

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

SKILL ASSESSMENT

The following questions will help you identify the skills in which you excel and target those which you need to develop. By yourself or with your team, try to answer each of the questions as honestly as possible. After completing this independent living skill assessment, review it with your team and identify those skills you would like to strengthen.

	<i>I do not know about this</i>	<i>I need to know more about this</i>	<i>I know about this</i>
1. Understand that a missed period following sexual intercourse may mean pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Understand that as soon as two weeks after a woman has missed her period, a simple urine or blood test performed in the doctor's office can tell her if she is pregnant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Know that it is important to go to the doctor as soon as possible if I think I may be pregnant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Know what morning sickness is.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Know that both male and female are responsible if pregnancy occurs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Know what my options are in case of unplanned pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Know how to evaluate the pros and cons related to options of unplanned pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Know what issues and factors to evaluate in case of unplanned pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Know that it is important to talk with my partner about options related to pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Know that it is important to talk to someone I trust about options and questions I might have related to pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Understand the realities of teen parenthood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Am aware of the financial reality and responsibility related to pregnancy and parenthood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Understand the impact of pregnancy and parenthood on my life and future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

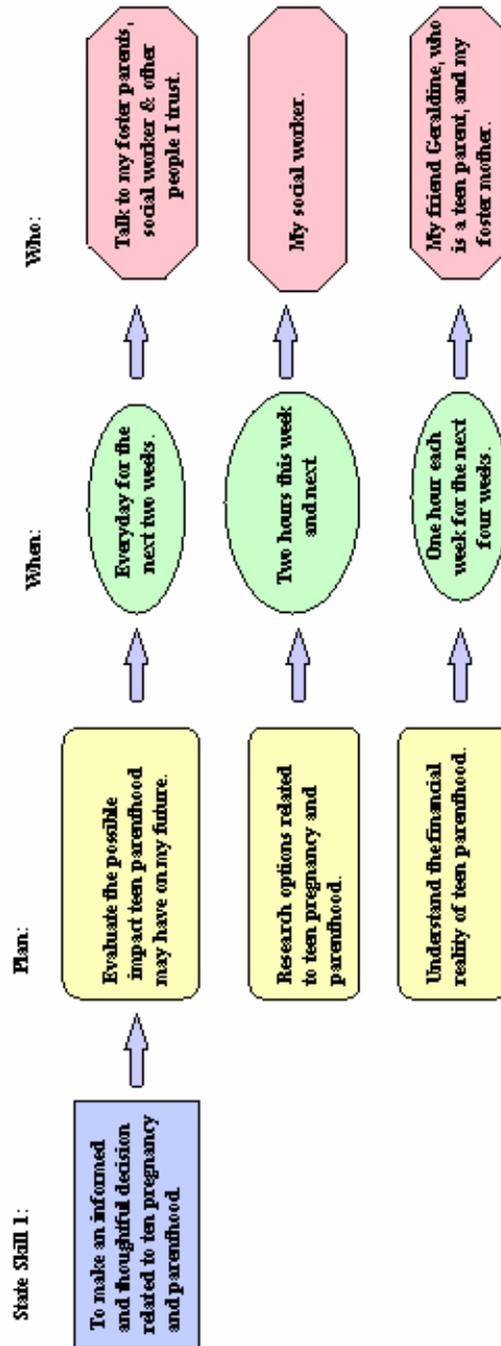
14. Know about support options for teen parents, such as WIC, TLP programs and Department of Transitional Assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Know that throughout pregnancy STD's, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and chemicals may result in harm to a baby.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Can make informed and thoughtful decisions related to pregnancy and parenthood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Independent Living Skills Module V

You have now completed the assessment section and identified those pregnancy and parenthood skills that you would like to strengthen in order to make better decisions on your own. The following guide can help you in planning how you can learn about and practice these skills. Choose a few skills that you want to develop, and with your team, write down your plan of action. Remember, once you accomplish these goals you can go back to your assessment tool and select new goals to build on your new skills.

EXAMPLE

GOAL: IMPROVE DECISION MAKING SKILLS RELATED TO TEEN PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD



Independent Living Skills Module V

GOAL: IMPROVE DECISION MAKING SKILLS RELATED TO TEEN PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD

State Skill 1:
To be develop
And/or improved.



Plan:
How do you plan to learn,
Develop and improve this skill?



