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Close Link between Teen Pregnancy and High School Dropouts Detailed in New Report

(Washington, DC) – In 2008, births to teens who lived in counties and cities where 25 persistently low-achieving schools are located accounted for 16 percent of all teen births in the United States, according to a new report released today by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. These same 25 school districts also accounted for 20 percent of all high school drop outs in the United States and are home to many of the nation’s lowest-performing high schools, often referred to as “dropout factories,” where only 60 percent or fewer of students graduate on time.

The new report, produced in collaboration with America’s Promise Alliance, underscores the clear link between teen pregnancy and dropping out of school and highlights what a number of communities across the United States are doing to directly confront these issues. With the help of school districts, public agencies, and community-based organizations, these communities—from California to New York and Texas to Tennessee—are using innovative strategies and activities to help students avoid pregnancy and complete their high school education.

For example, some school districts, such as the New York City Public Schools, have used results from surveys of parents to overcome resistance to programs designed to prevent teen pregnancy. Other districts, such as Harris County Schools in Houston, TX have organized information sessions to educate parents, teachers, and school leaders about the connection between teen pregnancy and school completion as a way to enlist more support for school-based teen pregnancy prevention programs. And in West Virginia, the state school system has partnered with the state health department and community-based organizations to hold in-person or online professional development courses for teachers to improve the delivery of pregnancy prevention programs.

“We are heartened by the work being done in communities across the U.S. to highlight the close connection between preventing teen pregnancy and educational attainment,” said Sarah Brown, CEO of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. “We encourage school leaders, policymakers, state and local officials, business leaders, and others to collaborate and develop novel strategies like those highlighted in this report to help young people avoid pregnancy and complete their high school education.”

Since its peak in 1990, the U.S. teen pregnancy rate has declined 42 percent and the teen birth rate is now at an all-time low. Despite this impressive progress, it is still the case that nearly three in 10 girls in this country will become pregnant before the age of 20. The United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancies in the developed world—approximately 750,000 pregnancies to teens each year.

The United States continues to also confront a high school dropout crisis. Each year, one in four U.S. public high school students fail to graduate with a diploma—that’s more than one million dropouts annually or one every 26 seconds. Although recent studies found the national graduation rate has increased to 75.5 percent, over the last decade less than half of all states made significant progress and only one state (Wisconsin) has achieved the Grad Nation campaign goal of a 90 percent graduation rate.

“The connection between teen pregnancy and dropout rates is a no-brainer,” said John Gomperts, president and CEO, America’s Promise Alliance. “What this report does is reinforce the importance of focusing on those school districts and communities where the dropout problem is the greatest. By turning around those communities that are struggling the most we won’t just see fewer dropouts and teen parents—we’ll see a stronger economy, more vibrant communities, and a more hopeful nation.”

The report highlights other existing data linking teen pregnancy and dropping out of high school, including:

- Parenthood is a leading cause of school dropout among teen girls. Thirty percent of teen girls who have dropped out of high school cited pregnancy or parenthood as a key reason, and the rate is higher for minority students: 36 percent of Hispanic girls and 38 percent of African American girls cited pregnancy or parenthood as a reason they dropped out;
- One in three (34%) young women who had been teen mothers earned *neither* a diploma nor a GED, compared with only six percent of young women who had not had a teen birth;
- Less than two percent of young teen mothers (those who have a baby before age 18) attain a college degree by age 30; and
- Over the course of a lifetime, a college graduate will earn, on average, \$1 million more than a high school dropout. Over the course of his or her lifetime, a single high school dropout costs the nation approximately \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, and productivity.

[Download the full report, including methodology, here.](#)

About The National Campaign: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan initiative supported almost entirely by private donations. Our mission is to promote values, behavior, and policies that reduce both teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among young adults. By increasing the proportion of children born into welcoming, intact families who are prepared to take on the demanding task of raising the next generation, our efforts will improve the well-being of children and strengthen the nation. Please visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org to find out more.

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