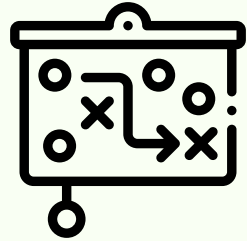
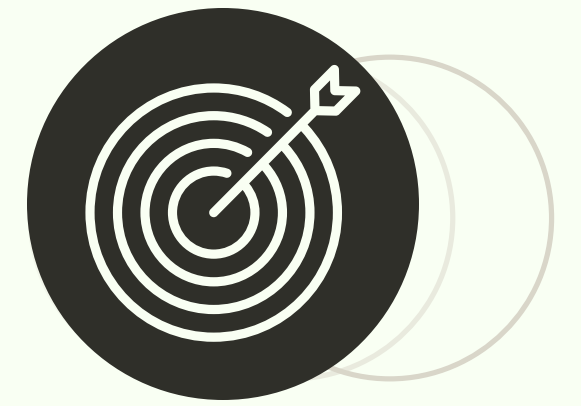




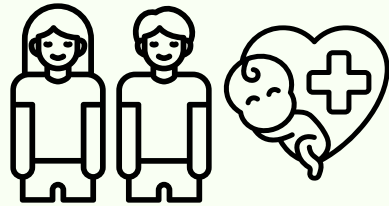
Unique Needs: Teenage Parents and Their Children

Presented by: Debrah Clark, MA, CFLE

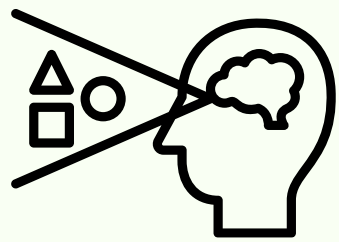
Training Objectives



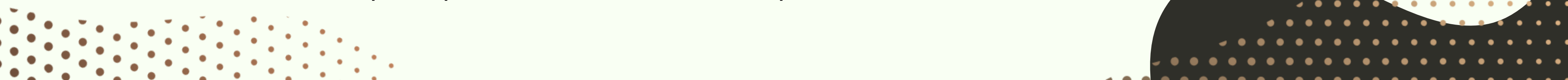
Provide strategies designed to maximize positive relationships between teen parents and providers



Provide a basic understanding of the unique developmental needs of both adolescent parents and their children



Get a view into the realities of life for pregnant/parenting teenagers. Systemic and societal obstacles and opportunities, family and peer support/lack thereof, and perceptions vs. realities will be explained





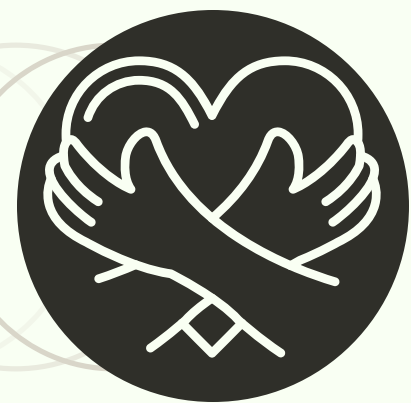
What you “Think” Matters!

(and what teen parents think, matters more!)

Answer in the chat...

What are some opinions people hold of young parents and their decisions and behaviors?





“How you are is as important as what you do”

- Jeree H. Pawl & Maria St.

John, 1998

Rather than focusing on individualistic solutions that further stigmatize teen mothers, we need to hone our professional skills and advocate for the resources that validate their strengths, recognize their struggles, and affirm their efforts to become the good mothers they want to be.”

- Lee SmithBattle, R.N., D.N.Sc.
The Prevention Researcher, Volume 10,
Number 3, 2003



Statistics on Teen Parents



Fifty-three percent of teen mothers receive a high school diploma compared with 90 percent of female teenagers who do not give birth at ages 15-19.



Black teen mothers are the most likely subgroup to follow through with their high school degree (62%), with Hispanic teen mothers being the least likely (45%).



25% of people who become teen moms drop out of school before conceiving.



73% of teenage mothers in the U.S. are poor or low income.



Statistics on Teen Parents, Cont.



