

MOAPPP Monitor

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Fall 2007

MOAPPP's mission is to develop and strengthen policies and programs that promote adolescent sexual health, prevent adolescent pregnancy and support adolescent parents.

Our Class Experiences Affect How We View Early Pregnancy and Parenting

Jodi Pfarr, J. Pfarr Consulting

People who grow up in middle class experience a certain level of economic security—food is on the table, transportation is available, health needs are met and maybe even a family vacation is enjoyed. Less obvious are the other “benefits” we subtly receive.

One key benefit of middle class is having a “future story.” When our needs are met for today, we can turn to the future. We ask our children, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” We don't question *if* they are going to college; we wonder *to which one?* They have a story, even if it isn't perfectly clear. And for many it is well planned out: education, marriage, financial security and then a baby. A second hidden benefit is the focus on achievement—education, career, a car or two. In middle class there is a sense that one should at least strive for achievement, and at best, produce it in many areas of one's life.

In her book, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*, author Barbara Ehrenreich illuminates the stress people feel trying to survive on less than a livable wage. People in poverty are so focused on survival—securing a ride, food, housing or clothing—there is no time or energy to look to the future. The present is most important; it is all about the “right-now.” Make the best decision for this moment and worry about tomorrow, well, tomorrow. This is in stark contrast to those in middle class who constantly take today's

decision, play it into the future, see how it looks and then come back into this moment and make the decision based on the future ramifications. In contrast, when our lives are about surviving, it is the other people in our

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lives who help us survive. The emphasis in poverty is on relationships. Relationships are a necessity, as much as achieving is a necessity for middle class.

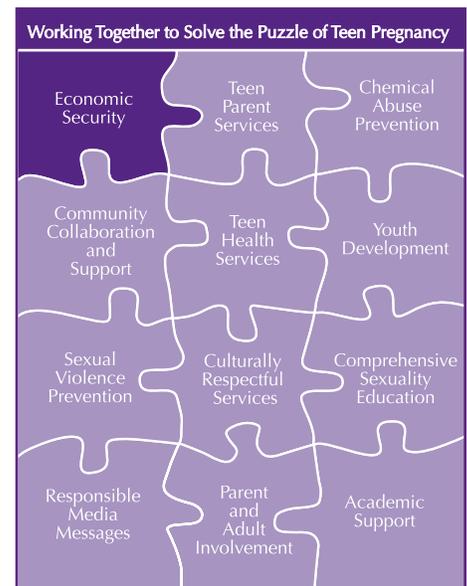
As we look at teen pregnancy prevention, it is crucial that we understand how economic security, or lack of it, influences how and why teens get pregnant. Teens in middle class have future stories in their minds. They take information from the moment and process it into the future. Their identities are tied to their future goals—having a good job and a nice place to live; having a baby at a young age would adversely affect their goals.

However, when a teen in poverty is invested in the moment and life is about relationships, having a baby may actually feed this reality. A baby can provide another relationship, as well as create an identity. In the book, *Promises I Can Keep*, author Kathryn Edin posits that while the ways to form an identity in middle class are numerous, they are more limited in poverty. Being a mother or father becomes a viable option.

Our own experiences with and understanding of class can profoundly impact our effectiveness in working with young people. We must be conscious of our personal experiences and assumptions about

class and the benefits we may have received. We must acknowledge that not all the teens we work with have had access to the same benefits and, as a result, may view becoming young parents very differently than we do. If we look at

parenthood through their eyes, we are more likely to make our programs meaningful to all teens, not just to those who come to us with similar class experiences.



MOAPPP's Teen Pregnancy Puzzle illustrates the complexity of the issue and the need for comprehensive solutions based on research.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Dear Friends,

This issue of the *Monitor* tackles the challenging topic of economic security, and how its presence or absence affects a young person's risk for pregnancy. Warm thanks to Jodi Pfarr who, among other things, leads trainings based on Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. When I participated in one of Jodi's trainings a few years ago, my world view was transformed regarding class assumptions, and the many ways they can get in the way of making strong connections with the young people we're working so hard to reach. I hope her article inspires you to do some further reading about this topic—the resource list on page seven has several excellent recommendations.

