

## 70 percent of college-age pregnancies unplanned

By Audrey White  
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Some characterize unplanned pregnancy as a high school problem, but information recently compiled by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy indicates that it is a growing concern for college-aged women, too.

Bill Albert, the campaign's chief program officer, said there is little concrete data available on the number of unplanned pregnancies among college women because most studies focus on high school students. Statistics and anecdotal evidence, however, indicate that it is a growing problem, especially among women at community colleges. According to the report, seven out of 10 pregnancies among women in their 20s are unplanned.

"There is precious little research on the rates of unplanned pregnancies for young people in community colleges and colleges," Albert said. "The little data that is available is sort of patchwork. When this country thinks about unplanned pregnancy, they tend to think about teenagers, when in fact the highest rate of that is among women in their 20s."

Guli Fager, a University Health Services healthy-sexuality education coordinator, said a lack of resources available to pregnant and

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parenting students makes it nearly impossible for them to stay in school. Fager said there are no records kept of how many UT students become pregnant each year and that they are a population that remains unrecognized.

"This lack [of resources] forces people who are pregnant out,"

she said. "That's why we don't see pregnant students here. It's not because they're not having sex and getting pregnant, because I promise you they are. It's because they're either getting an abortion or leaving school because there is nothing available to help them."

Fager said the only resources available to pregnant women are a few pieces of literature about abortion clinics, adoption centers and pre-natal care centers near the University. The University does have one day care center run by the Child Development Center, but it has a long waitlist and rates of \$600 to \$900 a month.

According to the campaign study, 61 percent of women in community colleges who become pregnant drop out.

The Austin Community College system has similarly limited resources. Since the school does not have a student health center, students must rely on outside sources for sexuality education and resources. There is a day care at the Eastview campus, but it can only serve about 60 children at a time and usually has a waitlist of between 150 to 200 children.

The ACC system also has a program set up to help provide funding for child care for eligible students, said Steven Christopher, director of Special Populations at ACC.

"It's a challenge for the student, but there are community resources for folks," Christopher said. "We are addressing the need to help pay for child care once the children are born."

Some ACC students and faculty members have made efforts to educate themselves and others, organizing information tables and

speakers to distribute information about healthy sexuality and contraception.

Cynthia Brown, a community health educator for Planned Parenthood, has given lectures in classes on human development and child psychology and said she hopes researchers will pay more attention to unplanned pregnancies beyond high school.

"At the community colleges, I have several teachers who invite me into their classes every semester to talk about birth control and pregnancy," Brown said.

The National Campaign's report says increasing comprehensive sex education and sexuality resource materials at the high school and early college level is a necessary measure to help reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies among college-aged women.

Fager agreed and said University Health Services works to reach out to freshmen students early on.

"Most of the students who come here are from Texas, and they've had abstinence-only education. They've never had anyone whose whole job it is to hand out condoms and teach them how to avoid getting pregnant," she said.

Nursing junior Lizzie Olguin is pregnant but said she's determined to remain in school as a parent. Olguin works in the healthy sexuality resource center as a peer educator and said that despite the challenge of limited resources from the University, she believes it is possible to persevere as a pregnant student and soon to be parent.

"It seems impossible, but I know it's not, and I'm going to do it," she said. "My mom got pregnant with me in college and had to drop out, and I saw how hard it was for her to struggle. It happened, and it was unplanned, but I just have to plan around it and keep going. My grades aren't any different, and I'm not stopping next semester. I just need a little bit more help."

