

HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND RIGHTS BRIEF



Overview

Access to health care for pregnant and parenting teens is essential and teen parent service providers can be the link to help support access to that care. It is important for all youth and especially expectant mothers and fathers to know that they have the right to receive good quality medical care and the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Under Colorado state law, teens are allowed to seek reproductive health services and mental health supports without [parental consent](#). This adolescent provider [toolkit](#) from the Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care provides an understanding of minor consent and confidentiality and provides explanation of the tools when talking to teens and the parents of the teens. The National Center for Youth Law's 2019 [chart](#) provides an overview of Colorado's minor consent and confidentiality laws in the event a parent needs to be involved to support a teen.

MINORS RECEIVING PREGNANCY-RELATED AND CONTRACEPTIVE CARE

- Under Colorado state law, minors who are pregnant may consent to pregnancy-related care, and those who are themselves parents may also consent to any medical care for their own children.
- Minors may obtain contraceptive information, procedures, and supplies if they request them and are in need of such services or when they have been referred for these services by another doctor, member of the clergy, family planning clinic, school, or agency of the state.
- Unmarried minors under the age of 18 may not consent to permanent sterilization procedures without a parent or guardian's consent.

Source: [Minors' Medical Records and Consent to Care](#), Colorado Legislative Council Staff, April 2020.

Having an established team-based health care provider that provides comprehensive and continuous medical care can guide pregnant and parenting teens in making healthy choices and learn to advocate and take responsibility for themselves and their children. Pregnant and parenting teens can often feel out of place going to a health care provider as they worry that they are being judged for being so young. [Youth- friendly health care](#) environments that welcome partners, family and friends for support can promote a teen parent's confidence in taking care of their children.



Prenatal Care is Especially Important

Young teen mothers are more likely to have preterm or low-birth weight babies and lack of care often leads to some of these disparities. According to [Child Trends](#), teen mothers have the highest rates of receiving late or no prenatal care. Accessing care and supports can help to improve birth outcomes.

The [Colorado Adolescent Maternity Program](#) (CAMP) works with young mothers by helping them throughout their pregnancy and post-partum period to ensure their medical, social and emotional needs are met. This program provides enhanced prenatal education and support catered to adolescent mothers 21 years old and younger including midwives, social workers, psychologists, a psychiatrist, a dietician, and care coordination.

The [Young Mother's Clinic](#) is part of Children's Hospital and is the only dedicated mother-baby medical home in the Denver metro region and provides health resources, contraceptive care, comprehensive emotional care and parenting support for moms younger than 22 years old and their babies. Fathers are encouraged to participate and be part of their children's health care.

Contraceptive Health Care for Teen Moms and Dads

Teen parents need accurate, informed support in thinking about when they see themselves having a second pregnancy. [BC4U](#) offers video visits for free reproductive medical advice and birth control services and pregnancy and STI testing with a clinician. Local public health departments also have family planning services that teens can utilize at low cost. [Find Your Local Public Health Agency](#).

School-Based Health Services for Teens

Health access and services through school-based health clinics is one way to support adolescents and is linked to [improved academic success](#) and reduced absenteeism. A [school-based health center \(SBHC\)](#) is usually located inside a school or on school grounds. A school nurse can help a student access a SBHC because some expect appointments ahead of time. Most are staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of medical and behavioral health specialists, with some having dental professionals, health educators and/or health insurance enrollment specialists on site. Services provided by a SBHC help identify problems early, provide continuity of care, and improve academic participation. Often SBHCs provide linkages to community resources, such as housing, transportation and food. Colorado SBHC locations can be found [here](#).



Community Based Health Centers

Some pregnant teens may have a family or private medical provider. For those that don't, there are [Community Based Health Centers](#) located throughout the state that can see them at low cost. These [clinics](#) can offer family, pediatric, prenatal, mental health and dental care and often provide access to other services and resources.

Mental Health Supports for Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Pregnant and parenting teens (including dads) have high rates of depression, postpartum depression and anxiety. Many teens do not know where they can ask for help and do not know they can consent to their own mental health care. Teen parent providers can direct teen parents to this minor consent and confidentiality laws [chart](#) to get more information about their healthcare rights. Teens can ask their health care provider or school nurse for a referral to someone in their community that provides mental health support. [Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Counsel](#) provides locations of community mental health services across the state. If a teen needs immediate mental health support, they can call the [Colorado Crisis Services](#).

Paying for Health Care

Lack of health insurance or being low-income can be a barrier for teens to access care for themselves or their families. Many community-based health care providers will be able to enroll patients in Medicaid, CHP+ or provide services on a sliding scale. Babies born in Colorado are eligible for Medicaid. For more information about Medicaid eligibility or how to apply, go to [Health First Colorado](#). Teens need to know that some insurance companies could send health information to the teen's address. If the teens are concerned about family members receiving a bill or information about their health care visit, they need to talk with their insurance provider about policies and processes for communicating with patients.

COVID-19 Implications

Because of COVID-19, there is a possibility that many teens are not able to access reproductive health appointments. Teen parent service providers have reason to believe that lack of access to reproductive health appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic might result in increases in repeat teen pregnancies, which is to emphasize a strong need for continuity of care.



Resources

[Aurora Public School School-Based Clinics](#)

[Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care](#)

[Colorado Behavioral Health Care Council](#)

[Colorado Community Health Network](#)

[Colorado Health Institute-School-Based Health Centers](#)

[Denver Health School Based Health Centers](#)

[Find Your Local Public Health Agency](#)

[Health First Colorado-Colorado's Medicaid Program](#)

[Minors' Medical Records and Consent to Care](#)

[Referrals and Linkages to Youth-Friendly Health Care Services](#)

[School-Based Health Centers Colorado locations](#)

[School-Based Health Alliance](#)

[Teen Legal Guide to Sex, Pregnancy and Parenting](#)

[Understanding Minor Consent and Confidentiality](#)

