



The Responsibilities of Parenting - R U Ready?

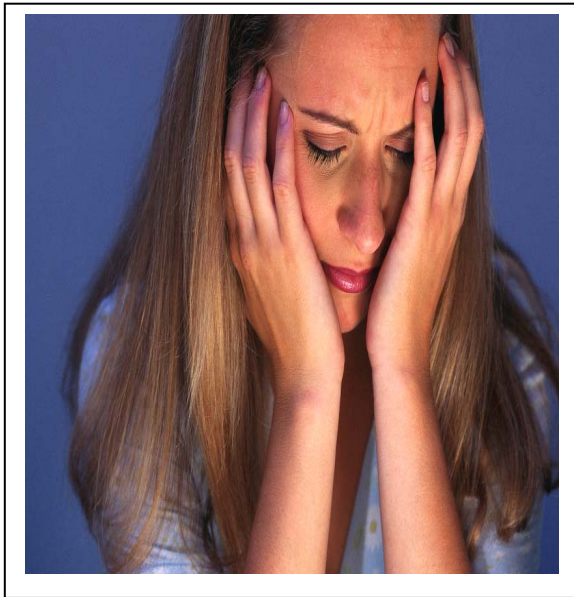
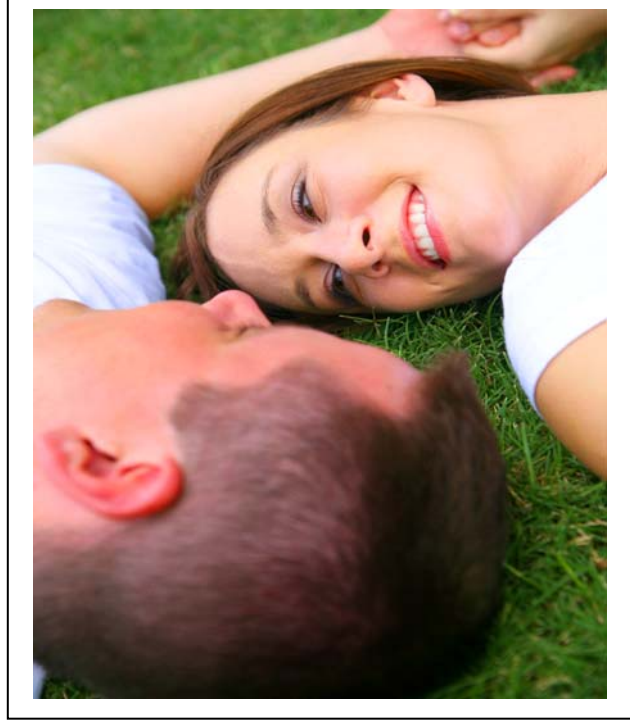
A Student's Guide to Child Support

This product has been reviewed by workgroups from the Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support managers and training staff, Office of Child Support performance management, the Paternity Establishment Percentage team, the Establishment Work Improvement Team, a teen focus group, and current and former Michigan teachers, as well as staff of the Department of Education and the Department of Community Health.

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The Responsibilities of Parenting – R U Ready?



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



ISMAEL AHMED
DIRECTOR

Dear School Official:

The Michigan Department of Human Services Office of Child Support developed this teaching packet for use in Michigan schools to increase the students' awareness of the legal and financial responsibilities that come with being a parent. It is important that adolescents learn that mothers and fathers have equal importance in the lives of their children and that providing for a child's needs should be the shared responsibility of both parents. For unwed parents, this means establishing paternity at birth, as well as providing ongoing financial and medical support for the child.

In the United States, nearly 40% of children are born to parents who are not married, and most of those children live in single-parent households. In Michigan, there are more than 48,000 children born to unwed parents each year, with over 12,000 born to teenagers. One in three teenage girls in the United States becomes pregnant at least once before the age of 20, and the rate of teen pregnancy in the United States remains far higher than in other comparable countries.

Research closely links teen parenthood to many negative consequences for mothers, fathers, and their children. For example, compared to those who delay having children, teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school, remain unmarried, and live in poverty. Their children are more likely to be born at low birth weight, grow up poor, live in single-parent households, and experience abuse and neglect. Children need a responsible mother and father, and it is essential that parents be emotionally, financially and physically prepared to handle the responsibilities of child rearing!

Please be sure to include female and male students in these class units. It is our sincere hope that Michigan teens will make the decision to delay parenting until a more appropriate time. However, we believe the information contained in the teaching packet is valuable to those who are already parents as well as future parents.

Thank you for all you do for Michigan's children. We appreciate your effort in helping young students to obtain a better understanding of this extremely valuable life lesson: Children need a responsible mother and father!

Sincerely,
Marilyn F. Stephen, Director
Michigan Office of Child Support

Introduction



This teaching packet complements the life skills curriculum. It has five units, including:

- 1) The Challenge – Why teach about the legal and financial responsibility of teen parents?
- 2) Facts about Teen Parents with Children.
- 3) Establishing Paternity and a Legal Father.
- 4) Marriage and Parenting Realities.
- 5) Providing Financial and Medical Support.

This packet teaches:

- **The Rights and Responsibilities of Parenthood** – What does it mean to be a parent? A legal parent is responsible for supporting his/her child – period. It does not matter that parents are not married, didn't intend to become pregnant, are underage, are still in school or have other financial obligations.
- **The Realities of Marriage and Parenting** – What is it really like to be married or a parent? Being a parent is fun yet demanding, rewarding yet expensive, and difficult. Teens need to attain a certain level of maturity and independence to become good parents.
- **The Future As a Parent** – What does the future hold? Teens need to evaluate their own readiness for parenthood and marriage, and plan ahead to make realistic decisions based upon a solid understanding of the legal consequences of becoming a parent.

The subject of marriage and committed relationships will naturally arise from time to time while using this teaching packet. We suggest that teachers maintain a respectful and supportive stance toward the non-traditional family structures that may be realities in many students' lives. However, it is important to present marriage as an option, and to explore with the class some of the possible advantages and benefits of marriage as a context for parenthood and an environment for raising children.¹

¹<http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/K/KIDSCOUNTIndicatorBriefIncreasingthePercentag/Two%20Parent%20Families.pdf>

The teaching packet introduces students to information about the Michigan child support system and assists students in recognizing the legal consequences of failing to pay child support. There are a variety of activities to capture the attention of high school students including glossary matching, multiple choice, marriage questions, whose job is it, truth or myth and budgeting for child support.

This packet seeks to expose students to attitudes that may influence their behavior as adults. It has been developed to change the way students view child support – from a problem that can have little or no effect on their lives, to an inherent responsibility that goes hand-in-hand with parenthood. Students will understand that:

- Children need and benefit from healthy relationships with both parents.
- Education and knowledge enable them to make informed decisions about their future.

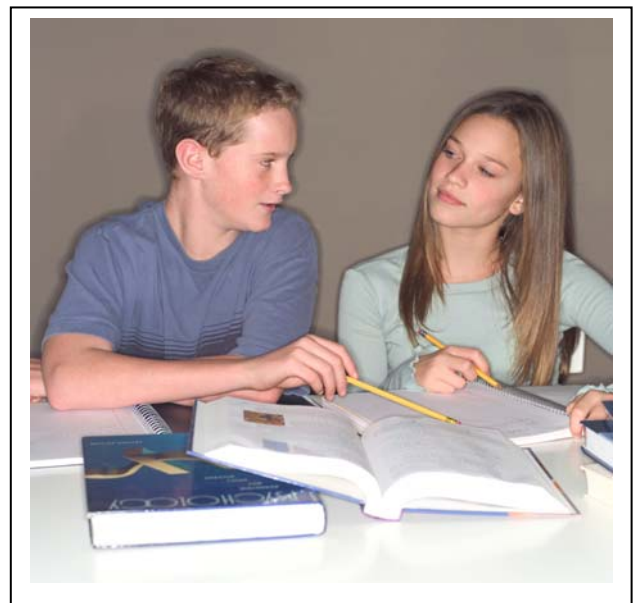
You can make a good investment in the future of Michigan and its children by implementing “The Responsibilities of Parenting – R U Ready?” teaching packet. We are excited about the implementation of this teaching packet and look forward to assistance in promoting its value. A glossary, located at the end of unit 2, contains explanations of the child support terms used throughout.

Informational sources for the teaching packet include:

- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.
- P.A.P.A. (Parenting and Paternity Awareness) curriculum of Texas.
- Get More (Teen Pregnancy Prevention Curriculum) of West Virginia.
- Michigan Department of Human Services Office of Child Support data.
- Michigan Department of Community Health data.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy was founded in 1996 as a private, nonprofit organization. It seeks to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families by reducing teen pregnancy. The National Campaign's goal is the reduction of the U.S. teen pregnancy rate by one-third between 2006 and 2015.

