

# TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION TASK FORCE

*Plan to Prevent and Reduce  
Teen Pregnancy*



Mississippi Department of Human Services  
Mississippi State Department of Health





# Plan to Prevent and Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Mississippi

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# Plan to Prevent and Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Mississippi

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In January 2012, Governor Phil Bryant in his first State of the State address issued a directive to the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) and the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) to develop a plan within 30 days for preventing and reducing teen pregnancy in Mississippi. In response to this directive, the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program was established. The program will promote the use of multiple strategies, e.g., abstinence and abstinence-plus sex education and youth development programs, coalition building, media outreach, to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy.

On February 1, 2012, a meeting was held to collaborate with Mississippi leaders to discuss the development of a plan to address teen pregnancy within 30 days. Diverse partners from all sectors of society were invited including business, faith-based, government, education, the media, legal, service providers, community and private foundations. From this meeting, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Blue Ribbon Task Force was established with subcommittees formed to assist in planning and implementation. The individuals selected for the Task Force and subcommittees have the capacity to listen to concerns, build community support and explore available resources. The Task Force is a three-tier structure:

- The Mississippi Department of Human Services Executive Director and the Mississippi State Department of Health State Health Officer will co-chair the Task Force. Mississippi First Lady Deborah Bryant is the honorary chairperson for the Task Force.
- Community, faith-based and governmental agency leaders will make up the core team responsible for reviewing data and making recommendations during the 30-day development period prior to its submission to the Governor.
- Other state, community and faith-based leaders, stakeholders and youth will participate on the ten subcommittees:
  - Education and Career Choices
  - Family Matters
  - Legal Advisory
  - Media Advisory
  - Medical Advisory
  - Public Policy (Research and Evaluation)
  - State and Local Action
  - Teen Parents
  - Youth Development and At-Risk Youth
  - Youth and Youth Leaders

Youth involvement is critical to the success of this program. To ensure young people have a voice in the development of the programs that will affect their future, youth will be placed on the Task Force team and each subcommittee. Youth will have the opportunity to engage state leaders, discuss issues affecting youth and develop leadership skills.

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Task Force is to improve the lives of Mississippi families and ensure a better future for our youth by collaborating to create a comprehensive campaign to reduce and prevent teen pregnancy. To accomplish this mission, the program will:

- Engage local communities statewide.
- Provide culturally competent education.
- Propose legislation when necessary.
- Ensure access to teen-friendly healthcare services.
- Increase job opportunities for teens.
- Engage teen parents, both mothers and fathers (including the family support unit) in making healthy choices for themselves and their children.
- Educate and promote social wellness among youth and families.
- Assist organizations seeking funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs.
- Conduct statewide focus groups for teen parents to determine what interventions would be useful in preventing teen pregnancies.

### **STATE COORDINATOR**

An appointed state coordinator will be responsible for monitoring activities associated with the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program. This individual will work in conjunction with MDHS and MSDH staff, Task Force and subcommittee members to support the mission and core values of the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program.

### **TARGET POPULATION**

The program will focus on youth ages 8 to 19, teen parents, youth in foster care, the juvenile justice system and at-risk youth. Information will further be disseminated and available to parents, youth leaders and the general public.

### **PROGRAM STRATEGIES**

The program will use the following strategies to implement a plan to improve the lives of Mississippi youth and their families:

- Strategy 1: Assure consistencies among federal and state laws, policies and procedures related to teen pregnancy.
- Strategy 2: Identify existing state, local and private teen pregnancy initiatives, improve agency collaborations and implement new strategies to build capacity.
- Strategy 3: Mobilize Mississippians by educating youth, parents, youth leaders, legislators and the general public about importance of preventing/reducing teen pregnancy by providing culturally competent education and outreach.

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Strategy 4: Promote positive youth development, youth leadership and access to career opportunities.

Strategy 5: Monitor program activities and evaluate progress.

Each subcommittee is responsible for developing goals and objectives and executing these strategies to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy and promote positive youth development in Mississippi. The subcommittees will work independently and collaboratively on these strategies.

### ***PERFORMANCE EVALUATION***

The Task Force will provide the Governor and Legislature with information, data and recommendations to improve the lives of youth and their families. To gain insight in how the program is doing, the following are some of the performance measures to be used to determine effectiveness:

1. To reduce the number of teen pregnancies, ages 8-19 by 15 percent (45 births per 1000 females) by 2017.
2. To reduce the percentage of repeat teenage births from 21.4 percent to 15 percent by 2017.
3. Increase the level of understanding for parents and guardians of the importance of teen pregnancy prevention programs.
4. Develop peer/leader programs to positively influence students to make wise choices as it relates to their sexual health each year.
5. Develop numerous partnerships across the state.

