

# Making the Connection...

## TEEN PREGNANCY AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

It is important that young people in South Carolina succeed in school so they can thrive as adults. Unfortunately, becoming pregnant (or getting a partner pregnant) makes it hard for teens to do their best in school. Preventing teen pregnancy is one key factor in making sure that teens have the opportunity to achieve success in school. Conversely, school failure and disconnection from school are important risk factors for becoming pregnant as a teen.<sup>1</sup> Helping teens get involved and succeed in school can reduce the likelihood of teen pregnancy.

### SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

- Youth who are not engaged in school are more likely to engage in risky behaviors that can lead to teen pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>
- Teens who are engaged in school become sexually active later and are less likely to become pregnant in their teens, while students who drop out of school are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors and become pregnant.<sup>2</sup>

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- Many teens are engaging in risky behaviors. On the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:
  - 57% of high school students reported they had ever had sexual intercourse and 42% reported they had sex within the last three months. Among the students who were currently sexually active, 42% reported not using a condom the last time they had sex, and 26% reported they drank or used drugs before the last time they had sex.<sup>3</sup>
  - 71% of high school students report ever

drinking alcohol, and 22% reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks of alcohol at a time) within the last 30 days.<sup>3</sup>

- 44% of high school students report ever using marijuana, and 21% reported using a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription.<sup>3</sup>
- Fewer than three out of five students (59%) describe their grades in school as mostly A's or B's.<sup>3</sup>

### DROP-OUT

- One study found that only 51% of young women who became mothers as teens got their high school degree by the age of 22 compared to 89% of young women who were not teen parents.<sup>4</sup>
- Teen pregnancy can directly contribute to young women dropping out of school. One study found that 30% of teen girls identified pregnancy or parenting as a reason for dropping out of school.<sup>1</sup>

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- The state has one of the lowest high school graduation rates in the country. Only 66% of students entering 9th grade in the 2008-2009 school year graduated from high school within four years. Across the United States, 75.5% of students graduated during the same time period.<sup>5</sup>

### CHILDREN OF TEEN MOTHERS

- When entering kindergarten, children of teen mothers scored lower on reading and

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math assessments than children of mothers in their twenties.<sup>6</sup>

- Children of teen mothers are less likely to graduate from high school than children born to mothers who are 20 or 21.<sup>7</sup>

### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- More than one in four (21%) children in kindergarten were assessed as not being ready for the first grade in 2008.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2010, 7.4% of students failed first, second, or third grade. By the third grade, 22% of students tested below state standards in reading and 33% of students tested below state standards in math in 2009.<sup>8</sup>

## FOCUSING ON PREVENTION

The number of teens becoming parents in South Carolina has decreased by 26% over the last decade. The teen birth rate is now the lowest recorded since tracking began in 1980. Most recently from 2009 to 2010, our state saw a 13% decrease in the teen birth rate from 49.0 to 42.6 (per 1,000 girls).<sup>9</sup> Although the decreasing trend is encouraging, South Carolina's teen birth rate is still far above the national teen birth rate (34.3 births per 1,000 15-19 year old girls).<sup>10</sup> The close links between teen pregnancy and educational achievement mean that continued efforts to prevent teen pregnancy are a critical aspect of efforts to improve educational achievement among South Carolina youth.

Schools can play an important part in preventing pregnancy among their students in a number of ways. Striving to engage all students and intervening early with those at risk of dropping out can help students avoid a variety of problems, including teen pregnancy. In addition, schools can provide comprehensive health education using research proven approaches to pregnancy prevention designed to build

the knowledge, attitudes and skills that students need to avoid risky sexual behaviors. Schools can also reach out to teens who are pregnant or parenting to provide them the assistance they need to stay in school and avoid becoming pregnant again before they complete their education. By preventing teen pregnancy, more South Carolina young people will have the chance to complete their education and reach their goals.

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup>The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2010). *Why it Matters: Teen Pregnancy and Education*. Retrieved February, 2012 from <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/education.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Kirby, D. (2002). The impact of schools and school programs upon adolescent sexual behavior. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 39, 27-33

<sup>3</sup>South Carolina Department of Education. Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2011, South Carolina High School Survey, Summary Tables, weighted data. Retrieved February, 2012 from <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/os/Health-and-Nutrition/School-Health/documents/2011HSTables.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Perper, K., Peterson, K., & Manlove, J. (2010). *Diploma Attainment among Teen Mothers*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved February, 2012 from [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child\\_Trends-2010\\_01\\_22\\_FS\\_DiplomaAttainment.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2010_01_22_FS_DiplomaAttainment.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., and KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2009* (NCES 2012-006). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved February, 2012 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012006.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Terry-Humen, E., Manlove, J., & Moore, K. A. (2005). *Playing Catch-Up: How Children Born to Teen Mothers Fare*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Retrieved February, 2012 from <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/PlayingCatchUp.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. *Costs of Teen Childbearing: Consequences for the Children*. Retrieved February, 2012 from [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/costs/pdf/report/5-BTN\\_Consequences\\_Children.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/costs/pdf/report/5-BTN_Consequences_Children.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, Profile for South Carolina. Retrieved February, 2012 from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/stateprofile.aspx?state=SC&group=All&loc=42&dt=1%2c3%2c2%2c4>

<sup>9</sup>SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, Division of Biostatistics and Health GIS, Office of Public Health and Statistics and Information Systems, 2010 Teen Birth Data (2011).

<sup>10</sup>CDC/NCHS, Division of Vital Statistics.