

# Talk with teens about impact of pregnancy

**Some of my daughter's classmates actually say they do not need to worry if they have a baby because they would be eligible for government programs. I want to give my daughter information to counter this notion. Where can I find it?**

It's ironic that going on public assistance, a sign of poverty, would be seen as a solution to something that has a far-reaching impact on a young woman's life. The reality is that decades of research makes it clear that women who have children when they are teenagers are more likely to receive public assistance and live in poverty than those who don't.

The economic outlook is grim for both teen mothers and their children. Teen mothers are much less likely to complete high school, severely affecting their chances of making a decent living. Being unmarried is another factor that affects future finances. In fact, according to a November 2008 report issued by the national initiative "Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity" (<http://www.spotlightonpoverty.org>), a child's chance of growing up in poverty is nine times greater if the mother gave birth as a teen, if the parents were unmarried when the child was born, and if the mother did not receive a high school diploma than if none of these circumstances are present. There are also potential impacts on the child's social and cognitive development. Teenage pregnancy affects both the mother and the child in numerous ways.



Unfortunately, the problem is getting worse, not better. Child Trends, a nonprofit research center that studies child development, recently issued a research brief, "Ten Reasons to Still Keep the Focus on Teen Childbearing" (available to download from its Web site, <http://www.childtrends.org>). Noting that the teen birth rate increased in 2006 and 2007 after a steady 14-year decline, the report makes the case for continued attention to teen pregnancy and reducing the incidence of teen births.

Despite what your daughter is hearing in school, the vast majority — more than 80 percent — of teen pregnancies are unplanned. And you should be aware that, based on 2007 data, the probability of a young woman giving birth during her teenage years is 18 percent. One in five teen births are to teens that already have had a baby.

Still, you should feel good that your daughter is talking about these issues with you. Many families find that it's not an easy topic to address. By sharing what other students are saying about teen parenthood, your daughter is opening a door for dialogue.

You might find it helpful to read more about talking with your teen about sexuality. You can find guidance at the Advocates for Youth Web site (<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>). Click on the "For Parents" button to find dozens of resources that can help you address these sensitive issues with children of any age.

*Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).*



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**For the month of  
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**Dear Subscriber:** This column was reviewed by Kara Newby, program coordinator in human development and family science for Ohio State University Extension.

The eighth annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is May 6, 2009. See <http://www.teenpregnancy.org> for details.

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