



Custer County Health Department  
Creating a State of Health

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## May Marks Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

In recognition of National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and the Custer County Health Department wants to remind parents and healthcare providers that youth need to have conversations with their parents or guardians on decisions and values about sex and the potential consequences. Oklahoma's teen birth rate is significantly higher than the national average; however, it is improving.

A teen birth rate is defined as the number of births per 1,000 females in a specified age group. A recent report from the National Center for Health Statistics shows the 2015 birth rate for Oklahoma teens aged 15-19 years was 34.8, significantly higher than the national average of 22.3. Older teens, aged 18-19 years, had the highest teen birth rate in the state at 64.2, followed by 15 to 17-year-olds at 15.9. When compared to other states in the nation, Oklahoma was tied with Mississippi for the second highest teen birth rate for 15 to 19-year-olds, the third highest teen birth rate for those ages 18-19, and the fifth highest rate for those ages 15-17.

"By addressing teen pregnancy, we address serious social issues and enhance overall child well-being," said Alicia Lincoln, child and adolescent health manager with the OSDH.

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, nearly 50 percent of teen mothers and their children are living in poverty. Only 38 percent of teen girls who have a child before age 18 get a high school diploma and 63 percent of teen mothers receive some type of public benefits within the first year after their children are born. Teen births affect the entire community in social and economic terms, making community-wide solutions necessary.

Teens need to have access to medically accurate information in order to make responsible decisions for their future. Evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention curricula are currently offered to schools and community organizations in Oklahoma County, Tulsa County and 24 other counties with high teen birth rates. The two curricula offered in these counties include "Making a Difference" and "Making Proud Choices." In addition, teen pregnancy specialists educate and train community members and professionals in adolescent health matters, fostering collaborative efforts and maximizing resources to promote positive youth development.

For information from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and "Ten Tips for Parents to Help Their Children Avoid Teen Pregnancy," visit: <http://ow.ly/tBU030bdULI>. For more information about teen pregnancy prevention programs in Oklahoma, contact Amy Terry, OSDH Maternal and Child Health Service, at (405) 271-4471. Media requesting more information or an interview should contact the Office of Communications at (405) 271-5601.

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