



NO PLACE TO GROW:

The Unsafe and Unstable Housing Conditions of Illinois
Pregnant and Parenting Youth and Their Children

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an attempt to determine the number of pregnant and parenting youth in need of alternative living arrangements throughout Illinois, the Center for Impact Research (CIR)—in collaboration with its working group members—conducted a statewide needs assessment to obtain more information about the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois. CIR developed and conducted a survey of organizations that provide services to pregnant and parenting youth throughout Illinois. CIR’s findings demonstrate the urgent need for a statewide focus on providing alternative living arrangements for this population.

Findings

The survey asked organizations to estimate the numbers of pregnant and parenting youth in their caseloads who were in unsafe or unstable living situations during the three-month period from September 1 through November 30, 2002.

The organizations surveyed served a total of 665 pregnant youth (with no other children) aged 21 or younger and 2,238 parents (who may or may not also be pregnant) aged 21 or younger **—or a total of 2,903 pregnant or parenting youth—**during the three-month period.

Number of Youth in Unsafe/Unstable Living Conditions

Service providers reported that there were 761 youth living in unsafe or unstable conditions, or **over 26%** of the pregnant and parenting youth that were served.

Number of Youth in Need of Alternative Living Arrangements

Service providers reported that 466 (61%) of the 761 youth who were living in unsafe or unstable living situations were in need of alternative living arrangements, or **over 16%** of all pregnant and parenting youth served by these organizations.

Those in Need of Alternative Living Arrangements: Where Did They Live?

Forty-six percent of the pregnant and parenting youth who were in need of alternative living arrangements were living with their family in a house or apartment. A significant number were also transient (at least 21%), with most of the transient youth staying at two or three addresses during the three-month period.

How Was Their Situation Unsafe/Unstable?

Overcrowding seemed to be the biggest problem, with respondents reporting that 226 (48%) of the youth in need of alternative living arrangements were living in such situations. Unsafe or terrible physical conditions were also a major problem, with 133 (29%) of those needing alternative living arrangements living in those conditions. Respondents reported that 151 (28%) of the youth needing alternative living arrangements had a household member who abused drugs or alcohol. Sixteen percent were also in households in which

there was a mental health problem in the family. Respondents noted that many of the youth's situations were unsafe or unstable in several respects at one time.

Where Were They Placed?

Respondents reported that they had been able to place 24% of the youth in the home of a friend or relative, and some youth were placed in emergency shelters (shelters that can house homeless youth for less than 120 days) or transitional living programs (geared toward longer stays).

Obstacles to Placing Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Appropriate Housing

Respondents reported that the most serious obstacles to placing pregnant and parenting youth in appropriate housing were the youth's lack of income, lack of affordable housing, lack of long-term supportive housing, limited availability or lack of transitional living programs, and the youth's lack of credit. Service providers reported that the limited availability or lack of transitional living programs was more of a problem for minors than for adults.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although CIR's survey results represent an undercount of the actual number of pregnant and parenting youth in need of alternative living arrangements, they clearly establish the need for a statewide response to the issue. On May 14, 2003, CIR held a summit on the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois in order to discuss the findings and to develop potential recommendations.

Based on the survey findings and upon the input received from the many service providers and advocacy organizations that attended the summit, CIR's working group recommends the following:

1. The State of Illinois should increase the state budget line item for homeless youth and designate a portion of this funding for pregnant and parenting youth.
2. Governor Blagojevich should sign HB 0556 that would allow community-based organizations to provide more transitional living services to minors (those under 18).
3. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) should target a portion of state and federal affordable housing dollars in Illinois towards housing for pregnant and parenting youth.
4. Advocacy and direct-service organizations should form a coalition that will address the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth and their children.

This coalition should:

- a. form an action plan to coordinate advocacy around this issue;
 - b. direct a public education campaign to educate communities about the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth;
 - c. advocate for increased funding and explore alternative public and private funding sources to provide housing for pregnant and parenting youth; and
 - d. work with state and local agencies and funders to establish a pilot program that provides housing for pregnant and parenting youth.
5. The Illinois Department of Human Services should work with this coalition to enhance and improve the “Help-Me-Grow” hotline in order to establish a comprehensive centralized referral system that can educate pregnant and parenting youth and youth service providers about available supportive services and housing programs.
 6. The Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services should work with the coalition to provide a mechanism for providing technical assistance to groups/organizations interested in establishing housing for pregnant and parenting youth.
 7. Members of the coalition should participate in the Youth Task Group of the Chicago Continuum of Care to ensure that a portion of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are designated for pregnant and parenting youth, especially minors.
 8. The State of Illinois should provide funding for local communities so that they can determine the extent of the need in their area and determine appropriate courses of action.

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

Although teen birth rates have been declining since 1990, the United States still has one of the highest teen birth rates among developed countries.¹ In 2000, the U.S. had a teen birth rate of 49 births per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19. In the same year, Illinois had a teen birth rate of 50 births per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19.² That amounted to 21,105 births to mothers under 20 years old in Illinois (8,153 of which were in Chicago). Although not every young mother lives in poverty, teen pregnancy has historically been linked to future welfare dependency and teen mothers are more likely to need such assistance in the future.³ Providing services to pregnant and parenting youth while they are still young is important in helping them to further their education and provide a safe and stable living environment for themselves and their children.

In previous research on the prevalence of domestic violence among low-income teen mothers, the Center for Impact Research (CIR) found that many teen mothers in Chicago experience severe difficulties escaping domestic violence due to a lack of temporary or permanent housing opportunities.⁴ CIR discussed the issue further with youth service and housing providers who reported that finding shelter or housing for pregnant and parenting youth (and their children) who were not wards of the state was a significant problem and that there were few referral sources for this population.