We also tried to make connections between economic security and the other areas in which we work: in the public policy arena, in new Minnesota communities, in youth development programs and in our work regarding young families.

MOAPPP's economic security is also on our minds this season. We recently underwent a vigorous review by the Charities Review Council of our financial and fundraising policies and practices. We're happy to report that we successfully met all 16 of their Accountability Standards.

We're trying to make it easier than ever for you to support the work we do on behalf of Minnesota's youth. You'll see on the back cover that you can designate MOAPPP to receive the donation you make during your workplace giving campaign. You can also follow the link from our website's homepage to Amazon.com, and we'll get a small percentage of any order you place. As always, you can continue to donate through the mail or directly online.

We know we are fortunate to have your support, and hope we continue to earn your trust through the work we do.

My best,

Brigid Riley, MPH
Executive Director

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MOAPPP's mission is to develop and strengthen policies and programs that promote adolescent sexual health, prevent adolescent pregnancy and support adolescent parents.

Economic Security and Public Policy

MAKING THE CONNECTION – MAKING THE INVESTMENT

Economic security is defined as the consistent ability to meet one's basic needs for health, education, housing, information, safety and work-related security. When families enjoy high levels of income and/or education, when the communities they live in also show evidence of high levels of income and education, their children benefit in many ways. One of those benefits is demonstrated by the fact that economic security is an independent protective factor for the prevention of teen pregnancy.

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PUBLIC INVESTMENT

We know that economic security provides a solid foundation from which young people can build successful futures. However, if young people come from economically insecure families and/or communities, there are quality programs that can provide them the tools to move toward greater security.

Public spending on programs to facilitate young people's journey toward economic security is an investment in our collective economic future. Yet, deciding to fund these types of programs is so often difficult for our country. Part of the problem may be that we pit funding for prevention programs against funding for direct service programs, claiming there is not enough money available for both. This is short sighted, given the fact that without investments in prevention, we will continue to see an increased need for direct services. Conversely, strategic investments in direct services serve prevention goals by promoting school success, job training and access to health care—tools that can be used to move toward greater economic security. We shouldn't have to make an either/or decision: we should invest in **both**.

PROGRAMS TO MOVE YOUTH TOWARD ECONOMIC SECURITY

Thankfully there are ever-improving examples of programs that address both parts of the prevention/services question.

Youth development programs that incorporate a service-learning component, with time for reflection with a trained facilitator,

increase school engagement, increase graduation rates and prevent teen pregnancy—all milestones on the journey toward economic security.

School-linked services for young parents, including school-based childcare centers, transportation and child development classes facilitate the parents' continued connection with school. Continued connection to school moves these families toward greater economic security.

Finally, programs that focus on the larger community can make a difference for families' economic security, including programs that reduce neighborhood crime, increase access to health care and increase the numbers of meaningfully employed.

CALL TO ACTION: YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Join the MOAPPP Advocacy Network. MOAPPP is developing an Advocacy Network to keep you connected to policy and funding issues affecting the economic security of youth and young families. To join the network, please visit http://www.moappp.org/public_policy.html.

Call your legislators. Your state and federal representatives are in St. Paul and Washington D.C. making decisions regarding how to best use federal and state resources. They need to hear from you that public resources should be focused on sustained funding for programs and opportunities that bring future security to adolescents, young parents and the communities in which they live.

Vote! Federal, state and local policymakers have an impact on public spending decisions. Attend candidate forums and town hall meetings and ask the candidates where they stand on the issue of investing public dollars in programs that facilitate the development of long-term economic success.

