

HIGHER TOGETHER

THE IMPACT OF A COLLEGE
DEGREE FOR YOUNG PARENTS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its founding in March 2010, Generation Hope has helped Washington, DC-area teen parents graduate from college through our Scholar Program, which provides teen parents (Scholars) with one-on-one mentoring, holistic case management, mental health services, financial assistance, academic support, and career and life skills development. Ninety-five teen mothers and fathers have earned Bachelor's and/or Associate's degrees through Generation Hope's Scholar Program and are now in the workforce.

Generation Hope routinely surveys alumni six months after their graduation, asking questions about their employment and financial status. However, this report marks the first time that Generation Hope has surveyed all of its graduates collectively. To our knowledge, this is the only comprehensive survey that has been conducted to understand post-college outcomes for teen parents who have completed Associate's and/or Bachelor's degrees. Very little is known about the experiences of parenting college students generally after earning their degrees, and even less is known about the outcomes for teen parent graduates specifically. Through this report, we aim to help community, education, and philanthropic leaders better understand the impact of college for teen parents and best practices for supporting them in their educational pursuits.

This report would not be possible without the contributions of Generation Hope alumni, who generously provided their responses and insights about their experiences during and after college.

MAJOR FINDINGS

“ [My college degree] means triumph in the face of overwhelming adversity. It means success. It means leaving a small legacy for my generations to follow.”

Bri Whitfield

George Washington University, 2018



The data collected in this survey clearly demonstrate the positive impact of a college degree for a young family.

- **Average annual earnings for teen parents more than doubled after earning a college degree.** While nearly 90% of respondents were earning under \$30,000 annually at the time that they started college, the average salary for those who are now working full time is more than \$60,000 annually.
- **Nearly one-third of teen parent graduates continued on to advanced degrees.** Thirty-two percent of Bachelor's degree earners are either working on or have earned a graduate degree.
- **Teen parents recognized the value that their college degree brought to their lives.** Almost 90% of respondents indicated at least one positive outcome from earning their degrees.
- **College completion unlocks higher earnings for young parents, but continued efforts to dismantle systemic oppression are essential.** Employment discrimination, lack of generational wealth, and pay disparities create ongoing barriers to economic mobility for young families beyond graduation. Even among teen parent graduates working full time, 50% are accessing some form of public assistance. Black teen parent graduates were more likely than Hispanic/Latinx graduates to be accessing public assistance, at 63% and 46%, respectively.

Generation Hope's Scholar Program was specifically designed to serve young parents in college, and has been enhanced over time by the feedback and input from our families. The responses from our alumni show that this intentional, wraparound support made a difference in their journey to a college degree. Many attested to the power of having a community behind them through both the highs and the lows and being inspired by staff, mentors, and other young parents to continue. Alumni Ashley Omar (Community College of Baltimore County, 2018) said, **"Generation Hope helped me in a time where everyone else gave up on me. I will always appreciate their endless support,"** while alumni Marikit Williams (University of Maryland, College Park, 2013), shared that **"[Generation Hope] is my chosen family. Well they chose me first, and I am grateful."** These testimonials clearly demonstrate both the impact of and the need for caring and holistic support for teen parents as they pursue higher education.



Marikit Williams

University of Maryland, College Park, 2013



THE TEEN PARENT POPULATION

**NEARLY TWO
OUT OF EVERY 100**



teen girls (13–19 years old) will have a child each year in the U.S.¹

The teen birth rate has been steadily declining since 1991, but **the United States still has one of the highest teen birth rates** among Western industrialized nations, at

**15.4 BIRTHS PER 1,000
TEENAGE GIRLS.**²

**ONLY
ABOUT
40%**



of teen mothers graduate from high school.¹

Teen fathers are

25–30%

less likely to graduate from high school than their peers who are not fathers.³

**ABOUT
89%**

of teen births are to unmarried parents.⁴

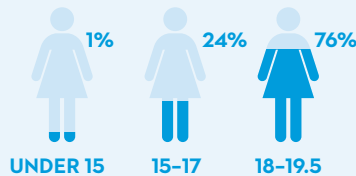


Teen birth rates are the highest for American Indian/Alaska Native teen girls (at almost **THREE TIMES THE RATE** for white teen girls), followed by Black and Hispanic/Latinx teen girls (**MORE THAN TWO TIMES THE RATE** for white girls).⁵



