

COUNTING IT UP

The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing in Washington in 2008

Headline:

An updated analysis from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy shows that teen childbearing in Washington cost taxpayers at least \$151 million in 2008. Nationally, teen childbearing costs taxpayers at least \$10.9 billion each year.

Highlights:

- Of the total teen childbearing costs in Washington in 2008, 40% were federal costs and 60% were state and local costs.
- Most of the public sector costs of teen childbearing are associated with negative consequences for the *children* of teen mothers, during both their childhood and their young adult years. In Washington in 2008, taxpayer costs associated with children born to teen mothers included: \$38 million for public health care (Medicaid and CHIP); \$52 million for child welfare; and, for children who have reached adolescence or young adulthood, \$53 million for increased rates of incarceration and \$45 million in lost tax revenue due to decreased earnings and spending.¹

Costs and savings:

- Between 1991 and 2008 there have been approximately 143,451 teen births in Washington, costing taxpayers a total of \$3.3 billion over that period.
- Had it not been for significant declines in the teen birth rate in recent years, the costs to taxpayers would have been even higher.
- The teen birth rate in Washington declined 36% percent between 1991 and 2008. The progress Washington has made in reducing teen childbearing saved taxpayers an estimated \$141 million in 2008 alone over the costs it would have incurred had the rates not fallen.

Visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org/costs for more information on the costs of teen childbearing, state-by-state data on teen pregnancy and childbearing, and other information. This analysis was funded in part by grant IU58DP002916-01 from the Division of Reproductive Health (DRH) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of DRH.



¹ Note that while this breakdown reflects costs associated with the *children* of teen mothers, the total cost figure above reflects costs for both the children and their parents. Also note that because we cannot measure and include all outcomes and all costs, the analysis should be considered conservative; that is, it is likely that the full costs of a teen birth are greater than the figures presented here.