

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Media Contact: Sara Finger**  
**(608) 251-1039**

**Teen Childbearing Costs Wisconsin Taxpayers \$156 Million**  
*Organization stresses the Value of Prevention on Tax Day*

Madison – In recognition of National Tax Day, the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is highlighting the public costs associated with teen childbearing in Wisconsin and encouraging taxpayers to recognize the value of prevention.

Despite a 31% decline in the state teen birth rate between 1991 and 2004, teen childbearing in Wisconsin cost taxpayers (federal, state, and local) at least **\$156 million** in 2004, according to a recent analysis by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Between 1991 and 2004, there were more than 97,400 teen births in Wisconsin. In 2004 alone, annual taxpayer costs associated with children born to teen mothers included: \$23 million for public health care; \$38 million for child welfare; \$50 million for incarceration; and \$41 million in lost tax revenue due to decreased earnings for over the children's career.

Meanwhile, the 31% decline in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 2004 in Wisconsin has yielded substantial costs savings. The progress of Wisconsin has made reducing teen childbearing saved taxpayers an estimated **\$97 million** in 2004 alone.

"This report makes clear that teen pregnancy and childbearing have significant economic and social costs," said WAWH Director Sara Finger. "Preventing teen pregnancy is a cost-effective strategy for creating a competitive workforce, fighting child poverty, and reducing overall state and local government expenditures in Wisconsin."

The Wisconsin Medicaid Family Planning Waiver program, which provides birth control, family planning counseling, treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, discussion of abstinence and other services to low-income girls and women ages 15 to 44, has helped to reduce the number of Medicaid funded births.

In 2000, there were 92 births for every 1,000 low-income girls ages 15 to 17. By 2003, there were only 1.5 births per 1,000 girls in that same age and income group who participated in the Family Planning Waiver program.

Other options to reducing the teen childbearing rate include increasing access to responsible sexual health education and to emergency contraception, a form of birth control that can prevent a pregnancy when taken within 120 hours of unprotected sex.

The analysis, *By the Numbers: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing*, is the first comprehensive national estimate of the public costs of teen childbearing since the 1996 and is the first-ever analysis of what childbearing costs in every state.

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.  
To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: [www.supportwomenshealth.org](http://www.supportwomenshealth.org)*

## The Value of Prevention

### Teen Pregnancy & Wisconsin's Economy

**Teen pregnancy in Wisconsin has cost taxpayers billions of dollars.**



- Between 1991 and 2004, teen births in Wisconsin cost taxpayers a total of **\$2.8 billion**.
- Teen childbearing in our state cost taxpayers at least **\$156 million in 2004 alone**.
- A majority (**62%**) of these costs are borne by our state and local governments.
- On average, it costs **\$5,133 per birth** for a child born to a teen mother 17 and younger.

### How was the money spent?

Because teen parents are often ill-equipped to support a family, most of the public costs of teen childbearing are associated with harmful consequences for their children. In Wisconsin in 2004, taxpayer costs associated with children born to teen mothers included:

- \$23 million for public health care
- \$38 million for foster care and other child welfare services
- \$50 million in incarceration costs for the sons of teen parents
- \$41 million in lost tax revenue due to decreased earnings and spending

### How is teen pregnancy linked to economic issues of critical interest to our state, such as child poverty, out-of-wedlock births, educational attainment, and workforce readiness?

- In Wisconsin, 75% of pregnant teens rely on Medicaid for prenatal care and delivery.
- Less than four out of ten teen mothers ever complete high school.
- High school dropouts are less likely to be employed and have significantly lower earnings than those with at least a high school degree.
- In Wisconsin, 25% of teen pregnancies are repeat pregnancies. Having multiple children compounds the challenges a teen mother faces to finish school and keep a job.
- Young fathers are less capable of paying adequate child support to teen mothers, thus only 30% of teenage mothers receive child support.

**Preventing teen pregnancy is a cost-effective strategy for creating a competitive workforce, fighting child poverty, reducing overall state and local government expenditures in Wisconsin.**

**The teen birth rate in Wisconsin declined 30.9% between 1991 and 2004, saving taxpayers an estimated \$97million in 2004 alone.**

We've proven that we can make a difference in reducing teen pregnancy rates. If our state is able to sustain our progress, will not only improve the well-being of our children, families and communities, but we will also reduce the burden on taxpayers.

### You can help our state moving in the right direction!

1. Support the Wisconsin Medicaid **Family Planning Waiver** which gives low income women between the ages of 15-44 access to free family planning services.
2. Support **Comprehensive, Age-Appropriate and Medically Accurate Sexuality Education** in the Schools.
3. Support increased education and access to **Emergency Contraception** to prevent unintended pregnancies.
4. Help **reduce health disparities** that negatively impact young women of color in Wisconsin.

*For more information on ways to prevent teen pregnancy, please visit: [www.supportwomenshealth.org](http://www.supportwomenshealth.org)*