- ✓ Most fathers of children born to teen mothers are over 20. A national survey in which 63% of cases established paternity, 70% of children born to teen mothers were fathered by men over the age of 20.
- ✓ A significant correlation exists between childhood sexual abuse and teen pregnancy.
- ✓ An estimated [60 percent](#) of teen girls' first pregnancies are preceded by experiences of molestation, rape, or attempted rape. In one study, between [30 and 44 percent](#) of teen mothers were victims of rape or attempted rape, and up to [20 percent](#) of girls were pregnant as the direct result of rape.



What are the roles of parents?



Teens usually believe the family way is the right way even if experience and research prove otherwise.
(Sometimes we all do...)



**in the
chat...**

What are the roles
of parents?

Roles of Parents:

According to the world



- Financial providers
- Emotional guides
- Spiritual/religious leaders
- Disciplinarians
- Role models
- Moral educators
- Counselors
- Medical practitioners
- Tutors
- Advocates
- Protectors
- Responsible for everything the child does.

Roles of Parents:

What Teens See Themselves as



- Adults/more responsibilities
- Disciplinarians
- Being loved
- Having a purpose/having hope for the future

- Strong but isolated: Adults against teen parents
- A good parent
- TIRED
- Unsupported



**in the
chat...**

As practitioners, how do we see
ourselves in the role supporter of the
educational/life success of teen
parents?



Who a Teen Parent **REALLY** is:



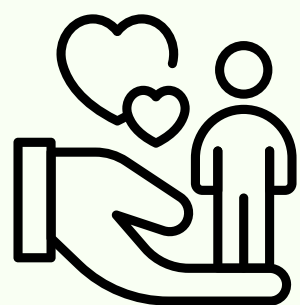
- ✓ Most likely had/has a trauma background, likely in early childhood
- ✓ A kid, A person, trying to figure out a life they did not expect
- ✓ Living in poverty-usually before and after the pregnancy
- ✓ Has adults in their life that believe childbirth/pregnancy makes them an adult
- ✓ In need of mentoring- a chance, respect, and help



Who the Child of a Teen Parent is:

- Usually unexpected, usually loved
- Felt sorry for by society
- Most likely has trauma exposure, possibly was created from trauma
- Many are developmentally behind in all domains
- Usually living in poverty
- Seen as a way out, seen as hope by the parent
- Could be a pawn in custody battle
- In danger of abuse and neglect at higher rates





Who the Helpers of Teen Parents and Their Children are:



- People who lose applications/paperwork
- People who openly judge or pity them with looks/words/and body language
- Sometimes cruel in order to “hold them accountable”
- Well-meaning and intentioned
- Overworked
- Underpaid



Obstacles to Success:

