

Partner with the Child Support Program to Raise Awareness about Responsibilities of Parenthood

This fact sheet discusses the benefits of incorporating child support education principles into your program. Child support education increases the student's awareness of parental responsibilities, educates about teen pregnancy, and prevents the need for child support services. To learn more, read our child support fact sheet on [preventing the need for child support](#).¹

Child support education has the power to shape an adolescent's future. Child support education is not a sex education class; rather, it focuses on the financial, legal, and psychological realities, consequences, and responsibilities of teen parenthood.

What is the Child Support Program?

All states and some tribes run a child support program in partnership with the federal government to promote parental responsibility and to ensure that children in single-parent families can count on stable financial support from both parents. The program is open to all children who have a parent living elsewhere. Child support agencies help locate parents; establish paternity; set, enforce, and update legal child support orders; and collect and distribute child support payments.

Child support agencies also do a lot more for families. State, local, and tribal child support agencies are adopting a more family-centered approach for each family to help parents access the tools they need to support their children, and even help prevent the need for child support services by promoting responsible childbearing and parenting choices. Child support programs partner with other organizations to help build healthy family relationships, support responsible fatherhood, and prevent unplanned pregnancies.



Why should you collaborate with the child support program?

Child support education is a distinctive component to pregnancy prevention and teen development programs – it discusses the realities of parenthood, including the importance of establishing paternity and being emotionally and financially prepared to support a child. Child support programs partner with middle schools, high schools, fatherhood programs, and pregnancy prevention programs to reach young adults.

CHILD SUPPORT EDUCATION ADDS A UNIQUE ASPECT TO PREGNANCY PREVENTION

The curriculum informs students about:

- Financial obligations and expenses of raising a child
- Legal rights of establishing paternity
- Responsibilities of fatherhood
- Importance of being emotionally prepared for parenthood

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Child Support Education Is Easily Integrated Into Your Program

If you work with teens and would like to partner with child support to encourage healthy teen development, here are a few ways to get started.

Include it in your curriculum. Incorporate discussions about the costs of raising a child, the benefits of establishing paternity, and why father involvement is important for the well-being of the child. Browse through examples of child support education curriculum.²

- California Kern County Department of Child Support Services, [It Happened to Me, It Could Happen to You](#)
- Michigan, [The Responsibilities of Parenting – Are you Ready?](#)
- Minnesota, [Dads Make a Difference](#)
- Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, [What's the Rush?](#)
- Texas, [No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents](#)
- Texas, [Parenting and Paternity Awareness \(p.a.p.a.\)](#)

Collaborate with child support agencies. Co-produce outreach materials or distribute information about child support responsibilities and financial obligations; i.e., fact sheets, brochures, or public service announcements. Invite someone from your local child support agency to talk about their program. Contact a local [child support agency](#).³

Share information about child support with your clients. Introduce core components of child support education in your presentations, outreach discussions, and other agency activities. Access outreach tools and materials on our [Hispanic Outreach Toolkit](#).⁴

Child support education challenges teens to personalize the realities of becoming a teen parent and assess their readiness for parenthood. Though child support education curricula vary, common threads address the costs and complexities of teen parenting, the importance of paternity establishment, marriage and relationship realities, and financial responsibilities.

The Child Support Program Reaches Men And Boys

Although historically, pregnancy prevention efforts disproportionately targeted females, males play a vital role in teen pregnancy prevention. Males' perceptions of the financial responsibilities that accompany parenthood influence sexual behavior and contraceptive use.

Adolescent males who perceive a high likelihood of having to pay child support in the event of becoming a nonresident parent have fewer sexual partners (one partner instead of two or three) and use effective forms of contraception more consistently.⁵ Additionally, males often equate their ability to provide for their child with responsible fatherhood.⁶ Though many teen fathers perceive an ability to meet their family's financial needs before the birth of their child, few actually do. Child support education is a pregnancy prevention tool with a unique ability to target males' perceptions of the realities and responsibilities of fatherhood.

Child Support Education Dispels Misperceptions About Teen Parenthood

Child support education identifies the realities of teen parenthood and challenges teens' perceptions with exercises that address budgeting and the effects of teen pregnancy on education, career, and income. Teen-focused programs can more effectively alter teens' misperceptions about parenthood by developing partnerships around child support education. Child support education replaces misperceptions with realities that resonate with teens.

Non-parenting teens identify unrealistic perceptions about teen parenting and underestimate the cost. Positive perceptions about teen parenthood have been linked with an increased likelihood of becoming a teen parent.⁷

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PARTNERING TOOLBOX

Partnering Tip #1: Set up a “meet and greet” to become better acquainted with a potential partner. Share information about your goals and learn about theirs. This meeting will help reduce apprehensions about partnering and will serve as the foundation for future collaborations!

Partnering Tip #2: Be creative! Partnerships around teen pregnancy expand beyond health class. Business, law, or social studies classes can also serve as a venue for reaching teens and discussing the legal and financial realities of teen parenthood.

REFERENCES

- ^{1.} Read our fact sheet on preventing the need for child support:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/factsheets/child_support/child_support_prevention.pdf
- ^{2.} To browse through examples of child support education curriculum refer to:
California Kern County Department of Child Support Services, It Happened to Me, It Could Happen to You
www.ithappened2me.org
Michigan, The Responsibilities of Parenting - Are you Ready?
www.michigan.gov/ruready
Minnesota, Dads Make a Difference
www.dadsmakeadifference.org
Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, What’s the Rush?
www.tndagc.org/whatstherush/
Texas, No Kidding: Straight Talk from Teen Parents
<https://www.oag.state.tx.us/media/videos/play.php?image=NoKiddingV5&id=335>
Texas, Parenting and Paternity Awareness (p.a.p.a.)
www.oag.state.tx.us/cs/of/papa/
- ^{3.} To find a local child support agency, refer to: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/extinf.html
- ^{4.} Access outreach tools and materials on our Hispanic Outreach Toolkit:
ocse.acf.hhs.gov/toolkit/outreach-toolkit/
- ^{5.} Chien-Chung Huang & Wen-Jui Han. “Perceptions of Child Support Sexual Activity of Adolescent Males” Journal of Adolescence, 27, 731-748. 2004.
- ^{6.} Emily Jackson, Alison Karasz, and Marji Gold. “Family Formation in the Inner City: Low-Income Men’s Perception of Their Role in Unplanned Conception and Pregnancy Prevention,” Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved. February 2011.
- ^{7.} Judith W. Herrman & Julie K. Waterhouse. “What Do Adolescents Think About Teen Parenting?” Western Journal of Nursing Research. October 2010.

For additional resources, refer to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
www.thenationalcampaign.org

