

## EFFECTS OF TEEN PREGNANCY

**Physical:** Teens have a higher death rate from complications of pregnancy. They are often undernourished and do not receive adequate prenatal care. This results in more low birth weight infants and infants with birth defects.

**Social:** Recent estimates from national surveys indicate that for every teenage birth that is delayed, the taxpayer saves \$5,560.00. That means that \$6,171,600.00 could have been saved if the 1,110 Utah women age 17 and under, who gave birth, would have delayed the birth of their first child to a time beyond their teenage years. Over 30% of the Medicaid funded deliveries were to women under age 20. It is believed that well over 8 billion dollars are spent annually in the United States on the costs of teen pregnancy. In Utah, over \$6,000,000.00 is spent annually. Children from low income households are more likely than others to be children of teenage parents and to become teenage parents themselves. The children of teen parents already run a high risk of later unemployment. Not only do teen parents often lack employment skills, they also lack the necessary resources to begin developing their children's future parenting and employment skills. Children born to teen parents are more likely to grow up in a disadvantaged neighborhood, have poorer childhood health, and have a greater chance of growing up in a single-parent home.

**Emotional:** The decision to engage in sexual relationships and teen pregnancy impede the emotional development and maturation process of the teen. Nineteen percent of all mothers who commit child abuse are or have been adolescent mothers. Teen parents who marry have a higher rate of marital separation, divorce and eventual remarriage.

**Education:** Teen mothers are less likely to finish their education. Sixty percent of American teens who gave birth did not have their high school diploma. Only about one-half of those girls will get their diplomas. Nine out of ten who do not graduate from high school will live in poverty.

What are the consequences to the teen father?

1. He does not have a choice in whether the baby is aborted or not. It is the girl's legal choice.
2. If the mother keeps the baby and they don't marry, the father is still legally responsible for child support until age 18. If the girl and the baby go on welfare, the support money may be garnished from the boy's wages if and when he gets a job.
3. If the couple doesn't marry, he does not have a choice whether the baby is put up for adoption or not, again it is the girl's choice. However, if the girl intends to put the baby up for adoption and the boy wants to raise the baby himself, he may claim rights of paternity by filing a notice with the Department of Health, acknowledging that he is the child's father and expressing intent to support the child to the best of his ability. He then becomes legally and financially responsible for the child. He can also be declared the child's father through a paternity suit. In either case, he would have to claim his rights of paternity before the baby is born but no later than the date the child is relinquished or placed for adoption by the biological mother or the date an adoption petition is filed. If he does not register his claim, he no longer has a legal right to try and establish his paternity. (Utah law)

4. He may not be able to prove the baby is his or not his without a court order.

The mother may put unknown on the birth certificate. What if he wants to see his child? He would not have the right.

Mother may put his name on the birth certificate. What if he doesn't think it is his baby? (For example: Ralph is a good kid, from a good family, with a reputation for being straight. He and some other friends were very curious about sex and wanted to experiment without getting into trouble—without anyone finding out about it, and without hurting anyone. They knew of a girl who was known to be easy. She would have sex with anyone and everyone. They could satisfy their curiosity with her, no one need ever know, and no one would be hurt, right? They all had sex with her to satisfy their curiosity. But the girl got pregnant. She looked at all the guys she had been with, and decided that Ralph was the nicest, had the most supportive family and the most money. She told him he was the father of her child. He said, "No way!" He would not lay claim to that girl and her baby! With so many guys sleeping with her, the chances were pretty slim that he was the baby's father. She went to his parents and told them they were going to be grandparents. They were crushed and appalled. Ralph admitted the whole sordid affair to them. They agreed that he was probably not the father and no way could he marry such a girl. The baby was born, and in one more attempt to get Ralph to take responsibility for her and the baby, the girl sent birth announcements out by the dozens with Ralph's name on them as the baby's father. Ralph left town, leaving his parents to deal with the shame.)

5. If he marries the mother and they try to raise the child together
  - a. their marriage is much more likely to end in divorce than if the circumstances did not include the pregnancy.
  - b. he is much more likely to drop out of school and get a job; the less education, the lower the income, for life.
  - c. he may feel guilty about not being able to support a family financially.
  - d. he is likely to feel great resentment to the girl and the baby who have tied him down and ruined his chances to make something of himself.