



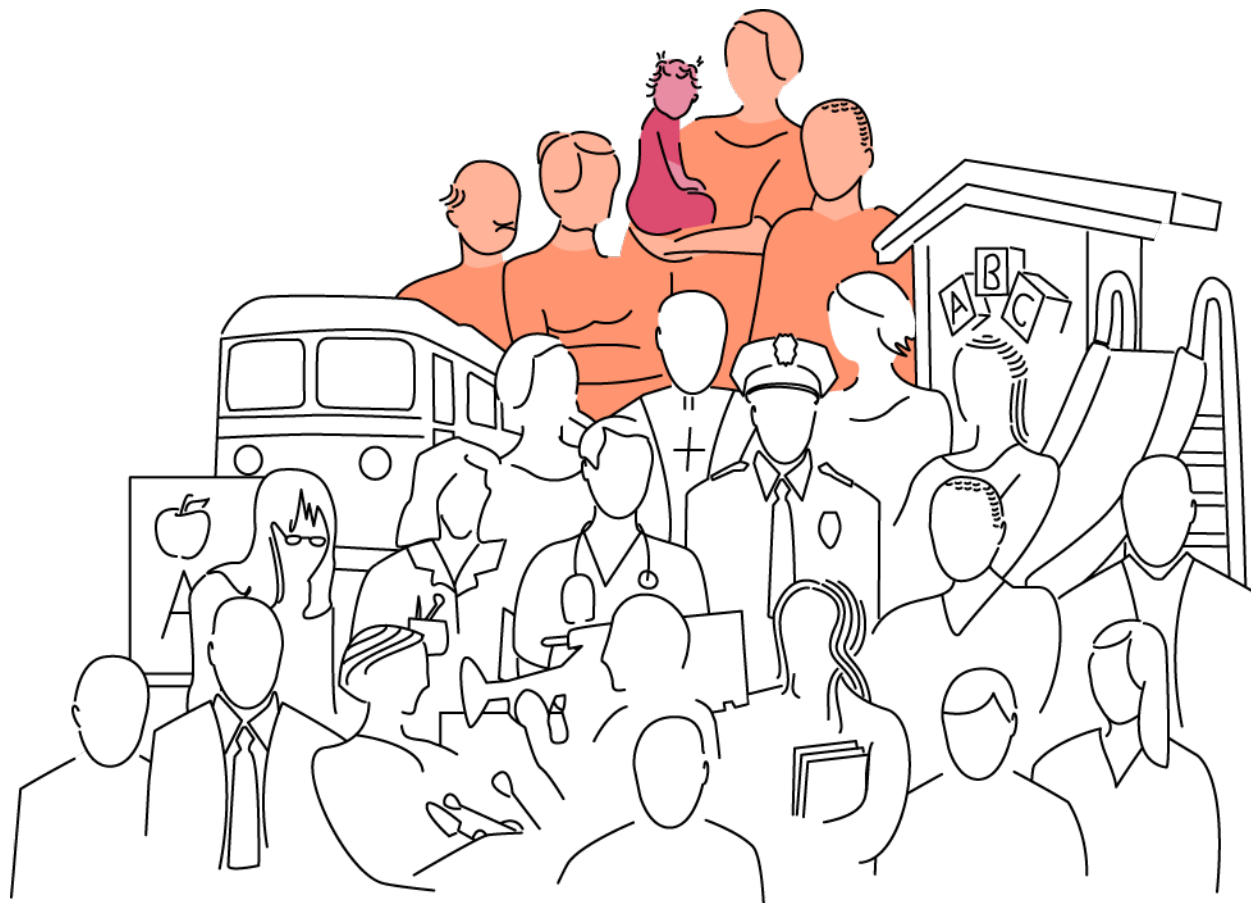
Center for Urban Child Policy

Advancing Public Policy to Improve the Well-Being of Children

THE IMPLICATIONS OF TEEN PARENTING IN SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE

This brief discusses teen parenting in Shelby County, outlines negative outcomes associated with teen parenting, both for children and for parents and provides information about local resources for teen families, as well as suggestions for parents and policymakers in order to help provide more secure beginnings and improved cognitive, social and emotional developmental outcomes for vulnerable children in our community.

