



supporting

TEEN PARENTS

Parenting is an incredibly difficult job. Teen parents face a unique set of challenges as they raise their children. Teen parents often lack knowledge about child development and have limited skills to provide for their children physically and emotionally. Some teen parents may have lost their family's support, leaving them isolated and with few resources. What can we do to help?

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR TEEN PARENTS?

Lack of knowledge about how to best support their children's development.

Their own **incomplete development and maturity.**

Lower income limitations (from being in school) or working multiple jobs which limits their schedule as well as options for childcare.

Increased frequency of conflicts with their own parents and / or their baby's other parent.

WHY IS IT CRITICAL TO HELP TEEN PARENTS?

Children of teen parents are **more likely to experience abuse and neglect** than children of older parents. The impacts of abuse and neglect are both immediate and long-term on children and their communities.

The **first years of a child's life represent a window of opportunity**, not only in terms of the child's early cognitive, social-emotional and motor development, but also in terms of parenting patterns, behaviors and strategies that set the tone for parenting even as the child grows and develops in future years.

According to the CDC, about **50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma before age 22, compared to 90% of their counterparts without children.** Without a high school diploma, they earn less and are more likely to be unemployed.

Children of teen parents are more likely to **continue in a cycle of poverty** with lower school achievement, higher drop out rates, more health problems and other ongoing issues.

IF YOU ARE A TEEN PARENT:

- ➔ **Ask for help - it's okay to need it!** Parenting is a difficult job and you deserve support. Reach out to neighbors, sign up for a Home Visitor, contact school staff or co-workers to ask about parenting resources.
- ➔ **Get to know other parents.** It can feel like you're all alone, but isolation makes parenting even harder. Join a playgroup or volunteer at your child's preschool.
- ➔ **Find resources...they ARE out there.** Check to see if your high school has a Parent Resource Center with information and classes. Visit your local library and recreation centers to learn more about available programs.

IF YOU CAN HELP A TEEN PARENT:

Take time to talk. Isolation can be incredibly difficult for all parents. Say hello, ask about their children and share your own struggles.

Make an invitation. Even the simplest activity—a walk to the playground—can offer an opportunity to model positive parenting techniques and provide emotional support to the teen in their role as a new parent. Plus, your children will enjoy the playmate!

Don't shame. Choose actions and words that say you value them *and* their children.



Building hope for children & families
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Find more resources for parents online at
www.scanva.org/prc