When:
When, where, and how often will you
Work on this skill and by when will you
have mastered this?



Who:
Who will assist you?

State Skill 2:



Plan:

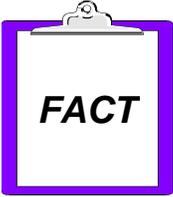


When:



Who:

Pregnancy



If you had sex without using sufficient birth control/STD prevention or any kind of sexual relationship that allowed semen to enter the vagina **and** you are experiencing one or more of the following symptoms, you may be pregnant:

- Missed your period or having a very short, light period
- Feel nauseous or have to vomit
- Have to go to the bathroom frequently
- Experience tenderness and swollen breasts
- Have changes in mood and appetite

Symptoms of pregnancy are different for each women. If you think you may be pregnant, you should take a pregnancy test as soon as pregnancy can be determined. There are several types of pregnancy tests available. You may buy a home pregnancy test in the drug store or pharmacy. While these tests can be conducted privately in your home, they are expensive (between \$10 and \$20) and are often difficult to read. So, if you decide to do a home pregnancy test and the results are negative, you may still be pregnant, especially if one or more of the symptoms has continued. If your results are positive, you need to follow with a medical appointment immediately. The most accurate way to detect pregnancy is through a blood test administered by a clinic or your physician. These tests are usually free of charge or covered by your health insurance.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY – *What now?*

Parenthood is one of the biggest responsibilities one can ever assume. Becoming a parent is a choice, a decision based on desire and resources. Many factors need to be carefully evaluated and require a lot of thought and discussion. The decision to have a child should be a mutual one, made by both the mother and father-to-be. A father has a very important role, beginning with participation in the decision making. A father has a very important role, beginning with participation in the decision making. However, no one (mother- or father-to-be) should try to make a decisions regarding potential parenthood without understanding all the options. Some of the options and issues regarding unplanned pregnancy that you may or may not have considered are summarized below.

Do you think you have a choice about whether or not to become a parent? If so, which issues would you consider?

Think about the realities of parenthood as a life time commitment. You owe it to yourself and your baby to make a wise and informed decision.

Options

If you feel that pregnancy may not be the choice for you, be certain to discuss your concerns and alternatives with someone you trust: your foster parent, social worker, etc. for further counseling on this issue.

Adoption – Many pregnant teenagers and fathers-to-be do not realize that adoption is an option. Surrendering a child for adoption requires a lot of careful thought and discussion... “Am I ready to care for a baby? What does adoption really mean? Will I be able to say goodbye to my child and know that a good family will raise him/her? Can I choose the type of family I want to raise my child? Can I ever change my mind?”

If you are pregnant or a father-to-be and think that you may not be ready to become a parent, adoption is an alternative to consider. Discuss your feelings with your partner, social worker, foster parent, someone you trust. Your social worker will be able to give you more detail about the adoption process. Don't be afraid to explore all the options. Talking about the possibilities is the best way to understand your choices. Remember, you will need time to consider your options and ask questions, etc. You are the one who will make the decision.

As you know, decision making is not a simple process. It requires a lot of thought, planning and discussion. You will most likely find that you change your mind again and again before you arrive at a final decision. Don't worry! This is the process. Although it is sometimes difficult, it's essential that you thoroughly examine all your options until you are satisfied with your decision.

As you move to different stages in your decision-making process, you may want to go back to previous exercises in this section to help you think through your choices.

Remember, you are the one who is making the decisions about your life and your baby's future. When you need someone to talk to, to discuss your choices, don't hesitate to ask for help. No one is expected to have all the answers.

Be a best friend to yourself!

Evaluate

Did you evaluate all options and issues related to your and your partner's pregnancy carefully?

Do you think you have obtained all the information you need, and have received input from people you trust in order to make a good decisions about potential parenthood?

Have you talked to you partner about the pregnancy? Does he/she feel and think the same way as you do or differently?

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Have you and your partner made a decision about your options?

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How does each of you feel about the decision?

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What kind of help and resources do you need to support your decision?

