

Don't Forget About Teen Fathers:

What Programs Are Available?

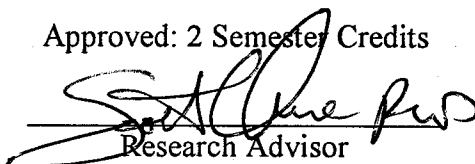
by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

Guidance and Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



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August, 2004

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ABSTRACT

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| Don't Forget About Teen Fathers: What Programs Are Available? |
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| Guidance and Counseling | Scott Orme | August/2004 | 30 |
| (Graduate Program) | (Research Advisor) | (Month/Year) | (# of Pages) |

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|---|
| American Psychological Association, 5 th edition |
| (Name of Style Manual Used in this Study) |

Are there programs available to assist teen fathers? Many programs focus their attention on teen mothers and teen fathers often go without assistance. Without assistance teen fathers struggle in the following areas: relationships with mother, child, parents, education, employment and financial support, restricted freedom, and physical and emotional demands. Through a literature and program review, statistics on teen fathers are presented, along with the areas of need that teen fathers face. Included is an overview of four selected programs and a school based curriculum from across the country. They include MELD (Minnesota Early Learning Design), STEP-UP, Hand to Hand-Father to Father, the Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative, and "Maximizing a Life Experience" (MALE).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Scott Orme, for guiding me through this journey and making the thesis process as painless as possible. I am especially grateful for you taking me on during your busy schedule. Also I want to thank all the great professors and colleagues of mine at UW-Stout who have made my educational journey informative, fun, and worthwhile. All of you have helped prepare me for my future as a school counselor.

I want to thank my Mom, Dad, family, and friends for all their support over the last seven years of my college experience. My Mom instilled in me as a child the importance of education and because of her I have embarked on this educational journey. Thanks for all your love and support.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Bishop family. Madge and Woody you have given me excellent advice from your many experiences in education, also you have raised a wonderful daughter that has shared in my life for the last 2-½ years. Thank you for being so supportive. To Megan who has always been by my side even though distance keeps us apart. We started our life together unsure of where it would lead and today it is much clearer. We have a tough year ahead but know that the end is in sight and soon we will be together. I love you!!

Thank you all for helping me become the person I am today.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy has been a topic of discussion for several years. Most of the discussion is centered on problems facing teen mothers and their children. Many government, community, and school based programs focus their attention on prevention and/or helping the mother and child. These programs are beneficial but often leave out a missing piece of the puzzle; teen fathers. While programs that focus on abstinence or the delay of sexual intercourse can be effective, it does not work for all males. An article by Starkman and Rajani (2002) indicated that abstinence-only programs had not reduced high-risk behavior, but that comprehensive sex education was more effective. It was also noted that although there are many abstinence education proponents there are very few published, peer-reviewed studies done on abstinence-only programs. Starkman and Rajani (2002) did reference a study done on an abstinence-only program that used the "Postponing Sexual Involvement" curriculum. The results showed that the students who were involved in this abstinence-only curriculum were more likely to report becoming pregnant. With this in mind schools, communities, and governments need to focus programs on comprehensive sex education and the needs males have after they become teen fathers.

According to the US Census Bureau (2003), in 2001 there were 445,944 births to girls' age 15 to 19 years of age. This number is down from the 521,826 births to the same age group in 1991. Based on 2002 data, the National Center for Health Statistics (Martin, Hamilton, Sutton, Ventura, Menacker, & Munson, 2003) reported that the birth rate for teenage males (15-19 years) was 17.4 per 1,000 males. With this information it should be known that Balter (2000) reports that approximately 15 percent of birth

certificates are missing information about the father's age. While information about teenage mothers is more accurate, this is not a determinate of the number of teen fathers. Many cases of teen pregnancies include the partners of teenage mothers being on average two to four years older than the mothers (Balter, 2000). Sonenstein, Pleck, and Ku's (as cited in Balter, 2000) surveys estimate that 2 to 7 percent of teenage males have fathered children, with the number being as high as 20 percent in urban areas. It has also been shown that teenage fatherhood is most common among African American, Hispanic males, as compared to Caucasian males (Balter, 2000). It should also be noted that while some avoid the responsibilities of fatherhood, others are involved making visits and providing emotional and financial support.