The evaluation of the plan will be ongoing so that successful outcomes may be measured.

### ***PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT***

Recognizing that transparency is important and necessary to offset misperceptions, the Task Force will make all meeting notes, informational materials and products publicly available. Interested parties will have an opportunity to add information and offer suggestions, thereby ensuring a public review of the programs and products prior to utilization.

### ***CHALLENGES***

Because of the complexity of governmental organizations, community and faith-based organizations are sometimes reluctant to form partnerships. However, these partnerships are essential to the overall success of the project. Therefore, the Task Force and its subcommittees are charged with developing collaborative opportunities where information, assistance and support can be shared. Further, efforts to include youth are important because they must have a voice in this process.

Long term projects can be daunting, so the Task Force recognizes that implementation and follow-through are key to the success of the program. MDHS and MSDH will monitor the subcommittee meetings and ensure reports are compiled and submitted timely and the project continues to move forward.

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Funding for projects can be challenging, but recognizing there are many existing resources and by bringing them together, will provide a diverse, creative funding stream that will result in a synergistic effect that will garner success.

### ***CORE VALUES AND SOLUTIONS***

Given our deep concern for our children and communities and the magnitude of the problem of teen pregnancy and its consequences, we will act with high standards and urgency to resolve this problem. Solutions to this problem will take years and require a committed effort. As the Task Force and subcommittees continue to meet, goals and objectives will evolve and change. While incorporating short and long-term goals, we will work in a purposeful, strategic and resourceful way to maximize our collective impact to change the “cultural norm” about marriage and unwed pregnancy, improve the lives of our children and transform Mississippi. Once the plan is approved, we will convene the Task Force and subcommittees to implement the strategies outlined in this plan.

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## ***Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program***

### ***WHY DOES THIS MATTER***

Youth in Mississippi are burdened with high rates of adverse life issues such as:

- Only 71.4 percent of high school students graduate – lowest in the nation.
- 23 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds do not attend school, do not work and have no degree beyond high school – 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the nation.
- 33 percent of Mississippi children under 18 years old live in poverty – highest in the nation.
- 39 percent of children live in families where no adult has a full-time, year-round employment – highest in the U.S.
- 57.9 percent of high school students and 28.4 percent of middle school students reported having sexual intercourse.
- In 2009, Mississippi ranked highest in teen births with a rate of 64.2 births per 1000 females aged 15-19, compared to the national rate of 39.1 births per 1000 U.S. females aged 15-19.
- Although 2010 data to compare states is not yet available, the provisional data from the MSDH show Mississippi's 2010 teen birth rate is 55.0 births per 1000 females aged 15-19.
- 23 percent of babies born to teens are repeat births.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing the seriousness of this problem, Phil Bryant, Governor of the State of Mississippi, in his first State of the State address, issued a directive to the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) and the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) to develop a plan within 30 days for preventing and reducing teen pregnancy in Mississippi. In response to this directive, the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program was established. The program will promote the use of multiple strategies, e.g., abstinence and abstinence-plus sex education and youth development programs, coalition building, media outreach, to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy. Although there are differing opinions about how to address the teen pregnancy rate, few would disagree that evidence-based programs are needed at all levels. Community, faith-based and governmental agencies must work together to develop and implement strategies that effectively reduce these numbers. Increasing the capacity of families and communities to nurture teens, help them stay in school and set goals for their lives may contribute to lower rates of teen pregnancy.<sup>2</sup> Interagency partnerships, collaboration and coordination across the state will be necessary for the success of this program.

## ***Teen Pregnancy Prevention Blue Ribbon Task Force***

The first step to developing this plan was to identify a diverse group of concerned citizens who were willing to commit their time and talents to plan strategies for the program. On February 1, 2012, a meeting was held to collaborate with Mississippi leaders to discuss the development of a plan to

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1. Mississippi State Department of Health Statistics and The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Books, 2011.

2. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1998a

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address teen pregnancy within 30 days. Diverse partners from all sectors of society were invited including business, faith-based, government, education, the media, legal, service providers, community and private foundations. From this meeting, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Blue Ribbon Task Force was established with subcommittees formed to assist in planning and implementation. The individuals selected for the Task Force and subcommittees have the capacity to listen to concerns, build community support and explore available resources. The Task Force is a three-tier structure:

- The Mississippi Department of Human Services Executive Director and the Mississippi State Department of Health State Health Officer will co-chair the Task Force. Mississippi First Lady Deborah Bryant is the honorary chairperson for the Task Force.
- Community, faith-based and governmental agency leaders will make up the core team responsible for reviewing data and making recommendations during the 30-day development period prior to its submission to the Governor.
- Other state, community and faith-based leaders, stakeholders and youth will participate on ten subcommittees:
  - Education and Career Choices
  - Family Matters
  - Legal Advisory
  - Media Advisory
  - Medical Advisory
  - Public Policy (Research and Evaluation)
  - State and Local Action
  - Teen Parents
  - Youth Development and At-Risk Youth
  - Youth and Youth Leaders

Youth involvement is critical to the success of this program. To ensure young people have a voice in the development of the programs that will affect their future, youth will be placed on the Task Force team and each subcommittee. Youth will have the opportunity to engage state leaders, discuss issues affecting youth and develop leadership skills.

