

Background

Jamaican law requires that girls leave school during their pregnancy. Since 1978, the Programme for Adolescent Mothers has supported these students to return to school, delay a second pregnancy until professional goals are achieved, and increase their employability.^{1,2}

Description

The Programme for Adolescent Mothers has established seven centers and six outreach stations. "The centres provide extensive individual and group counselling aimed at building self-respect, exploring emotional problems, increasing understanding of sexual and reproductive health and encouraging family planning. Special counseling and parenting programmes are also provided for teen fathers, as well as the parents of teen mothers and teen fathers."¹

Results

Reviewers rated this practice as featuring the following gender transformative characteristics:

- Change or attempt to change an imbalance of power or otherwise level the playing field (*critical criterion*)
- Challenge and change common discriminatory gender beliefs or norms (*critical criterion*).

This practice may help to challenge discriminatory beliefs if it includes messaging about the caregiving responsibilities of both fathers and mothers. If effective in building girls' confidence and empowering them, the practice may also change power imbalances. However, no assessments or evaluations of this practice are available. Program data indicate that the overall program has helped thousands of young students return to school¹ and that program participants were more likely to complete their education and establish a career²; however, these findings are not specific to this practice. In addition, a cost-benefit analysis of the overall program found social and private benefits of nearly J\$137 million (equivalent to approximately USD 1.6 million in today's dollars), but analysis for individual components was not available.²

Summary conclusions

Depending on how it is structured and the messages it provides, counseling has the potential to challenge discriminatory gender beliefs and inequalities. More documentation on its implementation and effects is needed.

Reference(s) and source(s)

1. Hubbard, Dianne. 2008. School policy on learner pregnancy in Namibia: background to reform. Gender Research & Advocacy Project Legal Assistance Center. www.lac.org.na/projects/grap/Pdf/learnerpregnancyfull.pdf (accessed June 27, 2011).
2. McNeil, Pamela. 1998. Women's Centre, Jamaica: Preventing Second Adolescent Pregnancies by Supporting Young Mothers. Family Health International YouthNet.

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