Although the numbers of teen births are at an all time low, the impact on mothers, fathers, children, and society are significant. The children of teenage parents often suffer from low birth weight, health problems, have trouble in school, live without their fathers, grow up in poverty, or repeat the cycle of becoming teen parents themselves (Balter, 2000). With the known effects on children being born to teen parents there has been a push for research on teen mothers and their pregnancies. In recent years there has been slightly more research and programming done to help aid teen fathers and increase their family involvement. Research conducted by Lerman and Ooms (as cited in Balter, 2000) reported that 50 to 70 percent of teenage fathers do not live with their children. Smollar and Ooms (1988) made note that a majority of teen fathers live with their own parents and not their children. According to Robinson and Barret (1985) teen mothers and fathers only marry in 10 percent of the cases and the divorce rate is three times higher for those who marry under the age of 18 than it is for couples who have children after age 20.

It is these high numbers that have led society to cast a negative stereotype against teen fathers. Instead of stereotyping, schools, communities, and the government need to research and develop programs that can involve teen fathers into family planning.

Without proper programs teen fathers often will suffer from educational, career, and economic losses (Elster & Lamb, 1986). These future losses also have an effect on the teen father's relationship with both sets of parents, the mother, and the child. With these hardships occurring programs need to aid and encourage teen fathers to continue their education, find jobs, provide for their families, and be a part of their child's life.

Smollar and Ooms' (1988) research in the late 1980's examined the question of why do we want to know about young unwed fathers. The three reasons they found in the late 80's still pertain to teen fathers today. First is the fact that "society needs relief from the burden of public support for the children of young unwed fathers." The second is "children need the personal as well as financial participation of their fathers in their lives." Lastly is that "young unwed fathers need to feel that they can be effective in their role as fathers, both financially and personally" (p. 21).

This paper examines what are the needs of teen fathers and the types of programs available to this neglected population. It will examine the function of different programs in the ability to address teen fathers' needs. Also, it looks at what schools can do to incorporate programming to support teen fathers' needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the needs of teen fathers and examine select programs and services from around the country. This study was conducted from January to August 2004 through a comprehensive literature and program review.

Definition of Terms

Birth Rate – “The ratio of total live births to total population in a specified community or area over a specified period of time. The birthrate is often expressed as the number of live births per 1,000 of the population per year.”

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/>)

Teen Father – for the purpose of the statistics used in this research a teen father is a male age 15 to 19 who has fathered a child.

Teen Mother – for the purpose of the statistics used in this research a teen mother is a female age 15 to 19 who has given birth to a child.

Assumptions of the Study

It is assumed that much of the research and programming done on teen pregnancy focuses on teen mothers and their children and that there is scant information available on programs and services for teen fathers.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation is the current data and research available. It is possible that enough pertinent and relevant information is not available through the research methods used. This includes the limited time spent researching for information from January to August 2004. A second limitation is the inability to generalize the study's findings to all school districts, communities, and states, for each program and teen father. A third limitation is that unconscious biases may prevent reporting data and information in an objective manner at all times during the writing of the research project. A fourth limitation involves the potential for unreliable data sources.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There has been much attention focused on teenage mothers with little research done on the needs and programs for teenage fathers. Research on the population of teen fathers began to surface in the late 80's with a small amount developing into the 21st century. This chapter will identify through the available literature what the key needs and problems are facing teen fathers, a description of select programs from around the country, and how schools can get involved.

Needs and Problems Facing Teen Fathers

Relationship with Mother

One of the main concerns for teen fathers is their relationship with the mother of their child. During the pregnancy teen fathers can encourage the mother to carry on a healthy lifestyle. It is important for mothers to avoid smoking, alcohol, and other drugs while also seeking prenatal care (Endersbe, 2000). Through support from the father this process is easier on the mother. Also, teen fathers can be part of the birth by being in the delivery room encouraging and coaching the mother of his child.

Almost 80 percent of teen births happen outside of marriage (Endersbe, 2000). This requires many teen fathers to establish paternity if they want legal rights. This may sometimes be difficult because some teen mothers and her parents are reluctant to want the father involved. Endersbe (2000) also noted that many teen fathers may feel denial toward the fact that they are the father. This often leads to court cases of trying to establish paternity in order for the mothers to receive child support.

