

Teenage mothers a vulnerable population

[Family](#), [Teenage Pregnancy](#)



Teenage Mothers a Vulnerable Population Joy Carr Nur/440 April 24, 2011

Maria Mendez Teenage Mothers a Vulnerable Population Teenage Mothers, a Vulnerable Population While there are a number of vulnerable populations in the world, very few receive the publicity, funding, and assistance that they need to survive in today's society. There is a vast amount of media coverage on the elderly population and homeless children. However, most vulnerable populations are not recognized and assisted due to personal biases or a lack of education regarding their situations. Teenage mothers are one such vulnerable population. The general public is usually biased against teenage mothers and feels that they are responsible for their situation. Because of this belief, they are often shunned by society and thought to be uneducated and promiscuous. In fact, most teen mothers become pregnant due to a lack of education about sex and contraception, particularly within their home environment. " Too often the problem can be traced to the failure of society's adults to take responsibility for the safety of its children. " (Stepp, 2008) Prior to researching this vulnerable population, I had mixed views of teenage mothers. I often felt what much of society does; that these girls got themselves into this situation and it is now their responsibility to deal with the consequences. I generalized and stereotyped them as being uneducated and from lower class families. Teenage mothers, in my mind, were the result of their own parents not being around or caring what their children were doing. Girls that became pregnant at such a young age, I believed, were irresponsible and grew up knowing nothing but a welfare lifestyle that they would continue to live in generation after generation. After researching this vulnerable population, I realized that I, like the majority of our society,

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stereotyped teenage mothers. I was unfair to them and never gave them a chance to tell their story. I was unaware that many teenage mothers were the victim of some type of sexual abuse. It never occurred to me that the reason society views many teenage mothers as uneducated is because many of these girls have had to drop out of school in order to care for their infants. Often they are single parents who do not have the luxury of having time to study or attend school. They are consistently shunned by society and are forced to feel ashamed. This shame prohibits many of these girls from pushing forward into society and really trying to further their education. When I think about it, if I knew that people were constantly judging me and looking down on me, I would have a difficult time going out into public and standing up for myself. Society's views and prejudices have helped to contribute to the lack of assistance and support that teenage mothers receive. One such service that teenage mothers often fail to receive is adequate healthcare. During pregnancy, when prenatal care is so important, teenage mothers do not receive the medical attention that they need. Sometimes this is due to the fact that they do not want to tell a parent or caregiver that they need to see a doctor because they are pregnant. It is much more difficult in society for a teenage girl to go into a store to purchase a pregnancy test than for a married 25 year old. Because of this, teenage mothers are also less likely to find out that they are pregnant as early as their older counterparts. Then, once these girls do find out they are pregnant and they have to disclose to their parents that they are pregnant, they can only hope that they won't be shunned by their families. Many teenage mothers choose to keep their babies, which is not always a popular

decision with their families. If they are lucky, the parent or person who carries the insurance in their household will support the decision and assist in getting any prenatal care that is needed. And of course, the teenage mother has to worry about how childbirth expenses and nursery care will be paid for or whether she will have a huge hospital bill once the child is born. Follow up care for the new mother and infant child is also expensive for a teenage girl who has less than a high school education. This is often why teenage mothers are forced to resort to going on welfare and relying on government assistance in order to survive. I chose the character Jessica Riley from the neighborhood. Jessica is an 18 year old single mother of two children. Ryan is 17 months old and Carrie is 6 weeks old. Jessica is currently working full time at a restaurant. Jessica was fortunate enough to have obtained a General Equivalency Diploma. She had been attending a community college for cosmetology but had to drop out because of the increasing demands of raising two small children. Jessica feels fortunate that her boyfriend Casey, the father of Carrie, does help her with some of the financial responsibilities. Jessica's family upbringing was difficult. Her father walked out on the family when she was seven, therefore she was raised by a single parent. She has two younger siblings, Jenna and Jason. Jessica and her mother had a volatile relationship, as a result, Jessica moved into a small one bedroom apartment when she was 6 months pregnant with her first child, Ryan. Ryan's father walked out on Jessica when she was 4 months pregnant with him. As a result of Jessica's poor education and lack of family support Jessica has had many struggles financially and emotionally. She does receive government assistance in the form of WIC and medical

assistance. Her son also attends a government funded daycare center. Thankfully her mother will help out and watch her children for a few hours in the evening. Her current boyfriend can be abusive at times, which she covers up. Jessica neglects her health with poor eating habits and lack of exercise. She is still a smoker and will drink when she "parties" with her friends. Her boyfriend insisted she continue drinking while she was pregnant, but thankfully she would pretend to drink to avoid any harm to her unborn child. As a society it is time to face the realities of teenage pregnancy. There is already increased education about this vulnerable population in schools. However, there is often an argument amongst political parties about what exactly should be taught and what teenagers should be exposed to in school. After watching popular television shows, though, such as Sixteen and Pregnant and Teen Mom, teenagers are fully aware of the issue. Teens are exposed to these issues in popular culture and if we as a society do not take it upon ourselves to educate our youth on what options are available to them, they will learn it through some other venue. Health education classes should be offered through community programs so that teens have a safe and anonymous way of receiving this information. Abstinence is one thing to teach, but we have to be realistic to the fact that teenagers have been having sexual intercourse for generations and it is not going to stop altogether. Teenagers need to know what their choices are and they need to see what consequences can occur as a result of each choice they might make. It is true that teenage mothers are receiving access to more services and educational information than in previous years, but there is still more that needs to be done. It is time to recognize that just telling our

children to say “ no" to unprotected sex is not always a reality. Society needs to stop being so judgmental. We need to learn how to say, “ How can I help", instead of making these young girls feel so ashamed that they don't know how to say “ can someone please help? " Reference Adams, E., Gavin, N. I., Femi Ayadi, M. M., Santelli, J., & Raskind-Hood, C. (2009). The Costs of Public Services for Teenage Mothers Post-Welfare Reform: A Ten-State Study. *Journal of Health Care Finance*, 35(3), 44-58. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

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