An appointed state coordinator will be responsible for monitoring activities associated with the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program. This individual will work in conjunction with MDHS and MSDH staff, Task Force and subcommittee members to help formulate strategies and implement plans. The State Coordinator will support the mission and core values of the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program by networking, organizing focus group meetings, speaking at churches, schools and other local meetings, attending coalition meetings and identifying potential cross program collaborations.

### ***MISSION, GOALS AND ACTION PLANS***

On February 15, 2012, the Blue Ribbon Task Force and its subcommittees met to discuss the mission, goals and objectives that are data driven and evidence-based for the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program.

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The Task Force mission is to improve the lives of Mississippi families and ensure a better future for our youth by collaborating to create a comprehensive campaign to reduce and prevent teen pregnancy. To accomplish this mission, the program will:

- Engage local communities statewide.
- Provide culturally competent education.
- Propose legislation when necessary.
- Ensure access to teen-friendly healthcare services.
- Increase job opportunities for teens.
- Engage teen parents, both mothers and fathers in making healthy choices for themselves and their children.
- Educate and promote social competence among youth and families.
- Assist organizations seeking funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs.
- Conduct statewide focus groups for teen parents to determine what interventions would be useful in preventing teen pregnancies.

### ***TARGET POPULATION***

The program will focus on youth, ages 8-19, teen parents, youth in foster care, the juvenile justice system and at-risk youth. Youth go through distinct stages of adolescent development; therefore program strategies need to be tailored by age, gender and ethnic backgrounds. MDHS, MSDH, the State Coordinator, the Task Force and subcommittees will work together to coordinate efforts and support positive youth development strategies throughout Mississippi and encourage the use of evidence-based, age-appropriate and medically accurate curricula. Parents, youth leaders and the general public will also receive information to educate them on the issues surrounding teen pregnancy prevention.

## ***Strategies to Prevent and Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Mississippi***

According to a report from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unwed Pregnancy, pregnancy is just one problem young people face in today's culture. Parents identify violence, gangs, drugs and pressure from peers to engage in unhealthy behaviors as even greater risks than early pregnancy.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program will focus on preventing all high-risk behavior, e.g., substance abuse, tobacco use, delinquency and school failure, and associated poor outcomes. Programs will emphasize the positive qualities and behaviors needed for youth to become healthy, successful and responsible.

The program will use the following strategies to implement a plan that will improve the lives of Mississippi youth and their families.

- Strategy 1: Assure consistencies among federal and state laws, policies and procedures related to teen pregnancy.
- Strategy 2: Identify existing state, local and private teen pregnancy initiatives, improve agency collaborations and implement new strategies to build capacity.
- Strategy 3: Mobilize Mississippians by educating youth, parents, youth leaders, legislators and the general public about importance of preventing/reducing teen pregnancy by providing culturally competent education and outreach.
- Strategy 4: Promote positive youth development, youth leadership and access to career opportunities.
- Strategy 5: Monitor program activities and evaluate progress.

Each subcommittee is responsible for developing goals and objectives and executing these strategies to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy and promote positive youth development in Mississippi. The subcommittees will work independently and collaboratively on these strategies.

### ***STRATEGY 1***

***Assure consistencies among federal and state laws, policies and procedures related to teen pregnancy and propose legislation when necessary.***

Mississippi has a wide array of children and youth programs that operate under different funding streams and regulations. Many of these programs have the same goals (pregnancy prevention and/or youth development) and often serve the same populations. Aligning existing and new policies and programs will ensure that services are not duplicated and resources are used efficiently and effectively.

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3. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1998a

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## ***Public Policy Subcommittee***

The Public Policy Subcommittee will assist the Blue Ribbon Task Force for the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program to:

- Identify, evaluate and monitor social, political and environmental trends and assess how public trends may impact the teen pregnancy rate and other high-risk behaviors.
- Determine how the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program can anticipate and adjust to public policy trends in order to more effectively achieve goals to reduce teen pregnancy and improve the lives of children and families in Mississippi.
- Analyze Mississippi's global reputation in respect to teen pregnancy and develop recommendations to strategically position the Task Force to support its objectives.
- Develop recommendations to the Task Force with regard to formulating and adopting basic policies, programs and practices concerning broad public policy issues.
- Assess and respond, as appropriate, to risks that may arise in connection with the social, political, environmental and public policy aspects of the Task Force's activities.
- Provide oversight by periodically assessing the number of partnerships, policy and procedures, media outreach, ability to provide technical assistance and the program's impact on teen pregnancy and high-risk behavior reduction.