Young women in foster care are **MORE THAN TWICE** as likely to become pregnant as their peers.⁶

% OF TEEN BIRTHS⁵



15%

of teen births are subsequent births.⁵



Nationally, teen pregnancy is **HIGHEST IN RURAL COUNTIES.**⁷



Children of teen parents are **LESS LIKELY** than their peers to enter kindergarten at high levels of school readiness.³

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT⁸

- The teen birth rate in DC is on par with the national average at 15.6 births per 1,000 teenage girls, while Maryland and Virginia both have rates lower than the national average at 13.1 births per 1,000 teenage girls.
- When broken down by race/ethnicity, the teen pregnancy rate in all three areas mirrors the national disparities between white, Black, and Hispanic/Latinx teen girls.
- DC, Maryland, and Virginia have lower than average teen birth rates for white teens (0, 7.1, and 10 per 1,000 teen girls, respectively, compared to the national average of 11.4) and Black teens (23.9, 16.7, and 20 per 1,000 teen girls, respectively, compared to the national average of 25.8).
- All three jurisdictions have higher than average rates of teen birth among Hispanic/Latinx teen girls at 38.4 (DC), 36.8 (Maryland), and 29 (Virginia), compared to the national average of 25.3 for Hispanic/Latinx teen girls.

WHY FOCUS ON HIGHER EDUCATION FOR TEEN PARENTS?

Although the teen pregnancy rate in the United States has dropped precipitously since its peak in 1991, the United States still has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates among developed countries.² Moreover, teen pregnancy disproportionately affects young people of color, with a 2019 teen birth rate of 29.2 teen births per 1,000 for American Indian/Alaska Native teen girls, 25.8 births per 1,000 for Black teen girls, and 25.3 births per 1,000 for Latinx teen girls compared to 11.4 births per 1,000 for non-Hispanic white teen girls.⁹ With the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* in 2022 and less access to abortion across the country, it is also likely that the teen birth rate will rise. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 29% of teen pregnancies end in abortion,¹⁰ a rate that may drop as abortion becomes less available, and Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youth and young people with low incomes are likely to be most affected. All of these factors compel us to continue to do our best to understand and support positive outcomes for this group of high-potential youth.

Only about 40% of young mothers graduate from high school,¹ and while the postsecondary data for teen parents are extremely limited, we know that they are highly unlikely to graduate from college. **In fact, less than 2% of mothers who have a baby by age 18 go on to earn a college degree by age 30.**¹¹ However, college has the potential to be transformative for both young parents and their children. Single mothers who earn a Bachelor's degree are likely to earn \$625,134 more over the course of their lifetimes than their counterparts without degrees, and each credential earned beyond a high school diploma significantly lowers the likelihood that a single mother and her child will be living below the poverty line.¹² Underscoring the generational impacts of a college degree, parental education significantly influences a child's educational attainment,¹³ meaning the children of teen parents who graduate from college are themselves more likely to do so. While the bulk of resources directed towards teen pregnancy focus on prevention and immediate needs (such as diapers, housing, and food), it is crucial to also deploy significant resources to increase higher educational attainment for this population, thus accelerating their economic mobility.



LESS THAN
2%
OF MOTHERS WHO
HAVE A BABY BY
AGE 18 GO ON TO
EARN A COLLEGE
DEGREE BY AGE 30.¹¹

GENERATION HOPE SCHOLAR PROGRAM MODEL

Generation Hope's Scholar Program is both holistic and family-centered and is rooted in our values of Support, Acceptance, Family, Education, and Race Equity. Scholars in the Generation Hope program must be 25 or younger at the time of application and have been a teen parent (defined as expecting or parenting at 19 or younger). Generation Hope works with Scholars from across the Washington, DC metro region, providing:

- A one-on-one mentor who provides emotional support and guidance;
- Up to \$2,400 in tuition funding annually;
- Long-term support from compassionate, student-centered, culturally responsive case managers;
- Access to up to \$1,000 in emergency funding annually as well as tangible items such as diapers, children's books, etc.;
- Free tutoring;
- Free mental health support;
- Free career coaching and career services including connection with internships and job preparation;
- Connection to a caring community of their peers who meet regularly to support one another and build success skills.

In addition, Scholars with young children are eligible to participate in Generation Hope's early education program Next Generation Academy. About one-third of the respondents of this survey had participated in both Next Generation Academy and the Scholar program. Next Generation Academy provides Scholars and their children with the following additional supports:

- Monthly home visiting using an established home visiting curriculum;
- Support in building their family's library with a free, brand new, culturally relevant children's book each month;
- Monthly stipends to assist with high-quality childcare and enrichment opportunities;
- Matching with community members who help Scholar families build social capital;
- Monthly dinners where Scholars learn about key parenting skills and connect with a community of their peers.

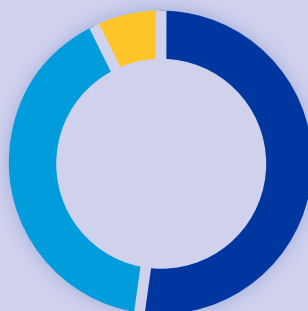
REPORT METHODOLOGY

Generation Hope sent a survey to alumni via email and text message and offered a \$20 gift card as an incentive. Generation Hope staff members also made personal reminder calls to alumni. Alumni had the option of completing the survey anonymously but had to provide a name and email address to receive the incentive.

RESPONDENTS BY THE NUMBERS

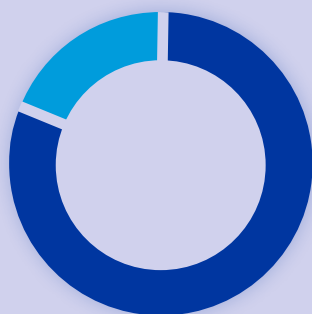


58 SURVEYS COMPLETED,
with respondents ranging from
0–10 years since graduation
(average 3 years since graduation)



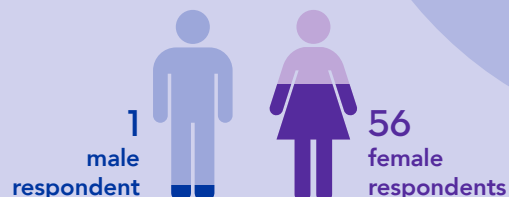
Respondents identified as...

- 52% Black/African American
- 41% Hispanic/Latinx
- 7% Other/Preferred not to say

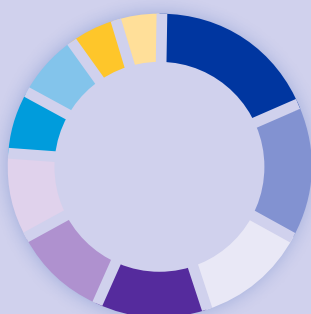


Highest degree earned while in the Generation Hope program

- 81% Bachelor's degree
- 19% Associate's degree

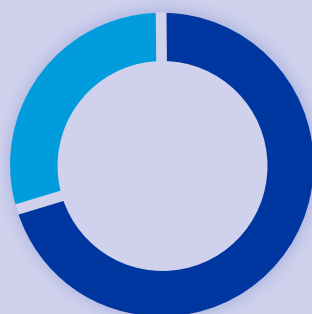


*One preferred not to say



Majors

- 19% Business
- 14% Social Science
- 12% General Studies
- 12% Humanities
- 10% Criminal Justice
- 9% STEM
- 7% Allied Health
- 7% Education
- 5% Communications
- 5% Other



- 70% cared for 1 child while in college
- 30% cared for 2–3 children while in college

Respondents graduated from **21 DIFFERENT COLLEGES** in the Washington, DC metro region, with the most frequently attended schools being:

- Northern Virginia Community College** | 12 respondents
- George Mason University** | 10 respondents
- Montgomery College** | 10 respondents
- Trinity Washington University** | 9 respondents

REPORT THEMES

COLLEGE DEGREES MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON TEEN PARENTS

- College degrees were correlated with a significant increase in earnings for graduates. Prior to starting college, respondents were earning an average of less than \$15,000 annually. Graduates who are working full time are now earning more than \$60,000 annually.
- Graduates have high levels of full-time employment. Among those who graduated one or more years ago, 84% are employed full time, and 88% are either employed full time or in graduate school.
- Many graduates have pursued additional education beyond their undergraduate degrees, with 32% of Bachelor's degree earners either working on or having earned a graduate degree.
- The majority of graduates feel positively about their college degrees, with 90% indicating some sort of positive outcome from their degree, including feeling that it was a valuable use of their time, helped them be more financially stable, inspired others in their family to go to college, improved their and/or their children's lives, made their children more likely to go to college, and/or has been essential to getting to where they are today. This was true for both Black graduates and Hispanic/Latinx graduates.

