



Children Raising Children

Public Policy Now or We Deal With the Consequences Later

Ekua Asabea Blair
Chief Executive Officer
Massey Centre

Setting the Context



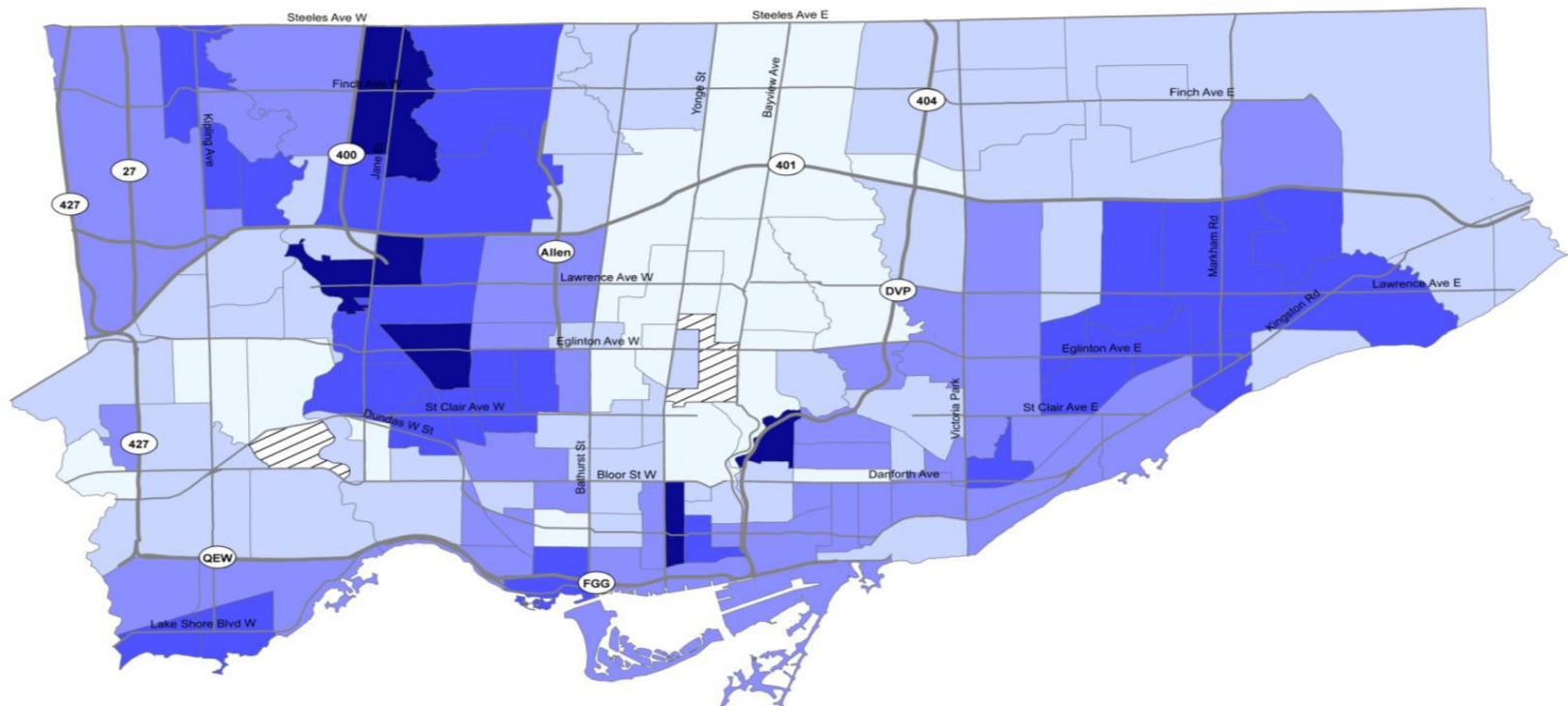
Who we are?

- ▶ Brief history
- ▶ Mission
- ▶ Vision
- ▶ Programs and Services

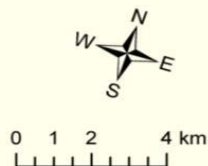
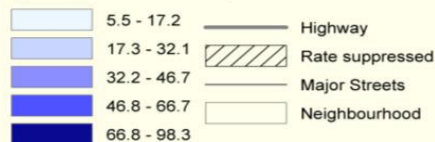
Profile - Pregnant and Parenting Teens



Teen (Aged 15 to 19 Years) Pregnancy Rate by Toronto Neighbourhood 2007 to 2009



Teen Pregnancy Rate (per 1,000 Females)

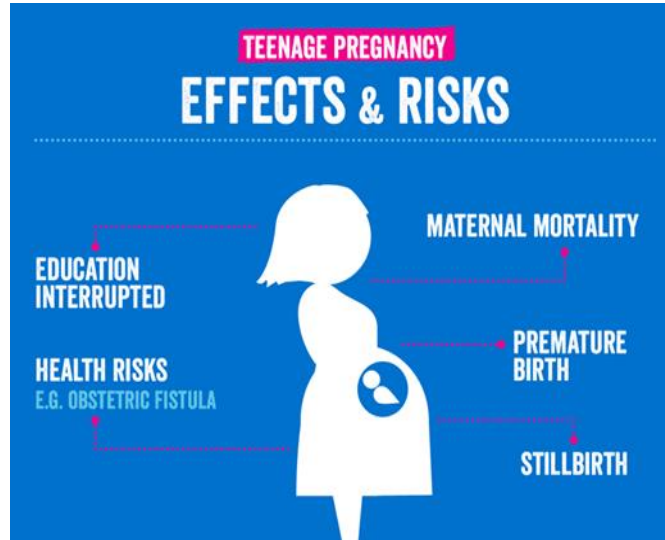


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Source: Inpatient Discharges 2007 to 2009 and Therapeutic Abortions Summary, 2007 to 2009, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO, Date Extracted: May 2011 (Inpatient Discharges) and July 2011 (Therapeutic Abortions Summary).
Prepared by: Surveillance and Epidemiology Unit
Contact: SEU@toronto.ca

Note: 1. Classification is by Natural Breaks
2. Records missing census tract information or could not be linked a Toronto census tract were excluded from analysis.

