



## Healthy Teen Network

# POSITION STATEMENT ON **VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE SERVICES FOR YOUTH WHO ARE PREGNANT OR PARENTING**

*Adopted by the Healthy Teen Network Board of Directors on June 4, 2016*



### Position

Healthy Teen Network promotes egalitarian norms that support healthy relationships, voluntary birth-planning, and non-violent means to deal with stress and conflict as integral approaches to reducing the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) among young people who are pregnant, expectant, and/or parenting.

Healthy Teen Network supports the development and delivery of resources and services specific to aiding youth who are expecting children or parenting for developing healthy relationships, managing conflict with their intimate partners, removing themselves from harm, and recovering from trauma should intimate partner violence occur.

All youth who are expecting children or parenting should receive screening on the nature of their intimate partner relationships during the entire prenatal and postnatal periods to ensure the identification of youth at risk for, or

involved in, violent relationships. Pregnant and parenting youth identified as having risk for, or involvement in, violent relationships with their intimate partners should receive, without barrier or delay, the full range of resources and services necessary to address the constellation of factors associated with IPV.

## Issue

It is estimated that two-thirds of all teens who are pregnant or parenting have been the victim or perpetrator of physical interpersonal violence, with an even greater number involved in psychological abuse.<sup>1</sup> Few resources and services have been developed specific to the needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing IPV.

## Supporting Information

Intimate partner violence may include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and/or psychological aggression.<sup>2</sup> Violence may include the use of technology to control the behavior of, criticize, or stalk another person. Other terms associated with IPV are relationship abuse, relationship violence, dating abuse, domestic abuse, teen dating violence, and domestic violence.

Intimate partner violence is largely rooted in the desire to control another individual and exert aggressive behaviors to influence how another person thinks, feels, or acts. Intimate partner violence may begin with jealousy, advance to controlling activities, and escalate to physical, emotional, and sexual violence. Although youth may interpret partner's jealousy as flattering, it may be rooted in control and insecurity. Several risk factors are associated with increased risk of IPV during pregnancy and parenting, including history of exposure to community or family violence, disadvantaged backgrounds, and poor social skills. Youth may be especially at risk as they continue to develop themselves while confronting the challenges of pregnancy and parenting.

A unique aspect of IPV during the adolescent years is the prevalence of reciprocal violence, especially with regard to psychological aggression, wherein both partners in the couple are perpetrators and victims. Also, many young women may be targets for sexual coercion, birth control sabotage, or other forms of control, which may yield unintended or unwanted pregnancies.

Youth who are pregnant or parenting may sustain violence by their intimate partners due to stress, economic or social dependency, and/or lack of skills in communication and coping. Violent behaviors may be exacerbated during the early post-partum period when infant care responsibilities, lack of sleep, ongoing financial pressures, recovery from the birth process, and changing dynamics in the relationship further instigate conflict and stress. Youth who are pregnant and parenting may feel responsible for being victimized, worried about the safety of

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<sup>1</sup>Newman, B.S. & Campbell, C. (2011). Intimate partner violence among pregnant and parenting Latina adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26 (13), 2635-2657; Harrykisson, S.D., Rickert, V.I., & Weimann CM (2002) Prevalence and patterns of intimate partner violence among adolescent mothers during the postpartum period. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 156, 325-330.

<sup>2</sup> Breiding, M.J., Basile, K.C., Smith, S.G., Black, M.C., Mahendra, R.R.. (2015). [\*Intimate Partner Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements, Version 2.0\*](#). Atlanta (GA): National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

their children, and may want to maintain relationships for the safety of their children. The consequences for the youth, their child, extended family, and the community at large of interpersonal violence are significant.

Because the needs of youth who are pregnant or parenting may differ from other youth or may differ from older parents, development of violence prevention and response programs and curricula specifically for this population are warranted.

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