

Improving Care for Pregnant Youth in Foster Care Enrolled in STAR Health

Testimony to the House Human Services Committee

To support the health of teens in foster care and their babies, the Legislature should encourage innovative steps in STAR Health to ensure that pregnant teens in foster care have access to early prenatal care and appropriate postpartum care.

There is a high rate of teen pregnancy in Texas foster care.

- 332 youth in Texas foster care were pregnant in FY 2017.
- Teen girls in Texas foster care are almost *five times* more likely to become pregnant than other teen girls in Texas.
- *More than half* of teen girls in foster care who age out of care or extend their time in care will become pregnant before they turn 20.

Youth in foster care are less likely to receive early prenatal and postpartum care, putting babies' and moms' health at risk.

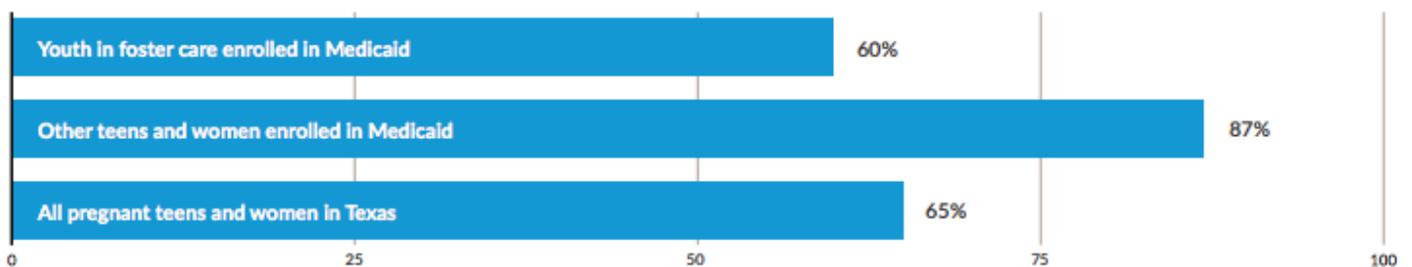
- Fewer youth in foster care received timely prenatal care than other women and teens in Texas' other Medicaid programs (60 percent of youth in foster care compared to 87 percent).
- More youth in foster care have a baby born too small compared to pregnant teens and adults in Texas' other Medicaid programs (12.7 percent of births to youth in foster care compared to 9.3 percent).
- Fewer youth in foster care had a postpartum visit compared to other women and teens in Texas' other Medicaid programs (42 percent of youth in foster care compared to 67 percent).

Texans Care for Children is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan, multi-issue children's policy organization. We drive policy change to improve the lives of Texas children today for a stronger Texas tomorrow. We envision a Texas in which all children grow up to be healthy, safe, successful, and on a path to fulfill their promise.

STAR Health serves nearly all youth in long-term foster care, providing policymakers an opportunity to improve care.

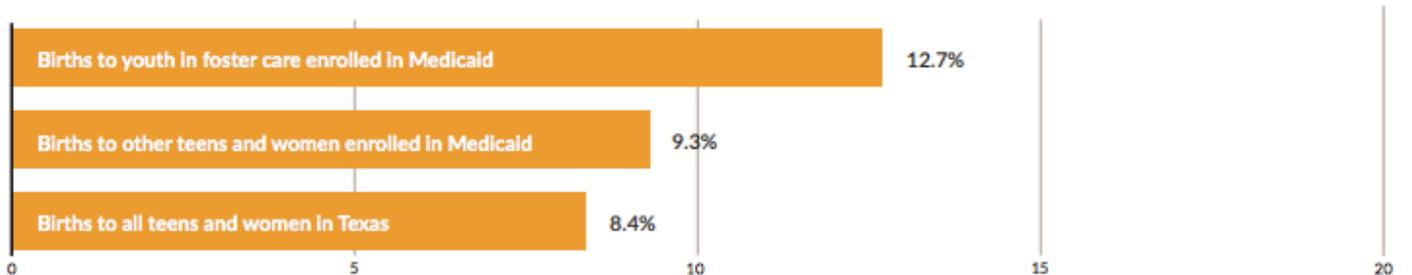
- Encourage Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in STAR Medicaid programs to share *best practices* for prenatal and postpartum care with the STAR Health MCO in order to improve early entry into prenatal care and postpartum follow-ups and to address drastic disparities in birth outcomes among pregnant youth in foster care.
- Encourage a STAR Health *Performance Improvement Project* that is tailored to youth in foster care and uses creative approaches to engage pregnant youth and facilitate prenatal and postpartum care.
- Add the two recently-approved contraceptive care measures to the list of quality measures that Texas Medicaid and CHIP track annually, so *data* can inform decision-making. In the future, consider adding these quality measures to Medicaid value-based payments initiatives.

Not Enough Teens in Foster Care Receive Timely Prenatal Care



Timely prenatal care for teens and women enrolled in Medicaid is defined as care in the first trimester or within 42 days of enrolling in their health plan. Timely prenatal care for all pregnant teens and women in Texas is defined as starting care in the first trimester.

Too Many Teens in Foster Care Have Babies at a Low Birth Weight



Low birth weight, which is more likely in teen births and when prenatal care is late or inadequate, puts a baby at higher risk of health problems and dying in infancy. Low birth weight is defined as less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces.

Source for all data above: Texas Medicaid data, FY 2016.