TEEN PARENT GRADUATES STILL FEEL CONNECTED TO GENERATION HOPE

- Regardless of their graduation date, alumni indicated high levels of ongoing connectedness with Generation Hope. Fifty-seven percent indicated that they still had a relationship with their Generation Hope mentor, 79% with Generation Hope staff, and 66% still feel connected to the Generation Hope community.

MAJOR MATTERS FOR TEEN PARENTS

- College major correlated significantly with employment rates. One hundred percent of Business, Criminal Justice, Allied Health, and STEM majors are employed full time, while 60% of Humanities, Communications, General Studies, Education, and Social Science majors are employed full time. However, of those who are employed full time, average salaries do not differ significantly across majors.
- Public assistance utilization is also correlated with majors. Alumni who majored in Humanities, Communications, General Studies, Education, Social Science, and Criminal Justice are more likely to be using public assistance than their peers who majored in Allied Health, STEM fields, or Business.
- Overall, 27% of respondents wished they had chosen a different major; however, no Allied Health or STEM majors did, and only one Criminal Justice major felt that way.

TYPE OF DEGREE MATTERS FOR TEEN PARENTS

- The type of degree impacts salary, with Bachelor's degree recipients earning, on average, almost \$15,000 more annually than Associate's degree holders.
- Relatedly, 73% of Associate's degree holders are using public assistance, compared to 51% of Bachelor's degree earners.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS FOR TEEN PARENTS PERSIST BEYOND GRADUATION

- The data show that while a college degree is instrumental in accessing higher earnings for young parents, it is not a magic wand. Systemic barriers to accessing wealth persist even for college graduates, and the current economic environment, created in part by COVID-19, continues to impact these graduates.
 - More than half of all teen parent graduates (54%) are accessing public assistance. Even among graduates working full time, 50% are accessing some form of public assistance. More than half of those using public assistance are accessing Medicaid only, while others reported accessing SNAP, WIC, and TANF.
 - Black teen parent graduates were more likely than Hispanic/Latinx teen parent graduates to be accessing public assistance, at 63% and 46%, respectively.
 - Approximately 60% of teen parent graduates held student debt at graduation and the average amount was \$23,991, which is lower than the national average for college graduates of approximately \$31,000 of debt at graduation.¹⁴ Black teen parent graduates had a much higher likelihood of borrowing than Hispanic/Latinx teen parent graduates (75% vs. 41%, respectively), and those who did borrow had more than double the debt load of Hispanic/Latinx graduates (\$29,767 vs. \$13,163, respectively). This data is aligned with national data showing that Black student parents have the highest student loan debt of all students.¹⁵



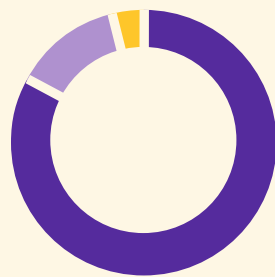
DETAILED FINDINGS

EMPLOYMENT AND GRADUATE SCHOOL

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

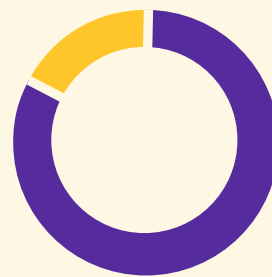
Among those who graduated one or more years ago: **88%** of teen parent graduates are either employed full time and/or in graduate school.

