Access to Contraception

Allow teen mothers to consent to their own birth control.

Texas has the fourth highest rate of repeat teen births nationwide. In 2017, of the nearly 27,000 births to Texas teens aged 15-19, **19% were to girls who already had at least one child**. While teen parents can complete their education, form strong workforce attachments and achieve their potential, it becomes harder with each additional unintended birth.

A teen mother has a legal right and duty to consent to all medical care for her child and make important health-related decisions. However, under Texas state law, if she is under the age of 18, she is not allowed to consent to her own contraception. Research shows that having one birth during adolescence is a strong risk factor for future unintended and untimely pregnancies. For this reason, even states that require parental consent for birth control usually empower minors who have experienced pregnancy or given birth to be responsible for their own contraceptive needs.

Allowing teen mothers to consent to birth control could result in positive and significant cost savings. A large majority of births to unmarried adolescents and young adults are covered by Medicaid, including 87% of births to teens 15-19. In 2017, 5,128 Texas youth aged 15-19 had a repeat birth, resulting in an estimated cost to Medicaid of **approximately $14 million**. Additionally, more than half of births to unmarried women in their early 20s are repeat births, meaning the first birth likely occurred during adolescence. Allowing a teen to access a long-lasting, highly effective form of contraception can prevent unintended pregnancy for 3 - 10 years, depending on method.

Teen mothers deserve support and help towards meeting their life goals - including tools needed to avoid a repeat pregnancy.
Health Care Access

Auto-enroll young adults into Healthy Texas Women.

The state of Texas has built robust family planning and reproductive health programs for uninsured and underinsured individuals. These programs fill an important gap in providing access to reproductive health care for Texas women and men. Streamlining enrollment policies would make it easier for young Texans to access these programs as they transition to adulthood.

Women exiting Pregnant Women's Medicaid are automatically enrolled into the Healthy Texas Women (HTW) program, which provides family planning and preventive reproductive health care for citizens and legal residents earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. This process has resulted in strong program growth and increased access to services. Similarly, young women aging out of Children’s Medicaid or CHIP could be auto-enrolled into HTW.

In 2017, 42% of teen births in Texas were to 19 year olds. Though they may be legal adults, an unintended pregnancy for an older teen still is likely to create barriers to achieving life goals. These young women generally are no longer eligible for CHIP or Children’s Medicaid and have extremely high rates of being uninsured. Additionally, many express a desire for highly effective contraception but without health insurance, they perceive cost as an insurmountable barrier. However, they often are eligible for HTW.

Automating program enrollment would increase the ability of these young women to access birth control and preventive health care and ultimately provide a cost savings to the state. In the 85th Legislative Session, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) was directed by rider to study the cost impact of auto-enrolling young women from children’s health programs into HTW. HHSC recently released a report estimating that in a 5-year period, the auto-enrollment would avert 11,275 unintended pregnancies, resulting in savings of $58.7 million in General Revenue ($102.6 million All Funds) from fiscal years 2020-2025.

Additional Priorities

In addition to the specific priorities listed above, we will advocate for:

- Appropriations in the D.1.1. women’s health budget strategy sufficient to fund forecasted caseload growth,
- Strategies to increase access to contraception, especially highly effective methods,
- Improved data collection around teen pregnancy, and
- Bills that improve the quality of school-based sexual health education for Texas youth.
The Facts About Teen Birth in Texas

Texas teen birth rates are among the highest in the nation. More than 27,000 Texas teens gave birth in 2017. To put it another way, a baby was born to a teen mom in Texas once every 19 minutes. Rates of teen pregnancy and birth are particularly high among minority youth, foster youth, teens with a history of trauma, and youth in rural counties. Rates across Texas counties vary significantly, with as many as 10% of adolescent girls giving birth each year in some counties. Early and unintended childbearing can make it harder for Texas youth to complete their education, form strong workforce attachments and build healthy families. But we're making progress. Like the rest of the US, Texas has seen strong declines in teen birth rates, including more than a 50% decrease in the last decade alone. While a variety of factors are causing this decline, research points to better contraceptive usage, including access to the most effective and long-lasting forms of contraception, as the most important factor in decreasing teen births.

For more data on teen birth rates in Texas, visit www.txcampaign.org.

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Teen Birth Rate, Texas and US

(Per 1,000 Girls Aged 15-19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>US</th>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>41.5</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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*2017 rates are preliminary and subject to change; Data Sources: National Center for Health Statistics; DSHS Center for Health Statistics

**ABOUT THE TEXAS CAMPAIGN**

The Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, a statewide nonpartisan organization founded in 2009, aims to reduce teen pregnancy through research, advocacy, collaboration and training. Our work helps expand opportunity, creates positive social change, and allows young people to be stronger contributors to their communities.

We believe that families and communities play a key role in the health of youth, so our focus is on creating a constructive dialogue and effective on the ground strategies around teen pregnancy prevention and adolescent health. We support strengths-based policies and programs to empower young Texans teens with the knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about their health and future.

WHAT WE DO
- Texas Youth-Friendly Initiative
- Statewide Annual Symposium
- Regional training events
- Data and research
- Federal and state advocacy

WHO WE WORK WITH
- Health centers
- Policymakers
- Educators
- Researchers
- Advocates
- Philanthropists
- Technical assistance providers
- Community organizers

www.txcampaign.org
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