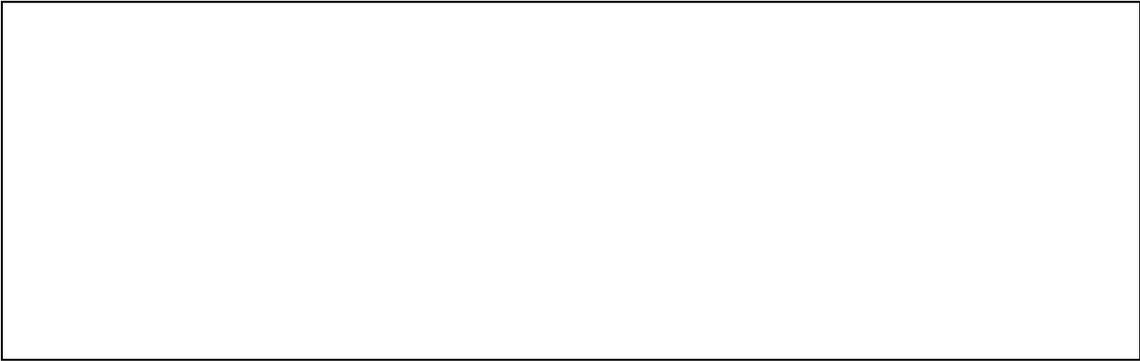
REPEATED PREGNANCY/PARENTHOOD

If you are already a parent and want to evaluate whether or not you should have additional children or if you are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, much of the precious decision making and evaluation processes apply to you as well. However, it is particularly important to know that –

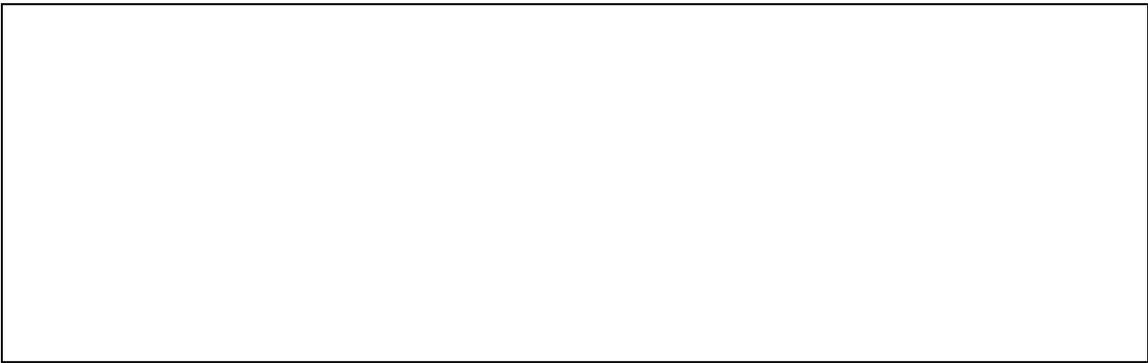
- You will not get additional benefits for additional children while on TAFDC
- The time limits regarding TAFDC benefits still apply to parents regardless of the number of children they have.
- Second and third children, double and triple the work involved in parenting.
- Furthering your education and holding down a good paying job is much more difficult with two or more children than with one (sick time, workload, study time, etc.).
- Repeated pregnancies in close proximity can put tremendous strain on your physical and mental health.
- Affordable housing is difficult to find for foster parents with one child. Imagine what it is like for parents with two or more children!

Consider the following:

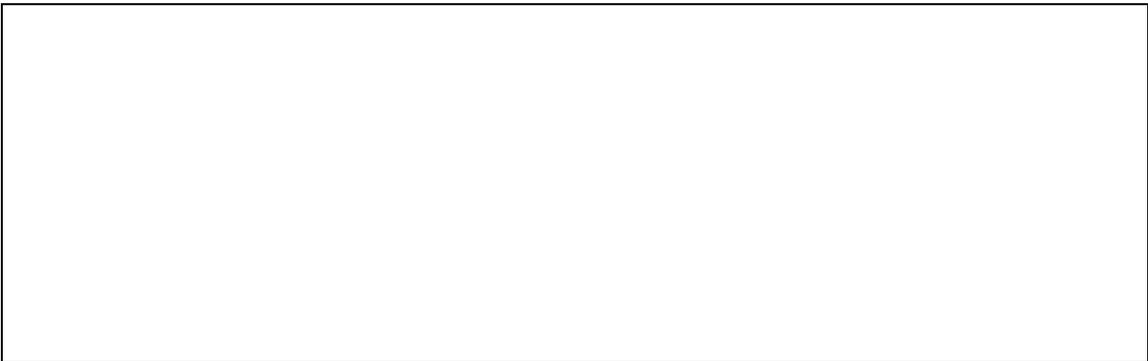
Josie, 17, resides in a Teen Living Program with her 9-month-old daughter, Briana. Josie is unemployed and is in the eleventh grade at high school. Dennis, 17, is the father of Briana, attends a GED program and sometimes stops by, but hasn't participated in parenting classes or family outings. Two days ago, Dennis came by the program and told Josie that he would like to have a baby boy with her. What advice would you give Josie? Why?