Service agencies that offered parenting classes were facing difficulties providing parenting assistance when the youth with whom they worked were not in stable living situations. In general, service providers spoke to CIR about a significant need for alternative living situations among the youth with whom they worked and a lack of any housing opportunities for pregnant and parenting youth.

In addition to discussing the overall lack of housing and shelter for pregnant and parenting youth, service providers were particularly concerned about the lack of housing and shelter for pregnant or parenting minors (those younger than 18) who could not live at home.

¹ Heather Boonstra. "Teen Pregnancy: Trends and Lessons Learned." The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002. Available online at www.agi-usa.org. According to the report, the U.S. rate "is nearly twice that in Canada and Great Britain and approximately four times that in France and Sweden."

² "Facts at a Glance 2002." Child Trends, 2002. Available online at www.childtrends.org. Preliminary 2001 data are also available.

³ "Not Just Another Single Issue: Teen Pregnancy Prevention's Link to Other Critical Social Issues." The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002. Available online at www.teenpregnancy.org.

⁴ Konieczny, Mary Ellen. "Domestic Violence and Birth Control Sabotage: A Report from the Teen Parent Project." The Center for Impact Research, 2000. Available online at www.impactresearch.org.

Currently in Illinois, organizations can provide transitional living services (housing or shelter for more than 120 continuous days) to adults, but cannot obtain a license to provide such services for minors. Although some transitional living facilities accept minors with parental consent, most do not because they are concerned about issues of liability. The only available shelter for a pregnant or parenting minor who does not have parental consent is an emergency shelter, where she cannot stay for more than 120 days. In addition, many of the emergency shelters that are licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services to provide services to homeless youth do not take in youth who are parents themselves although the law allows them to do so. Transitional living services do exist for pregnant or parenting youth aged 18 to 21. When interviewed, several organizations providing those services to young adults reported that they were turning away large numbers of pregnant and parenting youth younger than 18 who were ineligible due to their age.

Homeless youth service providers were also concerned about pregnant and parenting youth as a specific subset of the homeless youth population. In a 2001 report, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless estimated that “over the course of a year, approximately 26,000 youth in Illinois experience homelessness.”⁵ The same report pointed out that pregnant and parenting youth accounted for a disproportionate segment of homeless youth in Illinois, and cited a 1996 survey of Illinois homeless youth providers, in which 30 percent identified services for pregnant and parenting youth as their greatest unmet need.

Because the 1996 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) legislation required unmarried, custodial teen parents under age 18 to live with parents or adult relatives or in an adult-supervised setting, it has become even more important to determine how many pregnant and parenting youth are not or should not be living with their parents due to an unsafe or unstable living situation. Under the federal TANF legislation, if a teen’s current situation would jeopardize the physical or mental health and safety of the teen or her child, other living arrangements can be approved. However, because of the limited number of organizations that provide shelter or housing for pregnant or parenting youth who are not wards of the state, alternative living arrangements in Illinois are difficult to obtain. This lack of safe housing alternatives forces some youth to live in unsafe or unstable environments in order to obtain needed financial assistance.

In 2001 CIR formed a Housing Working Group of service providers and youth advocacy organizations to investigate the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth. Although CIR had gathered anecdotal information from social service and homeless youth service providers, the number of pregnant and parenting youth in need of alternative living

⁵ “Youth on the Streets and on Their Own: Youth Homelessness in Illinois.” Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 2001. Available online at www.chicagohomeless.org. The report defines “homeless youth” as those between the ages of 14 and 21, who have left home because of serious family problems and who are not in a safe and stable living situation. This definition includes both youth who have “run away” and those who have been “thrown away.”

arrangements throughout Illinois was unknown. In an attempt to quantify the problem, CIR—in collaboration with its working group members—conducted a statewide needs assessment to obtain more information about the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth (those 21 and younger) in Illinois.

This report is the result of that effort. Although the method used does not capture the actual total number of the pregnant and parenting youth in need, this assessment provides insight into the significant need for housing for pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois. CIR's findings demonstrate the urgent need for a statewide focus on providing alternative living arrangements for this population.

METHODOLOGY

Together with the Housing Working Group, CIR developed and conducted a survey of organizations that provide services to pregnant and parenting youth throughout Illinois. Specifically, CIR surveyed organizations that administer state-funded programs such as Teen Parent Services, Healthy Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon.⁶ CIR mailed surveys to 132 youth service organizations throughout the state in early December 2002. In return, it received 98 surveys from 69 organizations (a response rate of 52%). Due to errors in survey completion, however, information from only 81 surveys (from 58 organizations) was included in this report (representing 44% of the original 132 organizations).

The survey asked organizations to estimate the numbers of pregnant and parenting youth in their caseloads who were in unsafe or unstable living situations during the 3-month period from September 1 through November 30, 2002. Organizations were asked to have staff members who had direct contact with the youth fill out the surveys. Seventy-seven of the organizations reported that their staff made home visits to the youth that they served (one organization reported that it did not make home visits; three organizations did not answer the question). Organizations could submit more than one survey for their organization so that the tally reflected all the pregnant and parenting youth served by the organization. Due to the types of service programs surveyed and the way in which their services are accessed, the numbers of pregnant and parenting youth represent non-duplicated cases.