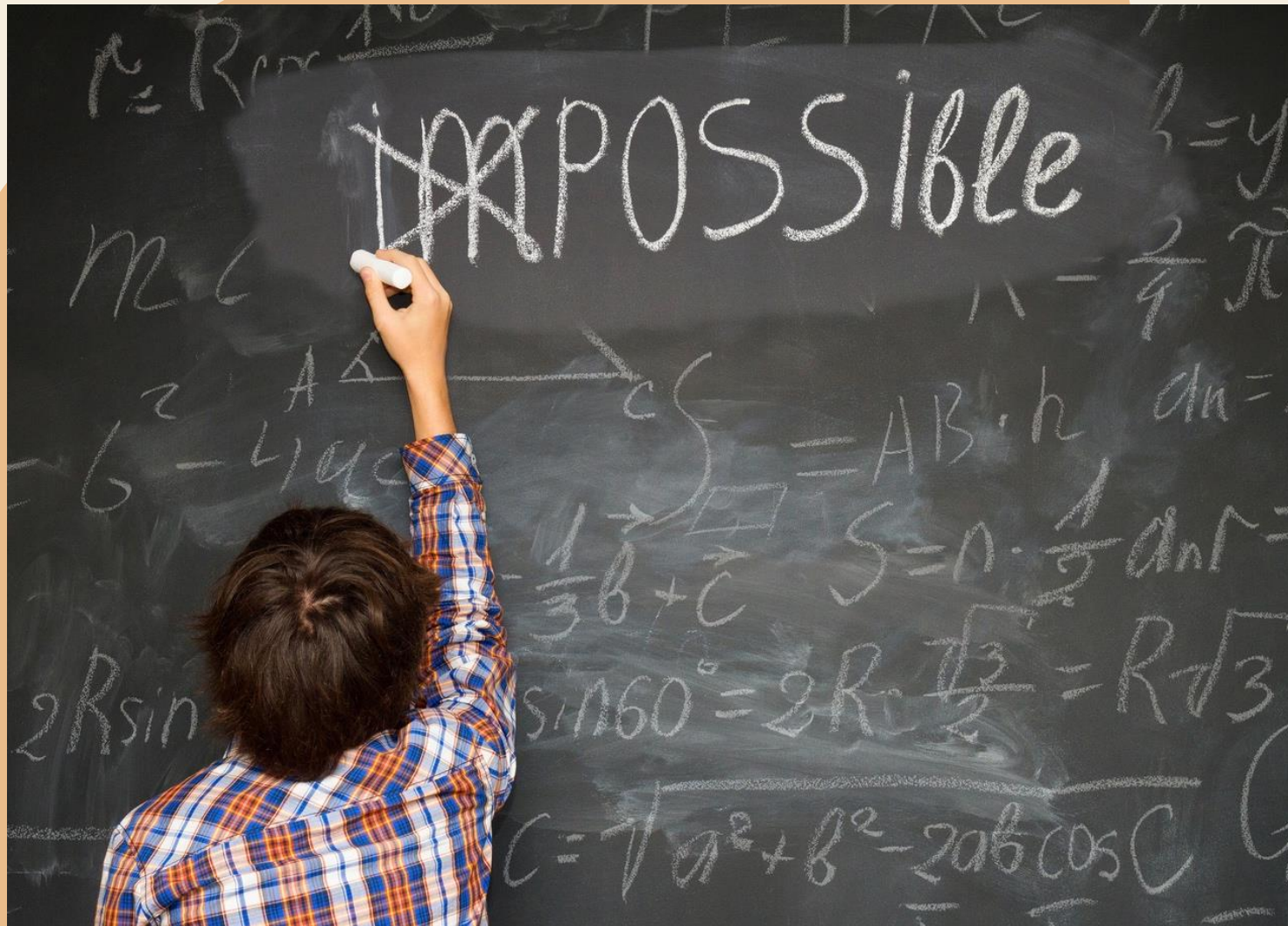
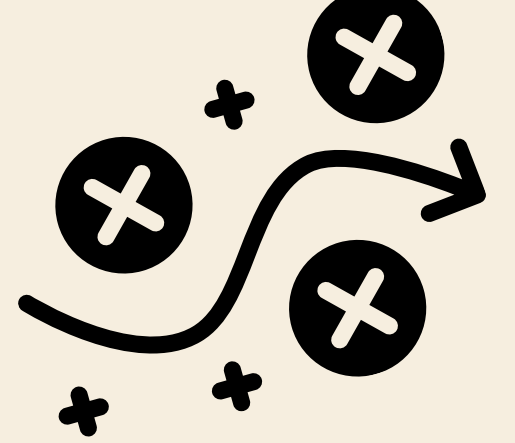
Expressed by Teen Parents



- “Anxiety when stepping into a new room”
- “Doubting myself”
- “Coming back to school”
- “Staying focused”
- “Controlling my feelings and being the best mom”
- “Letting people into my life to do me wrong and distract me from what is important”
- “Losing a lot of things and people in my life, being traumatized as a young child”
- “Getting to graduation”

Obstacles to Success, Cont.

Expressed by Teen Parents



- “Affordable food and more opportunities for jobs” (2)
- “My mother does drugs and wasn’t there”
- “Self worth and needing to love myself”
- “Who will be bringing me to school” (4)
- “Keeping up on what I am doing and focus on myself and family”
- “Keep going and never give up”
- “Paying attention, getting good grades”
- “Trauma I am battling in my mind”
- “Ignorant people who need to learn and behave like they have manners”

Who I am

Straight from Teen Parents



- "16 year old mother of a two year old"
- "Determined and persistent"
- "Nice, caring person who listens to others and tries to understand them"
- "17 year old senior, mom , daughter, sister, friend, lover, supporter"
- "Mother, girlfriend, student"
- "Mom, friend"
- "Mother of one, going to school to finish"
- "An African American 16 year old mom"
- "A junior teen parent-alert, elegant, classy, good, and a ticking time bomb"
- "A teen mom and a student at the same time"



Who I am

Straight from Teen
Parents, Cont.