Full time employment status by major



Black teen parent graduates

- 83% employed full time
- 13% part-time
- 4% not employed

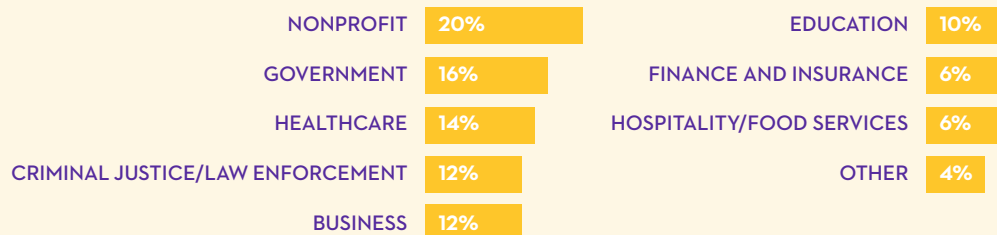


Latinx teen parent graduates

- 83% employed full time
- 0% part-time
- 17% not employed

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Fields of employment for teen parent graduates



FOR THOSE NOT EMPLOYED OR EMPLOYED PT (N=12)

	TOTAL STUDENT PARENTS	PERCENTAGE
Chose to stay home with children	6	50.00%
Can't find childcare	2	16.67%
In graduate school	3	25.00%
Can't find job in field	3	25.00%
Can't find job	3	25.00%
Can't find job with adequate pay	3	25.00%
Barriers with immigration status	1	8.33%

Note: Respondents could select more than one.



JOB SATISFACTION

Among those who graduated one or more years ago:

- **67% CURRENTLY EMPLOYED** in their desired field
- **51% WORKING** in jobs related to their majors compared to about 27% of college graduates nationally¹⁶
- **59% ENJOY THEIR JOBS**

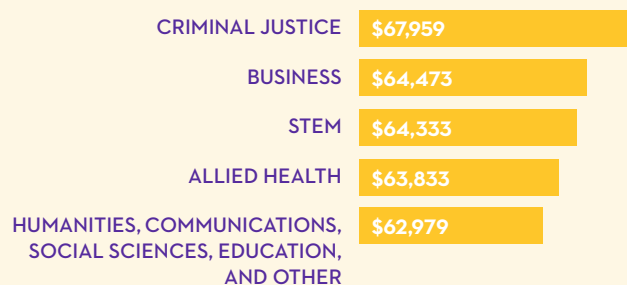
GRADUATE SCHOOL

- **32% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** have either earned or are working on a Master's degree.

FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

SALARY

- Average salary for teen parent graduates working full time: **\$62,859**
- Average salary for Associate's degree earners working full time: **\$50,600**
- Average salary for Bachelor's degree earners working full time: **\$64,972**



PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

- **54% OF ALL TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** are accessing some form of public assistance, such as TANF, SNAP, WIC, or Medicaid.
- **50% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES WORKING FULL TIME** are accessing public assistance.
- **100% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES WORKING PART TIME** are accessing public assistance.
- **51% OF BACHELOR'S DEGREE HOLDERS** are accessing public assistance.
- **73% OF ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE HOLDERS** are accessing public assistance.
- **63% OF BLACK TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** are accessing public assistance.
- **46% OF HISPANIC/LATINX TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** are accessing public assistance.

DETAILED FINDINGS (CONT.)

FINANCIAL OUTCOMES (CONT.)



STUDENT DEBT

- **60% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** had debt at graduation.
- Average student debt for those who borrowed was **\$25,081.82**.
- **75% OF BLACK TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** hold student loan **DEBT AVERAGING \$29,767**.
- **41% OF HISPANIC/LATINX TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** hold student loan **DEBT AVERAGING \$13,163**.

PERCEPTION OF COLLEGE



PERCEPTION OF COLLEGE

- **88% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** indicated at least one positive outcome that had come from earning their degrees.
- **43% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** feel that their college degree has helped them become more financially stable.
- **66% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** believe that their children are more likely to go to college because they earned their college degree.
 - Black teen parent graduates: **57%**
 - Hispanic/Latinx teen parent graduates: **75%**
- **33% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** indicated that earning their college degree inspired others in their family to do the same.
- **90% OF TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** indicated that earning their college degree was worth the money.
 - **83% OF BLACK TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** indicated that earning their college degree was worth the money.
 - **100% OF HISPANIC/LATINX TEEN PARENT GRADUATES** indicated that earning their college degree was worth the money.

