



Breaking the Cycle:

Teenage Pregnancy in Kosciusko County

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Breaking the Cycle: Teenage Pregnancy in Kosciusko County Executive Summary

Teenage pregnancy is a growing problem across the country, and unfortunately, Kosciusko County is not immune. Many misconceptions exist about today's teen mothers: Teenage pregnancy is not restricted to any one social class — it is a problem that cuts across all economic and racial lines. The fact is any teenage girl with a child fits the description of teen mother.

Through interviews and research, we've identified the problem, examined a successful program for teen moms in the Wawasee School Corporation and developed a plan for the Warsaw School System.

The Problem

The number of sexually active teens is increasing. Some estimate that as many as 85% of high school students have had sexual intercourse. There are approximately 40 pregnancies per year in the Warsaw High School, 20 in Wawasee and 10 in the Tippecanoe Valley High School. The most disturbing part about these numbers is the drop-out rate of teen mothers. This school year alone, eight girls have dropped out of Warsaw High School as the result of pregnancy.

This is the problem we chose to focus on — breaking the cycle of teens leaving school, having additional children, being forced into low-paying jobs and many times ending up as welfare recipients. And unfortunately, statistics prove this spiral increases the likelihood of the children following in their mothers' footsteps. The U.S. Census Bureau reports 47 percent of teen mothers had mothers who also gave birth to a child by the age of 19.

There is a problem in this county, but there is also a successful program set up to address it.

The Program

Teen Parents Succeeding (TPS), a church-sponsored daycare home, helps teen mothers in the Wawasee school district graduate by offering low-cost childcare through support from

Step Ahead monies. Because the program is located in a house, it is not required to follow the exhaustive requirements for licensure as a daycare center, but instead is licensed as a daycare home. The childcare provided by this program is unique in that it takes newborns up to two-year olds. Many daycare centers require children to be potty-trained before they will accept them, posing a problem for anyone searching for infant care. Jackie Plickerd, founder and director of TPS, also provides the teens with other services. The teen mothers are required to spend one class period a day taking care of all the children at the daycare home. They are also required to participate in educational programs dealing with topics such as nutrition and health, parenting skills and financial responsibility. The program has been a tremendous success with 20 girls either graduating and/or remaining in school (undergraduates).

Recognizing there still remains a problem for teen moms in the Warsaw High School and seeing the success of a program only miles away, there seems to be a simple solution.

The Plan

Our proposal would be to implement a program similar to TPS in Warsaw. Several church and community leaders have offered their support of such a program. We would suggest a daycare home offering services to infants as well as toddlers. As important as the daycare services would be educational programs covering topics such as responsibility, parenting and financial management. In addition, we would like to offer a mentoring program to provide the young women with someone who will offer support and encouragement.

Today, you have been confronted with the need to do something to address the issue of teenage pregnancy. You have seen the problem — eight girls have quit school due to pregnancy. You have seen the program — TPS is the program to keep these girls in school. You have seen the solution — a program similar to TPS to address the problem in Warsaw.

If you are interested in receiving a full copy of our white paper, please contact Cris Pyle at 372-7504 or Mark Price at 267-3200.

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