What advice would you give Dennis? Why?



What has to be in place (resources, relationship, support system, job, money, etc) before people should consider having additional children.



What can people do to prevent additional unplanned pregnancies?

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Do you think you are ready and prepared to have an additional child? Why? Why not?

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Pregnancy—If a woman’s choice is to carry the baby through the nine months of pregnancy, she must realize that during this time the fetus (baby) will be totally dependent upon her for good care. Pregnancy is the beginning of the mother/child relationship. How well everything goes throughout the pregnancy, birth and afterwards depends upon the mother’s actions during pregnancy. She must eat nourishing foods and have lots of rest.

Using cigarettes, alcohol or drugs can seriously harm the baby by increasing his/her risk of physical or mental handicaps. It is important that she get medical attention as soon as she suspects pregnancy and keep all follow-up doctor appointments. Teenagers must take special care during pregnancy because babies of young mothers are more likely to be born prematurely and at a low birth weight.

It is important to take folic acid **before and during** pregnancy. Lack of folic acid can cause birth defects. You can get folic acid in orange juice and one-a-day vitamins. Ask your doctor for more information.

Since a variety of health problems can occur as a result of poor nutrition, lack of prenatal care or simply due to the physical immaturity of the young mother, it is essential that she take special care of herself and her baby during pregnancy.

A father-to-be can fulfill a very important role during his partner’s pregnancy—beginning with participation in the decision making. Parenthood is a lifetime responsibility—one that must be taken seriously.

For Females

Evaluate Your Habits. Do you think that your lifestyle supports a healthy pregnancy and therefore, a better chance for a healthy baby? Why? Why not?

It is important to eat right during pregnancy. Do you think you eat healthy foods?

Pregnancy can put much physical and emotional strain on you. Do you think you can deal with the possible stress factors accompanying pregnancy?

STD's and HIV/AIDS can put a child at significant risk for birth defects and serious disease. If you think you may have contracted an STD, it is vital to get tested. If you think you may be HIV positive, you should find out as soon as possible. If an HIV+ pregnant woman takes certain medications (AZT) during pregnancy, she will greatly reduce the risk of her baby becoming infected during pregnancy and birth! Evaluate your risks for STD's and HIV.

For Males

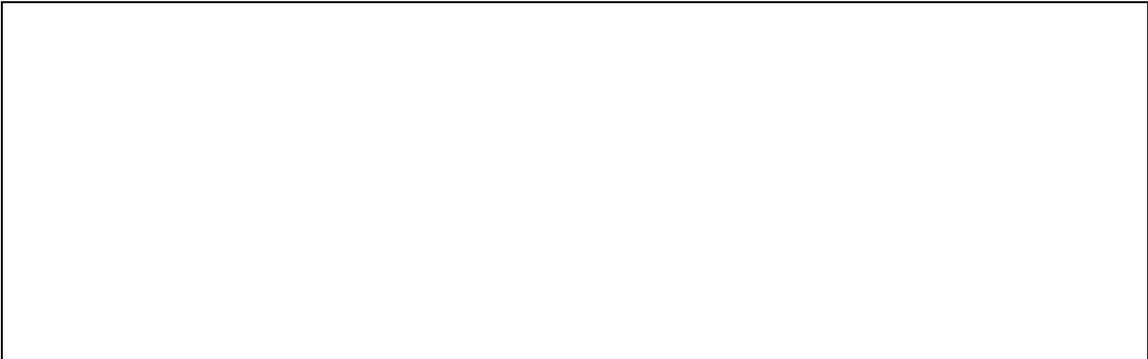
Although females carry a child, pregnancy is a shared responsibility. Guys who think they can just walk away or ignore issues related to pregnancy are irresponsible and wrong. Just like birth control and STD prevention, pregnancy is NOT just a female issue but the responsibility of both partners. So, if you have had unprotected sex, you have to deal with the consequences and think about the following questions:

Have you talked to your partner about expectations and decisions regarding pregnancy?

