Characteristics of Pregnant Teen Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions

According to SAMHSA’s TEDS Report titled “Characteristics of Pregnant Teen Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions”, teenage pregnancy is a serious public health concern because of the risk of short term and long term negative consequences for the mother and the child. The report compared pregnant adults to pregnant teens, finding pregnant teens have an increased risk of pregnancy related complications, such as premature delivery and delivering babies with developmental problems.

According to SAMHSA’s TEDS Report, pre- and postnatal health problems for both mother and child are compounded when the mother uses alcohol or drugs. The report states that this is of particular concern for pregnant teens because they tend to recognize their pregnancies later than adult women and pregnant teens are more likely to engage in binge drinking and drug use early in their pregnancies. Research from the TEDS Report indicates that mothers who used drugs during pregnancy may have babies that exhibit signs of addiction at birth, in addition to long-term effects of maternal prenatal drug use in children at 6 years of age.

Statistics:

- Between 2007 and 2010, about 57,000 female teen admissions aged 12 to 19 were admitted to substance abuse treatment annually; of these, 4.0 percent (an annual average of about 2,200 admissions) were pregnant.
- Pregnant teen admissions were 3 times more likely than non-pregnant female teen admissions to report receiving public assistance as a primary source of income (15.0 vs. 5.3 percent).
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- Of non-pregnant female teen admissions that were not in the labor force, 74.0 percent reported that they were students, whereas only 44.2 percent of pregnant teen admissions reported school as their reason for not being in the work force.
- More than half of pregnant teen admissions (51.0 percent) reported using drugs or alcohol in the month prior to treatment entry.

The report suggests these problems can be amplified by other factors associated with teenage mothers, including poverty, homelessness, exposure to violence and crime, poor health, and lack of access to health care. The report recommends treatment for substance abuse to aid in breaking the cycles of substance use and abuse among pregnant teens and, in turn, prevent or mitigate the short- and long-term impact of teen maternal substance use. Find the latest Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) report on The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website http://www.samhsa.gov/data/#teds2.

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