Limitations

Because the responses only represent 44% of the organizations to whom CIR sent surveys, and because the survey only captures youth who were already accessing some kind of youth-specific services, the numbers detailed in this report represent an undercount of the number of pregnant and parenting youth in need of safe and stable alternative living arrangements in Illinois. Given that most of the organizations either did not keep the kind of data about which CIR asked or did not track it in a way that fit the survey questions, CIR relied on staff knowledge of their program participants to complete the survey forms. CIR did not ask the service providers to report the total number of minors they served (those under 18) versus the number of adult youth; therefore, any reported differences between minors and adult youth in the survey cannot be assumed to reflect differences between minors and adult youth in general. Furthermore, due to a misstatement on the survey, the number of pregnant and parenting youth who are need of alternative living arrangements

⁶ These programs provide a variety of services to pregnant and parenting youth such as case management, parenting classes, home visits, information about child development, transportation, referral services, and assistance with educational enrollment.

due to domestic violence may not have been accurately counted (details are provided later in the report).

Despite these limitations, even this undercount demonstrates the urgent need for housing services for pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois. CIR's data point policymakers to the issues that are having an impact on pregnant and parenting youth's ability to find and retain safe and stable housing and to specific areas for further investigation.

FINDINGS

Number of Youth Served by the Organizations and Their Ages

The 58 organizations served a total of 665 pregnant youth (with no other children) aged 21 or younger and 2,238 parents (who may or may not also be pregnant) aged 21 or younger — **or a total of 2,903 pregnant or parenting youth**—from September 1 through November 30, 2002.

The average age of the pregnant youth was just over 17 (17.3), and was almost 18 (17.8) for parenting youth.⁷ The youngest pregnant youth served was 11 and the age of the youngest parent served was 12.

Where Were the Respondents?

Most of the surveys were from rural areas (53%) (see Table 1). Twenty percent of the surveys were from suburban areas, and 19% from urban areas. The remaining surveys were from rural and suburban areas both (2%) or did not specify a community type. Most of the young parents served were in urban areas (45%), while most of the pregnant youth served were in rural areas (44%).⁸

Table 1: Respondents and Youth Served by Community Type⁹

Type of Community	Number of Surveys	Pregnant Youth (w/no other child)	Parenting Youth (could be pregnant)	All Pregnant and Parenting Youth
Urban	15 (19%)	100 (15%)	1015 (45%)	1115 (38%)
Rural	43 (53%)	293 (44%)	543 (24%)	836 (29%)
Suburban	16 (20%)	206 (31%)	488 (22%)	694 (24%)
Rural and Suburban ¹⁰	2 (2%)	32 (5%)	43 (2%)	75 (3%)
Unspecified	5 (6%)	34 (5%)	149 (7%)	183 (6%)
Total	81 (100%)	665 (100%)	2238 (100%)	2903 (100%)

⁷ Respondents were asked to estimate the average age of both the pregnant and parenting youth served. The average cited here takes into account the average age given by the respondent and the number of youth served by that respondent.

⁸ Although the reasons for this difference are unclear, it could be explained by the fact that there are fewer youth receiving TANF downstate and that more pregnant and parenting youth are referred to programs via KidCare and health departments (instead of TANF case workers). Those administering KidCare and health departments are more likely to have identified pregnant youth.

⁹ Information about the type of community is missing from five surveys that served 183 youth.

¹⁰ Two respondents indicated that they served both rural and suburban communities.

Number of Youth in Unsafe/Unstable Living Conditions

Organizations were asked about the number of pregnant and parenting youth that they served who were in unsafe or unstable living conditions. As examples of unsafe/unstable living conditions the survey listed the following:

unsafe/terrible physical conditions, temporary or no physical structure, overcrowded situation, household member(s) abuse drugs/alcohol, household member(s) physically, sexually, and/or psychologically abusive to teen or to her children, household member(s) engaged in criminal activity, mental health problem in family, financial abuse,¹¹ and teen is forced into illegal or otherwise harmful activities.

The youth were divided into four groups: pregnant minors (those under age 18), pregnant adults (those aged 18 through 21), parenting minors, and parenting adults.

Table 2: Youth Living in Unsafe or Unstable Conditions

		% of 761 youth living in unsafe/unstable conditions
Pregnant minors	73	10%
Pregnant adults	70	9%
Parenting minors	159	21%
Parenting adults	459	60%
Total	761	100%
Total Pregnant/Parenting Minors in Unsafe/Unstable Conditions		232
Total Pregnant/Parenting Adult Youth in Unsafe/Unstable Conditions		529
% of total youth served living in unsafe or unstable living conditions		26%

Service providers reported that there were 761 youth living in unsafe or unstable conditions (see Table 2), **or over 26% of the pregnant and parenting youth that were served.**

¹¹ This term is widely understood as either the use of welfare assistance by someone else with no help to the pregnant or parenting youth or the theft of money or valuables that belong to the youth. It was not explained to survey respondents.

As seen in Table 3, the pregnant and parenting youth reported as living in unsafe or unstable conditions were more likely to live in urban areas (54%). Twenty-eight percent lived in rural areas and 11% in suburban areas.

Table 3: Youth Living in Unsafe or Unstable Conditions by Community Type

Type of Community	Minors	Adults	% of 761 youth living in unsafe/unstable conditions
Urban	61	350	54%
Rural	113	98	28%
Suburban	40	44	11%
Rural and Suburban	8	28	5%
Unspecified	10	9	2%
Total	232	529	100%

Number of Youth Who Could Be Helped with Services

CIR asked respondents: of those who were in unsafe or unstable living situations, how many were in a situation that could be made safe or stable with some kind of service? Some examples of services provided to the respondent suggested by the survey were re-activating utilities or completing repairs.

