

Supporting Pregnant & Parenting Teens

Secondary Super Strategies | INTRODUCTION

Who are Pregnant & Parenting Teens?

Pregnant and parenting teens encounter a multitude of hurdles on their path to high school graduation. While adolescence can be a cumbersome time for any teenager, pregnant and parenting teens have the added stress of juggling schoolwork with parenting responsibilities. These hurdles could include:

- lack of affordable childcare
- disruption in schoolwork as a result of pregnancy related absences and maternity/paternity leave
- lack of proper support systems
- difficulty obtaining or lack of accommodations related to pregnancy and parenting

Every effort should be made to assist these students with high school completion either through school-based support services or referrals to local support agencies.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2018, the total number of teen births in Illinois for females aged 13 to 19 was 6,458. Teen births make up 4.5% of all births throughout Illinois.²



Pregnant & Parenting Teens Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide all staff and students with professional development on Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
- Counselors should be aware of local childcare options and financial supports available to parenting students.
- Offer counselor services several times throughout the semester.
 - ✓ track student progress
 - ✓ provide opportunities for career assessments
 - ✓ assist in goal planning and a tailored graduation plan
 - ✓ provide academic intervention
- School nurses can provide assistance in pregnancy identification, referrals to quality prenatal care, parenting education and education regarding prevention of future pregnancy, and referrals to clinical services and healthcare.
- Keep an up to date “resource library” of local agencies that students can be referred to for any of the following:
 - ✓ mental health services
 - ✓ childcare
 - ✓ tutoring
 - ✓ supplemental nutrition programs
 - ✓ early childhood education programs



DID YOU KNOW?

Teen pregnancy and parenting accounts for 30% of student dropouts annually; nearly half of female dropouts indicate that becoming a parent played a role in their decision to leave school.¹

Pregnant & Parenting Teens Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allow students to have access to academic instruction and stay connected during their maternity/paternity leave.
 - ✓ Review the school's policy on services for students with temporary medical conditions as pregnant and parenting teens should fall within that category.
- Students receiving supports and services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must continue to receive the supports during pregnancy and any parenting related absences from school.
- Review the school's policies regarding absenteeism and truancy to confirm pregnant and parenting teens rights are protected per Title IX.
- Reasonable accommodations must be provided to students both during and after pregnancy. Accommodations could include:
 - ✓ larger desks
 - ✓ elevator access
 - ✓ cellphone access for emergency calls
 - ✓ adjustments to class schedules
 - ✓ freezing grades while on maternity/paternity leave
 - ✓ private space for nursing mothers and proper milk storage
- Provide appropriate supports, services, and accommodations to parenting fathers as well.
- Partner with your local community college for career and technical education (CTE) exploration days. Inform students on the different career options within CTE and how they can get started during high school.



Pregnant & Parenting Teens Super Strategies | RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set up student support groups for pregnant and parenting teens.
 - ✓ Reach out to former students or individuals in their career field of choice who had a similar experience and can address the need for role models.
- Emphasize potential earnings and timelines for completion when informing students about specific CTE programs.
- A large number of CTE programs allow students to work as they obtain certifications or a degree in their field of choice. This track can be beneficial to parenting teens who want to further their education but also need to provide financially for their family.



SOURCES:

¹ Education Law Center. (June 2019). *Clearing the Path: Creating School Success for Pregnant and Parenting Students and Their Children*. Retrieved from <https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Clearing-the-Path-ELCs-Pregnant-and-Parenting-Students-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

² Illinois Department of Public Health. (2020). *Births to Mothers Under 20 Years of Age*. Retrieved from <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/Teen%20births%201959-2018.pdf>.

³ Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act H.R.2353, 115th Cong., (2018) (enacted). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2353/text?r=2>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Supporting the Academic Success of Pregnant and Parenting Students Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, Washington, D.C., 2013. Retrieved from www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf.