



# The RealCare<sup>®</sup> Program

## Value Statement: Reducing the Impact of Teen Pregnancy

Reality: One teenager becomes pregnant every minute.<sup>1</sup>

In 2009, over 410,000 babies were born to teenage mothers in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> These are startling statistics, which schools are trying to reduce through education. The biggest challenge for changing a teen's attitude toward early parenthood is getting them to internalize the profound impact it would have on their lives. Research shows that incorporating infant simulators into parenting education curriculum can dramatically modify teenage attitudes about sexuality, parenting and even their future goals.<sup>3</sup> The RealCare<sup>®</sup> Program<sup>4</sup> from Realityworks helps you increase the effectiveness of your teaching. Through infant simulators, a comprehensive curriculum and administrative software, the RealCare<sup>®</sup> Program is an interactive solution with life-changing results.

"Since starting the [RealCare<sup>®</sup> Program] over five years ago, we've seen our pregnancy rates drop at one school from 72 to 19 and at another school from nine to zero!"

**LaNae Gaskill, Teen Parent Coordinator  
Mahleur County, Ontario, Oregon**

## Teen Pregnancy

Even with a decline in recent years, the number of teen pregnancies in the U.S. remains unacceptable. In 2009, 5,021 girls under age 15 gave birth. Those between 15 and 19 gave birth to 409,840 babies.<sup>2</sup> And these are just the live births. The actual pregnancy numbers are much higher. In the face of these statistics, many school districts and social service organizations offer programs to encourage teens to consider the long-term consequences of sexual activity. These programs are important not just to keep girls from getting pregnant and dropping out of school; the consequences of teen mothers impact everyone. That's why effective parenting education programs are so critical.

## The Real Costs of Teen Pregnancies<sup>5</sup>

When a young girl gets pregnant, it doesn't just impact her future and her baby's. Her family, school, community and society all pay a price. And since girls ages 15 to 17 are 52% more likely to have a low birth weight baby than a 20- or 21-year-old, the propensity for a special needs child is high. The following are many of the costs associated with teenage childbearing.

### Costs to Students

**Loss of future income:** 67% of adolescent mothers drop out of high school; dropouts earn about \$260,000 less over a lifetime than high school graduates.

**Additional costs for the family:** Children of adolescent mothers can be a financial burden for the family because the girl can't cover the costs for food, clothing and healthcare. The average cost to raise a child up to age 2 is \$5,440 and from 0 to 17 years old is \$118,590.

### Costs to Schools

- **Loss of funding:** Every student that drops out means decreased funding for the school.
- **Infant programs:** Adolescent mothers are at high risk of having low birth weight babies, who are more likely to have special needs. Early intervention for 0- to 3-year-olds costs an average of \$15,740 per child.
- **Pre-school programs:** These same children may require special programs, at an average cost of \$7,667 per child.
- **School-age programs:** Educating special needs children from age 5 to age 21 costs an average of \$5,709 per child.
- **Other instructional programs:** Adolescent mothers using homebound, hospital and summer school programs to continue their education during pregnancy cost schools a average of \$3,839 per pupil.
- **Transportation services:** Special transportation services required either for adolescent mothers or their children with disabilities cost an average of \$4,418 per pupil.
- **Administration and support services:** Offering special education programs costs an average of \$662 per pupil.
- **Daycare services:** Schools can incur the expense of daycare so teen mothers can stay in school.

### Costs to Society

- **Welfare and food stamps:** 80% of teen mothers end up on welfare. The costs of providing public assistance benefits, welfare and food stamps: \$2.8 billion annually.
- **Medical care:** Cost to provide medical care to teen mothers and their children: \$2.3 billion annually.
- **Foster care:** Costs for children of adolescent mothers who end up in foster care: \$900 million annually.
- **Child abuse:** Children of adolescent mothers are twice as likely to be abused as those born to 20 or 21 year olds.
- **Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS):** Two thirds of SBS children die or suffer permanent disability. Medical care for a severely injured SBS child ranges from \$300,000 to over \$1,000,000 for the first five years.
- **Loss of tax revenue:** The effect of adolescent parenthood on the work patterns of fathers: \$3.2 billion annually.
- **Incarceration:** Constructing and maintaining prisons and associated inmate costs caused by adolescent childbearing: \$2.3 billion annually.