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Somalis Seeking Economic Security in Minnesota

Immigrants are at significant risk for economic instability upon arrival in the United States. Oftentimes immigrants are refugees or asylees who have had to flee their home countries because of political unrest, famine or persecution. They arrive in their new homeland without financial resources or job skills and face barriers in language, literacy, culture and religion.

An emerging and important immigrant community in Minnesota is the rapidly growing African population. This group has experienced a more than threefold increase since 2000, including representation from more than 45 nationalities with the top five being Somalis, Ethiopians, Liberians, Kenyans and Nigerians¹. Let's take a closer look at Minnesota's vibrant Somalian community since it represents the largest percentage of Africans in Minnesota.

SOMALIS IN MINNESOTA

Minnesota is home to the country's largest population of Somali residents who represent 37% of the total African population here. Most Somalis live in the metro area, particularly in Minneapolis: nearly a third of Minnesota public school students who speak Somali at home attend Minneapolis public schools. Smaller numbers have moved to Rochester, Owatonna and other suburban and Greater Minnesota communities¹⁶.

An emerging and important immigrant community in Minnesota is the rapidly growing African population. This group has experienced a more than threefold increase since 2000, including representation from more than 45 nationalities with the top five being Somalis, Ethiopians, Liberians, Kenyans and Nigerians¹.

While Minnesotans may view Somali immigrants as a monolithic group, Somali society is actually composed of multiple groups, affiliated by language, culture, geography or other commonalities. In addition to learning a new language, a new culture, and otherwise wrestling with the ordinary challenges of life in a new country, they must confront the physical and emotional effects of their experiences in Somalia and refugee camps.

Most Somalis are Sunni Muslims. In Minnesota—especially at school and in the workplace—Somalis find they must negotiate for time and space to pray (at five predetermined times a day,

facing Mecca), for permission to wear the hijab (a head covering, a religious observance of modesty for Muslim women), and for understanding as they fast from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan (a lunar month near the end of the calendar year). Islam also prohibits charging or paying interest, which makes it difficult to purchase homes or otherwise participate in Western economic life.

MOVING TOWARD ECONOMIC SECURITY

As the Somali population has grown in Minnesota, so too has the number of Somali-led nonprofit organizations whose primary mission is to serve Somali immigrants, refugees and asylees. There are currently more than 30 organizations that fit this category, a majority formed between 2000 and 2006 and situated in the Twin Cities metro area¹. Such organizational activity and growth is a remarkable example of an immigrant community working together to build its internal capacity to provide needed programs and services for its members.

"Community development" was cited as a major activity area for 72% of the African-led organizations that participated in a study of African-led nonprofit organizations in Minnesota.

The most common services they offered were business financing services; women's empowerment programs; home ownership education; counseling services; citizenship classes and financial literacy education. All these services help build the capacity of an individual and family to achieve sustained economic security¹.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Minnesota's Somali families are facing the same challenges that other families here face regarding their hopes and dreams for their children's economic security. Like other families, they are dealing with the realities and ramifications of adolescent sexual development. In the coming months, MOAPPP plans to partner with Somali-led organizations to bring information and resources about adolescent sexual health, teen pregnancy prevention and support for teen parent families to the Somali community in hopes of enhancing their efforts to address these issues.

Positive Youth Development— Good for America’s Economic Well-being

In the report, *Cost-Effective Investments in Children*, Julia B. Isaacs of The Brookings Institution recommends expanded federal funding of programs that reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Based on a review of benefit-cost evidence, Ms. Isaacs believes reducing teenage pregnancy will positively impact America’s future economic well-being. Youth are more likely to make a successful and economically secure transition to adulthood if not burdened with “the challenges posed by teen parenthood.” Reducing teen pregnancy will also mean a lower number of children growing up in poverty since a child’s chance of living in poverty is significantly higher when the mother is a teen.

