

This material is copyrighted and published by the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.. You may download this document for your personal use. Web-published with permission.

Teen Pregnancy and Sexual Assault

Teenage pregnancy is a misunderstood issue. Recently, we have begun to recognize the reality of the lives of teenage girls and make important connections between teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse, particularly in the following areas:

- Pregnant teenagers have experienced a higher than average incidence of sexual assault.
- The vast majority of babies born to teenage mothers are fathered by adult men, not teenage boys.

Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Assault

- 62% of pregnant and parenting adolescents had experienced contact molestation, attempted rape, or rape prior to their first pregnancy. (Boyer & Fine, 1993)
- 61% of pregnant teenagers had had an unwanted sexual experience. (Gershenson et. al., 1989)
- 74% of women who had intercourse before age 14 report a history of forced sexual intercourse. (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994)
- Between 11% and 20% of girls were pregnant as a direct result of rape. (Boyer & Fine, 1993)
- 23% of women who were victimized were pregnant by their perpetrator. (Gershenson et. al., 1989)
- Girls who were victimized prior to their first pregnancy were more likely than girls not abused to:
 - have voluntary intercourse earlier
 - use or have problems with drugs or alcohol or to have sex partners who use drugs or alcohol
 - have sex partners who are older
 - have had an abortion
 - have second and third pregnancies
 - have been in a violent relationship
 - have experienced emotional abuse or physical maltreatment in childhood
 - have experienced repeated victimization in the past year
 - have had a sexually transmitted disease. (Boyer & Fine, 1993)

Who are the "Fathers"?

- 70% of babies born to teenage mothers are fathered by adult men; only 30% are fathered by teenagers. (National Center for Health Statistics, 1992; California Center for Health Statistics, 1993)
- 19% of pregnant teenagers had partners 6 years older or more (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994)
- Of the pregnant teenagers had had an unwanted sexual experience, the ages of the perpetrators were:
 - 18% were within two years of the victim's age
 - 18% were 3-5 years older than the victim
 - 17% were 6-10 years older than the victim
 - 40% were more than ten years older than the victim (Gershenson et. al., 1989)

References:

Boyer, Debra and Fine, David. "Sexual Abuse as a Factor in Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Maltreatment." *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 24 (2), 1993.

Gershenson, Harold et. al. "The Prevalence of Coercive Sexual Experience Among Teenage Mothers." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 4 (2), 1989.

Sex and America's Teenagers. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994.

Males, Mike. "Teen Mothers, Adult Fathers." *Protecting Sexually Active Youth Network Newsletter*, June 1995.