”

- “A very proud pregnant teen mom who is going to be the best mom to my child”
- “In love with my baby”
- “A senior in high school and a proud teen parent”
- “A stressed, tired, but motivated mother”
- “Proud of myself for getting through the rough times”
- “A person who likes to be alone and by myself”
- “A mother who cares more for my baby than myself”
- “Hopeful”

What do Teen Parents Want for Their Children?

It's what all parents want for their children!

(Parental priorities are basically the same as adult parents, but the methods of achieving success may be different.)



Teen parents want their kids...

To choose
the right path

To be very
successfu

Do whatever she wants
without feeling like she
has to give up due to obstacles

to be herself

To learn to be
around others
and
respect them

To go to college

Go to school and
believe she could
become something

Have a stable job
and place to live

To finish school
and get a good
job

Challenges for Teen Parents



Mixed messages:

They are an adult or kid depending on situation and who is addressing them



No/**limited transportation** to/from school, work, doctor, grocery store



No/inconsistent **financial/emotional support** from other parent and own parent/guardians



Multi-generational living
(if the generations are **unsupportive**)



Challenges for Teen Parents, cont.



High likelihood that the pregnancy was due to a nonconsensual act by a relative or family friend four or more years her senior and then forced parenthood.



Balancing the internal emotional struggle as an adolescent with the emotional struggles of their children



Unsafe living environment and/or being unhoused



Mental and/or physical illness (their own or a loved one) i.e. depression, post partum depression, post partum psychosis, drug addiction, etc.

Joys of Parenting as a Teen

Being able to grow
with them

No one can love
you the way your
baby loves you

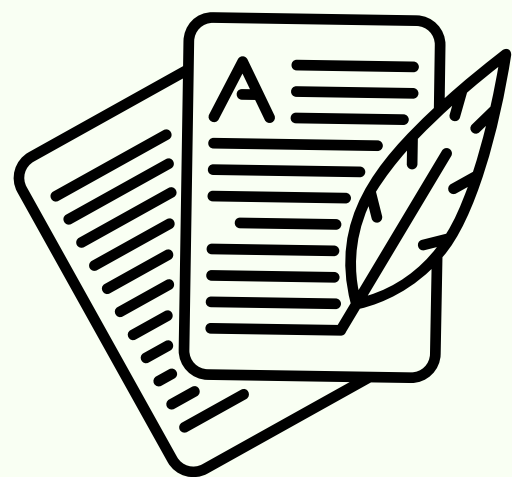
Seeing someone
they created accomplish
goals

Making memories
with my baby

Helping another
mom or baby

Knowing you are their
comfort and safe place



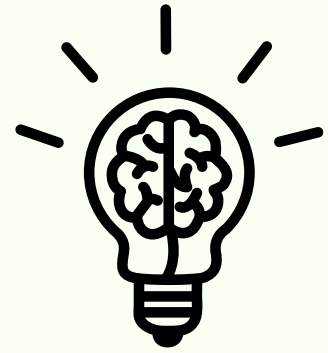


Stories that tell the story...

Sit back & relax while I tell the tales



What Teen Parents Want you to Leave Here Knowing...



- “Just because we have a baby, it does not mean we do not have morals.”
- “One (mistake) surprise, does not define us.”
- “Situations happen with babies and we, as parents, have to be available, like teachers who have kids.”
- “Support us. DO NOT JUDGE us. Judging us only adds stress to an already stressful situation. We are not motivated by judgement, and we may stop trying instead of keep going. (The same thing goes with making assumptions and past actions).”
- “Do not talk about our babies and how they effect our grades and behavior. You do not know what kind of mom we are, so the baby has no place in the conversation.”

