

# Caseworker Tip Sheet for Pregnant and Parenting Youth

## What is expected of me as a caseworker?

### Do I automatically file a dependency on the child of the dependent youth?

No, under state administrative code (WAC 388-25-0065), you file a dependency action only if the child is at risk. Teen parents have every right to parent their own child(ren) and have the same rights as any other parent in Washington state.

### What are the placement options? Do I need to find a new placement for the teen parent and child?

**LICENSED FOSTER HOME** – Refer to The Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) Licensing Division to explore current and other placement options. If the current placement doesn't meet licensing requirements and the caregiver is interested in having both the teen parent and the child, they can explore a waiver option with Licensing.

**UNLICENSED PLACEMENT** – Explore options for continued placement with the teen parent and caregiver. Topics you may cover in this discussion should include financial and child care assistance through community resources (such as public assistance, Working Connections child care, etc.).

### How do I access the “with child” financial supplement?

Caseworkers should refer to the DCYF Pregnant and Parenting Youth Policy and Procedure for more information.

### Does the teen parent need to change schools?

No. However, the teen parent may wish to if the mother is breastfeeding or wants different support. Check with Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for Graduation Reality And Dual-Role Skills programs, or local community colleges who may offer GED and pregnant and parenting teen programs.

### Do I need to provide oversight for medical appointments?

Your oversight for the dependent parenting teen does not change. You are not responsible for oversight of the non-dependent baby but should offer support as best practice.

### Am I required to do a court report on the non-dependent child?

No. However, a court report for the non-dependent child is not required. For best practice you may include information about the dependent teen's development and progress in providing care for their child.



### How can I talk with youth about their reproductive rights?

Talking with youth about their reproductive rights helps them make informed choices. Keep the conversation simple and provide all youth over the age of 12 the “Your Rights, Your Life: A Resource for Youth in Foster Care.” DCYF policy requires dependent youth over 12 receive this booklet annually. It is a good resource to help develop conversation and includes state laws on reproductive rights including:

- “If you are over the age of 14, you have the right to obtain tests and treatments for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) without the consent of a parent or guardian.”
- “All information about your reproductive health, STD, or HIV information cannot be disclosed without consent. This means that whoever has this information, including the caseworker, caregiver, or doctor, cannot talk to anyone about this information without a signed consent from you (the youth).”

### Do I have to do health and safety visits on the non-dependent child?

No. However, when completing the health and safety on the dependent parenting teen, it is best practice to check on the child's well-being and to offer any services to support the parenting teen and family.

### How can I best work with the youth?

It is important that you recognize the teen is a parent and that the teen should be treated as such. However, the teen parent likely has additional and unique needs. Take time to discuss their changing role and ask what support is needed. Refer them to appropriate community resources as needed.



## Supports and Services:

### How do I support youth with their education?

**Education options to share with teen parent:** They have a right to a free education if they are under the age of 21. Their rights are protected by state and federal laws. The first step to earning a high school diploma is contacting your local high school or school district office. A school principal or district employee can outline the different options for the youth, such as:

- Attending regular high school.
- Attending a program for pregnant and parenting teens, such as GRADS.
- Enrolling in an online school.
- Enrolling in a GED class at your local community college (may have costs involved).
- Your area may have a GRADS program for pregnant and parenting teens. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has information about GRADS on their website at: [www.k12.wa.us/student-success/learning-alternatives/graduation-reality-and-dual-role-skills-grads](http://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/learning-alternatives/graduation-reality-and-dual-role-skills-grads)

### Do I need to arrange transportation for the teen parent and their child for appointments?

You should help the teen parent explore options. Provide information on how to access community resources and encourage them to speak with the caregiver about support the caregiver may be able to offer.

### Do I need to provide child care when the parent goes to court?

Payment for child care can be accessed through DCYF depending on the case. You should speak with your supervisor if you need further clarification.

### Do I refer the teen parent to a parenting program?

Yes. You should refer the teen parent to any community resources which will benefit them and their child.

### Am I responsible for setting up visitation for the other parent and extended family?

No. However, it is best practice to help facilitate visitation. This may be a good place for a Shared Planning Meeting so that any issues around visitation (including visits with the non-custodial parent, siblings and extended family) can be discussed.

### Do I need to enroll the teen parent in WIC?

You should provide information to the teen parent (and caregiver) about this service and outline for the teen how to enroll in the program. Check in with the caregiver about how to help the teen access this service and follow-up with the teen during the monthly health and safety visit.

### Am I responsible for providing a clothing voucher to the dependent or non dependent child?

- **Licensed Foster Home:** A clothing voucher is available once per placement episode for a dependent child. It is expected that when additional clothes are needed the cost will be covered by the monthly subsidy.

For a non-dependent child you can complete an exception to policy and request a clothing voucher. Regional management must approve this request. Also, it is expected that clothing costs would be covered with the dependent child with child supplement subsidy.

- **Non-Licensed Foster Home:** A clothing voucher is generally provided with the initial placement episode. Relative support funds or the Relative Kinship Navigator program are other available resources. Check with your supervisor about how to access these resources.

### Do I need to supply a crib and baby supplies to the teen parent?

As best practice you should help the pregnant or parenting teen access supplies and support. Your support is critical to helping them shape their future success.

## Paternity

### Am I required to have the dependent teen parent file for paternity, a paternity affidavit or child support?

It is best practice to refer the teen to the Division of Child Support (DCS). This agency can help establish paternity, get a child support order for the child, help collect child support and enforce medical coverage. The teen parent's situation is unique. Paternity, domestic violence issues, the employment of the father and other factors make each situation different. The teen can complete an application for DCS services at [www.dshs.wa.gov/child-support](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/child-support) or call 1-800-457-6202 to have an application mailed to them.

## Protective factors

### What are my obligations if I learn the non-custodial teen parent is abusive?

You are a mandated reporter and should follow state law on mandated reporting.

### What if the parenting youth is dependent on drugs/alcohol – what is my responsibility?

You are a mandated reporter and should follow state law on mandated reporting.

## Resources

[www.independence.wa.gov](http://www.independence.wa.gov)

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