Teen Pregnancy and Foster Care

**What is CFSA?**

The DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) is a public agency whose goal is to protect children in the District of Columbia. It has several roles that it utilizes to achieve this goal.

- Supports struggling families by providing services including counseling, parenting classes, and facilitates the delivery of health and mental health services.
- Operates Child Protective Services that investigates claims when someone feels that a child is in danger of abuse or neglect.
- Finds children, who are not safe or able to be adequately cared for at home, a temporary place in the Foster Care system.
- Provides a permanent, safe place for young people to grow up, either through reunification, guardianship, adoption or life-long connections.  

**How is a child placed in foster care?**

Children enter the foster system when there is abuse, neglect or abandonment, or when a parent is ill, dies, or is incarcerated. Some of these children will be returned to their homes, and others will be eligible for adoption. Foster families are supported by CFSA staff, such as social workers, and monthly funds to pay for the child’s needs.  

**What is the link between teen pregnancy and foster care?**

- Adolescent mothers are more likely than older mothers to be more stressed by parenting.
- Families with mothers whose first birth was during their teen years are much more likely to be reported for child abuse or neglect than are families with non-teen mothers.
- Teen mothers are 2.2 times more likely to have a child placed in foster care during the first five years after birth than women who had a first birth at age 20 to 21.
- Second or later births in families with teen mothers are more likely to lead to children in that family being placed in foster care.

**Do we find this link in DC?**

- In the District of Columbia, 176 parents under the age of 16 had children served in foster care in 2009.
- Of the children under 5 years old entering foster care in 2009, 353 were born to teen parents.
• In 2009, a total of 3,841 children were served by CFSA in the District of Columbia. ¹
  - 2,903 children were born to teen parents or parents who had previous children as teens. ²
  - 2,008 children were born to parents who had 2 or more children as teens ³

**Children Placed in Foster Care in 2009 in the District of Columbia**

- 76% born to teen parents (19 years old and younger, and those who began having children in their teens)
- 24% born to parents 20 years old and older

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<tr>
<th>Children Placed in Foster Care</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
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**How does the link between teen pregnancy and foster care affect children and taxpayers?**

• Children in foster care are significantly more likely than children in the general population to be classified with an emotional or behavioral disorders and placed in special education ²

• Foster youth are more than twice as likely as other youth be disconnected from work and education. More than 1/3 have neither a high school diploma or a GED ²

• Nationally, child welfare services to families with teen mothers cost $2.3 billion in 2006. ⁵

**Recommendations:**

• Assure that teens in foster care have adequate access to contraceptive and reproductive health services.

• Fund and implement Nurse-Family Partnership in the District of Columbia. This program provides nurse home visits to low-income first-time mothers during their pregnancy and child’s infancy, and has been shown to reduce abuse/neglect, prevent secondary births, and improve children's educational outcomes. ⁶

• Continue to fund and expand the Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program. This program works with disadvantaged teens to educate on reproductive health care and has been shown to reduce the number of teen pregnancies. ⁶

• Continue to investigate and fund other youth programs that are based in research and have been rigorously evaluated that aim to prevent teen pregnancy and its related consequences.

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**About DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**

The mission of DC Campaign is to cut the city’s teen pregnancy rate in half by 2015. DC Campaign is the only organization devoted entirely to preventing teen pregnancy in the nation’s capital. A 501 (c) (3) organization grounded in youth development principles, DC Campaign accomplishes its work through collaboration, cooperation and consensus building. [www.dccampaign.org](http://www.dccampaign.org)

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1. District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency. [http://cfsa.dc.gov/cfsa/view,a,3,q,519844,cfsaNav_GID,1487,cfsaNav,%7C31342%7C,.asp](http://cfsa.dc.gov/cfsa/view,a,3,q,519844,cfsaNav_GID,1487,cfsaNav,%7C31342%7C,.asp)


3. Unpublished Data. Children Served in Foster Care in FY 2009 with Teen Parents. CFSA DC

4. CFSA 2009 Needs Assessment Report