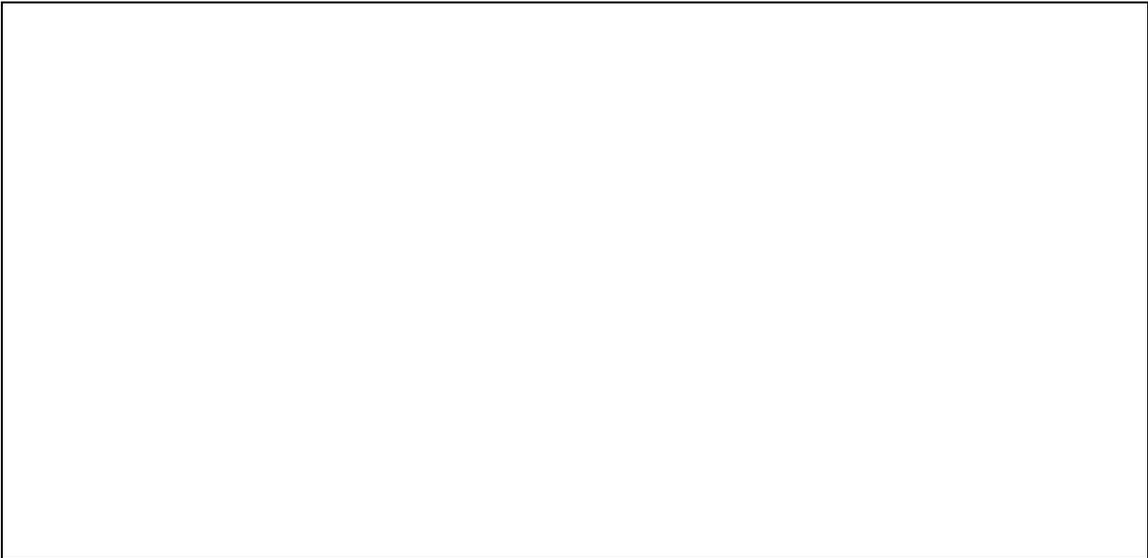
Yes No

What are or would be your expectations? And, what kind of decisions would you have to consider?

Do you think you can support your partner in maintaining and developing a healthy life style? Why or why not?



STD's and HIV/AIDS can put a baby at serious risk for birth defects and disease. If you think you have contracted an STD and/or HIV, you need to get tested as soon as possible. If you test positive, you need to let your partner know as soon as possible so that she can obtain the appropriate medical care. Also, if you test positive for an STD, do not continue sexual activity as you will be putting your partner and child at risk.



Do you have the financial and emotional resources to support your partner and meet her needs while preparing for the birth of your child? Why or why not?

Are you prepared to accompany your partner to prenatal appointments and participate in birthing classes?

Yes

No

Are you prepared for the changes pregnancy will bring to your relationship and your life? Why or why not?

PARENTHOOD

Parenting a child can be both a very rewarding and a challenging experience. It is certainly possible for a young mother/father to do a fine job of parenting. Many young people are successful parents. They give their children the love they need, sometimes at great sacrifice to themselves. They love their children deeply. But it is difficult to know who will be a good parent. Age, in and of itself, is not the determining factor of being a good parent. Some thirty-year-old parents neglect their children while some 18-year-old mothers and fathers do a fine job of parenting. However, teen parents are often not prepared for the extent of responsibility involved in childcare. New parents must learn how to feed, bathe, diaper and nurture and keep their new baby healthy.