Teen parents must also decide between several choices in regards to the nature of their new family. Pennetti (1988) postulated that there are certain choices a teen father can make when it comes to the living situation, and with each there is a different degree of family unity and intimacy. The first is to decide to live apart, where the father assumes financial responsibility but has little emotional involvement with child and mother. Pennetti (1988) suggested that this arrangement often leads to the father seeing his child less and less with the financial payments following the same pattern. The second option is cohabitation or living with the mother and child without being legally married. It is noted that social resistance to cohabitation has lessened but still many parents may pressure their children to get married for the sake of their new baby. Teen parents in cohabitation may also find it difficult to clearly define roles and expectations that usually come along with marriage. The third option is marriage, which socially is the most attractive choice. Marriage allows for both parents to provide and equally share the emotional and financial support for a child (Pennetti, 1988). Lang and Lang (1995) would argue that from a child's point of view it is more important for a father to be around than to have him married to their mother. This is especially true if the child lives with his/her parents and grandparents. Lang and Lang (1995) also noted that there are some indications that early marriage may actually interfere with a teen father's ability to finish school or find work that will support his new family. This can be explained by the fact that more teen fathers who are married feel the responsibility to quit school in order to try and provide for their child.

Relationship with Child

According to Ayer (1995) statistics generally show that children raised without fathers encounter more emotional, social, educational, and health problems than babies raised in a two-parent family. Also, these children are more likely to live in poverty.

According to Lang and Lang (1995) children who live apart from their fathers are five times as likely to be poor and twice as likely to be high school dropouts. They also note that 70 percent of young children that are part of long-term juvenile correction centers did not live with their fathers while growing up.

According to the Administration for Children and Families (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region5/htm_pages/fthrhd.html) the following statistics relay the importance fathers play in their child's life. Children of fathers who are absent from their life are:

- 32 times more likely to run away
- 5 times more likely to commit suicide
- 9 times more likely to drop out of high school
- 2.5 times more likely to become a teen parent
- 37% more likely to abuse drugs
- Twice as likely to live in poverty
- Twice as likely to commit crime

The relationship or lack of relationship teen fathers have with their children can have a detrimental effect on the child's future, thus costing society.

Relationship with Parents

The parents of the young father may feel their son's future is lost (Endersbe, 2000). The mother's parents may also blame the father and reject him from seeing their daughter or his child. These reactions to the young father can be detrimental to the teen's ability to be a good father himself. Instead, Endersbe (2000) discusses a few ways parents can help both the father and mother. Parents first must listen without blaming. Another important aspect is for parents to encourage the new parents to finish school and complete a job-training program, which will help them in the long run. Also, parents often are able to provide a safe place for their children and new baby to live. Lang and Lang (1995) suggest that approximately 50 percent of teen fathers live with their child shortly after its birth. In one-fifth of the cases it is in a household with at least one of their child's grandparents, usually being the house of the girlfriend or wife's parents. These living arrangements can have both positive and negative effects on the father's relationship with his child and girlfriend/wife. One aspect is the fact that the new parents are receiving help with money, childcare, housing, and advice. On the other hand the father may feel shut out or that he is not trusted with the care for his child. Another issue when living with the grandparents of a child is privacy in raising their own child. A teen father may feel their every move is being scrutinized.

Education

Pirog-Good's (1993) research *The Education and Labor Market Outcomes of Adolescent Fathers* is based on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience-Youth Cohort (NLSY). The basis of the research was through interviews of men who were 14 to 21 years of age in 1979 and annual follow-up

interviews up through 1988. The study examined the trends that faced teen fathers as they pertained to education and labor market outcomes compared to their peers who had not become teen fathers. They found that the rating of average school satisfaction for teen fathers was significantly lower than that of their peers. Another result of the NLSY study was that the average years of education completed by 1988 was 10.972 for teen fathers compared to 13.137 for non-teen fathers. The proportion of teen fathers who received a high school diploma or GED by 1988 was 63.560 compared to 87.632 of the non-teen fathers. Another result Pirog-Good (1993) shows is the average age for teen fathers to receive their high school diploma or GED is 19.100, while it is 18.500 for non-teen fathers.

Employment and Financial Support

Pirog-Good's (1993) research to examine the labor market results of teen fathers examines the work commitment, average hourly wage, and average income of teen fathers compared to non-teen fathers. To find out about work commitment the participants in the NLSY study were interviewed in 1979. The respondents were asked what they would do if they were unable to support their families. Among the options given were to seek more education, go on welfare, enter training, apply for food stamps, and engage in shoplifting. The results showed no difference between teen parents and non-teen parents when it came to willingness to go on welfare or seek more education. There was however a more significant number of teen fathers who were willing to enter training, apply for food stamps, and shoplift than those who were non-teen fathers.

Pirog-Good's (1993) study calculated the average hourly wages of respondents in 1988 dollars for teen fathers and other males between the ages of 18 and 29. The results

showed that below age 21, teen fathers earned more on an hourly basis than their peers. In three of the four years examined the difference was significant. The average hourly wage of teen fathers and their peers from 22 to 26 years old showed no significant difference, while 27 to 29 year old teen fathers earned significantly less than those males who had children when they were 20 or older. For example 29-year-old teen fathers earned \$7.29 an hour to non-teen fathers earning \$10.91.

The last component of the labor income that Pirog-Good's (1993) research examined was the average income of respondents, which was expressed in 1988 dollars also. The average income and average hourly income data seem to reflect one another. Teen fathers earned more than their peers during their teen years, about the same in their early twenties and significantly less in their mid to late twenties. At age 29 teen fathers were earning \$12,340, while non-teen fathers were earning \$21,452.

Lerman and Ooms (1993) report on data that was drawn from a study that began in Baltimore in the mid-60's. In 1987 the children of this study were between 18 and 21 and using their interviews it was found that 80% were receiving some amount of child support in the first couple years after birth and four years later that number plummeted with just one in three receiving financial assistance.

Restricted Freedom

Often times teen fathers' friends will quit calling, which leads the father to feel left out or alone. It is important for young fathers to be able to keep their social contacts and balance those with their priorities as a new father (Endersbe, 2000). This can be a tough task but if the father is able to build a strong support system it will make the transition much smoother. Endersbe (2000) relayed the message that finding and

building support makes being a parent much easier. This support can come from school counselors, woman's doctors, birthing classes, family, friends, and neighbors. Endersbe also lists five advice areas that teen fathers give: baby-sit, hang out with kids, find good father role models, and communicate and compromise.

Physical and Emotional Demands

According to Schwartz (1999) teen fathers almost never plan pregnancies. Due to unplanned pregnancies many teen fathers' initial reaction to a pregnancy is denial, fear, and a desire to escape. Other emotional consequences they face is the rejection from family members, barriers to contact with their child and the mother, lack of ability to contribute financially, and an inability to see future achievements due to the unexpected pregnancy. Schwartz (1999) also made reference to the emotional strain that teen fathers go through when dealing with conflicting roles of adolescent and new father. Teen fathers have a need to take on new responsibilities of adulthood when they are still not at a mature adult level. The physical and emotional demands on a teen father can lead them to believe that they are inadequate as a parent.

By understanding what problems and needs teen fathers have, communities, schools, and the government can better provide programming. The next section will examine what programs are available to suit the problems teen fathers are facing today. Also included is an examination of the components of successful teen father programs.

Teen Father Programs

While examining the available literature on teen father programs it was noted that many programs were directed at the involvement of fathers in general and not the specific population of teen fathers. With the scant research done on specific teen father programs

this section will give an overview of four developed programs and the services they provide for teen fathers. Finally, will be an overview of the “Maximizing a Life Experience” (MALE) group curriculum, which can be used in a school setting.

The first program is a national non-profit family service organization based in Minneapolis. The MELD (Minnesota Early Learning Design) program was developed in 1973 to assist in the needs of new parents through out the Twin Cities area. As the program developed communities inquired about the MELD organization forming programs to better provide services to populations of high stress, such as teen mothers and immigrants. Since MELD’s development the organization has shared its knowledge and currently MELD has been replicated in 20 states (<http://www.meld.org/>). The specific MELD program that will be discussed here is MELD for Young Dads, which derived from MELD for Young Mothers.

The idea of MELD for Young Dads was developed in 1985, after listening to young fathers discuss the lack of support they receive as fathers. It was in 1989 when curriculum was beginning to be developed for new populations such as teen fathers. MELD’s philosophy is used for all of its populations it serves. The philosophy includes:

- Parents can learn from each other.
- Parents can support each other.
- Parents can cooperate with their community while maintaining their individuality.
- Parents can make informed decisions.

(<http://216.17.23.216/meld/program/program.cfm?pageID=1540>).

Although the philosophy is the same the curriculum and program designs are adapted to reach the specific populations they serve.

The goal of MELD's for Young Dads is to provide support, and help inform young fathers throughout the process of fatherhood. To support the goal of the program, MELD's focuses on the following objectives:

- **Reduce isolation** by gathering young dads who don't usually have a chance to talk about being a dad with their peers.
- **Provide positive fathering role models** by recruiting and training volunteers from the community to facilitate groups of young dads. These men empathize with young dads, but provide high expectations for father involvement.
- **Reinforce learning and stability** by providing support to young dads for two years.
- **Provide information respectfully** through a two-year curriculum that addresses the practical, emotional, social and educational needs of fathers, and builds upon their best intentions. The curriculum helps the group direct its own learning, share experiences, learn important information about child rearing and apply what they learn in every day life.
- **Use high quality training and technical assistance** for professionals and program volunteers to assure program quality.

(<http://216.17.23.216/meld/program/program.cfm?pageID=1540>).

Through the use of MELD for Young Dads there are five things they have found while serving young fathers. The first is the fact that using experienced fathers as peers can be very effective in helping young fathers develop as both people and as parents. Next is that recruiting and retaining young fathers is hard and takes time, which is why it is key to get the whole community on board with the program. Thirdly, is through

MELD's process of training and supporting professionals and volunteers it assures quality, prevents mistakes, and helps the program run smoothly. Next, is the fact that fathers need reinforcement that they are important in their children's lives. This is done by teaching young dads about how children grow, by getting proper support when they may be shut out from their child's life, and teaching them to counter negative messages with positive messages. The last area is that community mindsets toward fathers can change with positive programs

(<http://216.17.23.216/meld/program/program.cfm?pageID=1540>).

An important part of any type of program is the evaluation component. To evaluate the MELD for Young Dads program the organization focuses on certain "markers" which relate to the father's progress in education, employment, getting a legal plan in place, staying involved in the program, and establishing positive relationships with his family, his child's family, and others involved with his child

(<http://216.17.23.216/meld/program/program.cfm?pageID=1540>).

The MELD program and its affiliates are working to serve the often forgotten population of teen fathers. To help continue the support they offer program replication, training, and parenting materials. The MELD program is one of the most recognized programs to support the young fathers of this country. There are two others that also focus on helping teen fathers make the adjustment to parenthood. They are STEP-UP and the Hand to Hand, Father to Father program.

The STEP-UP (Skills, Training, Education, Employment Program for Unemployed Male Parents) is a program, which was developed in Phoenix, Arizona back in 1990 (<http://phoenix.gov/YOUTH/tparents.html>). In 1994, the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services selected the STEP-UP program for young fathers as one of four national programs to be replicated. The goal of the program is to address the needs of teen fathers by examining the young fathers' willingness and responsibility for becoming self-sufficient and sharing in the responsibility for raising their child (<http://phoenix.gov/YOUTH/tparents.html>). To help accomplish the goals of the STEP-UP program the organization provides certain services. To be eligible for services the father must be 22 years or younger and live in the city of Phoenix. Also, they must be having difficulty handling parenting responsibilities, finding a job, or continuing their education. If the father is eligible the following is a list of available services that may be provided (<http://phoenix.gov/YOUTH/tparents.html>).

- **Employment Services** – help the young parent learn how to conduct himself/herself in an interview, how to get and keep a job, as well as help in obtaining employment.
- **Case Management Services** – assist in identifying and resolving problems, and motivate the young parent to achieve self-sufficiency.
- **Attainment and Coordination of Resources** – meet basic needs, including food, clothing, housing, temporary financial assistance and transportation until employment is obtained.
- **Accessing Educational Resources** – G.E.D., community colleges and other educational services and programs.
- **Individual and Group Self-Help Counseling** – provide guidance with communication skills, winning attitudes, conflict resolution, parent responsibilities and parenting skills.

- **Assistance with establishing paternity and child support** – help fathers to understand the benefits to both parent and child.
- **Special Events** – Family Picnic, and Father’s Day and Mother’s Day Awards Recognition events.

The next teen father program to be discussed was developed by the Academy for Adolescent Health, in Washington, Pennsylvania. The Hand to Hand, Father to Father Program (http://www.healthyteens.com/our_programs-fathering.html) links adult volunteers with young fathers in a mentoring relationship. In the relationship the adult tries to emphasize the importance it is to have a father in a child’s life. The mission of the program is to support, educate, and challenge young fathers to actively participate and understand their role as father in the family. Mentors encourage the young fathers to become personally involved and provide the leadership, teaching, love, financial and emotional support needed to help their children develop and grow (http://www.healthyteens.com/our_programs-fathering.html). To reach the goal of the Hand to Hand, Father to Father program the following services are provided:

- Peer support and discussion groups for father involved with teen moms.
- Mentor training
- One on One mentoring services that link experienced community fathers with young dads
- Skill building home visits
- Employment assistance

(http://www.healthyteens.com/our_programs-fathering.html).

The last program that will be discussed comes from the Center for Schools and Communities. The Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>) has “A Resource Guide of Best Practices for Pregnant and Parenting Teen Programs.” Based on the before mentioned guide the rationale and program components will be discussed for an effective teen father program. According to the Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>) guide, children of teen or adult fathers who are involved in parenting programs displayed positive sex-role development, had better social adjustment, cognitive development, and higher academic achievement. With this rationale in mind an effective program consists of the following components.

The first component is recruitment and programming. According to the website (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>) one of the most effective strategies in recruitment and programming is to use male staff. Adult male staff members can provide a positive role model for the younger members. To help in the recruiting process it is necessary for groups and organizations to collaborate with schools, communities, recreational facilities, churches, businesses, and civic and men’s organizations. It was noted that nontraditional meeting times, places, and formats are key to better the chance of teen fathers’ participation. The hours of the meetings should be flexible and the meeting places may occur at recreational and sporting events. According to the guide (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>) most group meetings should be limited to 15 fathers and be held in “father-friendly” rooms. To help make the rooms “father-friendly” the rooms should consist of the following:

- Posters depicting positive male role models.

- Neutral colors and décor.
- Evidence of father/child relationships in the forms of photos, cards, and posters.
- Parenting, nutritional and health information pertinent to teen fathers.

While conducting sessions it is important to understand that the stages of adolescent development have been accelerated because of the pregnancy. With this in mind teen fathers must develop skills at a much faster pace. A very important skill that teen fathers must learn is to take responsibility for themselves and their child. In doing this they must learn pre-employment skills, life skills, and parenting skills, which can be taught in several ways. The way these skills can be taught is through male support groups, mentors, role models, internships, and schools and curriculum (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>).

The guide (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>) suggests using “A Curriculum for Young Fathers” written by Pamela Wilson, MSW, and Jeffrey Johnson, Ph.D., in collaboration with Public/Private Ventures and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Included in the curriculum are a teacher/facilitator training package and five modules of 25 sessions with assessments and activities on different topics. The curriculum serves as a guide and can be modified to meet individual teen fathers. The topics that are covered in the curriculum include: personal development, life skills, responsible fatherhood, relationships, and health and sexuality.

The final teen father program that will be discussed is the “Maximizing a Life Experience” (MALE) group. The MALE group specifically ties into how schools and school counselors can be directly involved with teen father programs (Huey, 1991). The MALE program was developed to provide support and assistance to unwed teenage

fathers in a school setting. According to Huey (1991) the MALE program's rationale was to help develop teen fathers' awareness of responsibilities, rights, and resources. The goal of the "Maximizing a Life Experience" (MALE) group is to help young men understand their emotional rights and concerns and receive proper support. Also, to understand what their legal rights and responsibilities are when it comes to their children and also any available resources they may have. To support the MALE groups' goal there are seven objectives to help teen fathers:

1. Learn more about themselves and better understand their feelings about their present situation.
2. Understand their legal and emotional rights and responsibilities.
3. Recognize that pregnancy cannot be dismissed as an accident.
4. Obtain factual information about reproductive biology, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases.
5. Identify and explore their present and future options.
6. Learn how to solve problems and make sound decisions.
7. Realize what resources are available and how to use them (Huey, 1991).

Huey's (1991) research was conducted by using the MALE program in a suburban high school with a predominantly Black and low-income student population. With eight members the group was set up to meet once a week for 8 weeks in one-hour sessions with one three-hour field trip. To properly run the program the counselor rotated the meeting times so students would not miss the same class period more than twice. Students were encouraged to get assignments ahead of time and keep up on all homework.

Huey's (1991) article also gave an overview of each of the nine sessions' components and what skills were worked on. Session one consisted of four primary tasks: an overview of the program and logistical information, a get-acquainted activity, setting both group and individual goals, and developing of basic group rules. According to Huey (1991) during the second session the group watched a film titled "Teenage Father" by Taylor Hackford (1978), which is taken from a young man's perspective on the times of hearing of the girl's pregnancy to the time a decision and action was taken. A group discussion followed the film in which the group examined values and attitudes involving teenage sexual activity. Similar to the previous session, the third session used a filmstrip, which defines and highlights the role of the unwed father. The film allowed for discussion on the options available to teen fathers. Before the next session an attorney from the Legal Aid Society was provided questions from the group so they were able to come prepared to answer the teen fathers' legal rights and responsibilities questions. The fifth and sixth sessions involved Planned Parenthood. During the fifth session a representative from Planned Parenthood came to speak about the reproductive process and contraception. With the information presented the follow-up session led the group to visit Planned Parenthood, where a staff member reviewed previous information given in session five. The seventh session focused on effective problem-solving skills and decision-making, with opportunity to use these skills in simulated situations (Huey, 1991). The eighth session gave each group member the opportunity to use resources and new skills to work through any personal problems they were having in relation to becoming or being a teen father. The final session included three primary tasks: reviewing and summarizing the group experience, providing information about available