ANA VÁSQUEZ is a 30-year-old mother of two sons, a nursing school graduate, and a proud Generation Hope alumna. She graduated from George Mason University with a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing in May 2020 and started working at Medstar Georgetown University Hospital that July. Her degree has opened up a world of possibilities. **"There's so much I can do with nursing, not just bedside," she explains. "I can go into administration, I can go into teaching, or I can go into the public sector."** Ana says that her experience as a parenting student on public assistance gave her a unique perspective that helps her understand and relate to financially struggling patients in a way her colleagues can't. In addition to sharing her story with prospective nursing students, Ana stays connected to Generation Hope by mentoring a current Scholar. **"I am the biggest advocate [of the program],"** she says. Along with the pride Ana feels after earning her Associate's and Bachelor's degrees, she enjoys tangible benefits, including health insurance coverage for her family through her job. She no longer shares a bedroom with her sons as she did while in school — Ana purchased her first home earlier this year.



ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

ANA
VÁSQUEZ



“

Once I graduated and started my first job and got my first paycheck, I realized, ‘Oh, I guess I can budget a whole apartment for myself.’ I got my first room at 28 [years old] when I graduated from college. I got my own room, like my own door with my own privacy, and I wasn't freaking out about making ends meet as much... It blew my mind because I had shared [a room] with the boys since I was 17.”

IMPACT OF COLLEGE ACCORDING TO TEEN PARENT GRADUATES

MY DEGREE MEANS...

“A motivator for my future
kids to be whatever
they want,”

Joseph Yusuf

Howard University, 2019

“Generational wealth
and stability,”

Alexis Beuchert

Old Dominion University, 2022

“My degree means
everything to me. I gave
myself and my child a
fighting chance by having
my degree.”

Andre’a Johnson

University of Maryland, Global Campus, 2020

WHAT HAS YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE ALLOWED YOU TO DO?

“

Having a college degree allowed me to get
a secure government job doing the work I love.”

Andre’a Johnson

University of Maryland, Global Campus, 2020

“

My college degree has allowed me to
pursue jobs that I otherwise would not
have had the ability to obtain. It has also
opened doors for me that were specifically
designed to help me move forward in
my career.”

Britnie Carrion

George Mason University, 2021

“

The degree meant financial stability for my son and me
no matter what, and the ability to buy a car and house
for my family before my 21st birthday. It also
allows me to vacation and create
memories with my son!”

Lillian Graciano

University of Maryland, Baltimore, 2019



WHAT DOES YOUR COLLEGE DEGREE MEAN TO YOU?

“

As a teenager who aged out of foster care with a baby, my college is probably the greatest example of ‘overcoming’ in my life. So many said I wouldn’t be successful as a person—let alone a parent or student—but my degree is a true example that I am not a statistic and that I am the one who can decide my success and shape what it looks like. I join the ranks of the very few foster kids who have been able to rise above their circumstances and get a degree.”

Colleen Forsee

Northern Virginia Community College, 2015



“

It means I move through the world differently because I do have a degree and I am no longer seen as a liability for society because I am a teen mom. It means people respect me because I do have a degree and don’t use my teen motherhood against me.”

Yoslin Amaya Hernandez

University of Maryland, College Park, 2021



“

My college degree is a big part of me and how I identify myself. I am extremely proud of the degrees I earned, and I feel that they tell a lot about me, my passions, my hard work, and my determination. They really are everything to me!”

Melissa Corpancho

George Mason University, 2017



“

My college degree means the world to me. It has transformed my life tremendously. Going from being this poor little kid to being this successful and educated woman that is financially well off and is continuing to grow professionally, my degree has put me in the position to provide my daughter everything I didn’t have and more.”