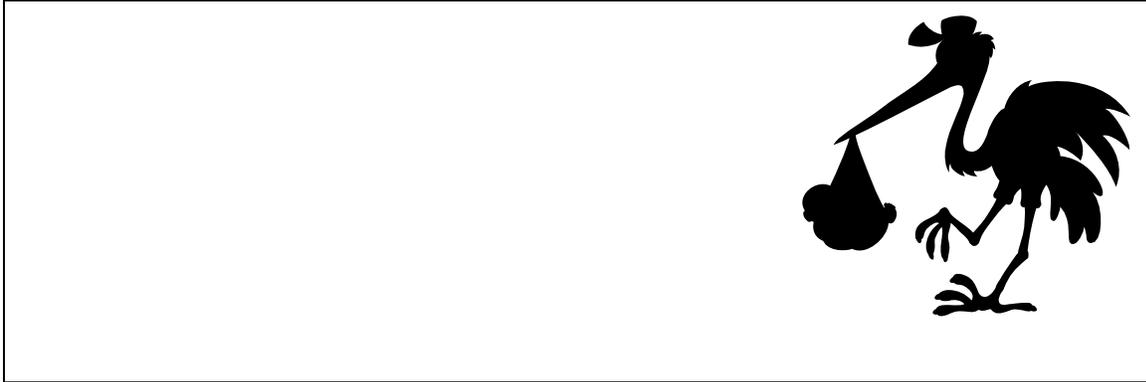


While loving a baby is essential, having enough money to feed and clothe him or her, pay the rent for an apartment, pay for medical care, etc. are also very basic needs. Along with parental responsibilities come home management duties: meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, paying the bills, balancing the budget, etc. A new parent must also learn about the social service system and the available resources, e.g. WIC, food stamps, TLP programs, support groups.



However, the most important of all, parents must know that the baby is totally dependent upon them for love, care and sustenance. The child's needs must come first, before all else. For many young parents that involves a complete change of life style that they have to be prepared to make. Most often, young parents' time is completely consumed by school, childcare and work. Recreational activities like movies, dances or simply hanging out with friends are rarely possible due to the demands of parenthood. Parenting is also quite stressful at times and many young parents may not have the coping skills necessary to deal with difficult situations. The choice of parenthood, nevertheless, is a personal one and the following questions will help you to evaluate whether or not it may be right for you.

What are your thoughts about becoming a mother/father at this time?



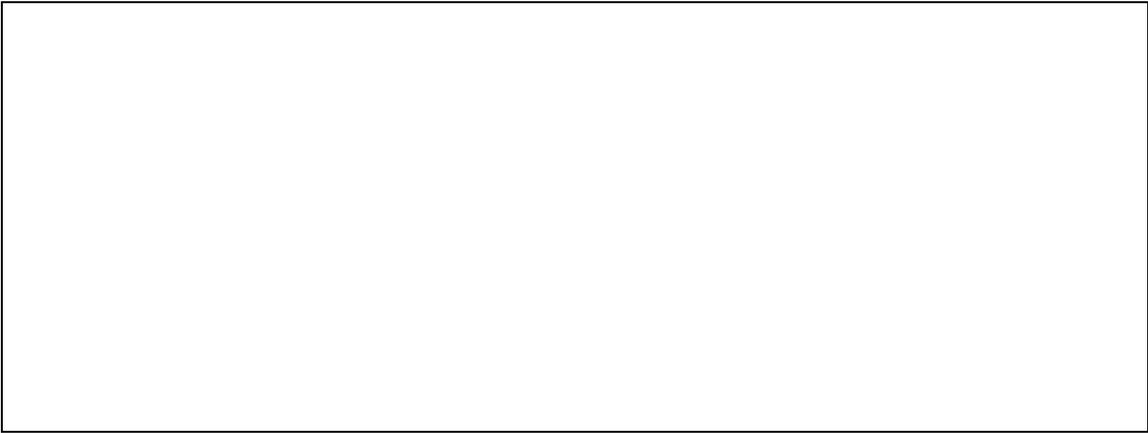
Do you believe you are ready at this time in your life to parent a child? Why or why not?

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What do you see as the rewards of parenthood?

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How do you think having a baby to care for every day would impact your life? What things would be different?



Do you think having a baby would interfere with your education and future plans? Why or why not?



Pretend for a moment that you are a baby about to be born. Would you choose yourself as a parent?



If you were to become a parent at this time in your life, would you need the support of your family and friends? Who would help you? How?

Have you thought about the long-term responsibilities of becoming a parent? What do you think your and your child's lives would be like in 3, 5, 10 years from now?

Where will my baby and I live? How will I support us both?