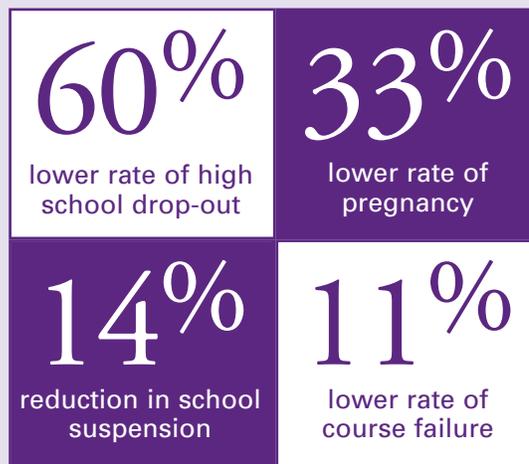
The report goes on to highlight and recommend two specific programs that have been shown to work to prevent teen pregnancy when evaluated under rigorous scientific conditions. Worth noting is that both programs have a broad focus on youth development rather than a specific focus on sexuality education. The program that showed the higher benefit-cost ratio was the Wyman Center’s Teen Outreach Program (TOP). The Junior League of St. Louis, Missouri developed TOP in the early 1980’s. The program is currently found in more than 400 schools and organizations around the country.

TOP is a service-learning program, which combines voluntary community service with structured opportunities for learning before and after the service. According to America’s Promise, a collaborative network of communities and partners working for youth development, “opportunities to help others” is one of five fundamental resources that youth need. Investment in service-learning programs may bring social benefits for participants beyond the benefit of reducing teen pregnancy rates³.

Since service-learning is the primary focus of TOP, the curriculum does not explicitly focus on the risk behaviors it aims to prevent. Rather, the TOP program seeks to develop the participants’ competence in decision-making, interaction with adults and peers and recognizing and managing their emotions. TOP has also been shown, through rigorous evaluation, to demonstrate:

- 60% lower rate of high school drop-out;
- 33% lower rate of pregnancy;
- 14% reduction in school suspension; and
- 11% lower rate of course failure².

Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program (TOP) gets results* for teens:



**Results verified by Philliber Research Associates over 12 years.*

Due to the proven results of TOP, MOAPPP supports this program as an avenue for investing in the youth of Minnesota, their future economic security and the economic security of their future children. MOAPPP has partnered with Hennepin County and the University of Minnesota Healthy Youth Development Prevention Research Center to promote the Teen Outreach Program in various locations throughout Hennepin County. Several sites will begin implementing the TOP program this fall.

We are excited about the future possibilities of the TOP sites across the state, the young people who will participate in TOP, and championing the positive aspects of youth development programs that can make a difference in the future economic security of the young people who they serve.

Breaking a Cycle of Poverty: Economic Security for Teen Parents

Allison Flittner, MOAPPP Intern

Teen parenting is intricately tied to economic security, both in terms of who becomes a young parent and how that parent and child's economic future plays out. As stated in the report, *Not Just Another Single Issue: Teen Pregnancy Prevention's Link to Other Critical Social Issues*, "Poverty is a cause as well as a consequence of early childbearing, and some impoverished young mothers may end up faring poorly no matter when their children are born. Nevertheless, most experts agree that although disadvantaged backgrounds account for many of the burdens that young women shoulder, having a baby during adolescence only makes matters worse¹⁷."

Young families experience economic hardship for many reasons. Studies show that high school completion positively affects long-term earning potential, yet only 40% of teens who become mothers before age 18 graduate from high school, as compared to 75% of similarly situated young women who delay childbearing until 20 or 21¹². Though an additional 23% obtain a GED, research suggests that a GED does not hold the same value in the labor market as a high school diploma. Adolescent parents who complete a GED do not end up in jobs that are paid as well as adolescent parents with a high school degree⁵.

Teen mothers are likely to have a second birth within two years, further impeding their ability to finish school and/or keep a job. Nationally, about one-fourth of teenage mothers have a second child within 24 months of the first birth¹⁴. In 2005, approximately 17% of births to teens in Minnesota were second births⁶.

