adolescent Health within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS), along with the Administration for Children and Families, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and other relevant DHHS agencies (Wind, 2010).

Another enactment that has provided support and preventive services for teenage pregnancy is the Fostering Connections Act in 2008. This act increased support by letting states use federal funds to provide foster care, adoption and guardianship assistance to eligible youth past the age of 18 and up to 21. This act helps foster youth delay pregnancy and childbearing because states are required to develop a transition plan for youths as they age out of the system .

The act is guided by the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) and states that ‘transitional plans’ should be personalized and include options in regards to housing, health care, education and local employment. Furthermore, in 2010 the Consolidated Appropriations Act replaced the community-based grants for abstinence only education. This was administered by the Office of Adolescent Health within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health. Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) is funded under the Affordable Care Act and administered by ACYF. The PREP program creates better opportunities for youth in the foster care system in regards to pregnancy prevention programs. Under this act, the funds must be used to reach at risk youth, including those who are homeless, out of school, or in foster care (Boonstra, 2011).

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