## **Goals**

1. Review current legislation as it relates to teen pregnancy.
2. Identify current budget and financial issues.
3. Determine different perceptions regarding teen pregnancy both nationally and in Mississippi.

## **Objectives**

1. Identify public policy trends, potential legislation and potential impact on teen pregnancy and other high-risk behaviors.
2. Review practices and policies implemented in others states, identify evidence-based programs and explore the potential for replication in our state.
3. Categorize state, federal and regional funding opportunities.
4. Catalog city, county and state spending on teen pregnancy prevention efforts and explore methods for streamlining these efforts.
5. Identify and explore public perceptions regarding recipients of cash benefits.

## **Action Plan**

Thirty days after approval of this plan, the subcommittee will:

1. Identify and monitor all bills proposed in the current legislative session that focus on or will potentially impact, teen pregnancy and other high risk behaviors.

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2. Develop a report of preliminary findings to be shared with the Task Force.

Sixty days after approval of this plan, the subcommittee will:

1. Continue to monitor all bills proposed in the current legislative session that focus on or will potentially impact, teen pregnancy and other at risk behaviors.
2. Explore creation of “Fiscal Notes” to highlight the potential cost/benefit of enacting proposed legislation.
3. Develop a report of additional findings to be shared with the Task Force.

### **STRATEGY 2**

***Identify existing state, local and private teen pregnancy initiatives, improve agency collaborations and implement new strategies to build capacity.***

The Task Force will seek to engage local communities statewide; provide culturally competent education; ensure access to teen-friendly healthcare services; and support organizations that are seeking funding for prevention programs.

No one person or organization can provide all the needs of Mississippi youth. To support them fully, schools, youth-serving organizations, faith-based institutions, businesses and government agencies, as well as, youth and families, must collaborate to share expertise and resources. Quality youth programs are needed to help youth make healthy choices and become productive citizens. The Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program is committed to improving the capacity of the state, community and faith-based organizations to successfully address the needs of youth. Identifying resources and improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of professional staff and volunteers will lead to better results for the program.

### ***State and Local Action Advisory Subcommittee***

Subcommittee members will be involved in projects such as community coalition building, conferences and forums, networking and building parent/child and school/child connectedness. The subcommittee will:

- Develop a plan for engaging schools and local and faith communities.
- Work with the state coordinator to develop a coalition of state, community and faith-based organizations and individuals to garner broad community support for reducing teen pregnancy and other high-risk youth behavior across the State of Mississippi.
- Help empower the community at a grassroots level to focus attention on teen pregnancy.
- Develop a referral process for needed services.
- Pool resources.
- Strengthen the efforts of individual groups who are working to prevent teen pregnancy and youth development.
- Promote best practices.
- Build bridges with potential allies or opponents through meetings and other events.

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Members of the subcommittees will be asked to engage districts and major municipalities across the state to secure local “buy-in” through solicitation of ideas and advice. Groups such as educators, social workers and youth leaders will be encouraged to participate. Team building at a district level will assist in implementation. Once the plan is approved, eight to ten key sites across the state will be identified for the initial meetings. All non-profits, churches, organizations or individuals who are willing to participate will be identified and listed for each area.

Strong partnerships with relevant organizations and agencies in our community are critical because working together will assist with the delivery of consistent messages and reach youth through a variety of channels. It will also provide valuable opportunities to share resources develop joint goals and objectives and learn from each other. Working together, members from the community, faith-based and governmental agencies can determine what can be done to effectively prevent and reduce teen pregnancy and promote youth development.

### ***STRATEGY 3***

***Mobilize Mississippians by educating youth, parents, youth leaders, legislators and the general public about importance of preventing/reducing teen pregnancy by providing culturally competent education and outreach.***

The Healthy Teen for a Better Mississippi Program will provide free information service for communities, organizations and individuals interested in developing new, effective strategies for supporting young people and their families. The Healthy Teen for a Better Mississippi Program will link those interested in youth issues with the resources they need to better serve young people, families and communities.

### ***Family Matters Subcommittee***

The Family Matters Subcommittee will provide advice and tips for parents, guardians and mentors on how they can support their youth.

### **Goal**

To increase the positive influence of parents and adults and reduce the negative impact media and peers have on the decisions made by youth.