April 2009



IN SHELBY COUNTY, 15% OF NEWBORNS (ABOUT 2,200 EACH YEAR) ARE BORN TO TEEN MOTHERS. THIS PERCENTAGE IS HIGHER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE (11%), AND 50% HIGHER THAN DAVIDSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE'S 2ND LARGEST METROPOLITAN AREA.

These children are likely to grow up in poverty and face additional hardships.

- » Nationwide, sixty percent of teen mothers live in poverty, (<\$13,690 for a family of 2 and \$17,170 for a family of 3).
- » Children of teen parents have an increased risk for a variety of problems- dropping out of school, getting involved in crime, and using drugs and alcohol.

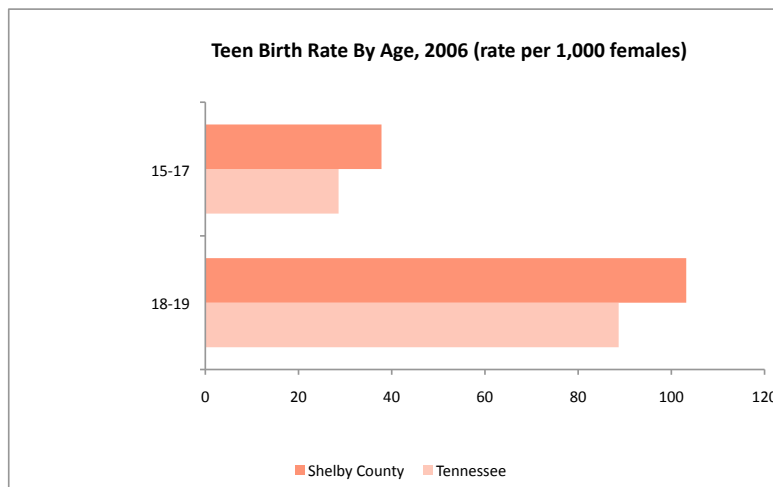
In the past three decades, teen childbearing and parenting has changed.

- » Teens today begin having sex at an earlier age.
- » Teens today are less likely to marry if they become pregnant.
- » Teen parents today are more likely to live in poverty.

(Source: Nord, Moore, Morrison, Brown, & Myers, 1992)

IN 2006, 15% OF ALL BABIES BORN IN SHELBY COUNTY WERE BORN TO TEEN MOTHERS.

In Shelby County- there are more births to young teens (aged 15-17) than the state average (37.8 versus 28.6 per 1000).



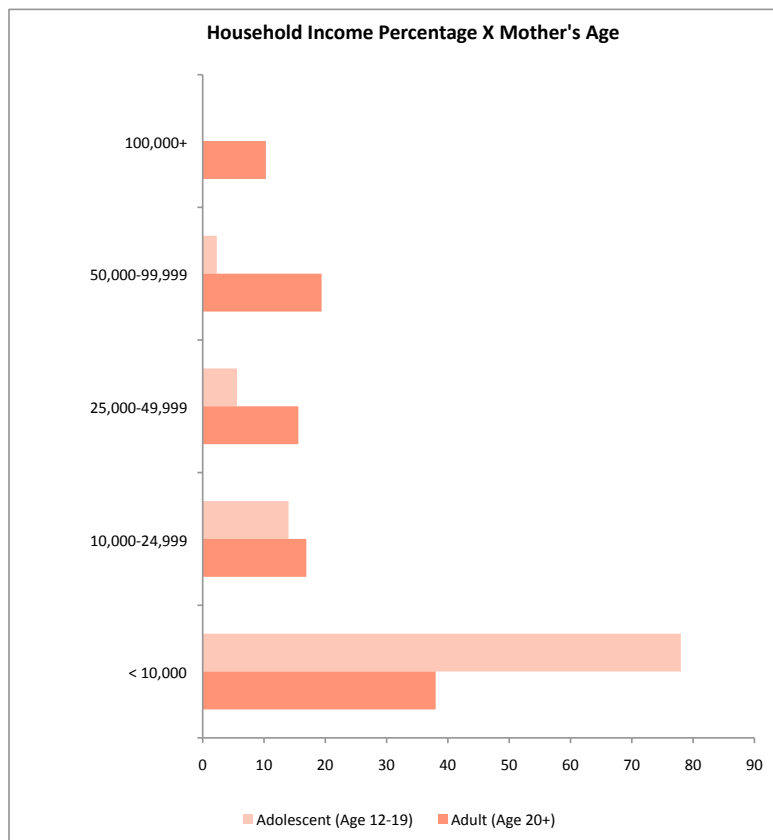
» In Memphis, almost one in five births occurred to a teen mother (2005). This rate is 25% higher than the teen birth rate in New Orleans, Louisiana (14.6%) and almost twice the teen birth rate in Louisville, Kentucky (10.4%).

(Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation)

» In 2006, 61% of teen births in Shelby County were to older teens (aged 18 and 19). This would seem to be good news. Unfortunately, in Shelby County and across the country, families headed by mothers who are 18 or 19 are as likely to raise families in poverty as are younger teenage mothers. (Hoffman, 2006)

In Shelby County, more than 85% of teen mothers report annual incomes of less than \$15,000 a year.

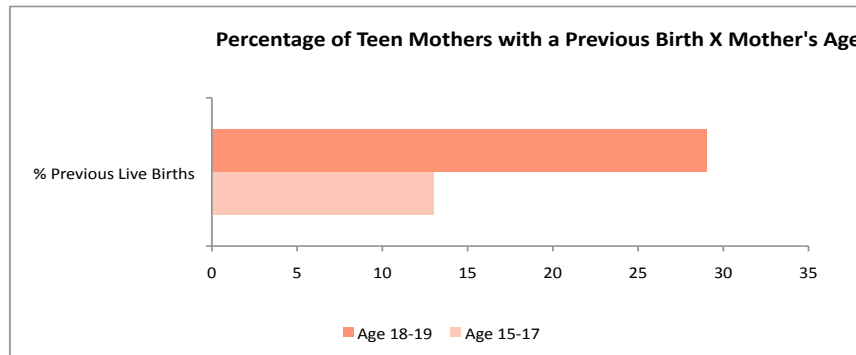
- » 78% of these teen mothers reported an annual income of less than \$10,000.
- » More than 80% of young mothers with children live in poverty during their children’s important developmental years. (Maynard, 2006)



RISK FACTORS RELATED TO TEEN PREGNANCY:

In 2006, a quarter (23%) of births to teens in Shelby County were not first births.

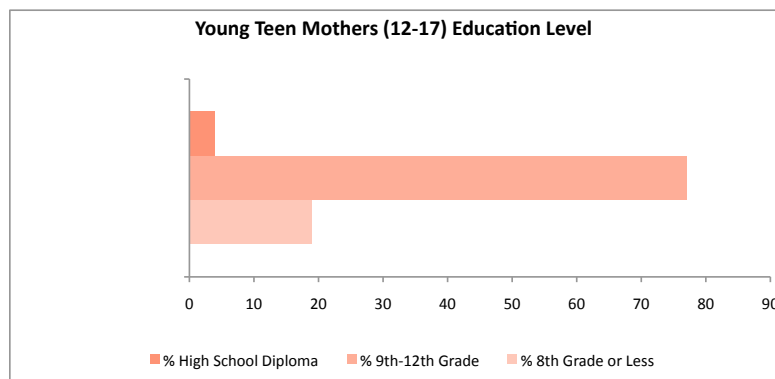
- » Teen mothers with more than one child have an even greater difficulty acquiring education and becoming financially stable. (RI DOH, 2006)



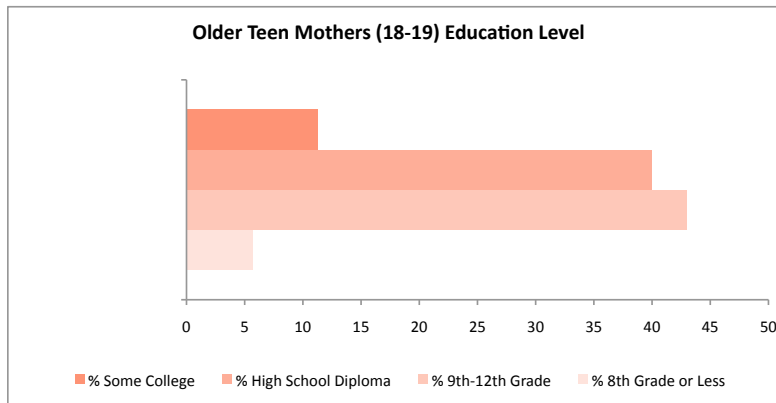
- » Only 40% of adolescent mothers aged 17 or younger will graduate from high school.

