

NC Teen Pregnancy Rates Hold Steady

RALEIGH—North Carolina's teen pregnancy rates continue to hold steady, with 2006 state rates nearly the same as those over the previous three years. The four-year plateau follows a 13-year decline that resulted in the state's lowest-ever rates in 2003. The state's adolescent pregnancy rate has declined by 36 percent since 1992.

The 2006 pregnancy rate for teens ages 15 through 19 was 63.1 pregnancies per 1,000 girls, compared to 61.7 per 1,000 in 2005, according to the State Center for Health Statistics.

The total number of North Carolina teens aged 15-19 who were pregnant in 2006 was 19,192. That number includes both married and unmarried females. Nearly 29 percent of those pregnancies were to girls who had been pregnant at least once before. The number of 10- to 14-year-olds who were pregnant last year was 405.

Among minority populations, Hispanic teens had the highest pregnancy rate, although their rate has dropped nearly 7 percent since 2003. The 2006 pregnancy rate among Hispanic adolescents in the state was 173.1 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19, a 1.5 percent decrease from the 2005 rate of 175.7. African American teens had a 2006 pregnancy rate of 86.2, compared to 85.3 in 2005. The number of pregnancies among American Indian teens and other minority groups was too low to calculate reliable rates.

The disparity between white and minority teen pregnancy rates has narrowed since 1992, when the minority teen pregnancy rate was two times higher than the white rate. In 2006, the minority teen pregnancy rate dropped to 1.6 times that for white teens.

"It is good news that the state pregnancy rates among teens have not been increasing over the past few years," said State Health Director Leah Devlin, "but we really want to see these rates begin falling again. North Carolina still has one of the higher teen pregnancy rates in the nation."

"North Carolina Public Health and the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina-APPCNC-have been working together with communities throughout North Carolina on teen pregnancy prevention and teen parenting issues since 1985," Devlin said. "That kind of cooperative effort is vital to reducing teen pregnancy rates on both the county and state levels."

"Reducing teen pregnancy will take a concentrated effort and increased resources, but we believe it can be done," said Kay Phillips, executive director of APPCNC. "We need to work together to build upon programs that are working, develop new interventions, and expand into more communities."

In the eastern part of the state, Greene County's rate fell from 95.5 in 2005 to 66.7 in 2006. Greene County Health Care, Inc. operates an Adolescent Parenting Program (APP) for first-time pregnant and parenting teens. The clinic sits on the high school's property, and students have easy access to the APP program coordinator and needed health services. Funded through the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services' Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives (TPPI), the program helps teen parents to complete high school, learn parenting and child development skills, and delay a second pregnancy. In addition, a new grant will help provide preventive services to middle- and high-school-aged teens.

Although Orange County has a relatively low rate of teen pregnancy on the county level, some communities in the county have higher rates and face challenges that are often linked to teen pregnancy, such as low socioeconomic status, limited education among parents, and significant school dropout rates. Through the Chapel Hill Women's Center, a program called

Teens Climb High offers primary prevention help to middle school females by empowering girls to identify and reach goals and to delay initiation of sexual activity.

Other counties are beginning new programs in hopes of reversing rising teen pregnancy rates. Jones County had a teen pregnancy rate of 20.2 in 2006, an increase from its 2005 rate of 13.3. The Jones County Health Department has received a new teen pregnancy prevention grant from N.C. DHHS. With those funds, a Teen Prevention Education Program (Teen PEP) will be implemented in partnership with the county school system. Adult staff and high school peer educators will be carefully trained so they can provide sexual health education to other students. The program has showed promising results in other states.

More information on state and county teen pregnancy rates and numbers is on the State Center for Health Statistics website at www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/pregnancies/2006. For county rankings and information about reducing teen pregnancy, see the APPCNC website at www.appcnc.org. Parents can also contact APPCNC at nc4facts@appcnc.org or 919-226-1880.

About the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina

The prevention of adolescent pregnancy is the business of the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina (APPCNC). We believe a cooperative approach between public agencies, private organizations and community volunteers can maximize prevention efforts. APPCNC has been working for North Carolina since 1985.

About NCDHHS Division of Public Health, Women's Health Branch

The Women's Health Branch has primary responsibility for developing and promoting programs and services that protect the health and well-being of infants and women during their child-bearing years. The Branch develops medical guidance and offers assistance, consultation and training for professionals who provide women's health services. These programs and services improve the overall health of women, reduce infant sickness and death, and strengthen families and communities.

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The **Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Coalition of North Carolina**

Kay Phillips, Executive Director
(919) 226-1880

North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Public Health

Carol Schriber, Public Affairs Officer
(919) 733-9190