<sup>1</sup> "Estimated Pregnancy Rates for the United States, 1999-2000: An Update," National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 52, No. 23, June 15, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vital Signs: Teen Pregnancy - United States 1991-2009 (4/8/2011); "Births: Preliminary data for 2009." National Vital Statistics Report, 2010, Vol. 59, No.3

<sup>3</sup> "The Effectiveness of Infant Simulators in Teen Sexuality & Parenting Programs," Realityworks whitepaper, 2006

<sup>4</sup> The Realityworks RealCare<sup>®</sup> Program was formerly called Baby Think It Over<sup>®</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Sources for the data in this section: The Campaign for Educational Equity (Teachers College, Columbia University); "Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing," 1996; The National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study, June 2004, Data Report No. 4; Special Education Expenditure Project, "What Are We Spending on Special Education Services in the United States, 1999-2000?"; USDA, "Expenditures on Children by Families - 2001 Annual Report."; The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, "Counting It Up: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing Key Data," June 2011.

# Qualitative Benefits of the Realityworks Approach

Students	
Maintain academic standing and career development	Help teens keep up their attendance or avoid dropping out of school due to pregnancy.
Develop parenting skills	Provide teens the comprehensive yet practical skills required for caring for an infant that can be utilized in babysitting and future parenting. This includes dealing with the stress of responding to the constant demands of an infant, which may avoid a future case of child abuse or Shaken Baby Syndrome.
Build character	Help adolescents internalize what it takes to be responsible, while increasing self respect and empathy for others.
Understand consequences of actions	Assist teens in understanding the consequences that bearing children has on them and others, teaching life-long lessons on being responsible for their actions.
Understand financial and lifestyle impact	Demonstrate to students the financial impact of having a child as a teen, along with the resulting immediate and long-term impacts on their lifestyle.
Break the cycle of teenage motherhood	Children of teenage mothers are 83% more likely to become teen mothers themselves. <sup>4</sup>
Schools	
Improve the school image	Offer innovative programs in parenting and life consequences that bring positive visibility to the school on a topic important to all.
Build strong families and strong communities	Offer programs that increase the schools' interactions with their communities and result in stronger families and more productive citizens.
Society	
Reduce health costs to future employers	Children born to adolescent mothers are more likely to have special needs and incur increased lifetime health costs.
Redirect program spending to other areas and increase funding available	Reduce the number of adolescent mothers and therefore the spending on programs that support them. In addition, increase tax revenue by enabling teen mothers and fathers to achieve their earning potential.

## Why Does Reality Work?

As any parent knows, dealing with a newborn baby can be difficult, time-consuming and exhausting. The late-night feedings, the inexplicable crying, the inconvenient diaper changes, the around-the-clock care that is required...these are the realities of parenting. These are also intangibles that can't really be taught by a curriculum that involves only words, images, or passive baby stand-ins such as eggs or bags of flour.

### The Realityworks Approach

Modifying teen attitudes towards sexuality and parenting requires changing their perceptions. Yet to drive home just how challenging caring for a baby can be, teenagers need a dose of reality. They need an interactive curriculum that lets them experience parenthood in as real a way as possible. Because reality works.

"We have kids begging to take the Baby home on Friday, but they sure are glad to bring it back Monday morning. If it helps just one of our kids to make better decisions, it will be worth it all."

**Linda Cox, Guidance Counselor  
Bellwood Middle School, Tennessee**

Whether your curriculum teaches abstinence, contraceptive use or both, adding the RealCare® Program with its infant simulators, curriculum and software makes your teaching more effective. As a result, your students' awareness of the actual consequences of having a baby is transformed from abstract concept to startling reality.

Adding the RealCare® Program to your curriculum is also an investment with a potentially huge payoff: For some schools, keeping just five girls from getting pregnant and dropping out means retaining enough funding to cover the annual salary of a first-year teacher.

For interactive simulations that bring about life-changing results, consider making the Realityworks RealCare® Program an integral part of your Family and Consumer Science, Health, Child Development or Life Skills curriculum.

### Next Steps

To learn more about our infant simulators, parenting programs and possible funding sources, contact a Realityworks Product Consultant at 800.262.3806 or go to [www.realityworks.com](http://www.realityworks.com). At our site, you can also request a copy of our white paper on the effectiveness of infant simulators in teen sexuality programs.