One service mistakenly suggested by the survey was “removing a dangerous person from the home.” Since this service does not actually exist, the number listed here likely overstates the number of youth who could have been helped by a service (as opposed to their requiring alternative living arrangements).

Service providers reported that 295 (39%) of the 761 youth in unsafe or unstable living situations were in circumstances that could be made safe or stable with some kind of service (see Table 4).

Table 4: Youth in Situation that Could Be Made Safe or Stable with Some Kind of Service

		% of 761 youth living in unsafe/unstable conditions
Pregnant minors	36	5%
Pregnant adults	35	5%
Parenting minors	81	11%
Parenting adults	143	19%
Total	295	39%
Total Minors 117	Total Adults	178

Number of Youth in Need of Alternative Living Arrangements

In an attempt to isolate the most extreme cases, CIR asked respondents: of those who were in unsafe or unstable living situations, how many were living in situations that would require that they find safe/stable alternative living arrangements (short-term or long-term) in order to make their situation safe/stable?

Service providers reported that 466 (61%) of the 761 youth who were living in unsafe or unstable living situations were in need of alternative living arrangements (see Table 5). **This number represents over 16% of all pregnant and parenting youth served by these organizations.**

Table 5: Youth in Need of Alternative Living Arrangements

		% of those 761 living in unsafe/unstable conditions
Pregnant minors	37	5%
Pregnant adults	35	5%
Parenting minors	78	10%
Parenting adults	316	42%
Total	466	61%
Total Minors 115	Total Adults	351
% of total youth served in need of alternative living arrangements		16%

The remaining questions on the survey focused specifically on those 466 youth in need of alternative living arrangements.

Those in Need of Alternative Living Arrangements: Where Did They Live?

**Table 6: Where Youth in Need of Alternative Living Arrangements Lived
(during 3-month period)**

Where Were They Living?	Minors	Adults	% of those 466 who need alternative living arrangements
With family in house/apartment	66	148	46%
Transient (but staying at 2 or 3 addresses)	33	63	21%
Alone in house/apartment	3	47	11%
With significant other in house/apartment	16	32	10%
With friends in house/apartment	9	32	9%
With significant other's family in house/apt.	9	30	8%
Transient (with no regular residence)	5	28	7%
In shelter	5	10	3%
In car	1	1	<1%
In foster care	4	0	<1%

The survey asked respondents to identify where those youth who were in need of safe/stable alternative living arrangements were living during the period from September 1, 2002 through November 30, 2002. Because youth could have lived in more than one situation, respondents were asked to check all the situations that applied to the youth. As shown in Table 6, most of the pregnant and parenting youth who were in need of alternative living arrangements were living with their family in a house or apartment (46%).

A significant number were also transient¹² (at least 21%), with most of the transient youth staying at two or three addresses during the three-month period. Fifteen of the youth were staying in a shelter, and two pregnant youth (one minor and one adult) were living in cars.

One suburban respondent wrote that the youth “often move from place to place in search of a safe and stable living situation, which affects the youth and the children. ”

In addition to the categories listed in Table 6, the survey also asked respondents to list how many youth were living on the street alone, on the street with family members, or living in an abandoned building (squatting). Respondents reported no youth living in those situations.

How Was Their Situation Unsafe/Unstable?

Service providers were asked how the youth’s situations were unsafe or unstable during the three-month period.¹³

As seen in Table 7, overcrowding seemed to be the biggest problem, with respondents reporting that 226 (48%) of the youth in need of alternative living arrangements were living in such situations. In these instances, overcrowding was viewed as much more of a problem than an inconvenience, with negative effects on the youth and her children.

One urban respondent described the youth as “usually living in an overcrowded situation, sometimes sleeping on the floor with their children. They have problems keeping clothing and other properties. ”

“This creates situations like two adults plus two children living in a studio apartment and in places that have roaches, are in need of repair, and it forces them to live with relatives who are unstable or have unsafe living conditions. ” (rural respondent)

Unsafe or terrible physical conditions were also a major problem, with 133 (29%) of those needing alternative living arrangements living in those conditions.

“Some physical spaces [were] so desperate that it is much more than a matter of turning on the heat. ”(urban respondent)

¹² There were two categories of “transient” available to the respondent: transient with no regular residence and transient but staying at two or three addresses. Twenty-one percent represents the larger percentage of those who fit into one of the two categories.

¹³ Because a youth could have been in more than one situation, respondents were told to count a youth under whatever situations applied.

Of the 102 adults living in unsafe or terrible physical conditions, 97 of the parenting adults were in such situations, compared to only five of the pregnant adults.

Having a household member who abused drugs or alcohol was also a common situation, with respondents reporting that 151 (28%) of the youth needing alternative living arrangements had such a household member. Many of those youth (16%) were also in households in which there was a mental health problem in the family.

“Difficult to say the impact it has on the children—certainly it affects their ability to trust and there are always concerns about the types of people who are around the children in the various settings.” (urban respondent)

Respondents noted that many of the youth’s situations were unsafe or unstable in several respects at one time.