### **Action Plan**

1. Work with the Media Advisory Committee to develop brochures and fact sheets for parents, guardians and mentors.
2. Identify existing youth and young adult organizations, e.g., Salvation Army teen groups, after-school athletic programs and College Campus Ministries, and develop strategies to increase adult and parental involvement to reduce at-risk behavior.

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### ***Media Advisory Subcommittee***

The Media Advisory Subcommittee will research and provide data on the influence of the media, e.g., social networks, online communication, tweeting, sexting and entertainment, on teen relationships. Marketing concepts and resources including a web site, brochures, videos, will be developed to educate youth, parents, youth leaders, legislators, clergy and community leaders understand how adolescents establish, perceive and value relationships and interact with friends, family and romantic partners. The mission of the Media Advisory Subcommittee is to ensure that everyone has access to accurate and appropriate information to prevent teen pregnancies in the State of Mississippi.

### **Goals:**

1. Develop talking papers, white papers, handouts, brochures and press releases that the Governor, his staff, key legislators, Blue Ribbon Task Force Committee members, involved organizations, faith-based and state agency heads can use in disseminating information on the Task Force, its purpose and agenda.
2. Research and utilize existing advertising dollars within organizations and agencies to including existing television, radio and print media contracts and spots.
3. Develop an advertising campaign to target pre-teens, teens, teen parents, parents and educators. The campaign may be developed with current resources within the Task Force or additional funds, as available. The use of an outside advertising agency may also be employed. The campaign, depending on available funds and partners, hopes to include a comprehensive web site, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, print media, e.g., billboards, brochures, flyers, posters, mobile apps and video and radio spots. Links to the web site will be included on various other sites to promote traffic.

### **Action Plan**

1. Continue to modify and disseminate the message to target audiences.
2. Use Task Force leaders and the Governor's office to convey the message to the public.
3. Refine the advertising campaign while continually updating and monitoring social media sites to ensure the message is reaching teens effectively.
4. Identify and widely use identifiable spokespersons for the advertising campaign.
5. Develop promotional events to engage the public in the goal of reducing teen pregnancy; make recommendations to the Task Force for their presence at key events to talk about the mission and purpose of the Task Force.

The subcommittee will respond to information requests regarding youth programming and policy, available resources, federal and state youth-related initiatives and other topics.

### ***STRATEGY 4:***

***Promote positive youth development, youth leadership and access to career opportunities while increasing job opportunities for teens and teen parents.***

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Youth are our future leaders and a valuable resource. It is critical that we develop youth leadership potential by providing them with additional opportunities and supports that they need to become good decision-makers and successful citizens.

### ***Education and Career Choices Subcommittee***

#### **Goals:**

1. Be an advocate for teen parents. Support teenage parents and promote self-sufficiency by increasing access to various resources. This may be accomplished by improving access to supportive housing, childcare, education and employment. Serve as a network of individuals tasked with serving as a voice for the needs and concerns of young parents.
2. Create an electronic repository of available resources through a collaborative effort designed to provide a list of referral resources to the myriad of programs available in the community for teens and families. Ideally, this referral resource would take the form of a web portal with hard copies available across the state through schools, MDHS and MSDH county offices, faith and community-based organizations. Resources listed in this directory will be identified as organizations that provide services for families with children.
3. Create a “Spirit of Change” through educating communities, providing information and increasing awareness about teenage pregnancy. Central to this goal should be a method of empowering and equipping adults with a message about abstinence and/or comprehensive reproductive health that is easy and simple to share with their children. In conjunction with this, there should be a parallel effort to promote parents having these discussions with their children.
4. Support community partners and stakeholders through efforts to increase their capacity to deliver services, encourage their participation and involvement, and support ongoing efforts that have proven successful by providing information on best practices, curricular choices and education options.
5. Increase awareness among teen parents and students at risk of failure and/or dropout on diploma-related education opportunities. Programs should provide assistance and support for teens to meet high school graduation requirements and obtain a diploma.
6. Explore ways to coordinate and align various services of value to teens, families and teenage parents. Work with stakeholders at the community, state and federal level to improve access to services, e.g., education, pregnancy prevention and family care. Develop a “Teenage Pregnancy Website” to house approved curriculum, service providers and agencies to maximize use of limited resources and improve/expand the delivery of prevention services.
7. Teenage Pregnancy Prevention (Reduction and Prevention) – Provide educational, skill building, peer-to-peer, enrichment opportunities, goal oriented programs that are age-appropriate, evidence-based and medically accurate to reduce and prevent teen pregnancies. Ideally, delivery would be facilitated through schools, churches and communities or community-based organizations.
8. Increase awareness and access to career opportunities. Ensure parents and teens are afforded the opportunity to acquire and upgrade employment skills. Identify specific

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strategies to address workforce needs and/or capitalize on areas of interest within the target population to foster employment opportunities. Primary objectives include:

- a. Increased awareness of and access to career opportunities.
- b. Development of an online repository that provides information on career and technical opportunities as well as training institutions.
- c. Promotion of opportunities for apprenticeships in skilled occupations and expansion of structured training opportunities through community and faith-based organizations.
- d. Increased cooperation and communication between various agencies, faith-based and community service organizations.