Educational Status of Teen Mothers.

The majority of adolescent mothers do not receive a high school diploma or earn their GED certificate before giving birth. Having a baby is highly likely to cause a woman to end her education.



Conversely, women who have a strong desire to continue their education past high school are more likely to delay childbearing than women who have lower educational aspirations. (Hoffmann, 2006)

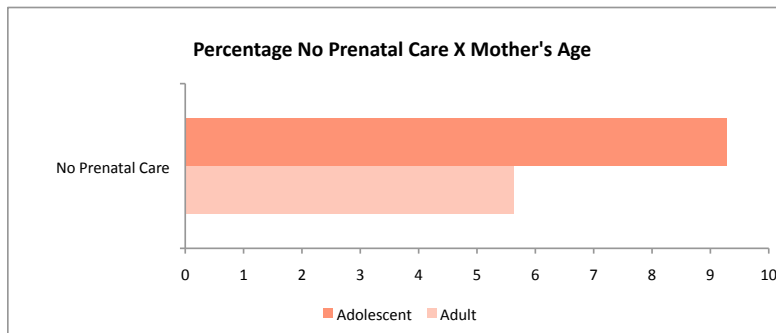


Teen mothers are less likely than adult mothers:

- » To receive prenatal care.
- » To have healthy birth-weight babies.

Prenatal Care.

In Shelby County, teen mothers are 50% less likely to receive prenatal care (2006).

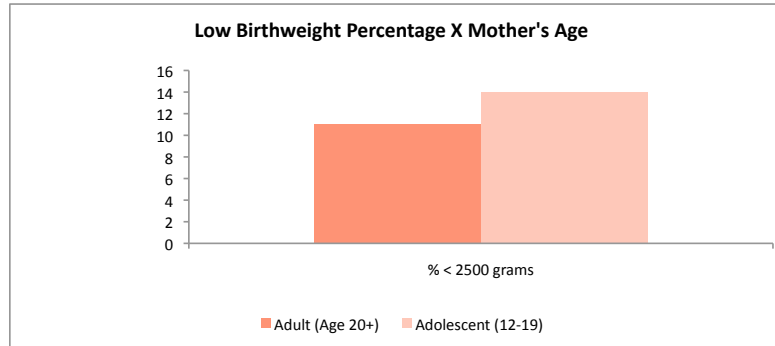


- » 22% of women in Shelby County who received no prenatal care in 2006 were adolescents (12-19).



Low Birth-Weight.

Teen mothers are significantly more likely to have low birth-weight babies than are adult mothers. (Maynard, 2006) LBWV increases the risk of critical health conditions such as deafness and blindness.



Many health problems for babies of teen mothers are related to the social and economic conditions that lead to adolescent parenthood, such as poverty and poor neighborhoods. (RI DOH, 2006)

Cognitive Development and Education.

Across the country, children of adolescent parents:

- » Earn lower scores on tests of cognitive development &
- » Have weaker communication skills when compared to their peers. (Terry-Humen, Manlove, & Moore, 2005)
- » Children of teen mothers are more likely to be doing remedial rather than advanced work &
- » Are less likely to graduate from high school. (Maynard, 1996)

Across the country, most adolescent parents have incomes below half the federal poverty line, a condition referred to as "dire poverty." (Garfinkle, 1997)

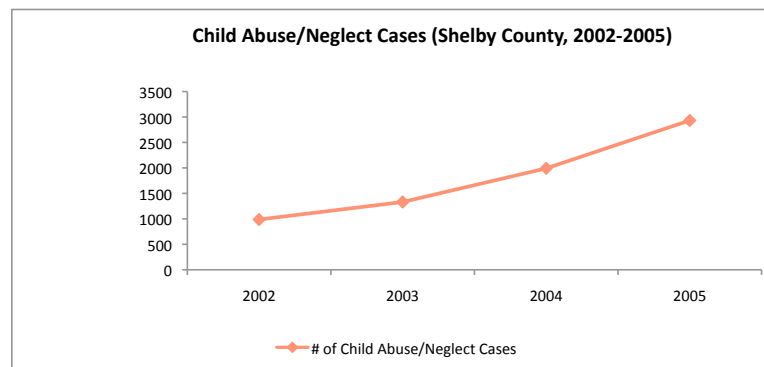
- » Nationally, almost 40% of teenage mothers are dependent on, and live with, their parents. (Ruggles, Sobek, Alexander, Fitch, Goeken, Hall, King, & Rennarder, 2008)
- » Children born to single, teenage mothers are 10 times more likely to live in poverty than children born to married women over the age of 20. (Wertheimer, O'Hare, Croan, Jager, Long, & Reynolds, 2002)