resources, and completing a group evaluation and posttest. According to Huey's (1991) article the group got a 9.5 rating out of a high of 10. Students reported that of the things they would change would be to have longer and more frequent sessions and the thing they enjoyed most was the supportive atmosphere.

The MALE group programs attempt was to try and provide unwed teenage fathers with knowledge, support, resources, and counsel to better help them cope with the changes that occur when becoming a new father. With all the changes and responsibilities that come along with becoming a father, teens in this position need to be targeted where they spend most of their time; school.

School Involvement

Huey (1991) notes that the experience of fatherhood is a life-changing event and with those changes come choices and responsibilities. School counselors are in a position to override myths and stereotypes about teen fathers and provide much needed services to this often forgotten population. Teen fathers need help to understand their feelings, their legal and emotional rights and responsibilities, their alternatives, and the consequences of those choices.

Schwartz (1999) noted that many schools have comprehensive programs for pregnant and parenting females, in which they try to encourage mothers to identify and involve the fathers. Some of the teen mother programs also will include the fathers if they are willing. Some schools enable fathers to continue their schooling, offer parenting courses, help them find part-time work, and develop a career plan. It is important for schools to encourage and accommodate teen fathers to continue their education.

Through curriculum and collaboration, schools can play a valuable role in the success of teen fathers. Schools in collaboration with community agencies can help find teen fathers part-time jobs, financial assistance, child-care, and educational opportunities. Schools most importantly can help teen fathers feel supported through offering groups on teen fatherhood using such curriculums as the “Maximizing a Life Experience” (MALE) group model or similar curriculums.

When looking at what schools and school counselors can do Huey stated it best when he said:

Becoming a father during adolescence has serious consequences for individual development, and teenage fathers are not psychologically prepared for their new role. School counselors must become more active in responding to the silent cries of the forgotten half of the teenage pregnancy problem (1991, Conclusion and Implications section, para 3).

CHAPTER III: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the needs of teen fathers and examine select programs and services from around the country. When examining the literature on teen fathers' needs and available programs it becomes evident that teen fathers are still a neglected part of teen pregnancy. This chapter will give a summary of why teen father programs are important and summarize the main parts of the selected programs discussed in chapter two. The research will conclude with limitations of the project and recommendations for future programs and studies on teen fathers.

Summary

From the time literature emerged about teen fathers in the late 80's till the present much of the focus has been on the lack of support for teen fathers. Included in the reflection of a lack of support is the fact that teen fathers have similar needs as teen mothers. Examining the available literature on teen fathers there were seven areas of need that teen fathers had.

The first area of need is the relationship the father has with the mother of his child. According to Schwartz (1999) almost all teen pregnancies are unplanned causing the teen father to have feelings of denial, fear, and a desire to escape. These feelings can lead a father to abandon the mother during her pregnancy. During the pregnancy Endersbe (2000) reflects on the important role a father can have in encouraging the mother to avoid smoking, drinking, doing drugs, and seeking prenatal care. Also, teen fathers must make a choice about the living arrangements they will have with their child and the mother. Pennetti (1998) suggests that there are three choices and that each carries along different degrees of intimacy and unity. The three choices are living apart,

cohabitation, and marriage. Each choice carries along different responsibilities with Lang and Lang (1995) arguing that more important to the child is having the father around than having the parents married.

The second area of need is the relationship the father has with his child.

According to the Administration for Children and Families

(http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region5/htm_pages/fthrhd.html) fathers who are absent from their children are at heavy risk. These children are 32 times more likely to run away, 5 times more likely to commit suicide, 9 times more likely to drop out of school, 2.5 time more likely to become teen parents, and twice as likely to live in poverty. These statistics indicate the importance that the father-child relationship is.

The third area where teen fathers face problems is in their relationship with both sets of parents. Endersbe (2000) makes the point that the fathers' parents may feel their son has given up his chance at a future. Also, the mothers' parents often blame the teen father and he may not be allowed to see the mother or child. These can be detrimental to the teen fathers' willingness and ability to become a good father.