“Often youth are forced to choose the best of several bad options. Unstable housing can be an obstacle to the home visiting services that we provide because we are unable to find them or they don’t want us in the residence because of illegal activity, intoxicated household members or squalid living conditions.” (urban respondent)

“A large number live in a household with someone who abuses alcohol and other drugs. Sometimes youth are not able to get to school due to their living condition, when they do get to school, there is little or no progress.” (urban respondent)

**Table 7: How the Youth’s Situations Were Unsafe or Unstable
(when they were in need of alternative living arrangements)**

How Was the Youth’s Situation Unsafe/Unstable?	Minors	Adults	% of those 466 who need alternative living arrangements
Overcrowded situation	60	166	48%
Unsafe/terrible physical conditions	31	102	29%
Household member abuses drugs or alcohol	41	90	28%
Mental health problem in family	25	49	16%
Financial abuse	18	39	12%
Household member engaged in criminal activity	14	34	10%
Household member(s) is physically, sexually, and/or psychologically abusive to teen	24	21	10%
Boyfriend is physically, sexually, and/or psychologically abusive to teen	8	19	6%
Temporary or no physical structure, e.g., car, on street	6	18	5%
Unclear as to reason	8	8	3%
Household member(s) is physically, sexually, and/or psychologically abusive to teen's children	6	7	3%
Forced into illegal/harmful activities by household member/boyfriend	2	1	<1%

Where Were They Placed?

Service providers were asked if they had been able to place any of the youth in housing alternatives (see Table 8). It is important to note that a youth could have been placed in more than one type of facility during the 3-month period and could be counted more than once in Table 8. Respondents reported that they had been able to place 24% of the youth in the home of a friend or relative, and some youth were placed in emergency shelters (shelters that can house homeless youth for less than 120 days) or transitional living programs (geared toward longer stays). Transitional living programs are not licensed to

accept minors who are not wards of the state without parental consent. Therefore the facilities that accepted the six minors who were placed in transitional living programs must have obtained parental consent.

Service providers reported that the lack of housing for this population made it difficult for the youth to engage in any other activities.

“It is difficult for the youth to care about school when their housing is in jeopardy.”(urban respondent)

“School is the last thing on their mind because they need a place to live. But when you are homeless you can’t save earnings because you still have to eat, or pay people to let you stay with them so you never get ahead.”(urban respondent)

Table 8: Where Youth Were Placed¹⁴

Where Youth Were Placed	Minors	Adults	% of those 466 who need alternative living arrangements
Home of a friend or relative	34	79	24%
Affordable, independent housing (permanent)	4	36	9%
Emergency shelter	5	21	6%
Transitional living program (6 mos. to year)	6	20	6%
Long-term supportive housing (1-2 years)	2	7	2%
Temporary foster homes for homeless youth	0	0	0%

¹⁴ A youth could have been placed in more than one type of facility during the 3-month period and could be counted here more than once.

Obstacles to Placing Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Appropriate Housing

Respondents were asked to rank a list of obstacles to placing pregnant and parenting youth in appropriate housing. They were asked to rank the obstacles on a scale of one to five (one being very much a problem and five being not a problem).

Table 9 lists the obstacles in order by average rank and then by community type. The most serious obstacles (those whose average rankings were between one and two) were the youth's lack of income, lack of affordable housing, lack of long-term supportive housing, limited availability or lack of transitional living programs, and the youth's lack of credit. Respondents reported that the limited availability or lack of transitional living programs was more of a problem for minors than for adults. Respondents gave that obstacle an average rank of 1.6 for minors, which was higher than the average rank given for that obstacle for both minors and adults combined (1.9).¹⁵

Comments from respondents reflected their serious concern and frustration with the lack of housing for those under 18 and the long waits for affordable or subsidized housing for adult youth.

“Those that are under 18 cannot receive any housing assistance. Those that are over 18 have to wait on average six months or more for assistance.” (rural respondent)

“If there were some ideal housing to move to, all would need this option...We only included a very small number here whose situations are truly desperate.” (urban respondent)

“A group home for pregnant/parenting youth is our dream!” (rural respondent)

Although on average, immigration status or lack of documentation was ranked last, it was one of the most significant problems for a few suburban organizations. One suburban respondent wrote that “language barriers are a big issue.” Another wrote that youth don't seek help when they are in unsafe situations because they “are afraid of deportation.”

¹⁵ Table 9 does not break out rankings by minors and adults and does not show this figure.

Table 9: Ranked Obstacles by Community Type¹⁶

Obstacles	All Types n=44	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Rural/ Suburban
Youth's lack of income (non-livable wages)	1.35 (1)	1.25 (1)	1.40 (1)	1.50 (1)	1.25 (4)
Lack of affordable housing (permanent)	1.63 (2)	1.38 (2)	1.83 (4)	1.67 (2)	1.25 (4)
Lack of long-term supportive housing	1.74 (3)	1.90 (3)	1.63 (2)	1.94 (4)	1.25 (4)
Limited availability or lack of transitional living programs	1.88 (4)	2.00 (4)	1.68 (3)	2.50 (8)	1.00 (1)
Lack of credit	1.88 (5)	2.00 (4)	1.84 (5)	1.92 (3)	1.25 (4)
Limited availability of emergency shelters	2.05 (6)	2.46 (10)	1.84 (5)	2.13 (7)	1.00 (1)
Limited/lack of shelters that accept youth with children	2.24 (7)	2.50 (11)	2.31 (9)	2.00 (5)	1.00 (1)
Teen's general fear of shelter	2.41 (8)	2.40 (7)	2.25 (7)	2.86 (9)	2.25 (11)
Limited/lack of shelters that accept pregnant youth	2.48 (9)	2.51 (12)	2.26 (8)	3.25 (11)	2.00 (9)
Landlords do not typically rent out apartments to young people/youth	2.51 (10)	2.45 (8)	2.97 (13)	2.07 (6)	1.25 (4)
Teen's perception that a shelter has too many rules	2.68 (11)	2.30 (6)	2.44 (10)	3.28 (13)	3.50 (13)
Teen's reluctance to go to shelters due to lack of privacy	2.68 (12)	2.45 (8)	2.50 (11)	3.21 (10)	3.00 (12)
Teen's reluctance to go to shelters due to their distance from her community	2.93 (13)	3.54 (13)	2.56 (12)	3.75 (15)	2.00 (9)
Fair housing violations (not renting to people w/children)	3.53 (14)	3.65 (14)	3.43 (14)	3.58 (14)	3.50 (13)
Immigration status/lack of documentation	4.27 (15)	4.50 (15)	4.50 (15)	3.25 (11)	5.00 (15)

