The Costs and Consequences of Teen Childbearing

Katy Suellentrop
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Still Work to Do

• Three in ten girls get pregnant once before they turn 20

• One-quarter of teen parents have a second child before they turn 20

• Disparities (over 50% of Latinas and African Americans)

• Higher teen pregnancy and birth rates than comparable countries
Consequences for Children

• Compared to children born to older mothers (20-21 years old), children born to teen moms are more likely to:
  – drop out of high school.
  – become teen parents.
  – use Medicaid and CHIP.
  – experience abuse/neglect.
  – enter the foster care system.
  – end up in prison (sons).
  – be raised in single parent families.

Consequences for Children

• Lower scores on measures of kindergarten readiness

• Lower vocabulary, math, and reading scores

• Greater risk of being born at low birth weight

Connection with Poverty

• A child born to a teen mother who has not finished high school and is not married is **nine times more likely to be poor** than a child born to an adult who has finished high school and is married.

• What if the national teen birth rate had not declined 30% between 1991 and 2002? In 2002, 460,000 more young children would have been living in poverty.

Consequences for Education

• Overall 34% of women who have a birth as a teen do not attain a diploma or GED by age 22 compared to 6% of women who do not have a teen birth.

• This bar chart shows the percent of teen mothers who attain a diploma or GED by age 22, depending on their age at the birth of this child; 43% of teens who gave birth before age 18 had neither compared to 27% of teens who gave birth at age 18 or 19.

Connection with Child Welfare

- Almost one-half of girls in foster care become pregnant by age 19.

- Compared to mothers age 20-21, young teen mothers were 2.2 times more likely have a child placed in foster care during the first 5 years after a birth.

- Delaying age of birth from 17 or earlier to age 20-21 would reduce the overall foster care placement rate by 8% percent.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: Washington, DC.
Public Sector Costs

United States Costs of Teen Child Bearing - 2004 - $9 BILLION
Methods

- National data from *Kids Having Kids* (Maynard 1996) and *Kids Having Kids: Revised Edition* (Maynard and Hoffman)
- Measure costs over the first 15 years following a birth – assume a steady state analysis
- Annual costs incurred in 2004
Methods (cont.)

• State costs are derived from national costs

• Account for the state’s share of teen births, the per client cost (relative to the national average), and utilization rates (relative to the national average)

• State specific income and sales tax structure
National Costs

Most of the costs of teen childbearing are associated with negative consequences for the children of teen mothers and include:

- $1.9 billion for increased public health care costs
- $2.3 billion for increased child welfare costs
- $2.1 billion for increased costs for state prison systems (among adult sons of teen mothers)
- $2.9 billion in lost tax revenue due to lower taxes paid by the children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes.

The one-third decline in the nation’s teen birth rate between 1991 and 2004 resulted in saving taxpayers an estimated $6.7 billion in 2004 alone.
State Specific Costs

- Average cost associated with a child born to a teen mother ranges from $7,836 in Vermont to $2,997 in Texas.

- Cost savings in 2004 range from $5 million in Wyoming to $1.1 Billion in CA.

- More detailed information available in the report and at [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/costs](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/costs)
Challenges and Limitations

- How to attribute poorer outcomes – circumstances before or after the birth
- The bar chart shows the distribution of teens by family income as a percent of poverty for teens who had a teen birth and those who didn’t; 28% of teens who had a birth as a teen were living at <100% of the federal poverty threshold compared to 16% of all teens.
“Reduction of early parenthood will not eliminate the powerful effects of growing up in poverty and disadvantage. But it represents a potentially productive strategy for widening the pathways out of poverty, or at the very least, not compounding the handicaps imposed by social disadvantage.”

Family Planning Perspectives, 30(5): 236-239;243.
What can be Done

• Invest in evidence-based programs
• Intensify efforts with vulnerable youth/populations with high rates.
• Enlist parents, media, faith community, business, judges, and others to help.
Thank-you!

For more information:

Visit our website:

http://www.TheNationalCampaign.org

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