

ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY INTERVENTIONS FOR BROWN COUNTY

**Prepared by the Brown County Adolescent Parenting Coalition and the
Brown County Health Department**

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STATUS OF TEEN PREGNANCY IN BROWN COUNTY

Statistics from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services shows that 262 Brown County teens gave birth in 2004 (the most recent data available). This represents 8% of total births to Brown County families and means that 30.7 out of every 1000 female teenagers gave birth that year. Only three counties had more births to teens than Brown County – Milwaukee, Dane and Racine. Statistics for the city of Green Bay (exclusive of the rest of Brown County) show the rate of teen pregnancy is 56.0 compared to 25.5 for the City of Madison.

What we know about teen parents:

- 65% of teen moms have been sexually assaulted as children
- 80% have grown up in poverty
- 70% will not have a high school diploma by age 30
- the sons of teen moms are 13% more likely to end up in prison
- the daughters of teen moms are 22% more likely to become teen mothers

In order to impact on teen pregnancy in Brown County and assure the health and wellbeing of teen parents and their children two major components must be addressed - pregnancy prevention and parenting support.

PREVENTION

Research based data show the following services can be effective in reducing adolescent pregnancy. Limited services are in place in Brown County but not at an adequate level to impact significantly on the teen birth rate.

Education:

Students: Students need to be informed of the consequences of early sexual activity and pregnancy before they begin engaging in risk taking behaviors. Both females and males need to understand the impact of parenting at an early age. Relationship education and counseling are key component in this process.

Parents: Parents need to develop skills that include addressing sexuality issues with their children. Parents also need to know what factors contribute to teen pregnancy.

Providers/Professionals: Youth serving organizations, clergy, health care providers, etc. need to be informed about the issue and invest in prevention efforts. Professionals must collaborate and provide a comprehensive continuum of care, without duplicating services. Research shows the services must be offered in a multidisciplinary setting and span the developmental years of adolescence. Short-term interventions are not effective.

Community: Community leaders, elected officials, businesses, etc need to understand the impact of teen pregnancy and invest in prevention efforts. The community impact of teen

pregnancy is both economic and social. Increased rates of teen pregnancy affect: graduation rates, abuse and neglect statistics, optimal development of the babies, welfare utilization rates, poverty levels, and the intergenerational cycle of teen pregnancy.

Case Management:

There are clear indicators of which teens are at highest risk of becoming pregnant. A case management model of working one-on-one with at-risk youth has proven effective in preventing pregnancy. The goals of the current 411 Case Management Program in Brown County are to increase assets and self esteem; help identify life goals and skills to achieve them; and assist in developing methods to resist peer pressure with a resulting decrease in risk taking behaviors.

Sexual Assault Prevention:

Many of the adolescents that become pregnant are victims of sexual assault. Many are also impregnated by adult males. It is imperative that this issue be addressed at both social and legal levels to decrease teen pregnancies.

PARENTING SUPPORT

Many challenges face teens if they do become pregnant. Since most teens reject adoption and decide to parent their child, resulting problems are usually inter-related and difficulty in one area leads to difficulties in multiple areas. Support is needed to assure that the children of teen parents reach their full potential. Interventions are needed in the following areas:

Case Management

Case Management Services have been shown to be critical in the success of teen parents. Multiple studies have shown that when pregnant and parenting teens receive intensive services, everyone wins (moms, babies, and the community). Case management is the glue that can pull all the pieces together for these extremely fragile young families.

Completion of High School Education

Without a high school education it is very hard to find employment with an adequate wage to support a family. Statistics for the number of Brown County teen parents that drop out of high school are not available. However, nationally 70% of teen mothers do not have a high school diploma by the time they are 30 years of age. If teens cannot complete their education in a traditional school there is a monetary cost associated with non-traditional options such as PASS, GED, etc.; this is often a barrier to getting a diploma. Failure to complete high school often results in families living in poverty and depending on social support programs to meet basic living needs.

Housing

Many teen mothers come from dysfunctional families and frequently cannot live safely with their family of origin due to violence, substance abuse and other issues. Options for safe housing before 18 years of age are extremely limited because most shelters are not able to admit women until they have reached the age of majority. This results in teen mothers and their child (children) living in unsafe situations.

Child Care

Child care is critical for teen mothers to successfully complete high school and maintain jobs. Because many teen mothers cannot qualify for subsidized child care they either drop out of school or leave children with inappropriate/unsafe providers.

Financial

Many teens are impregnated by older men who fail to pay child support. Although the child support system makes every attempt to collect payments they are often not successful. Because many programs use the adolescent's parent's income to determine eligibility, teen mothers are frequently denied needed services. Their parents often either cannot or will not assist, which results in lack of support/services.

Transportation

Transportation is needed for teen parents to get to school, jobs, medical appointments, etc. Many do not have the resources to even pay for the bus, much less purchase and maintain a car. There is additional time needed to maneuver the bus system, which may contribute to difficulty attending school, maintaining employment, keeping appointments, etc. For example, a teen mother might need over two hours if she has to take the bus to drop her baby off at childcare before catching another bus to school.

Mental Health Needs

Many teen mothers suffer from depression and other mental health issues. Treatment options are limited. This impacts not only on the mother's health but on the health and wellbeing of her child (children). Regular assessments and ongoing services are essential in helping teen parents overcome the traumas that often haunt their lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Brown County Adolescent Parenting Coalition makes the following recommendations:

- Adequate resources, including new revenue streams, need to be identified to assure that effective prevention interventions and parenting support programs are available in Brown County.
- Already established community collaborations need to be supported and new ones encouraged.
- The broad community must be engaged and involved in this issue to resolve the problem of adolescent pregnancy and parenting.
- Services need to be provided in settings where youth are readily accessible such as schools, churches, and community youth activity centers.
- It is critical to assure that all children have the support needed to succeed as this is a significant factor in preventing teen pregnancy.
- A community advocate (a paid staff position) needs to be created to:
 - Develop community resources
 - Monitor pregnancy rates
 - Disseminate best practice models
 - Evaluate current services
 - Advocate for the needs of adolescents in Brown County.This position should be housed in a neutral setting and not attached to a program or agency that will be seeking funding to provide services.
- A summit should be held with community providers and elected County officials to discuss the issues identified in this report and to develop viable long-term solutions.