

No. 23

## Pregnancy Prevention in WIA Youth Programs

Cheryl R. Sturko Grossman

2007



*Youthwork Information Briefs* are sponsored by Ohio Department of Job and Family Services - ODJFS, Office of Workforce Development, Bureau of Workforce Services.

Postponed and responsible parenting are among the positive social behaviors cited as appropriate outcomes for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) leadership development opportunities. Delaying parenthood makes it more likely that youth can successfully complete their education and prepare for adult family and workplace roles.

### Youth Sexuality and Pregnancy Statistics

Adolescent pregnancy and birth rates in the United States have been declining since the early 1990s but are still among the highest in the developed world. Between 750,000 and 1 million adolescents become pregnant each year in the U.S. The rate of pregnancy in the U.S. is twice as high as in England, Wales, or Canada and nine times as high as in Japan or the Netherlands.

#### Youth Sexuality and Pregnancy Statistics

- 45 percent of high school females and 48 percent of high school males have had sexual intercourse.
- By age 15, approximately 25 percent of all youth have had sexual intercourse; high proportions of sexually active girls (60-74 percent) who are 15 or younger report *involuntary* sexual activity.
- The teen pregnancy rate declined 28 percent between 1990 and 2002. Approximately 20-25 percent of the decline can be attributed to greater abstinence; 75-80 percent to better contraceptive practices.
- Young adult men who have sex with women who are more than six years younger are *less* likely to use contraception and *more* likely to get their partner pregnant.
- The teen birthrate has fallen from 96 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in 1957 to 61.8 in 1991 then to 49 in 2000 and 40.4 in 2005.
- Births to unmarried adolescents have risen from 13 percent of all teen births in 1950 to 79 percent in 2000. Births to unmarried teens now account for 31 percent of all nonmarital births in the U.S.
- 25 percent of teenage mothers have a second child within two years of their first.

### Who Is At-Risk for Early Parenthood?

Many of the factors that result in a youth being eligible for WIA programs, such as poverty or being in foster care, have also been identified as risk factors for early sexuality and, consequently, early parenthood.

### Risk Factors for Early Sexuality and Early Parenthood

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Being in foster care</li> <li>• History of sexual or physical abuse</li> <li>• Early puberty</li> <li>• Early dating behavior</li> <li>• Previous pregnancy</li> <li>• Peer or relative who was/is an adolescent mother</li> <li>• Child of an adolescent mother</li> <li>• Poor communication or relationships with parents</li> <li>• Socially isolated; few friends</li> <li>• Mixed messages about sexuality from media, family, church</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dropout or poor school performance</li> <li>• Weak attachment to school, work, and community (does not participate in clubs, sports, dances, or other events)</li> <li>• Sexual relationship with significantly older (6+ years) male</li> <li>• Inadequate knowledge of or access to contraceptives</li> <li>• Substance use or abuse (alcohol, drugs, tobacco)</li> <li>• Low expectations for the future</li> <li>• Depression or mental illness</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Low self-concept</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Consequences of Early Parenthood

Early parenthood can negatively affect many people: the mother, the father, the baby, both parents' families, and society as a whole.

### Effects of Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting on ...

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mother</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mothers under age 17 have more medical complications than adult mothers, such as poor maternal weight gain, premature births, pregnancy-induced hypertension, anemia, and sexually transmitted diseases. Although still low, maternal mortality for youth is about double the rate for older women.</li> <li>• Adolescent mothers are more likely than women who delay childbearing to live in poverty, depend on public assistance, be single parents, have limited job opportunities, and have more children.</li> <li>• About 30 percent of adolescent mothers complete high school; adolescent mothers are less likely to attend college than women who delay childbirth.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Father</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adolescent fathers complete fewer years of education and are more likely to have low wage jobs.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Child</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infants born to adolescent mothers are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight, or die within 28 days of birth.</li> <li>• Children born to adolescent mothers have increased risk of developmental delay, academic difficulties, behavioral disorders, substance abuse, early sexual activity, depression, and becoming adolescent parents themselves.</li> <li>• Some studies suggest that young maternal age is a risk factor for abuse.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Family/<br/>Grandparents</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family members, often grandparents, may have to provide child care or other services that may reduce their own income or affect other family responsibilities.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Society</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nearly 80 percent of adolescent mothers receive welfare payments at some point.</li> <li>• Nationally, adolescent childbearing costs taxpayers at least \$9.1 billion a year.</li> <li>• In Ohio, teen childbearing cost taxpayers (federal, state, and local) at least \$352 million in 2004; 61 percent of this is borne by state and local taxpayers.</li> </ul>  |

## Effective Strategies for Working with Youth at Risk for Early Parenthood

Because youth at risk of pregnancy and early parenthood may already be involved in youth programs, WIA providers and staff should incorporate pregnancy prevention whenever possible in order to fulfill their mission to help youth successfully transition to adult roles. WIA programs should emphasize a comprehensive approach.

