Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing rates remain higher in the United States than in most Western nations; more than 500,000 teenage girls have babies every year. As these teen parents mature, they have diminished educational and career expectations. A small number of programs directed toward the career needs of teenage parents was developed during the 1970s and 1980s; many more are needed. The trend is for these programs to share many of the same characteristics of dropout prevention programs. Specific career education components are included, such as assessment of aptitudes, career and vocational counseling, life skills development, preemployment preparation, and job development and placement. In addition, support services such as child care and transportation are provided. Characteristics of successful programs for teen parents include established sites that can provide services for nontraditional students, support and referral networks, and newsletters. Equity goals must be remembered when developers design programs for teen parents, and teens need to be encouraged to aspire to higher-wage jobs to support themselves and their children. However, gender-role biases need to be addressed. (This fact sheet provides information that can be used in developing programs for teen parents. It includes an annotated list of 14 print resources and addresses of 12 resource organizations that can be contacted for more information.) (KC)
CAREER EDUCATION FOR TEEN PARENTS

Despite a general decline in the birthrate since 1970, rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing remain higher in the United States than in most Western nations. Over 500,000 teenage girls have babies each year; most are unmarried and about half are not yet 18 years of age (Public/Private Ventures 1985). The trend is for these teen mothers to remain unmarried and to head their own households (Vetter 1988).

As these teen parents mature, they have diminished educational and career expectations. They face significant challenges in completing their high school education, pursuing postsecondary education, and entering the work force (Burge 1987; Lindner 1988). According to Lindner, "without intervention their education and employment opportunities are limited" (p. 8). Unquestionably, teen mothers are a subgroup of the population who can benefit from career education.

A small number of programs directed toward the career needs of teen parents were developed during the 1970s and 1980s (Burge 1987). The trend is for these programs to share many of the same characteristics of dropout prevention programs. Specific career education components in such programs are as follows: assessment and testing of skills, aptitudes, and interests; career and vocational counseling, including work experience; life skills development, including parenting and nutrition; basic skills, including study skills to help participants pursue further education or begin employment; preemployment preparation, including employability skills; and job development and placement, including mentoring and job shadowing (Lindner 1988). In addition, the following support services were provided: child care, transportation, networking, and referral to community services and agencies (ibid.).

Burge (1987) identifies the following as characteristics of successful programs for teen parents: established sites that can provide special services for nontraditional students; support and referral networks linking a variety of community agencies and services; and newsletters, an effective and expensive strategy for communicating with, educating, and supporting single parents.

Bitters (1988) points out the importance of keeping equity goals in mind when designing and implementing programs for teen parents. Because they have to provide for themselves and their children, teen parents need to consider higher wage/higher benefit jobs and careers. They must explore expanded role options and build equity skills because many of them will be the primary or sole provider for their child as well as the sole parent.

However, Bitters (1988) suggests that despite general heightened awareness about the changing roles of men and women in society, most young people need assistance in exploring the myths about gender roles. Teen parents, particularly, may need aid in resolving feelings about the opposite sex and how their life is different than they imagined it would be. Despite the emergence of programs for teen parents during the 1970s and 1980s, Burge (1987) points out that the number of teens served represents only a small proportion of those in need of services. Much more needs to be done in this area. This Trends and Issues Alert provides information that can be used in developing programs for teen parents. In addition to print resources, information is included about resource organizations that can be contacted for further information.

Print Resources


Explains why teen parents need to consider nontraditional and higher wage occupations.


Explores the nature of single parenthood, employment and other needs, examples of career development programs, and policy concerns.


Kit includes two resource directories, four student workbooks, a self user guide, an occupations digest, and two videotapes.


Goals are to increase economic self-sufficiency, explore nontraditional jobs, and improve life planning and parenting skills.


Concludes that job training and placement can only be effective in the long run if programmers consider the other needs of single parents.

Program focused on positive self-image and provided counseling, child care, clinic services, and job training.


Vocational education is an effective resource for teen parents because it emphasizes skills necessary for the transition to the workforce or postsecondary education.


Project Redirection improved teen parents' education and employment outcomes, reduced welfare dependency, and provided a developmental advantage for their children.


The Summer Training and Education Program addresses teen parenting issues in an employment and training context.


The Graduation Reality and Dual Role Skills program provides in-school vocational home economics instruction emphasizing healthy pregnancy, responsible parenting, and career development.


Video-based coping skills project focused on parenting attitudes and skills, career awareness, and single parent role models.


Identifies comprehensive services needed by single parents; advocates national data collection efforts and funding allocation changes.


Dropout prevention through provision of financial assistance for day care; instruction in health, family living, and guidance; and career awareness information and assessment.


Focused on nontraditional occupations and local labor market trends; involved field trips to local job sites and use of the Self-Directed Search.

**Resource Organizations**


Alan Guttmacher Institute, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003 (212/254-5656).

Center for Population Options, 1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20005 (202/347-5700).

Junior League of St. Louis Teen Outreach Program Network, 8346 Delcress, St. Louis, MO 63124 (314/872-1960).

Mott Foundation Too-Early Childbearing Network, 1200 Mott Foundation Bldg., Flint, MI 48502 (313/238-5651).

National Organization for Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting, P.O. Box 7365, Reston, VA 22090 (703/435-3948).


Support Center for Educational Equity for Young Mothers, School Services Division, Academy for Educational Development, 680 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10019 (212/397-0040).

Teen Fathers Collaborative, Bank Street College, 610 West 112th Street, New York, NY 10025 (212/663-7200).


Wider Opportunities for Women, 1325 G Street, NW, Lower Level, Washington, DC 20005 (202/638-3143).

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