Best Practices for Working with Teen Parents



- Show up
- NO JUDGEMENT, EVER
- Stay calm and listen
- Support our co-workers and our work families
- Meet needs in a timely, consistent way
- Model and encourage learning
- Be who teens and children need
- Keep the vision on the present and future while respecting the past that made all of us who we are
- With support of and for community organizations

Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Teens in Your Work

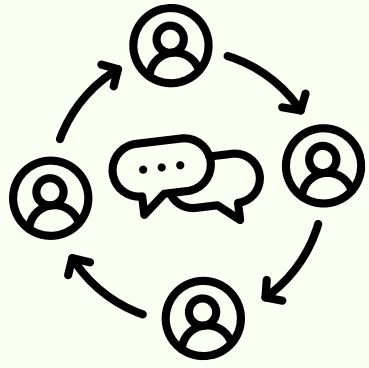
- Let them eat; offer snacks!
- Humor, but not sarcasm
- Compliments
- Smiling
- Be supportive
- Don't take it personal!



Practical Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teens

- Allow them access to their phones-they are always waiting for something for their child
- Do not discuss their parenting status with anyone else (without their permission)-including their parent/guardian
- Explore reasons for behavior before giving a consequence
- Make sure your seating arrangements can support a growing body





Communicating with Teen Parents

- Direct ALL communication as to how it will ultimately affect the teen parent in a short-term time span.
- They may see only TODAY; tomorrow is likely not a priority or sometimes an option.



From the field...

How will you
teach your child
the difference between
Right & wrong?

Como le vas a enseñar a tu hijo la diferencia lo bueno de lo malo?

Diciendole lo que esta bien y mal
y dandole consejos de todo lo bueno.

tell her and teach
her between good/bad.

I would tell him
that something
is wrong or bad
and teach him a
better way to do
things.

I would just say "no"
and show him a better way
that is better to do things.

I would show her
the difference and why
what they did was wrong
instead of right

praise him when he does good+
when he does wrong I'll help him
understand why it was wrong

I am...

I am a mother.

I wonder if my baby knows who I am to her.

I hear giggles and cries.

I see toes and smiles.

I want the world for my child.

I am tired.

I pretend that life is all planned out.

I feel exhausted.

I touch chubby cheeks and rolls.

I worry that I don't do enough.

I cry all the time.

I am a daughter.

I understand that my child looks up to me.

I say "NO!" "STOP!" "Put that down!" "You can't eat that!"

I dream about my future that I can barely see.

I try my best.

I hope I can try harder.

I am not done.

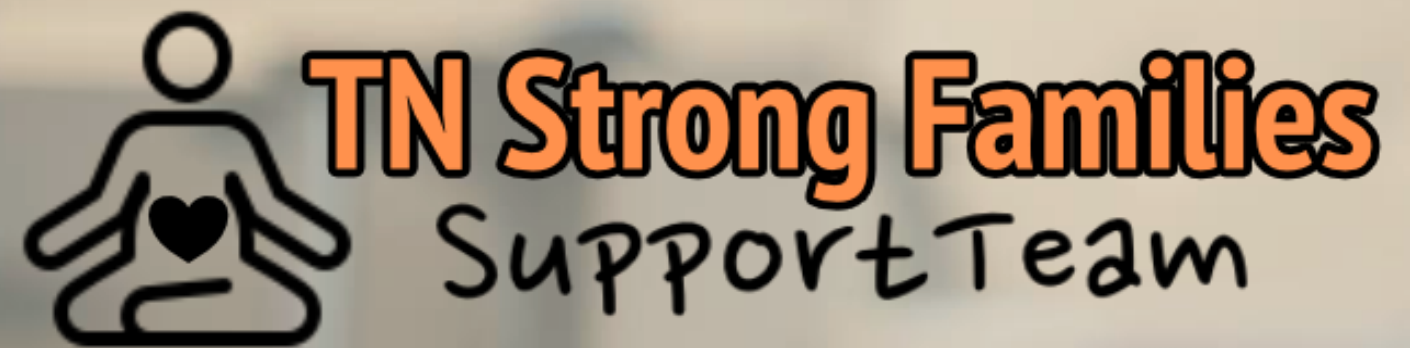
-Program Participant, 2022



Questions?



Thank you!!



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