



Wellness News

READY OR NOT: When Teens become Parents

by Nancy King

The teen birth rate in the United States is at an all-time low. But, here in southeastern Colorado, 77 babies were born to teen mothers in 2013, which is 15% of all babies born in the region.

What does this mean for our communities? Compared with their peers who delay childbearing, teens who have babies are less likely to finish high school; more likely to rely on public assistance; more likely to be poor as adults; and more likely to have children who have poorer educational, behavioral, and health outcomes over the course of their lives.

Some young people are mature enough to handle the responsibilities that come with parenthood, and have family members who can provide support. Other teens aren't so lucky. Specific kinds of help and support can make all the difference for young families:

1) Instead of shaming pregnant teens, have a serious talk with them about what they need to know about parenting. Explain the realities and responsibilities they are facing in terms they can understand.

2) Help them identify adopted-grandparents or positive role models, who can provide essential mentoring, parenting education and support during the critical early years.

3) Steer them toward healthy friends and relationships, where it is easier to make good choices.

4) Engage them with Nurse-Family Partnerships, which are available in all six Southeast Colorado counties to provide one-on-one education about caring for

the health of pregnant mothers and their newborns.

5) Assist them in finding reliable childcare, which can help a young mother finish high school or start community college classes, increasing her ability to provide for her children.

6) Boost their confidence during a job search and interview process so they can envision themselves becoming self-sufficient. Refer them to the area Workforce Center, which offers job placement and training services at no cost to the client, including job fairs, classes on resume building, interview tips, and even college tuition.

7) Encourage them to attend a class on budgeting and money management, so they can stretch the money they do have to make ends meet.

8) Provide emotional support as the realities of parenting sink in, helping them to sort through day-to-day problems.

9) Give them an occasional break for self-care, and time to attend to grown-up demands.

10) Take them to the library, and show them all the free resources available to them, including Story Hour.

Promote strong families in southeastern Colorado by supporting a teen parent in your community. It will make a difference in the lives of that young family for generations to come. For more information about counseling and skill building classes offered at Southeast Health Group.



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Call Southeast Health Group at 800.511.5446 for information or to schedule an appointment.