



News Release

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Denver Expert Responds To ABC Primetime Show On Teen Pregnancy: “We Must Help Teen Parents Create Positive Futures”

DENVER, COLORADO – June 24, 2009 - Noreen Keleshian, President and CEO of the Denver nonprofit Parent Pathways, says the nation has overlooked the issue of teen parents at the worst possible time. Behind the conversations about abstinence, human sexuality education and adoption mentioned on the special ABC Primetime “Family Secrets” last night lies the stark reality: thousands of teen parents remain invisible and largely ignored, struggling to grow up themselves while raising their own children.

After declining for 14 years, the country’s teen pregnancy rate rose in 2006 and 2007. Colorado’s rate was 42.6 births per 1,000 teen girls in 2005 to 43.8 in 2006 - higher than the national average of 41.9 - while Denver County’s rate was 71 births per 1,000 teen girls, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Keleshian, whose agency offers comprehensive education and supportive services to teen mothers, fathers and their children, says what teen parents and their children need most is support.

“Motherhood is a profoundly transformative experience as long as you fit society’s expectations about being a ‘good’ mother. If you are a young single mother, you are invisible,” says Keleshian. “Too many young women find themselves becoming mothers alone, and for many, pregnancy is a continuation of a cycle begun by their parents.”

Most of the teen mothers profiled in the ABC special have family to support them. But many young mothers who attend Parent Pathways’ Florence Crittenton School for pregnant and parenting teens in Denver lack family or other adults to provide guidance and support. Many have family histories of poverty, abuse, addiction and domestic violence. Without support, most teen mothers do not finish high school, end up parenting alone and depend on public assistance.

Keleshian calls for a widespread effort to support young mothers and their children, providing them with services that encourage health, stability and economic self-sufficiency.

“This is the way to reduce and eliminate dependence on social welfare systems, and to truly break intergenerational cycles of teen pregnancy and poverty,” she says. Students who get the kind of support Parent Pathways offers have greater success earning their high school diplomas; the Florence Crittenton School had a 95 percent graduation rate in 2009, graduating 40 teen mothers. Teen-age girls say becoming a parent is the primary reason they drop out of school, but if they are able to obtain their diplomas, their probability of needing public assistance to support their family drops by 40%.

About Parent Pathways

Parent Pathways is a Denver-based non-profit that empowers struggling teen families to be productive members of the community. Using a holistic and proven approach, Parent Pathways offers a spectrum of wraparound services for the entire teen family, including education, career guidance and parenting training for pregnant and parenting teen mothers at the Florence Crittenton School; early childhood education for their babies and toddlers at the Qualistar-rated Early Learning Center; and counseling, education and parenting support for teen fathers through the Young Fathers Program. Learn more at www.parentpathways.org.

(Florence Crittenton student photos available upon request)

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