

A pregnant pause

The challenges of teen motherhood

By Anais Cruz Gonzalez // Contributing Writer

▲AFH image by Tuki Babumba

Are you confused about teen pregnancy? Well, who isn't? Teen pregnancy is a topic that everyone has questions about, but not all are brave enough to speak up. The highest rate of teen pregnancy in the industrialized world is in the United States. This can be a big problem. According to Planned Parenthood, about 31 percent of young women become pregnant at least once before they reach 20 years of age – that's almost a million teen pregnancies a year. The [National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy](#) says that 8 of 10 of those pregnancies are unexpected and that some 80 percent of them happen to unmarried teens.

This problem can put these young girls' futures at risk. Only about one out of three teen mothers receives a high school diploma, according to the National Campaign. Of those who do make it to college, according to stayteen.org, less than two percent get a degree by age 30.

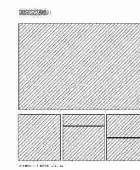
Another problem is that many of the fathers don't put enough effort in, and don't marry the mothers. Nearly 80 percent of unmarried teen mothers end up on welfare because they don't make enough money to support their children, the National

Campaign says. Meanwhile, statistics show that the daughters of teenage mothers are 22 percent more likely than others to become teen moms themselves, while 13 percent of the sons are more likely to end up in prison.

Some teens say: "We get it, we know the best way to protect ourselves is abstinence." Every teen knows this, but only a few actually follow that advice. They are being pressured by their peers and get very confused about what to do. Three out of four girls, and more than half of boys, report that a girl who has sex does it because her boyfriend wants her to, according to the National Campaign.

Some believe teen pregnancy isn't bad – as long as the young parents stay in school. Others feel babies bring too much stress to already pressure-packed teen lives. Numbers from the National Campaign show that 8 in 10 teen girls and 6 in 10 boys say they should have waited until they were older to have sex.

To stop the problem of teen pregnancy, we need to work together. There are a lot of ways to prevent it. The two most common solutions are staying abstinent, which means you don't have sex at all, and the other is to have access to contraception, like condoms or birth control pills. A sexually-active teen



who doesn't use contraception has a 90 percent chance of becoming pregnant within 12 months, according to the National Campaign.

Parents should develop healthy relationships with their kids to lower the risk. The National Campaign reports that 95 percent of adults and 85 percent of teens think it's important that students be given a strong message that they should stay away from sex until they are out of high school. And who better than a parent to make that point? ■