Crime and Delinquency

Children of adolescent mothers are more than twice as likely to be victims of abuse or neglect as are children of mothers in their twenties. (Maynard, 1996)

- » 5% of children born to adolescent mothers will spend time in foster care, frequently due to abuse and neglect. (George & Lee, 1997)



Children of teenage mothers are more than twice as likely to run away from home than the children of older mothers. (Maynard, 1996)

- » Boys born to teen mothers are almost three times more likely to be incarcerated than boys born to adult mothers. (Flanagan, 1995)
- » The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy estimates that crime related costs of teen childbearing amount to \$1 billion per year. (Maynard, 2006)

Local Support for Adolescent Parents

- » The Adolescent Parenting Program (Grades 7-12) is an academic and vocation curriculum designed to help parenting and pregnant teens meet state requirements for graduation, as well as provide the skills needed to cope with the realities of adult living. The Pyramid School provides affordable onsite child care and transition services such as non-tuition summer school, career counseling and job placement opportunities. For additional information contact Principal John White at 901-416-4400.
- » The "Healthy Families" program at The Le Bonheur Center for Children and Parents provides a home-visitation program for adolescent mothers designed to "prevent child abuse and neglect and address issues related to teen pregnancy, parenting skills and healthy child growth and development." They also hold an annual conference designed to support adolescent parents in Shelby County. For more information, call 901-287-KIDS.



HOW CAN WE PREVENT TEENAGE PREGNANCY?

Delaying parenting until mothers and fathers are out of their teens is good for families and good for children.

- » Research suggests that the most effective teen pregnancy prevention programs are multi-faceted.
- » They respond to the developmental needs of teens.
- » They build vocational and leadership skills.
- » They provide information about pregnancy prevention.
- » They promote access to reproductive health care providers. (Manlove et. al, 2002)

Policymakers and researchers agree on the need to focus on key proven best practices to prevent teen pregnancy:

- » Service Learning Programs that provide information about sexual health can postpone onset of sexual activity and reduce the number of teenage pregnancies. (Grades 7-12).
- » Extensive Sexual Education Initiatives taught by qualified instructors that provide opportunities to rehearse refusal skills have a positive impact on sexual conduct. (Grades 7-8).
- » Long-term Nurse Home Visiting Initiatives for young parents can minimize the chance of subsequent teen births, enhance the home environment, and promote cognitive development in our youngest children.

Things Parents Can Do Now:

Work to develop a close relationship with your children. Listen carefully to what your children say. Express love and affection often. Be supportive. Be respectful to your children. Have meals together as a family. Know your children's friends and their families. Make an effort to meet the parents of your child's friends. Welcome your child's peer group into your home. Talk openly to your child's friends about your expectations. Let your child know that you value his or her education highly. Meet with instructors and administrators. Set high expectations for educational performance. Help with homework. Volunteer in your child's classroom. Supervise and monitor your children. Establish regulations and curfews. Set high standards for expected behavior. Know what your children are watching, listening to, and reading. (Source: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy)



Demographic Data included in this policy brief are independent estimates created by the Center for Urban Child Policy utilizing 2006 State Health Department birth certificate data or from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count and Right Start Census Data Online unless otherwise specified. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KidsCount Data Book can be found at <http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter> or <http://www.kidscount.org/cgi-bin/cliks.cgi>.

The Center for Urban Child Policy at The Urban Child Institute conducts nonpartisan research and evaluation to raise the quality of public and policy discussions of child well-being. For more information, visit: <http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org/PublicPolicy>



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For more information on the well-being on children in Memphis and Shelby County, visit The Urban Child Institute at: <http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org/Home>; and The State of Children in Memphis & Shelby County, available at: <http://www.theurbanchildinstitute.org/Databook.php>