Sheila Best

Trinity Washington University, 2018



LESSONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The data in this report provide a number of lessons for organizations and individuals working in K–12 education and higher education and with youth and families. First, we hope that these findings demonstrate the tremendous value and impact of a college degree on a young parent and their family and encourage practitioners to intentionally include teen parents in their work. Specifically, individuals and organizations working with teen parents should consider:

- **INCLUDING COLLEGE PREP AND SUPPORT IN THEIR OFFERINGS:** While there are too few supports for expecting and parenting youth, what does exist tends to focus on basic needs and high school completion. Ensuring that young parents have information about continuing their education beyond high school as well as the resources to attend and complete college is crucial to the long term success of their families.
- **INVESTING IN ADVISING:** Our data clearly show differential outcomes across majors in terms of employment rates, utilization of public assistance, and more. While we believe young parents should have the freedom to pursue their passions, it is crucial for them to have honest, unbiased information about likely employment outcomes for their academic major. Students need to make fully informed choices about their majors, especially when they are considering the need to support their child or children. Additionally, students need solid academic plans leading to a Bachelor's degree or career-track Associate's degree. As the vast majority of graduates in our sample were single parents while in college (as are the vast majority of teen parents nationally⁴), they are in many cases under the financial pressure of supporting their child or children on their own, only increasing the importance of having all of the employment information about their majors and degree paths. Practitioners working with teen parents should work to increase their own knowledge about career outcomes for various majors and have ongoing conversations with students about their major choices, degree paths, and career options.
- **CUSTOMIZING CAREER PREPARATION:** While students may have access to career services on their campuses, those services are not specifically tailored to the needs of young parents. For many teen parents, career preparation activities, such as internships and networking events, are inaccessible as a result of parenting responsibilities, low income, little time, and other challenges. Practitioners working with teen parents should create specialized career support services that allow young parents to gain career experience while in college, increasing their chances of accessing well-paid employment that utilizes their degrees after graduation.
- **PRIORITIZING RELATIONSHIPS:** Almost 80% of graduates in our survey are still connected to a Generation Hope staff member, demonstrating the ongoing power and impact that caring, supportive relationships with adults can have in a young person's life. Organizations working with teen parents should ensure that they hire staff who are skilled relationship builders, have long-term commitment to the work, and are dedicated to supporting students using a strengths-based, equity-centered approach. In turn, organizations should provide the ongoing training and resources needed to ensure that their staff support young families at the highest level.
- **IMPLEMENTING WORK WITH A RACE EQUITY LENS:** Due to systemic obstacles and structural racism, youth of color are disproportionately impacted by teen pregnancy. It is imperative that practitioners provide support through a race equity lens. This means recognizing and committing to addressing long-standing, structural barriers to economic opportunity, positive health outcomes, and educational experiences that have prevented generational progress for communities of color and continue to create unique challenges for these populations each and every day.

LESSONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

This report underscores the importance of championing policies that make earning a college degree a more realistic option for young parents across the country. When a teen parent becomes a college graduate, there are long-lasting benefits for them, their children, and their communities. To help more young parents earn their degrees, advocates, researchers, and legislators should focus on:

- **ENSURING YOUNG PARENTS HAVE THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO FINISH HIGH SCHOOL:** Less than half of young mothers complete high school. Lack of transportation and childcare, housing instability, little access to prenatal care and proper nutrition, and stigmatization by teachers, administrators, and peers are significant hurdles to earning a high school diploma or GED for young parents. Without a high school credential, college is even further out of reach for this population. More high school completion programs for expecting and parenting teens need to be in place in communities across the country, and they need adequate funding and resources.
- **REMOVING FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PARENTS:** Reflecting the larger student parent population, the vast majority of our graduates came into college with very few financial resources, making the prospects of persisting and completing less likely. Investing in Pell Grants, emergency aid programs, scholarships for pregnant and expecting students, and completion programs that are intentionally inclusive of this population are important and needed legislative actions to ensure they have the resources to actually earn a degree.
- **INVESTING IN AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE:** Affordable childcare is not just important for workers but also for students. Childcare costs exceed the average fees and tuition of a four-year public university in 31 states and the District of Columbia,¹⁷ often forcing young parents to choose between furthering their education or working multiple low-wage jobs. In order to make college a more viable choice, significant investments in childcare solutions are needed that are both affordable and accessible for young families, including more investments in campus-based childcare.
- **CREATING MORE FAMILY-FRIENDLY COLLEGE CAMPUSES:** Despite the fact that nearly 25% of all undergraduate students are parenting,¹⁵ few colleges and universities have intentional supports to ensure they earn a degree or data collection systems to track how many of their students are actually parenting. This is because the higher education system was not designed with student parents in mind or the other marginalized student groups, such as first-generation college students, students of color, students with low income, etc., with which they intersect. In order for more institutions to become more family-friendly, they will need investments, resources, and capacity building. This is especially true for community colleges, where the largest share of student parents attend, and minority serving institutions that have been historically under-funded but serve the most students of color.
- **ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC HURDLES TO ECONOMIC MOBILITY:** As this report shows, a college degree is an important lever in accelerating the economic mobility of young families. Fully clearing their path to wealth building and sustainability will also require legislation that addresses long-standing systemic inequities. A young parent will earn higher wages thanks to their postsecondary credential, but employment and housing discrimination, for example, continue to make it difficult for them to earn a living wage and build generational wealth. Their degree might allow them to pursue a fulfilling career, but many will carry higher amounts of student loan debt that make it difficult to pay their bills. Policies rooted in racism and exclusion have kept resources out of the hands of communities of color, which is why Black student parents carry the highest amounts of student debt among all college borrowers. Legislative action should include efforts to dismantle these practices and to provide the resources that young parents need – and deserve – as they work toward their educational goals.

