

## Promoting What Works: Approaches for Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents

### GAPS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION IN PROGRAMMING

Symposium of the  
Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs and  
Office of Population Affairs

May 18, 2011

*Darlene L. Shearer MPH, DrPH*  
Department of Public Health  
[darlene.shearer@wku.edu](mailto:darlene.shearer@wku.edu)



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Programming Perspective: Introductory Remarks

- Adolescent pregnancy – something to be feared yet something that we dare not ignore
- Collectively our experience and knowledge is vast
- Adolescent mothers are prone to live in poor conditions, lack sufficient financial resources, suffer high stress, experience family instability, and have limited educational opportunities.
- While on our watch some adolescents do well, some don't.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### What we already know

- There is a plethora of programs to prevent adolescent pregnancy and ameliorate its consequences
- Some programs are more successful than others
- Youth need to be connected, engaged, and empowered
- Parents are a primary source of socialization and influence
- Adolescent parents and their children need additional social support and education
- Programs for adolescent mothers generally improve knowledge, confidence, and parenting skills, employability, and graduation rates

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gaps in Programming: **Access**

- Limited availability of comprehensive programs
- Not enough interventions are available at multiple points in time
- Programs don't always engage in continual outreach

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gaps in Programming: **Implementation**

- Insufficient resources
- Inadequately trained staff
- Ineffective management training and staff training

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gaps in Programming: **Content**

- Developmental needs of participants not always considered or addressed
- Strong psychological perspective may be lacking
- Limited follow up services – especially school-based and other clinic settings
- Program content and curricula don't address needs of all or targeted adolescents

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Gaps in Programming: **Populations**

- Increasing need to target particular at-risk groups:
  - Latina teens
  - teens with gang affiliations
- Urgent need to identify and serve marginalized groups:
  - teens in foster care
  - homeless and runaway youth
  - children of immigrants
  - LGBTQ youth
  - adjudicated youth
  - disabled youth
- Asian and Pacific Islanders are not one group; they have different risks and outcomes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*“We must move out of our comfort zones of believing we have achieved cultural competence and challenge our norms regarding what we think it means to truly embrace all youth.”*

(Healthy Teen Network (2008) Preventing teen pregnancy among marginalized youth.)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Challenges

- Complexities of adolescent pregnancy and parenting
- Sufficient intervention exposure to change behavior
- Tailoring programs for literacy needs and racial and individual differences
- Understanding rapidly growing world of technology and effect on family and adolescent development
- Selection, matching, and training of mentors and volunteers
- Staff attrition

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Challenges (cont'd)

- Community or agency politics
- Stressors of families, parents and teens
- Environmental conditions
- Multiply disadvantaged families
- Poverty and inequity
- Doing more with less

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Opportunities for Action

- Focus on culturally specific pregnancy interventions
- Don't under estimate the impact of motivational opportunities for teens
- Involve more community stakeholders
- Provide roles for parents
- Listen to teens more
- Involve and listen to boys and men
- More reviews of evaluation studies than ever – use them!
- Provide some funding opportunities for new twists or adaptation of interventions as long as rigorous evaluation is done

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Final Thoughts

- A missed opportunity – *most efforts to prevent teen births focus on the first birth*
- Community needs assessments are worth the effort
- Important choices to be made - *universal programming versus selected or indicated programming*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---