### ***Teen Parents Subcommittee***

The Teen Parents Subcommittee shall identify resources for pregnant and parenting teens along with the family support unit. The subcommittee shall focus on services that prepare teen parents for economic independence while also ensuring the well-being of their children. Education shall be provided to lower the risk of subsequent unplanned pregnancies while ensuring the young parents have access to adequate and appropriate healthcare and services for them and their children. Resources identified shall address needs for:

1. Basic assistance including food and shelter.
2. Health issues such as prenatal, postpartum, well-child care and pre/intraconception women's healthcare.
3. Child support programs and parenting classes.
4. Education, employment training and service opportunities.

### **Goal:**

To identify comprehensive services needed to meet the challenging needs of teen parents throughout the state's counties and thereby reduce the number of subsequent births to teen mothers while elevating the level of care that children born to teen mothers receive.

### **Objective:**

Provide a list of services available for teen parents.

### **Plan of Action:**

1. Conduct focus groups among teens and their parents to identify needs.
2. Identify barriers to the delivery of service. (i.e., financial, physical, policy, ideology.)
3. Conduct a needs assessment of the state resources that can address the needs of teen parents.
4. Educate the target population and professionals about services within the state.

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## ***Youth Development and At-Risk Youth Subcommittee***

The subcommittee will seek to use best practices and examine studies and data identified with successful low/no cost programs across the U.S. to determine their effectiveness in providing services to the at-risk population, e.g., youth in foster care, adolescent offenders. Resources on successful programs will also be studied.

### **Goals**

1. Identify programs.
2. Find out which programs school districts have implemented.
3. Evaluate program effectiveness.
4. Identify resources.
5. Target high risk areas within the state.
6. Define risk – Youth Risk Behavior Criteria. (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System [YRBSS], <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>).

### **Action Plan**

1. Schedule program providers to present ideas to the subcommittee.
2. Explore provider incentives.
3. Invite youth and their leaders, to attend meetings.
4. Streamline programs/preserve those that are working and eliminate those that don't.
5. Identify problems noticed in high risk areas, e.g., lack of programs, funds.
6. Examine issues and policies that are putting our state's youth at risk.

## ***Youth and Youth Leaders Subcommittee***

The Youth and Youth Leaders Subcommittee represents diverse group of young people. Youth and youth leaders will come together to share their experiences and ideas for creating strategies to prevent teen pregnancy and promote youth development. Youth will be trained as peer group leaders to facilitate discussions in schools, youth groups and various other venues about sexual peer pressure. Youth will have the opportunity to participate in decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers.

### **STRATEGY 5**

***Monitor program activities and evaluate progress. Use measurable indicators to track results at the state and local levels and help guide policy and program decisions. Collect and analyze relevant data on the trends among youth to aid in development of program strategies.***

The Task Force will provide the Governor and Legislature with information, data and recommendations to improve the lives of youth and their families.

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### **Goals**

1. To reduce the number of teen pregnancies, ages 8-19 by 15 percent (45 births per 1000 females) by 2017.
2. To reduce the percentage of repeat teenage births from 21.4 percent to 15 percent by 2017.
3. Increase the level of understanding for parents and guardians of the importance of teen pregnancy prevention programs.
4. Develop peer/leader programs to positively influence students to make wise choices as it relates to their sexual health each year.
5. Develop numerous partnerships across the state.

### ***Legal Advisory Subcommittee***

The Legal Advisory Subcommittee shall provide legal support and advice to the Task Force. This subcommittee shall advise other committee members on any matters regarding legal questions that could affect the operation of the Healthy Teens for a Better Mississippi Program. The Legal Advisory Subcommittee shall assist in addressing issues affecting teens through the media and court systems. The subcommittee will promote awareness regarding:

1. Child abuse and neglect.
2. Teen bullying.
3. Sexual predators.

### ***Medical Advisory Subcommittee***

The Medical Advisory Subcommittee is composed of doctors, nurses, social workers and other public health professionals who will review and approve all information materials to ensure that it is medically accurate, culturally relevant and age-appropriate. The Medical Advisory Subcommittee will reference credible research and literature to support decisions made regarding the medical accuracy of submitted information.

