

TEENAGE PREGNANCY PREVENTION

Support for strategies to help reduce adolescent pregnancies in Oklahoma

The League of Women Voters of Oklahoma (LWVOK) believes that many options or opportunities for lifestyles that stimulate self-sufficiency and self-esteem should be provided to help reduce adolescent pregnancies and births in Oklahoma.

In pursuit of this goal, the LWVOK recommends action to provide:

- better opportunities for obtaining good academic skills—emphasizing basic reading and math skills that create an incentive for learning and a desire to stay in school,
- more opportunities for jobs and training in work skills that teach good work habits and a good attitude toward work, as well as help to alleviate poverty;
- more training opportunities in family life education and life planning with emphasis on the responsibilities of being sexually active, parenting, and providing for the future;
- access for all teens to health services, including contraceptives and counseling on the responsibility of choosing whether or not to be sexually active; and
- resources for adolescents to help instill self-respect and an appreciation of their own capabilities and talents.

Consensus approved 1989

BACKGROUND

The LWVOK anticipated the public concern for this subject by initiating a state study on preventing teen pregnancy. A local league's summer program created so much interest that the 1987 convention adopted the topic, and local leagues completed the study during 1988 with consensus being adopted in 1989. The study generated not only interest, but also a videotape program, ***Teenage Pregnancy: A Path to Poverty***, that has been in demand by local leagues and the public as well. It has been shown by civic organizations and schools across the state. In 1988, the Governor's Summit on Families, Children and Youth recommended the prevention of teen pregnancy as its number one priority. As late as 1994, Oklahoma still did not have a consistent, statewide teen pregnancy prevention program. The State Department of Health had funded ten community-based prevention programs across the state. Several were located in league cities and were the result of local league advocacy efforts. During the 1994 legislative session, HB 1180 passed and the resulting law created the Interagency Coordinating Council on Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases. The council identified effective strategies and programs, increased public awareness of the costs and consequences of teen pregnancy, and developed a blueprint for state and local action.

In 2017, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released a report that showed that, nationwide, the rate of teenage pregnancy had dropped by 61% since 1991. However, the 2017 report showed that the birth rates among Hispanic teens and non-Hispanic African-American teens was twice that of non-Hispanic white teens. In Tulsa County, the birth rate of teenagers in 2017 was 24.2 per 1000 women between 15 and 19 ... a 35% decrease from the 2013 rate of 37.2 per 1000. At 24.2 Tulsa County is below Oklahoma's rate of 27.1 but much higher than the preliminary U.S. rate of 17.4. The state ranked No. 48 nationally in 2017, up one spot from No. 49 a year beforehand.

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