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ABOUT GENERATION HOPE

Founded in 2010, Generation Hope is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC that engages education and policy partners to drive systemic change and provides direct support to teen parents in college as well as their children through holistic, two-generation programming. Fewer than 2% of teen mothers will earn their college degrees before they are 30 years old, but Generation Hope Scholars graduate at a rate that is on par with the national average for all college students, is almost two times the rate of low-income college students, and is almost eight times the rate of single mothers nationwide. Generation Hope engages in local and national advocacy work, amplifying the student-parent voice and centering their experiences. Additionally, Generation Hope leverages its data and best practices to serve as a thought partner, providing colleges with the tools, resources, and support that they need to implement programs, adjust policies, and change structures and culture to improve outcomes for student parents.

For questions about the report or requests for partnership on implementing best practices for student parent and teen parent success, please contact:

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APPENDIX

SCHOOLS GRADUATED FROM	
Anne Arundel Community College	1
Bowie State University	3
Community College of Baltimore County	1
George Mason University	10
George Washington University	1
Howard Community College	2
Howard University	2
Marymount University	2
Montgomery College	10
Morgan State University	1
Northern Virginia Community College	12
Old Dominion University	1
Prince George's Community College	2
Towson University	2
Trinity Washington University	9
University of the District of Columbia	1
University of the District of Columbia Community College	1
University of Maryland, Baltimore	1
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	3
University of Maryland, College Park	6
University of Maryland, Global Campus	3

ANNUAL INCOME BEFORE COLLEGE		
I did not have any income	16	27.59%
Less than \$5,000	7	12.07%
\$5,000 - \$15,000	12	20.69%
\$15,001 - \$20,000	13	22.41%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	3	5.17%
\$30,001 - \$40,000	6	10.34%
\$40,001 or more	1	1.72%

MAJORS AND CATEGORIES		
Allied Health (Healthcare Administration; Nursing)	4	6.90%
Business Fields (Business Administration; Business; Human Resources Management)	11	18.97%
Communications Fields (Communications; Media, Journalism, and Film)	3	5.17%
Criminal Justice (Criminal Justice; Criminology; Forensic Science)	6	10.34%
Education (Liberal Arts for the Teaching Profession; Elementary/Special Education; Community Education; Elementary Education)	4	6.90%
General Studies (Associate's of Arts; Associate's of Science degrees)	7	12.07%
Humanities Fields (Political Science; Deaf Studies; Fashion Merchandising; Integrative Studies; International Relations; Social Justice and Human Rights)	7	12.07%
Other (Legal Studies, Paralegal Studies, Culinary Arts)	3	5.17%
Social Science Fields (Sociology, Social Work, Psychology, Family Science, Economics)	8	13.79%
STEM Fields (Information Systems and Operations Management; Civil Engineering; Exercise Science; Computer Science; Cybersecurity; Chemistry)	5	8.62%

RACE	LOCATION (NOW)			
	DC	VA	MD	OTHER
All	15.52%	25.86%	53.45%	5.17%
Black or African American	26.67%	13.33%	56.67%	3.33%
Hispanic/Latinx	0.00%	45.83%	50.00%	4.17%
Other races/not reported	25.00%	0.00%	50.00%	25.00%