

## SUPPORT FOR EXPECTANT AND PARENTING YOUTH

The Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health (MOASH) supports teens and young people who are pregnant, expectant, and/or parenting. It is essential that, as teen pregnancy prevention initiatives continue, they do not knowingly or unwittingly stigmatize young people who become parents. MOASH advocates for a positive youth development approach with young parents, with efforts that focus on increasing access to quality support services and helping them to understand their rights in realms of education, healthcare, parenting, and more. Teen fathers deserve particular attention in this area, as the majority of research and programs focus on mothers rather than fathers. All young parents deserve respect, assistance, and resources to achieve their personal goals while building happy, healthy, and thriving families.

### Why we stand for this:

- > It is inaccurate to assume that all teen pregnancies are unintended.
- > When educated on all their options after becoming pregnant, young people are better able to make well-informed choices about their bodies—including if and when to become a parent.
- > Individuals who become parents should be respected and supported. This support should utilize a positive youth development approach, where adults assist in the coordination of prenatal and pregnancy-related care, education around parenting skills, etc.

<sup>1</sup> State of Michigan. (2017). March 2016: Parenting Awareness Month Proclamation. Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57577\\_59874-377876-,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57577_59874-377876-,00.html)

<sup>2</sup> #NoTeenShame. (2017). "Our Collaborations." Retrieved from <http://www.noteenshame.com/about>

<sup>3</sup> Strong Families. (2016). "Young Parents." Retrieved from <http://strongfamiliesmovement.org/young-parents>

<sup>4</sup> Chambers, B.D. & Erausquin, J.T. (2015). The Promise of Intersectional Stigma to Understand the Complexities of Adolescent Pregnancy and Motherhood. *Journal of Childhood and Adolescent Health*. doi: 10.4172/2375-4494.1000249

- > As a consequence of some teen pregnancy prevention initiatives, many young expectant and parenting individuals may be stigmatized and isolated from their communities. Comprehensive sex education that is inclusive and not shaming to expectant or parenting teens can mitigate a loss of connection with their peers, as well as give them the tools they need to ensure any future pregnancies are planned.
- > Without support from their communities, young parents often face additional hardships in the areas of education, employment, financial stability, relationships, mental health, housing, child care, and parent and infant health.
- > When provided with support, young parents are able to finish high school/their GED, pursue and excel in higher education, secure employment and thrive in work environments, achieve housing and financial stability, and make valuable contributions to their communities.
- > Helping young parents leads to positive health and social outcomes for their children.<sup>1</sup>
- > Many other expert organizations<sup>2</sup>- including the US Department of Health and Human Services, Advocates for Youth, Forward Together, the National Crittenton Foundation, Healthy Teen Network, the National Women's Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union, and other member organizations of the Strong Families Network<sup>3</sup>- and federal laws like Title IX have recognized the importance of supporting expectant and parenting teens, implementing programs and policies that respect their rights and protect them from discrimination.

## Data and statistics:

- > Larger systems of oppression - and the intersection of identities across different dimensions of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, ability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. - may put some youth at a higher likelihood than others to be involved in a teen pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>

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5 Guttmacher Institute. (2020). United States - Teens - Teen Pregnancy. Retrieved from: <https://www.guttmacher.org/united-states/teens/teen-pregnancy#>  
6 Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). (2019). Number of Live Births by Age of Mother, Michigan Residents 1920-2018. Retrieved from <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/osr/nativity/Tab4.3.asp>  
7 MDHHS. (2019). Percent of Live Births by Age, Race and Ancestry of Mother, Michigan Residents, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.mdch.state.mi.us/osr/nativity/tab1.2perc.asp>  
8 Kids Count Data Center: A Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2018). REPEAT TEEN BIRTHS AGES 15-19. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/1647-repeat-teen-births-ages-15-19?loc=24&loct=2#detailed/2/any/false/37/any/3501,13077>

> In the US, 75% of pregnancies among 15-19-year-olds are unplanned.<sup>5</sup>

> Data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (2018) reports:

- There were 5,042 births to teen mothers (ages 15-19)<sup>6</sup> which accounted for 4.6% of all births in the state<sup>7</sup>
- 16.6% of births to teens ages 15-19 were repeat births.<sup>8</sup>

> Many young people report feeling more motivated to finish school after they become pregnant or begin parenting.<sup>4</sup> However, a lack of support or active opposition from school staff, community members, family, etc. can make this difficult:

- Expectant or parenting teens face both direct and indirect pressures that push them out of school, including punitive absence policies, bullying and harassment, coercion into lower quality alternative schooling, barriers to child care services and transportation, and more.<sup>9</sup>
- Only 53% of young women who gave birth as teens received a high school diploma.<sup>10</sup>

> Teen parents are significantly more likely to experience homelessness compared to other high school youth.<sup>11</sup>

> Data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) for Michigan (2016) reports that:

- Teen mothers are more likely than older mothers to experience depression before (31.4% vs. 15.1%), during (26.8% vs. 12.6%), and after (22.7% vs. 13.9%) pregnancy.<sup>12</sup>
- Teen mothers were more likely to have three or more unmet basic needs during pregnancy (i.e. affordable and reliable transportation, food security, safe and stable housing, basic utility services like heat and water, etc.) than older mothers (9% vs. 5%).
- Teen mothers were more likely to have six or more life stressors (i.e. sick family member, moving, partner or personal job loss or hours cut, homeless, financial difficulty, death of a loved one, separation or divorce, partner military deployment, partner or personal jail trip, loved one with substance use problem, etc.) before their baby's birth (13% vs. 6.7%).

9 Garcia, K., & Chaudhry, N. (2017). Let Her Learn: Stopping School Pushout for Girls Who Are Pregnant or Parenting. The National Women's Law Center. Retrieved from [https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Final\\_nwlc\\_Gates\\_PregParenting.pdf](https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Final_nwlc_Gates_PregParenting.pdf)

10 Manlove, J., & Santos, H. (2018). Data Point: Half of 20- to 29-year-old women who have birth in their teens have a high school diploma. Child Trends. Retrieved from <https://www.childtrends.org/half-20-29-year-old-women-gave-birth-teens-high-school-diploma>

11 Voices of Youth Count (2018) Missed Opportunities: Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VoYC-Pregnant-and-Parenting-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2018.pdf>

12 CDC and MDHHS (2016). Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System - Michigan Data (Indicator comparisons for mothers under vs. older than 20 years). Compiled by the Michigan Public Health Institute.

13 Healthy Teen Network. (2016). Fast Facts: The Unique Needs of Young Fathers [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Fast-Facts-Unique-Needs-of-Adolescent-Fathers.pdf>

14 Michigan Public Health Institute. (2020). LC Infographic Workbook\_State Level\_Final [PDF].

> Teen fathers involved in raising their children experience similar hardships to teen mothers, including school pushout, poverty, homelessness, and mental health concerns.<sup>13</sup>

> Data from the Michigan Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Program (MI-APPP)<sup>14</sup> demonstrates that, 14 when given adequate support, teen parents will thrive. After six months of case management, young parents saw the following improvements:

- 79% of clients had a positive school status (including graduating or earning their GED , re-enrolling in school, or staying in school).
- 68% of clients improved or remained high in their assets around commitment to learn (meaning having the belief that learning is important and having confidence in their ability to learn new skills).
- 66% of clients who were sexually active reported using contraceptives more frequently or continuing to always use them.
- 50% of clients had positive work statuses, meaning they either stayed employed or improved their process on getting work (this can include scenarios where clients went from seeking a job to having a job, or who went from not working to seeking a job, or clients who stayed employed).
- 72% of clients increased or remained confident in their skills to begin preparing for their career.
- 84% of clients reported an increase, or remained confident, in managing their own money.
- 66% of clients reported improved or remained high in their assets to help them make healthy life choices, including strong values and principles.