¹⁶ These rankings were determined by taking the average rank reported by the surveys, not by individual organizations. Although respondents were asked to rank the obstacles for four separate groups (pregnant minors, pregnant adults, parenting minors and parenting adults), there were not many differences between the group rankings for each obstacle. The average rankings were therefore combined into one average for each obstacle, taking into account the number of teens represented by each survey.

Effect on the Youth and their Children

The survey asked if most of the pregnant and parenting youth in need of housing kept their children with them throughout the time they need housing and asked respondents to discuss the well-being of the youth's children.

“Most keep their kids with them. However, I’ve known one client to split up her children in order that they may have a place to spend the night.”(suburban respondent)

“In most cases the children stay with the youth. In some cases other family members will keep the children while the teen lives from place to place.”(urban respondent)

Although there are significant missing data in response to this question (it was one of the last questions in the survey and one of a few that asked for details), only one respondent reported that most of the youth did not keep their children with them.

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that the unsafe and unstable living situations were having detrimental effects on the children.

“Unstable/unsafe conditions create stress and low self-esteem which affects the teen’s relationship with their child and that affects the child’s physical and emotional development.” (rural respondent)

Although it was not asked as a specific question, respondents wrote about the effect of the unsafe or unstable situations on the youth as well, describing their difficulties in providing any kind of services to youth who were in need of alternative living arrangements.

“Unstable living conditions affect everything in the children/teen’s lives. It makes it difficult to work, go to school, home visits. Even things like proper nutrition become problematic.”(urban respondent)

The survey also asked an open-ended question about what obstacles the respondents had encountered when providing services (not necessarily housing or shelter) to pregnant or parenting youth in general.

The most often cited issue in suburban and rural areas was transportation (25 respondents).

“The biggest obstacle I encounter when providing services to teen parents is lack of transportation. Nine out of ten times when I ask a young mom about what her biggest concern or barrier is, she says transportation. It is very difficult for pregnant/parenting youth to make it to their doctor, WIC, DHS, TPS, etc. appointments, due to lack of available transportation...Many times the young mom does not obtain her education due to transportation problems.” (suburban respondent)

Other frequently mentioned obstacles included the lack of housing or waiting lists for housing (14 respondents), the youth’s lack of maturity (12), and the youth’s lack of income (11). Age limitations on certain services were also cited by several respondents (9) as was lack of childcare (8).

Only a few mentioned domestic violence as an obstacle, despite CIR’s previous research demonstrating a high prevalence of domestic violence among teen mothers. The misstatement mentioned on page 11 might have resulted in an undercount of those who were in need of alternative living arrangements due to domestic violence. As seen in Table 7, at least 45 (24 minors and 21 adults) were in abusive situations. Taking the misstatement into consideration, the actual number may be higher.

“The youth that I deal with have gone back to abusive relationships. One of my girls was pregnant with a 6-month-old and had to move from her boyfriend’s home. In the past, I’ve had a mom kick her teen daughter out of the home. Problem with prostitution is another area.” (suburban respondent)

AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING IN ILLINOIS

CIR supplemented its needs assessment with a questionnaire for organizations that provided shelter or housing for homeless youth (ages up to 21) about their capacity to provide such services for those who are pregnant or parenting and who are not wards of the state. The response rate for this questionnaire was limited (we received information from 10 of 21 facilities). Although CIR was able to obtain information from some of the organizations in follow-up telephone calls, there is significant missing information (especially from downstate Illinois) about available shelter/housing and the number of youth that the facilities turned away during the 3-month period from September 1, 2002 through November 30, 2002.

Chicago

The lack of shelter for pregnant and parenting youth in Chicago is critical. In Chicago, there are four organizations that provide shelter or housing for pregnant or parenting youth who are not wards of the state. Only one youth emergency shelter, with 10 beds available for females, allows pregnant or parenting minors to stay at its facility. This facility does not keep a waiting list and turned away 16 pregnant or parenting minors and 15 pregnant or parenting adults during the 3-month period.

Three organizations in Chicago provide transitional living programs to young pregnant and parenting adults aged 18 to 21 (one extends the age to 24). Two of the facilities have 12 slots available. The facility that accepts youth up to age 24 has 25 slots available. At least two of the organizations do not accept youth with more than one child (we were not able to obtain that information from the third organization). One facility turned away 19 pregnant and parenting youth during the three-month period due to ineligibility—either because they were not deemed homeless or because they had more than one child. CIR did not obtain information about youth turned away from the remaining two programs.

- **Number of slots potentially available for non-ward pregnant/parenting youth in Chicago:**
 - 10 minors** (emergency shelter);
 - 49 young adults** (longer-term).

Chicago Suburbs

There are even fewer slots available for pregnant and parenting youth in the Chicago suburbs. Although no transitional living programs in Chicago accept minors, it is more common for programs to do so in suburban Chicago and in downstate Illinois. One transitional living program in the Chicago suburbs has six slots for females aged 17 to 21. It accepts youth if they are pregnant, but not if they are parents. That facility also has one apartment that may be used for a pregnant or parenting adult. The organization reported that it turned away 60 parenting youth during the 3-month period because it cannot accept parents into its facility. Additionally, it turned away 10 pregnant minors and 40 pregnant adults because of lack of space.