If you are pregnant or already a parent and need financial assistance to support yourself and your child, you may apply for Transitional Assistance (TAFDC) benefits through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). In order to receive TAFDC benefits for yourself and your child(ren), you must follow these DTA eligibility guidelines:

- If you don't have a high school diploma or GED, you must attend a high school or a GED program full-time. If the GED program is less than 20 hours per week, you must also be involved in job training or employment-related activities for a total of 20 hours each week.
- Until your 18th birthday, you must live with your parents, your guardians, or an adult relative over 20 years old.
- If you are under 18 and unable to live with your parents, a relative, or guardian due to issues of abuse, neglect, addiction, or other extraordinary circumstances, you and your child(ren) can live in a Teen Living Program (TLP). An assessment will be made to see if you meet these conditions.
- If you are 18 or 19 years old, you may ask to live in a TLP. An assessment must still be completed.

What is a TLP?

A TLP is a Teen Living Program. A TLP is a safe place for you and your child(ren) to live. A TLP will also:

- Give you the opportunity to complete your high school education or GED.
- Arrange for licensed childcare while you are in school.
- Give you the opportunity to gain the skills you will need to live on your own.
- Allow the father of your baby to visit and participate in groups and classes if appropriate.
- Encourage you and your family to visit and maintain contact with you if you wish.

Teen Living Programs are located throughout the state. Some are group homes for 4 to 15 teen parents, like you, and their children. Some programs are supervised, shared apartments. If you are eligible for a TLP, you will be referred to the program which best meets your needs and skill level. Every effort will be made to place you in the program closest to your current home, if you so desire and if a slot is available. All Teen Living Programs have staff available 24 hours a day to help you. You will have your own room for yourself and your child(ren). All TLP's offer case management and parenting and life skills classes. One TLP is designed specifically for residents facing issues of domestic violence.

How do I get into a TLP? And, why am I being referred to DSS?

First, to get into a TLP, you must be eligible for TAFDC benefits, under age 20, and be unable to live at home with your parents. You may be unable to live with your parents because of any of the following reasons:

- There is abuse or neglect towards the child(ren) by any member of the household;
- There is drug or alcohol abuse in the home; and/or
- There is a special reason that you cannot live at home.

To decide if you should live in a Teen Living Program, your DTA worker will refer your name to the Department of Social Services (DSS) so that they may arrange for an assessment of your individual needs. (Please remember that you are referred to DSS for an assessment only to see if you should live in a Teen Living Program.)

DSS works with people around the state who are trained to do these kinds of assessments. The assessor will contact you within 10 days at the telephone number and address you give to your DTA worker. The assessor will plan a time to meet with you and talk about what DTA can give you. The assessor will also meet with your parent or guardian. The assessor will then report to the Teen Living Program Coordinator at DSS. The TLP Coordinator will decide if you need a TLP and, if so, recommend which one is the best for you and your child(ren). Your DTA worker will let you know the final outcome in two to three weeks.

How long can I stay in the TLP?

As soon as you move into the TLP, the program will begin to help you prepare to live on your own. According to the TAFDC rules, you must stay at the TLP until your 18th birthday unless you are able to live with an adult relative. You are allowed to stay in a TLP until the day of your 20th birthday. Together you and the TLP will decide when you are ready to leave.

Can the father of my baby participate?

Fathers of children are encouraged to visit, if appropriate, and to participate in program activities, such as Parent Education and Life Skills sessions. Each program has rules on visitation and father involvement. The staff of the Teen Living Programs understands the importance of children maintaining contact with a supportive father and will help to foster that relationship.

What are the rules?

Although not all TLP's are alike, all of them have similar rules that you must follow in order to stay in the program. If you do not follow all of the TLP's rules, you can be terminated from the program and you may lose your TAFDC benefits.

TEEN LIVING PROGRAM RULES

1. Residents must participate for at least 20 hours a week in an educational program that will lead to a high school diploma or a GED certificate.
2. If your educational program is not a 20-hour a week program, then you must make up the time either in a training or employment-related activity in addition to attending the parent education and life skills classes provided by the program.
3. Residents must pay a program fee equal to 30% of their TAFDC check.
4. Residents must give their food stamps to the program. Programs are responsible for deciding how food will be purchased and distributed to the residents.
5. Residents must participate in 24 hours of life skills training and parenting education each month.
6. Residents may have visitors or overnight guests only with the permission of the TLP. Under no circumstances may residents have boyfriends or other male guests overnight. Males may visit during daytime visiting hours only.
7. Residents must agree to share in the household chores of the program. These chores may include shopping, cooking, and cleaning.
8. Residents must abide by the program curfews and specific rules regarding when, where, and how long a resident may be away from a program.
9. Residents are responsible for paying the TLP back for any damages and for any extra money the program spends on their behalf.
10. In accordance with Massachusetts Law, residents may not possess, serve, or consume alcohol at any time. Residents may not use or distribute illegal drugs. At no time may a resident possess a weapon.
11. Residents are responsible for the care of their child(ren) at all times. At no time may a resident ask a staff member to be responsible for the care of her child(ren).