Health & Social Issues - Teen Moms



- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Criminal Justice
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Family conflict and interpersonal violence
- ▶ Mental health challenges
- ▶ Child of a teen mother
- ▶ Lack basic life skills

(Toronto's Health Status Indicator Series - Teen Pregnancy, Toronto Public Health)

Intake Statistics for Family & Intimate Partner Violence

	Intake into the Residential Program	Intake into the Transitional Housing Program
Homelessness/ violent incident or desire to leave family/intimate partner violence	64%	63%
Victim of physical abuse/acts of violence < 3 months prior to MC	48%	46.6%
Victim of verbal, emotional, financial, sexual abuse < 3 months prior to MC	72%	83.3%

Populations Served

- ▶ Black/African Canadian
- ▶ Indigenous
- ▶ Teens living in poverty



Teen mothers vs other teens of similar backgrounds who delayed childbirth (Smith Battle 2009)



- ▶ Educational or economic outcomes (Corcoran & Kunz, 1997; Holmlund, 2005)
- ▶ Risk-taking, delinquent behavior, and substance abuse (Hope, Wilder & Watt, 2003; Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & MacKenzie, 2005).
- ▶ In their 30's and 40's (Furstenberg, 2007; Werner & Smith, 2001)

Even if mothers do
better, their babies
do worse.

It takes time for the
mothers to improve.
Babies can't wait.



How we make it worse



- The co-occurrence of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination,
- In a context within which power is exercised.

Impact of Stigma

- ▶ Discrimination
- ▶ Social isolation
- ▶ Self-esteem, poor self-regulation, smoking and substance use



Pregnant teens and stigma

(Wiemann et al, 2005)

39.1% of low income teens 48 hours after delivery:

- ▶ Felt discrimination from families, teachers, peers
- ▶ Absence of social support circles
- ▶ History of more drug abuse, exposure to violence, etc.
- ▶ Those who had more adaptive attitudes before hand felt less stigmatized

“When Children Have Children”

Website of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)

- ▶ “Babies born in the U.S. to teenage mothers are at risk for long-term problems in many major areas of life, including school failure, poverty, and physical or mental illness. The teenage mothers themselves are also at risk for these problems.”
- ▶ “Teenage pregnancy is usually a crisis for the pregnant girl and her family”

Stigma is a threat

- ▶ “Adolescents are able to make reasoned decisions about their health and medical treatment (usually with the support and guidance of their families) but at the same time are liable to faulty judgment when it comes to situations in which they feel attacked or threatened, misperceive the degree of danger involved to themselves or others, or fail to appreciate the consequences of their actions.” (*Flaherty, 2014*)

Parenting and Infant Development



Prenatal Stress



- ▶ Dependent on the quality of the maternal child relationship (*Bergman et al 2010*)
- ▶ Cognitive development for children born at risk (*Landry, Smith, Miller-Loncar, & Swank, 1998*);

Early Life Stress

- ▶ Chronic adversities early in life (ACE studies)
- ▶ Exposure to maternal depression/stress during the infancy (*e.g.*, Brennan et al., 2008; Halligan et al., 2007; Lupien, King, Meaney, & McEwen, 2000).
- ▶ Cumulative negative aspects of family dynamics (Evans, 2003, Flinn&England, 1995)

Children of Teen Mothers - Outcomes

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CHILD OF A TEENAGE MOM:

*More likely to
**start school at lower
levels of readiness***

*More likely to
drop out of school*

*More likely to
**enter the foster
care system***

*More likely to **live in poverty***

*More likely to **BECOME A TEEN PARENT***



gcapp.org/delayabirthday #dlaybday

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

What it is?

- Social and emotional mental health, is developing the capacity of the child from birth to 5 years old to form close relationships, manage and express emotions, and explore the environment and learn.

Zero to Three, Parenting Resource

Watch, Wait & Wonder Intervention Videos

- ▶ Video#1: Young mother leaves child alone - child cries
video

Watch, Wait & Wonder Videos

- ▶ Video #2: Young mother leaves baby alone - child does not cry

Watch, Wait & Wonder Videos

- ▶ Video #3: Young mother's reflections on her child's behaviour

We know teen mothers can do well.

We know their babies depend on mothers doing well before the babies are born and when the babies are in their first years.



How can policy makers help?

How Can Policy Makers Help?

- ▶ Teen pregnancy strategy
- ▶ Infant and early childhood mental health policies
- ▶ Address the child protection system, especially for Black and Indigenous peoples
- ▶ Review government and professional policies

Social Return On Investment (SROI)

- ▶ RAND Corporation, every dollar spent in the first 2 years of a child's life saves the system \$7

[Note: Estimates vary from 1.8 to 17 times saving per dollar spent in the first 2 years on educational, psychological or psychiatric services]

Reference

- ▶ Pregnant and Parenting Teens: A Review of the Social Attitudes, Stress and Outcomes, June 23, 2017 - Jean Wittenberg MD. DCP. FRCPC, Hospital for Sick Children, University of Toronto