

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

2005 Legislative Agenda for Children and Youth

Background Information

Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Issue #7

Though teen birth rates have been steadily decreasing since the early 1990s in our state and nation, Oklahoma continues to rank far above the national average. Compared to all other states and the District of Columbia, Oklahoma ranks among the top ten states with the highest (worst) birth rates to teens in *all* of the following categories:

- 8th highest for births to females ages 15-19
- 10th highest for births to younger teens, ages 15-17
- 7th highest for the birth rate to older teens, ages 18 and 19
- 3rd highest in the percentage of births to teens, as a percentage of all births
- 10th highest in the percentage of births that are repeat births to teens

[Note: Oklahoma only counts births, not pregnancies.]

The rates of adolescent childbearing in the U.S. are two to ten times higher than in comparable industrialized democracies -- countries that are competitors in the global marketplace. Births to older teens, ages 18-19, account for two-thirds of all teen births in our state each year... keeping too many young Oklahomans from completing their education and coming to the job market without the training and skills necessary for our state to achieve its economic goals.

Adolescent pregnancy is more than just a single issue. It impacts three generations at once – the teen, the baby, and the teen’s parents – and the impact is often negative for a family’s economic self-sufficiency and stability, and for the outcomes of the teen parent and the baby. Oklahoma’s high teen birth rates, high percentage of teen births and high percentage of repeat pregnancies to teens have significant costs and consequences for our state, in terms of poverty rates, health status, educational achievement, economic development potential and quality of life issues. Adolescent pregnancy keeps too many young people from graduating from school, too many families dependent upon welfare, and too many young children unprepared for school and too many children and youth growing up in poverty.

Fiscal Note:

The Oklahoma State Department of Health is requesting \$1,194,000 to expand community-based teen pregnancy prevention initiatives. *Total request \$1,194,000.*

Recommendation:

The Children’s Agenda supports the expansion of community-based teen pregnancy prevention initiative managed through the Oklahoma State Department of Health.