
PROVIDING SERVICES TO ALL TEEN PARENTS, BOTH NON-TANF AND TANF

Many teen parents are not eligible for or receiving TANF today, but are likely to be so in the future if they do not receive supportive services that help them to stay in school. A broad welfare prevention strategy would include mechanisms to ensure that all teen parents are provided these supports while in school, regardless of their welfare status.

The Challenges of Providing Services to All Teen Parents, Regardless of TANF Status

There are two major challenges to providing support services to non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents and their children. First and foremost, there is no stable public source of funding universally available to pay for child care, case management and other support services for all teen parents regardless of TANF status. Second, while there are often a variety of funding sources available that could pay for some support services for some non-TANF teen parents, there is no single entity within a community with responsibility and authority to pull those resources together.

Solutions from the Field

There are a number of strategies local communities and states have taken to create some flexible resources so that a broader group of teen parents, beyond those eligible for public welfare assistance, can receive support services.

In several states, flexible state resources are provided to localities (in particular, school districts) through formulas based on the numbers of teen parents served through schools. Generally, the resources come to the district in the form of supplemental average daily attendance dollars. These enhanced average daily

attendance (ADA) formulas generate additional revenues for local school districts that are flexible in how they can be used. These funds can be used for education, child care, case management, summer programming and so on, with no income restrictions on the students to which these services can be provided.

- In Florida, the program is called the Teenage Parent Program (TAP) and is administered through the state Department of Education. Districts receive state education monies for each teen parent in an approved TAP program (at a rate of 1.6 FTE or full-time equivalent). The children of teen parents are also enrolled as students, assigned an ID number and included in the district's full time equivalent count. These funds can pay for most programmatic elements for school-based programs for teen parents and their children, including child care whether on site or not.¹ Some but not all of the dollars going to local districts under this program are required to be spent on teen parents.
- Oregon's program is quite similar with respect to teen parents in that districts receive weighted reimbursements for the number of adolescent parents they serve. The monies go to the districts, but are not required to be spent on teen parents. There are few restrictions on how these monies can be spent.
- The State of California has had a state-funded program providing reimbursements to counties for services specifically for pregnant and parenting minors. The California legislature has just passed a new bill, patterned after the Florida law, called CALSAFE. CALSAFE replaces three programs for pregnant and parenting teens and their children currently funded at \$43 million, while also expanding services.

¹ *More information on Florida's funding approach is provided in "School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children: Overcoming Barriers and Challenges in Implementing Comprehensive School-Based Services," CAPD, Bala Cynwyd, PA, 1994, page 70.*

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The flexibility and administrative ease of using state educational formulas make it possible for the funds to pay for a broad range of services for all parenting students regardless of income or welfare status.

However, use of such formulas also allows districts to use these funds to pay for any services to any group of students. Thus, once in the district's coffers, the additional state funds generated by enrolling teen parents and their children may not necessarily be allocated to services for these students. Advocates for teen parent services who want their state to take this approach to funding should build language into any authorizing legislation requiring that additional resources which come to the district be spent for the benefit of teen parents and their children.

There are other strategies for serving non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents.

- Pennsylvania's state-funded program provides resources to school districts for support services for teen parents who meet income eligibility requirements. However, in Pittsburgh subsidized child care is available to all teen parents who are enrolled in school, regardless of income, because other public funding streams (specifically, CCDBG) have placed highest priority on serving teen parents among its target groups.
- In Hennepin County, Minnesota (which includes Minneapolis) the county social services agency makes both case management services and child care subsidies available to all teen parents, regardless of TANF status. The funds for these services are a combination of state and county general fund dollars.

These various strategies are encouraging in that they suggest both state and local strategies for creating new funding streams and more effectively accessing existing funding streams to support teen parent services. However, states have an opportunity now, with their TANF surplus dollars, to begin to build a broad welfare prevention strategy by funding support services for non-TANF teen parents so that they can stay in and complete school, avoiding the need to rely on public economic assistance.

Policy Recommendations

Given the importance of support services to help teen parents stay in and complete school and to ensure that their children get off to a good start, it makes sense to craft national, state and local policies to provide these services to all parenting adolescents and to do so as much as possible through school-based programs.

State TANF policies and regulations should allow and in fact **encourage support to non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents as a welfare prevention strategy**. This welfare prevention strategy should be supported with TANF surplus dollars among other resources. States could offer demonstration dollars to selected communities to develop replicable models for implementing such strategies.

In allocating other public funds for support services such as child care subsidies, case management and parenting education, community agencies or boards should place **high priority on teen parents and the children of teen parents**. These funds can then be used to pay for services available to TANF-eligible parenting teens.

States should enact and fund legislation to **provide additional resources to school districts based on the number of teen parents and children of teen parents served through schools**. These resources should be provided for the children of teen parents who are registered in such programs regardless of the location of child care (on-site or not). When such resources flow to the schools, they should be flexible enough to pay for a wide range of services and supports, but should be earmarked for expenditures on behalf of the teen parents and their children.

State funding should also support the provision of **technical assistance to local districts on how to build effective school-based programs**, including development of a range of educational options. They should not provide differential fiscal incentives for the schools to create stand-alone schools rather than embedding services in the comprehensive high schools.