The respondent for that facility wrote:

“There are almost no resources for this population in the southern suburbs. Referring them to the city programs further alienates them from any family support. There are also young women with 2-3 children at the age of 21. Most programs provide services to a woman and child, not multiple children.”

A second suburban organization has eight long-term supportive housing slots available for pregnant or parenting adults. It also offers two slots in scattered site housing (for one to two years) to pregnant and parenting adults. The organization turned away 44 pregnant and parenting 18 to 21-year-olds in the 3-month period: six were pregnant and 38 were parents.

A third organization offers six emergency shelter slots and accepts pregnant, but not parenting minors. The organization also runs a transitional living program that accepts pregnant, but not parenting youth aged 17 to 21. Three to four beds are available to youth who are not wards of the state. Finally, that organization has an independent living program with eight slots that serves 17 to 21 year-olds. Pregnant and parenting youth are eligible. Typically half of the slots are filled with parenting youth.

A fourth organization in the Chicago suburbs has five apartments for parenting youth aged 18 to 21. CIR was unable to obtain information from a fifth organization.

- **Number of slots potentially available for non-ward pregnant/parenting youth in Chicago suburbs:**
 - 6 pregnant only minors** (emergency shelter);
 - 19 young adults**, including 8 slots available for 17-year-olds (longer-term); and
 - 9-10 pregnant-only young adults**, including 17-year-olds (longer-term).

Downstate Illinois and Rockford

Information was even more limited from organizations throughout the rest of the state. CIR sent surveys to 11 organizations and five surveys were returned (one of the 5 organizations that returned surveys did not provide any services to pregnant and parenting youth). Another three organizations contacted by telephone provided limited information.

One organization provides 16 emergency shelter slots for ages 14 to 21 and accepted pregnant or parenting youth. It also runs a transitional living program with 41 apartments. The organization does accept minors into the program. The organization turned away five parenting adults during the 3-month period because the shelter was full.

A second organization reported that it runs a transitional living program for 18- to 21-year-olds that accepts pregnant or parenting youth. The program has 30 slots available. Another organization has five emergency shelter slots available for pregnant minors and yet another has an independent living program that accepts pregnant and parenting 18 to 21-year-olds with six slots.

One organization reported that it did not offer housing to pregnant or parenting youth, but that it helped youth to find and pay for apartments. That organization had the capacity to assist two pregnant and parenting minors and two adults with this process. Two additional organizations also provided such assistance in paying for and obtaining apartments but CIR was unable to obtain information about their capacity. CIR was unable to contact another three organizations.

- **Number of slots potentially available for non-ward pregnant/parenting youth throughout the rest of Illinois:**
 - 16 minors** (emergency shelter);
 - 5 pregnant-only minors** (emergency shelter);
 - 36 young adults** (longer-term); and
 - 45 apartments** available to both minors and young adults.

Opportunities in Illinois

Currently, the only long-term housing available for pregnant and parenting youth is for those who are wards of the state, for those who are 18 or older, or for those minors who have parental consent. Providers of services to homeless youth report that this parental consent is often difficult to obtain.

The Illinois legislature passed a bill (HB0556) in May 2003 that would enable minors to seek more long-term housing services. As of the publication of this report, the bill is awaiting the Governor's signature. The legislation will enable minors to seek partial emancipation strictly for the purposes of obtaining shelter and will authorize the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to license youth transitional housing programs to provide services, shelter, or housing to homeless minors.

This legislation opens the door for organizations that provide transitional living programs to young adults to extend their services to minors without having to obtain parental consent. In addition, the few shelters that already serve pregnant and parenting youth on an emergency basis might be able to serve those youth for longer periods.

OPPORTUNITIES IN OTHER STATES

Several other states have begun to use state and federal funding to provide housing for young mothers. National policy organizations have advocated for teen parent housing, or “second chance homes,” which are facilities designed specifically to provide housing for low-income pregnant or parenting young mothers.¹⁷ Youth who cannot live at home because of abuse, neglect, substance abuse, or other extenuating circumstances can live in supervised group homes or apartment clusters funded through state TANF or other public funds. Usually, states allow minors to live in the housing for pregnant or parenting youth without parental consent. Residents and their children can stay in the housing programs for long periods during which they are taught self-sufficiency and parenting skills.

Approximately 80 such facilities operate nationwide, and four states (Massachusetts, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Georgia) operate statewide networks of housing for pregnant or parenting youth. According to the Social Policy Action Network, early results of teen parent housing evaluations demonstrate that young mothers in such programs have fewer repeat pregnancies, healthier babies, better high school/GED completion rates, and stronger life skills.¹⁸

The facilities that offer this type of housing are a mix of public and private agencies whose costs per youth vary tremendously. The organizations receive funds from both governmental and private entities. In 2002, the U.S. Congress added \$19 million to the Transitional Living Program of the Department of Health and Human Services Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau) with the recommendation that the funds be used to support and create “second chance homes.” President George W. Bush proposed \$10 million for “maternity group homes” in his 2003 budget with the idea that the money be used “to increase support to community-based maternity group homes by providing young, pregnant, and parenting women with access to community-based coordinated services.” In addition, \$33 million geared specifically for such facilities may become available for FY 2003 through an amendment to the Charity Aid, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act of 2003.