The next area where teen fathers have problems is continuing with their education. Pirog-Good's (1993) research examined the trends that faced teen fathers compared to their peers in respect to education. What was found is the average years of school completed by 1988, was 10.972 for teen fathers compared to 13.137 for non-teen fathers. One suggested reason for the difference is teen fathers feel they need to quit school in order to get a job to support their child. This leads into the next area where teen fathers have problems.

The fifth area is employment and financial support. Based on Pirog-Good's (1993) study teen fathers less than 21 years old earned more in hourly and total income than their peers. During their mid-twenties they earned similar amounts as their peers but by the time teen fathers are 28 and 29 they earn more than \$3.00 less than those males who did not become fathers until later in life. Based on the 1988 data, the teen fathers earned \$12,340, while non-teen fathers were earning \$21,452 (Pirog-Good, 1993).

The sixth area where teen fathers have needs is when it comes to dealing with the restricted freedom. Teen fathers have to make a rapid adjustment from adolescence to the adult world, while many of their friends are still able to be teenagers. Endersbe (2000) suggested these are key reasons why teen fathers need to build strong support systems. The last area is teen fathers' ability to deal with the emotional and physical demands that having a child brings. Schwartz (1999) referred to the emotional strain and consequences teen fathers face when dealing with rejection from family, barriers to contact with mother and child, lack of ability to contribute financially, and inability to see a way to have future achievements.

The previous seven areas of need are a direct reason for the development and implementation of school, community, and government programs. The four programs written about in chapter two were the MELD (Minnesota Early Learning Design), STEP-UP (Skills, Training, Education, Employment Program for Unemployed Male Parents), The Hand to Hand, Father to Father Program, and the Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative. Also, included was an overview of the "Maximizing a Life Experience" (MALE) group curriculum, which can be used in a school setting.

The focus of the selected programs was to support, educate, and encourage teen fathers to become involved with their children's lives. MELD tried to accomplish this goal by reducing isolation, provide positive fathering role models, reinforce learning and stability, provide information respectfully, and use high quality training and technical assistance (<http://216.17.23.216/meld/program/program.cfm?pageID=1540>). The STEP-UP program offered several services to accomplish its goal. These services include: employment, case management, attainment and coordination of resources, accessing educational resources, individual and group self-help counseling, assistance with establishing paternity and child-support, and special events (<http://phoenix.gov/YOUTH/tparents.html>). The Hand to Hand, Father to Father Program (http://www.healthyteens.com/our_programs-fathering.html) supported its goal by offering peer support and discussion groups, mentor training, one on one mentoring by experience fathers, skill building home visits, and employment assistance. The final program discussed was the Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative (<http://www.center-school.org/education/ppt/pptfather.htm>) who focused on the importance of recruitment and programming. Similar to the other programs the Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative focused on using older male mentors to teach topics such as personal development, life skills, responsible fatherhood, relationships, and health and sexuality.

Along with the development and implementation of the before mention programs schools can and should play an important role in providing services to teen fathers. Through collaboration with community programs, schools can provide a wide array of services. Schools can seek out adult male mentors for the young fathers, provide individual/group counseling, help seek alternative methods of education, provide

resources for job opportunities, and teach them about legal and parental responsibilities. Most important schools and its personnel can give teen fathers an understanding ear to listen.

Limitations

One limitation is the current data and research available. Much of the research done on teen fathers indicates that this group is a forgotten population. Although relevant the research dates back to the late 1980's with scant information developing into the 21st century. Another limitation is the fact that research indicates there is a need for programming and further studies but little has been written in peer reviewed journals about specific programs. However, it is possible that enough pertinent and relevant information is not available through the research methods used. This includes the limited time spent researching for information from January to August 2004. A third limitation is the inability to generalize the study's findings to all school districts, communities, and states, for each program and teen father. A fourth limitation is that unconscious biases may prevent reporting data and information in an objective manner at all times during the writing of the research project. A fifth limitation involves the potential for unreliable data sources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in the literature and through program evaluation for teen fathers it can be suggested that there needs to be a continuation of studies done on this population. Since the late 1980's researchers have recognized the lack of information and services being provided to teen fathers but till this day teen fathers are often forgot about in the realm of teen pregnancy. The needs of teen fathers have been documented

but little research and advertising has been done about effective programs to help these fathers. It is recommended that organizations begin advertising and actively recruiting teen fathers to help support the seven areas of need this paper previously discussed.

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