

# Making the Connection...



## TEEN PREGNANCY AND HEALTHY CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Teen pregnancy can be linked to a host of other social issues including foster care, welfare, child abuse and negative birth outcomes - all of which have a direct connection to the Department of Social Services. Because teen pregnancy often creates vulnerable families who face intense pressures beyond their years, many teen parents are led to use the child welfare system and other means of assistance. An investment in teen pregnancy prevention will ultimately have a ripple effect on multiple social issues in addition to saving taxpayers millions.

### FOSTER CARE

- Teen girls in foster care are 2.5 times more likely to experience a pregnancy than their peers not in foster care.
- Young teen mothers (aged 17 and younger) are 2.2 times more likely to have a child placed in foster care than mothers who delay childbearing until age 20 or 21.
- Teen mothers ages 18-19 are about 1/3 more likely to have a child placed in foster care than mothers who had their first child at age 20 or 21.

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- There are more than 7,500 children in foster care.<sup>1</sup>
- 6% of Medicaid enrolled 18-19 year olds who became pregnant in 2006 were in foster care as children.<sup>2</sup>

### CHILD WELL-BEING

- Children of teen parents suffer higher rates of abuse and neglect than children of

mothers that delayed childbearing.

- Girls in high school who reported experiencing dating violence were four to six times more likely to have ever been pregnant than peers who had not experienced dating violence.
- Infants of teen mothers are at increased risk of being born prematurely.

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- 13% of babies born to 15-17 year olds and 11% of babies born to 18-19 year olds are low birth weight.<sup>4</sup>
- 15% of pregnant 18-19 year olds on Medicaid in 2006 were abused as children.<sup>2</sup>
- 13% of pregnant 18-19 year olds on Medicaid in 2006 had high risk pregnancies.<sup>2</sup>
- 27% of pregnant 18-19 year olds on Medicaid in 2006 had been involved in the Department of Juvenile Justice.<sup>2</sup>

### POVERTY

- Two-thirds of families that are poor were begun by a young unmarried mother.
- Almost 1/2 of all teen mothers began receiving welfare within five years of the birth of their first child.
- Over half (52%) of all mothers on welfare had their first child as a teenager.
- Nearly 80% of fathers do not marry the teen mother of their child and pay less than \$800 annually in child support.

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- 24% of children live in poverty - that is less than \$17,100 for a family of three.<sup>1</sup>

### EDUCATION

- Parenthood is the leading cause of school drop out among teen girls.
- Children of teen mothers are 50% more likely to repeat a grade, less likely to complete high school and have lower performance on standardized tests.
- Less than half of mothers age 17 and younger ever graduate from high school.

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- 21% of children are not ready for first grade.<sup>1</sup>

### THE LINK TO TEEN PREGNANCY

With a direct impact on many issues that effect South Carolina, we cannot afford to decrease our investment in teen pregnancy prevention. In South Carolina, annual taxpayers costs associated with children born to teen mothers included: \$34 million for public health care; \$23 million for child welfare and for children who have reached adolescence or adulthood; \$24 million for incarceration; and \$69 million in lost tax revenue (2008).<sup>3</sup>

#### IN SOUTH CAROLINA...

- Teen childbearing cost taxpayers at least \$197 million in 2008.<sup>3</sup>

The 15-19 year old teen birth rate in South Carolina decreased by 7.5% between 2008 and 2009, which correlates to the lowest teen birth rate for this age group in the state's history (49.0 per 1,000). Teen births among older youth exist at much higher rates than among their younger peers while Black and Hispanic teens continue to far exceed rates in their White counterparts.

Sexual risk behaviors are also on the rise among South Carolina youth. For the first time, the percentage of South Carolina high school youth who are sexually active has increased to 38.6% of all high school students, up from 35.9% in 2007. During the same time, the percentage of these students using a condom decreased for the second time in a row – from a high of 67% in 2005 to only 60% in 2009.<sup>5</sup>

Now is the time to invest in research proven approaches to pregnancy prevention that stress abstinence as the first and best choice, but also teach medically accurate information about condoms and contraception. It is not the time to make further reductions to valuable programming, such as the Community Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) programs that serve thousands of young people in all 46 counties of the state. With teen pregnancy rates on the rise, we know other areas will be affected so the time to invest is now. Our children cannot afford another budget cut.

Together, we can protect our children from being dependent on our social services system. Will you join us today and be a vocal supporter of our state's most valuable resource...our young people?

### SOURCES

*NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, all information in this fact sheet was taken from the Why It Matters series from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.*

1. South Carolina Kids Count, 2011.
2. South Carolina Budget and Control Board, Office of Research and Statistics, 2008.
3. Hoffman, S. (2011). By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in South Carolina. Washington DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.
4. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (2010). Division of Biostatistics, Office of Public Health and Information Systems; Teen Pregnancy Statistics.
5. South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Healthy Schools, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2009).