¹⁷ Organizations include the Social Policy Action Network (www.span-online.org) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (www.clasp.org)

¹⁸ Kate Sylvester and Kathy Reich. “Second Chance Homes: Advice for the States.” Social Policy Action Network, 1999.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At a minimum, CIR's survey demonstrates that there are 466 pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois who are living in unsafe and/or unstable living conditions with their children and are in need of alternative living arrangements. This represents 16% of the 2,903 pregnant and parenting youth served. Although CIR's survey results represent an undercount of the actual number of pregnant and parenting youth in need of alternative living arrangements, they clearly establish the need for a statewide response to the issue. With the severe lack of housing opportunities for this population, pregnant and parenting youth are almost condemned to fail. It is the responsibility of public and private organizations concerned about pregnant and parenting youth and their children to address the tremendous housing needs that they face.

Recommendations

On May 14, 2003 the Center for Impact Research held a summit on the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth in Illinois. Over 70 people attended the summit in Chicago. Based on the survey findings and upon the recommendations of the many service providers and advocacy organizations that attended the summit, CIR's working group recommends the following:

- 1. The State of Illinois should increase the state budget line item for homeless youth and designate a portion of this funding for pregnant and parenting youth.**

Currently, the State of Illinois provides only \$4.2 million in funds for programs that serve homeless youth. This line item funds 22 programs throughout the state. Last year, the programs provided emergency or transitional housing for only 619 youth, 121 of whom were pregnant or parenting. According to a 2001 survey of providers, 42% of youth contacting programs were turned away due to lack of resources.¹⁹ The state should increase this allocation in order to meet the needs of homeless youth and designate a significant portion of it for organizations that provide housing services for pregnant and parenting youth.

¹⁹ "Youth on the Streets and on Their Own: Youth Homelessness in Illinois." Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 2001. Available online at www.chicagohomeless.org.

2. Governor Blagojevich should sign HB 0556 that would allow community-based organizations to provide more transitional living services to minors (those under 18).

This legislation would open the door for organizations that provide transitional living programs to pregnant and parenting young adults to extend their services to minors more easily, and would allow shelters to serve pregnant and parenting youth beyond the existing limit of 120 days.

3. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) should target a portion of state and federal affordable housing dollars in Illinois towards housing for pregnant and parenting youth.

Because there are few alternatives, many pregnant and parenting teens are only able to access private market rental housing. However, survey respondents reported that a lack of affordable housing was a significant problem. In order to create more affordable housing opportunities for this population, IDHA (the state's primary housing finance agency) should create incentives for affordable housing developers and service providers to provide housing and rental support to this vulnerable population.

In addition, IDHA should work with service providers, advocacy organizations and supportive housing developers to form a model for providing permanent supportive housing for pregnant and parenting youth with services targeted to their needs and work with the developers to secure funding for building the housing.

4. Advocacy and direct-service organizations should form a coalition that will address the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth and their children.

This coalition should:

- a. form an action plan to coordinate advocacy around this issue;
- b. direct a public education campaign to educate communities about the housing needs of pregnant and parenting youth;
- c. advocate for increased funding and explore alternative public and private funding sources to provide housing for pregnant and parenting youth; and
- d. work with state and local agencies and funders to establish a pilot program that provides housing for pregnant and parenting youth.

Participants at the summit suggested that independent not-for-profits or faith-based groups might be interested in providing housing services to pregnant or parenting youth if they were more aware of the problem.

Many participants proposed the idea of forming a group to start and fund a pilot program, designed by local stakeholders. According to participants, any such program that provides housing for pregnant and parenting youth should include: holistic and comprehensive services; teen involvement in planning; a focus on education; a strong mentoring component; and assistance with transition to independence (post-housing support services). Providers believe that smaller buildings are more appropriate for this population.

Summit participants agreed that ideally the pilot would lead to a greater number of programs. Their general view was that having the state provide partial financing with local public-private partnerships would enable programs to have consistency in their services, while giving local programs the power to decide which models would work best for their communities.

- 5. The Illinois Department of Human Services should work with this coalition to enhance and improve the “Help-Me-Grow” hotline in order to establish a comprehensive centralized referral system that can educate pregnant and parenting youth and youth service providers about available supportive services and housing programs.**

Housing services for pregnant and parenting youth are limited and service providers are largely unaware of them. Pregnant and parenting youth service providers report that they do not generally have the time or resources to seek out information about housing opportunities. The “Help Me Grow” hotline currently provides referral services for pregnant and parenting youth. However, service providers report that housing is not a major component of the hotline and that operators are unfamiliar with Chicago neighborhoods.

- 6. The Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services should work with the coalition to provide a mechanism for providing technical assistance to groups/organizations interested in establishing housing for pregnant and parenting youth.**

This technical assistance should include a clarification of state laws and regulations about licensing and facility requirements, as well as a list of potential funding streams. Many current and potential providers state that they find the various requirements confusing and are daunted by the licensing process.

- 7. Members of the coalition should participate in the Youth Task Group of the Chicago Continuum of Care to ensure that a portion of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are designated for pregnant and parenting youth, especially minors.**

Currently Chicago's Continuum of Care, made up of city officials, foundations, and community-based organizations, prioritizes the allocation of HUD SuperNOFA (Super Notice of Funding Availability) dollars coming to Chicago. The Youth Task Group is focusing on the youth population to ensure that they receive high priority and that organizations submit proposals for programs serving this population.

- 8. The State of Illinois should provide funding for local communities so that they can determine the extent of the need in their area and determine appropriate courses of action.**

CIR's research represents the first attempt to quantify the number of pregnant and parenting youth in need of alternative living arrangements. The state should build on this effort in order to ensure that pregnant and parenting youth who are in unsafe and unstable living situations have access to needed housing services.



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