### **Action Plan**

1. Within two weeks after the plan is approved, establish a framework for evaluability criteria submitted by subcommittees.
2. On an on-going basis, evaluate suggestions from other Task Force members and make recommendations on risks and benefits.
3. Research the possible medical and economic implications surrounding all ideas within the subcommittees.
4. Suggest the use of materials that will improve the context of relationships.
5. Establish goals/life plans with children.
6. Provide information on the reasons why children are having sex, e.g., a means of acting out, abuse, boredom.

## **Plan to Prevent and Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Mississippi**

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7. Help emphasize positives, e.g., delaying sexual activities promotes healthy relationships.
8. Promote decisions for Abstinence/Abstinence-Plus education in all school districts.
9. Establish an Anti-Teen Pregnancy Incentive Program. Obtain financial support from private and public investors to provide funding for incentives, e.g., sponsored trips to national teen conferences, scholarships, gift certificates, prizes.

### ***PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT***

Recognizing that transparency is important and necessary to offset misperceptions, the Task Force will make all meeting notes, informational materials and products publicly available. Interested parties will have an opportunity to add information and offer suggestions, thereby ensuring a public review of the programs and products prior to utilization.

### ***CHALLENGES***

Because of the complexity of governmental organizations, community and faith-based organizations are sometimes reluctant to form partnerships. However, these partnerships are essential to the overall success of the project. Therefore, the Task Force and its subcommittees are charged with developing collaborative opportunities where information, assistance and support can be shared. Further, efforts to include youth are important because they must have a voice in this process.

Long term projects can be daunting, so the Task Force recognizes that implementation and follow-through are key to the success of the program. MDHS and MSDH will monitor the subcommittee meetings and ensure reports are compiled and submitted timely and the project continues to move forward.

Funding for projects can be challenging, but recognizing there are many existing resources and by bringing them together, will provide a diverse, creative funding stream that will result in a synergistic effect that will garner success.

### ***CORE VALUES AND SOLUTIONS***

Given our deep concern for our children and communities and the magnitude of the problem of teen pregnancy and its consequences, we will act with high standards and urgency to resolve this problem. Solutions to this problem will take years and require a committed effort. As the Task Force and subcommittees continue to meet, goals and objectives will evolve and change. While incorporating short and long-term goals, we will work in a purposeful, strategic and resourceful way to maximize our collective impact to change the “cultural norm” about marriage and unwed pregnancy, improve the lives of our children and transform Mississippi. Once the plan is approved, we will convene the Task Force and subcommittees to implement the strategies outlined in this plan.

***Blue Ribbon Task Force and Subcommittee Members***

<b>Blue Ribbon Chairs</b>	
First Lady Deborah Bryant* Honorary Chairperson	Dr. Mary Currier* - Co-Chair Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH)
Richard A. Berry* - Co-Chair Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS)	
<b>Governor's Office</b>	
Wesley Clay	Lucien Smith
Beth Gordin*	
<b>Legislature</b>	
Senator Sally Doty*	Senator Brice Wiggins*
Representative John Hines, Sr.*	
<b>State Agencies</b>	
Danny Bender*, (MSDH)	Kina Johnson, Dep. Bureau Dir., PREP, MSDH
Nycole Campbell-Lewis, Ph.D., LMSW* MDHS State Coordinator	Patti Marshall* Office of the Attorney General
John Davis*, Deputy Director of Programs MDHS	Harold Netto, MDHS
Julia Bryan, MDHS	David Noble, MDHS
Vera Butler, MDHS	Sandra Parks* Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH)
Geneva Cannon, MSDH	Andrea Patrick , MDHS
Kathryn Carter, MDHS	Tina Ruffin, MDHS
Scott Clements, Director* Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)	Francis Rullan, C.P.M. Division of Medicaid (DOM)
Ian Coleman, MSDH	Danielle Seale, MSDH
Jill Dent, Ph.D., MDHS	Charlie Smith, MDHS
Kevin Dobbs, Ph.D., MDHS	Lynda Stewart, LPC*, DMH
Derra Dukes, MDHS	Cathy Sykes, MDHS
Andrew Friday, MDHS	Beverly Walters*, Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC)
Barbara Hammer, MDHS	Estelle Watts, State School Nurse Consultant* MDE
Mark Henry*, Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES)	Gwendolyn Winters, MHSA, LSW, MSDH
Mari Irby, Communications Director Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB)	Jenny Wilburn, Executive Producer, Southern Remedies, MPB

