

PROGRAM TO CONTINUE EDUCATION OF GIRLS WHO MUST LEAVE
SCHOOL BECAUSE OF PREGNANCY

There is growing concern regarding very young girls who become pregnant. In Detroit, 3,833 illegitimate births were reported in 1964 and yearly scores more go unreported. A high proportion of these are the children of school-aged girls.

The problem is dramatized at several levels: first, when the student must leave school, she, of course, loses the chance to earn credits and maintain her class standing. For a larger percentage, this means that she does not finish high school at all, or, if she does, it becomes a difficult, part-time effort strung over a number of years. Second, the loss of school routine often leads to boredom which is demoralizing and destructive to intellectual interest and effort. Third, the girl's isolation from her peers damages her feelings about herself—feelings already assaulted by resentment and remorse over the pregnancy. Fourth, the pregnancy itself is fraught with fears and anxieties that are usually compounded by ignorance and guilt.

It is felt that if we are to curb this growing problem and meet the needs of these girls by intervening in the cycle, which for the most part has gone unbroken, a multi-service approach is needed.

It is with this in mind that this proposal determines to provide comprehensive educational, medical, and social work services to meet the multi-needs of the school-aged pregnant girl.

Specifically, the following services will be offered:

1. A classroom in the area but not in a school building, flexible enough to include blackboards, bathinettes, a library, a stove, mirrors, a sewing machine, etc.
2. The instructional program will include at least these elements:
 - (a) Individualized academic instruction in non-graded classes to help each student continue her education for credit.
 - (b) Instruction in the physical and emotional aspects of pregnancy.
 - (c) Individual and group counseling for both the girl and her family.
 - (d) Provision of a referral to existing infant child day-care facilities.

Population

The program will be offered to both public and non-public school pregnant girls, and provisions will also be made to accommodate cyesis cases in young girls not enrolled in any school. In the event that the fathers of the prospective children are known, counseling services will be made available to them if so needed or desired. Three centers will be established, each to serve twenty girls.

Personnel

Graduate students from the Merrill-Palmer Institute and other local higher educational institutions will be involved in parcticum experience with the project. They will assist in the family life education program and gain experience in counseling and related social work services.

Housing

Even if space were available in existing school facilities, it would be undesirable to house this project in schools, due to its nature. The centers will be located in three non-school facilities, such as church basements, in the inner-city area.

Medical services

Through a recent Public Health Office Grant, a Maternal and Infant Care Project is being established in several of Detroit's hospitals. Assurances, now on file, have been given that at least a part of the medical services needed by the school-aged pregnant girls can be offered through this Project.

Dissemination

Through the Division of School Relations and Special Services, arrangements have been made to establish a publication to serve both internal and external interests.

A separate project is being designed for submission also under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to implement such a publication, due to the wide range of projects in the school district of Detroit.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of the total program comprised of all of the projects submitted or to be submitted will be evaluated in one comprehensive effort. This component will encompass in-depth evaluation of all federal programs in the Detroit Public Schools.