- Offer comprehensive family life education programs that address the biological, sociocultural, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of sexuality.
- Provide life skills education, including assertiveness and decision-making skills training.
- Refer youth to agencies that can address issues of mental health, substance use, and sexual abuse.
- As part of a comprehensive family planning program, encourage abstinence and provide abstinence education to discourage first and subsequent adolescent pregnancies.
- As part of a comprehensive family planning program, encourage contraceptive use for sexually active youth. Research has found that sexuality education programs that provide information about contraception *do not* increase sexual activity of youth.
- Actively recruit young men into pregnancy prevention programs.
- Give parents guidance and background information, and encourage them to counsel their adolescent about sexuality. Parents have more influence than they might suspect.
- Provide leadership activities and other opportunities for satisfying interactions with peers and adults.
- Increase access to affordable family planning services including health, education, and counseling services related to birth control, contraception, pregnancy testing and counseling, adoption, and information and referral.

## The Good News

Many youth have access to protective factors that balance risk factors. Good communication within families, unambiguous expectations for sexuality, strong religious faith and practice, and strong connections with family, friends, community, or school all affect adolescent pregnancy rates. By providing comprehensive adolescent pregnancy prevention programs, WIA programs can contribute to good outcomes for youth.

## Sources

- Boonstra, H. (2002, Feb). Teen pregnancy: Trends and lessons learned. *Guttmacher Report on Public Policy*, p. 7-10. Retrieved November 1, 2006, from <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/tgr/05/1/gr050107.pdf>
- Child Welfare League of America. (n.d.). *Best practices for teen pregnancy prevention and parenting programs*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 3, 2006, from <http://www.cwla.org/programs/pregprev/flocrittpractices.htm>
- Child Welfare League of America. (1998). *CWLA standards of excellence for services for adolescent pregnancy prevention, pregnant adolescents, and young parents*. (Revised edition.) Washington, DC: Author.
- Child Welfare League of America. (2005). *Pregnant and parenting adolescents: Facts and figures*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 3, 2006, from <http://www.cwla.org/programs/pregprev/flocritttrends.htm>

- Committee on Adolescence & Klein, J.D. (2005, July). Adolescent pregnancy: Current trends and issues. *Pediatrics*, 116, 281-286. Retrieved October 10, 2006, from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/116/1/281>
- Family and Youth Services Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *YES! Youth empowerment strategies for all: Working with pregnant and parenting youth*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 3, 2006, from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/aboutfysb/yes\\_pregnant.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/aboutfysb/yes_pregnant.htm)
- Government Printing Office. (2006, November 30). *Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. Title 20: Employee benefits. Part 664: Youth activities under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 30, 2006, from <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=e721d4363e9aee9b2b3fb5fbadd2015&rgn=div5&view=text&node=20:3.0.2.1.41&idno=20>
- Guttmacher Institute. (2006, September). *U.S. teenage pregnancy statistics: National and state trends and trends by race and ethnicity*. New York, NY: Author. Retrieved November 8, 2006, from <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/09/12/USTPstats.pdf>
- Institute for Educational Leadership. (1999, May). *School-based and school-linked programs for pregnant and parenting teens and their children. A synthesis of conference proceedings (November 5-6, 1997, Washington, DC)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Maynard, R.A. (Ed.). (1997). *Kids having kids: Economic costs and social consequences of teen pregnancy*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (2006, November). *By the numbers: The public costs of teen childbearing in Ohio*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved January 3, 2007, from [http://www.teenpregnancy.org/costs/pdf/fact\\_sheet/OH\\_Final.pdf](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/costs/pdf/fact_sheet/OH_Final.pdf)
- National Network for Health. (2004, August 12). *Cooperative extension's position on adolescent pregnancy, parenting, and sexuality*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved July 24, 2006, from <http://www.nnh.org/products/position2.htm>
- Terry-Humen, E., Manlove, J., & Moore, K. (2005, January). *Playing catch-up: How the children of teen mothers fare*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Retrieved November 3, 2006, from <http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/PlayingCatchup.pdf>
- Troccoli, K. (Ed.). (2006, February). *It's a guy thing: Boys, young men, and teen pregnancy prevention*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Retrieved November 3, 2006, from [http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading/pdf/Guy\\_Thing.pdf](http://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading/pdf/Guy_Thing.pdf)
- Workforce Investment Act of 1998*. P.L. 105-220. Retrieved November 30, 2006, from <http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/wialaw.pdf>

# Inspiring great youth work

LEARNINGWORK CONNECTION

LearningWork Connection is an initiative of the  
Center for Learning Excellence at The Ohio State University.

614/292-8665 | e-mail: [learningwork@osu.edu](mailto:learningwork@osu.edu)  
[www.learningworkconnection.org](http://www.learningworkconnection.org)