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<b>Medical Profession</b>	
Dr. Freda Bush*	Dr. Randy Easterling*
Pamela Dulaney, School Nurse, MDHS Oakley Youth Development Center	
<b>Faith Community</b>	
Bishop Ronnie Crudup* New Horizon Church International	William Ndishabandi, Rector/Chaplain All Saints Episcopal, Jackson State University
Rev. James E. Morris, Sr.* Shady Grove MB Church	
<b>Community and Educational Organizations (For-Profit and Non-Profit) and Individuals</b>	
Jamie Holcomb Bardwell Women's Fund of Mississippi	Connie Little Jackson State University
Cassio Batteast The Salvation Army	Susan Lunardini Southern Consultants
Regina Berry, BSN, RN Rankin County School District	Larry McAdoo Redemption Outreach Ministries International
David Blankenhorn, Retired* Business Executive	Nancy New, Ph.D.*, New Summit Schools Mississippi Community Education Center
Thomas H. (Tom) Broome Rankin County Youth Court/Mississippi Council of Youth Court Judges/Mississippi Children's Commission, County Court Judge/Chair/Co-Chair Rankin County Juvenile Justice Center	Thomas Norman Mississippi Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
Captain Ken Chapman* The Salvation Army, Jackson Metro Area	Steve Pickering Mississippi Community Education Center
Pam Cross Life Center Resource Center	Ivie Pulliam, Director Southeast Rural Health Initiative
Nichole Harris*, Mayor of Tutwiler Tutwiler Community Center	Linda Raff Mississippi Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
Marsha James, Ph.D.* Belhaven University	Dina Ray Mississippi March Of Dimes
Carolyn Jefferson Mississippi Campaign for Teen Pregnancy Prevention	Nedra Redd Mississippi Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
Jannie Johnson Caring n' Sharing	Ed Sivak or Francinia McKeithan Mississippi Economic Policy Center
Sanford Johnson, Deputy Director Mississippi First	Janet Spears, Director of Development* The Salvation Army, Jackson Metro Area
Evelyn Jossell, Executive Director Youth Opportunities Unlimited	Genether Spurlock, Education Coordinator* Tutwiler Community Center

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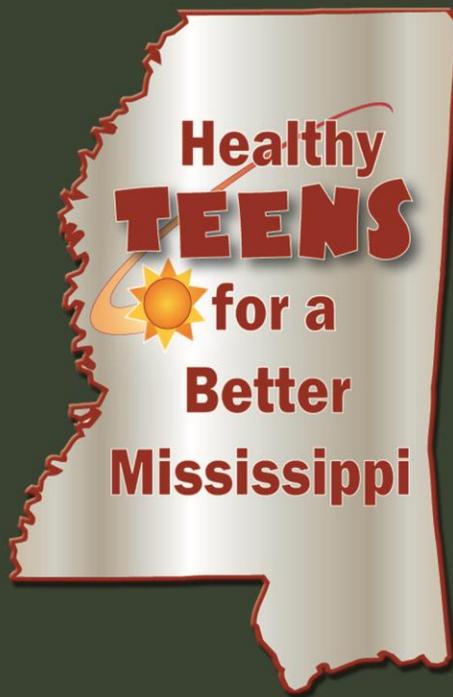
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Brianna Standberry King's Daughters Medical Center	Angie Williamson, R.N. King's Daughters Medical Center
Dr. Connie Jo Williams, Director* Early Beginnings Program	Charlotte Young, Ph.D., Director of Student Support Services & Dropout Prevention, Rankin County School District
Kim Williams, Program Developer AR, LA, MS Nurse-Family Partnership, National Service Office	
<b>Youth Development and At-Risk Youth Subcommittee</b>	
Honorary Ard, Program Consultant My Brother's Keeper	George Patterson, Community Outreach Director, Tougaloo College-Owens Health and Wellness Center
Dr. Daphne Buckley, Deputy State Superintendent, Mississippi Teacher Center Mississippi Department of Education	Tonja Smith, Program Coordinator Mississippi Children's Home Service
Shawna Davie, Drop Out Prevention Coordinator United Way of the Capital Area	Zakiya Summers, Community Relations Coordinator, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation
Layla Fitzgerald, Regional Coordinator Children's Defense Fund	Shirley Tucker, Vice President Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership
<b>Youth and Youth Leader Subcommittee</b>	
Colby Berry, Parks and Recreation Director City of Crystal Springs	Cedric Hampton, 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Jackson, MS
Toni Nettles JSU Graduate Student/Youth Peer Educator Camden, MS	Kynnedi Henry, 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade Madison, MS
TaShe Allen, 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Jackson, MS	Emily Moore, 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Jackson, MS
Jacqueline Cooper, 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Jackson, MS	Muriel Pannell, 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Jackson, MS
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*\*Indicates Blue Ribbon Task Force Member*







Mississippi Department of Human Services  
Mississippi State Department of Health

