

DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL, TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

Previous Family Income Study research indicates that dropping out of school before graduating, and being a teenage mother, are factors related to low educational attainment and welfare dependency. This issue brief describes the sequence of dropping out of school, and becoming pregnant for the first time, for women on public assistance.

Family Income Study Findings

- Over half (52 percent) of the women on public assistance had their first child before age 20, and more than half (55 percent) dropped out of school before graduating.
- Of those who *both* dropped out of school *and* were teenage mothers, 53 percent dropped out *before becoming pregnant* for the first time.
- The median length of time between dropping out of school and later becoming pregnant was one year.

Discussion

Family Income Study findings show that dropping out of school and teenage childbirth are related to welfare dependency. Completing high school is tied to the likelihood of employment and higher earnings. School-based programs that attempt to prevent teenage pregnancies and those that attempt to keep pregnant and parenting teens in school may yield positive results for some young women. However, since many young women drop out of school *before* their first pregnancy, school-based prevention and completion programs may not reach these teens.

If you have any questions, please call Carol Webster or Greg Weeks at the Institute.

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