One well-documented effect of adolescent childbearing is the impact of lower graduation rates on future earnings.

Teen parents spend an average of 20% more on health expenses than parents who wait until after they are 20 years old to have their first child¹⁵. Teen parents are more likely to have preterm and low birth weight babies, resulting in a range of medical problems for the child at birth and throughout life.

The children of teen parents are also likely to suffer economic consequences from being raised in a teen parent home. They are more likely to drop out of school; girls raised by teen parents are



Poverty is a cause as well as a consequence of early childbearing.

22% more likely to become a teen parent themselves; and boys raised by teen parents are 13% more likely to be imprisoned¹⁷.

These data are disturbing. If young parents are to achieve economic security, our mission must be two-fold. We must respond to the immediate educational, health, social and emotional needs of young parents and their children. We must offer them the resources and skills they need to be self-sufficient and raise healthy children including:

- flexible schooling that leads to high school graduation;
- high quality childcare;
- affordable and accessible prenatal, postnatal, well-child and reproductive health care;
- parenting education and support; and
- a comprehensive array of social services and resources.

At the same time, we must partner with organizations working to increase educational and economic opportunity for all young people. We need to move upstream to reduce the poverty conditions that may lead to pregnancy in the first place. Through the combined efforts of effective teen pregnancy prevention and comprehensive support for young families, we can increase the self-sufficiency, education and health of all teens, teen parents and their children.

RESOURCES

Academy for Educational Development

AED is committed to solving critical social problems and building the capacity of individuals, communities, and institutions to become more self-sufficient. AED works in all the major areas of human development, with a focus on improving education, health and economic opportunities for the least advantaged in the United States and developing countries throughout the world.

www.aed.org

Annie E. Casey Foundation

The primary mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. The foundation's economic security vision posits that improvements in a child's well-being are closely tied to improvements in the economic security and success of their families.

www.aecf.org

Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs

AMCHP supports state maternal and child health programs and provides national leadership on issues affecting women and children.

www.amchp.org

Child Welfare League of America

CWLA's mission is to ensure the safety and well-being of children and families. They advocate for the advancement of public policy, set and promote the standards for best practice and deliver superior membership services.

www.cwla.org

National Association of County & City Health Officials

NACCHO is the national organization representing local health departments. NACCHO supports efforts that protect and improve the health of all people and all communities by promoting national policy, developing resources and programs, seeking health equity and supporting effective local public health practice and systems.

www.naccho.org

National Center for Children in Poverty

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is the nation's leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health and well-being of America's low-income families and children.

www.nccp.org

National Fatherhood Initiative

National Fatherhood Initiative's mission is to improve the well being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible and committed fathers. Their website has information on the effects of father absence on poverty, maternal and child health, incarceration, crime, teen pregnancy, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse and education.

www.fatherhood.org

RESEARCH

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DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN DESIGNATE MOAPPP TO RECEIVE THE DONATION YOU MAKE DURING YOUR WORKPLACE GIVING CAMPAIGN?

If you participate in a giving campaign at your workplace that operates in partnership with one of the following "charitable federations," you may designate all or part of your donation to a specific charity. Please consider designating MOAPPP this year!

CHARITABLE FEDERATIONS IN MINNESOTA

The Minnesota State Employees' Combined Charities Campaign

Community Health Charities Minnesota

Community Shares of Minnesota

United Way: Greater Twin Cities; Becker County; Carlton County; Caring Rivers;

Crow Wing; Faribault; Hastings; Heart of the Lakes; Hibbing; Morrison County; New Ulm; Northeast Minnesota; Olmsted County; Red Wing; St. Croix

MOAPPP's Federal Identification Number (EIN) is 41-1722338.

QUESTIONS? Lisa@moapppp.org or 651-644-1447 x16 or contact the charitable federation your workplace uses and ask how you can "designate" the charity of your choice.