12. Residents receiving TAFCD benefits may live in Teen Living Programs until their 20th birthday. All residents must be prepared to leave the program when they become twenty years old.
13. Residents must agree to abide by all rules of the Teen Living Program. If a resident does not follow the rules, she will be terminated from the program and she may not be able to receive TAFDC benefits. Residents will receive a complete list of rules when they enter the program.
14. Residents have the right to appeal any of the above rules by contacting the TLP Network Coordinator.
15. Residents must follow all other rules of the TLP to which they are referred.

Who can I call if I have more questions?

If you have any questions about the Teen Living Programs or the assessment process, you can ask you DTA teen specialist.

What do you think about the TLP programs?

Managing Your Budget

If you depend on TAFDC benefits to support yourself and your child, you must have excellent money management and budgeting skills in order to meet all your financial responsibilities. If eligible and have one child, you will secure a monthly TAFDC payment of \$486.00 in addition to food stamps. Because all your expenses as well as your child's (with the exception of day care) have to come out of the \$486, it is crucial for you to be aware of financial limitations. Let's take a closer look at a personal budget.

ACTIVITY

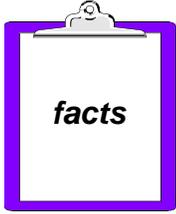
Establish a budget for yourself and your child using a monthly income of \$486.00 Note: If you need additional information on individual budget items, please refer to PAYA Module I.

Personal Budget

Rent	\$
Utilities	\$
Food	\$
Childcare	\$
Home Care	\$
Personal Care/Diapers	\$
Medical	\$
Insurance	\$
Transportation	\$
Clothing for self and child	\$
Recreation/Toys	\$
Savings	\$
Total*	
*The total must be equal or less than \$486.00	

What do you think about your budget?

As you can see from your own personal budget, while it is possible to cover all expenses with \$486.00, it is very tight and doesn't allow any room for luxuries.



facts

If parents are not married and the mother receives TAFDC benefits, the father will be held responsible for paying child support payments to DTA.

Parents are responsible for paying for child support regardless of whether or not they are living with the child(ren). Paying child support is a moral and legal obligation. Unless a child is adopted, child support must be paid until the child turns at least 18 years of age. If a parent fails to pay child support, he/she may have to go to court, his/her wages may be taken, or he/she may be arrested. If a man questions whether he is the father of a child, he can determine paternity through a test.

Do you agree that fathers should help pay for their children's support? Why or why not?

You must also be aware of the fact that according to welfare reform:

- A parent cannot receive TAFDC benefits for more than two consecutive years or more than a lifetime of 5 years. (While you are living in a TLP, these time frames do not apply.)
- A parent will not receive additional money for any child(ren) born while he/she is receiving TAFDC benefits.
- Parents are responsible for paying for child support regardless of whether or not they are living with the child(ren). Paying child support is a moral and legal obligation. Unless a child is adopted, child support must be paid until the child turns at least 18 years of age. If a parent fails to pay child support, he/she may have to go to court, his, her wages may be confiscated, or he/she may be arrested. Men who are asked to pay child support and question whether they are the father of a child can determine paternity through a test.
- Even if you choose not to live with the father/mother of your child, you can play a vital role in his/her upbringing.
- If you decide to become a parent, you will have to support yourself and your child or contribute to the support of your child. It is important to plan for this obligation thoroughly, particularly because of time limitations and restrictions associated with TAFDC payments. Remember, when TAFDC benefits end, **you** must meet the financial responsibilities associated with parenthood. Therefore, it is vital to establish solid educational/career plans and to work diligently to obtain a good job.
- Some people think that by becoming parents, they will automatically be eligible for Section 8 housing and get an apartment. That, however, is often not true. Section 8 apartments are often not available and waiting lists, even for emergency housing, are long.

In making the decision about whether or not to become a parent, it is important to consider all these factors. While some issues may be discouraging, it is important to acknowledge the reality and responsibility of parenthood.