Note: This teaching packet can be implemented along with the *Michigan Model for Health*,® an award winning model curriculum for k-12 students. In particular, the high school module *Healthy and Responsible Relationships* teaches students the skills necessary to avoid unplanned teenage pregnancy.



Unit 1: The Challenge

Unit Goal – To understand the legal and financial responsibility of teen parents

2007 Michigan Department of Community Health data (see Appendix 1) indicates, that of 124,549 total births in the state of Michigan:

- **48,259 or 38.7% of total births were to unwed parents.**
- **12,664 total births were to teen parents (younger than age 20).**
- **90.8% of the 12,664 births were to *unwed* teen parents.**

Every child needs financial and emotional support from both parents. Even when parents do not live together, it is important that parents work together to support their child. Michigan's child support program helps parents to establish a financial partnership.

What Is Child Support?

Child support is money a parent pays to help meet his/her child's needs when the parent is not living with the child.

How Do Parents Receive Child Support?

Parents and custodians (see unit 2 glossary definitions) can receive help in establishing paternity, as well as obtaining and enforcing child support and medical support by applying for services with the Michigan child support program.

What Is Paternity Establishment?

Paternity establishment is the process to determine the legal parental relationship between a man and a child based on an Affidavit of Parentage or a court order.

How Are Support Orders Established?

The Office of Child Support (usually through the Prosecuting Attorney) may request that the Friend of the Court issue a child support order. The court generally orders the non-custodial parent (see unit 2 glossary definition) to provide support for the child who is living with the custodial party (see unit 2 glossary definition.) The court determines the amount of child support, medical support and child care a parent must provide.

What Is Michigan Doing to Assist Parents?

The Office of Child Support contracts with the Friend of the Court and the Prosecuting Attorney offices in each county to deliver child support services in Michigan. Each partner agency plays a critical role in providing child support services. Teens with children can also apply for child support services to establish paternity and/or a child support order. According to national statistics, Michigan ranks the sixth highest in the United States in child support collections distributed to families and the state.

Unwed parents struggle with the serious challenges of raising their children, and many non-custodial parents fail to contribute their share of child support payments. Parents should provide both emotional and financial support to their children, but many do not. The problem of non-payment is large, and often the children who do not receive support are living in poverty. When a parent does not pay child support, the custodial party often finds (s)he cannot provide food or clothing for the child(ren).² More than 935,500 families received child support payments during 2008, which is approximately 12% of Michigan households with children.

Establishment of paternity is another step in resolving the issue of child support. Parents who are not married must establish paternity before the court may order a non-custodial parent to pay child support. Establishing paternity *in court* in order to determine a parents' responsibility to provide child support and/or medical benefits for a child increases the amount of time and money in the child support process.

Facts About Teen Parents

Teen parents are:

- More likely to be on public assistance – almost 70% of unmarried teen mothers receive public assistance (see unit 2 FIP/Medicaid glossary definition) within one year of the birth of their child.
- Less likely to receive adequate prenatal care.
- Less likely to obtain job skills and work experience.
- Very likely to quit school!³



² Families received \$1,035,120,734 (63%) of the total child support owed (\$1,647,484,005) in Michigan in 2008.

³ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/policymakers/PDF/SawhillTestimony502.pdf>

High School Dropouts Are:

- Likely to face a higher unemployment rate than high school graduates.
- Likely to earn less annually than high school graduates.
- At increased risk of having less stable employment than their peers who stayed in school and/or secured jobs.⁴

A person's level of education is a predictor of income – in general, the more education, the larger the earning potential.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau data for 2007, the median income of men who were:

- Not high school graduates was **\$22,602**.
- High school graduates was **\$32,435**.
- Attending college or received an associate's degree was **\$41,035**.
- A graduate with a bachelor's degree was **\$57,397**.
- A graduate with a master's or professional degree was **\$77,219**.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau data for 2007, the median income of women who were:

- Not high school graduates was **\$14,202**.
- High school graduates was **\$21,219**.
- Attending college, or received an associate's degree was **\$27,046**.
- A graduate with a bachelor's degree was **\$38,628**.
- A graduate with a master's or professional degree was **\$50,937**.⁵

In the United States in 2007, the median income of men was **\$44,255**; for women **\$34,278**, or 77.5% of men's earnings.⁶ In 2007, raising a child (to age 18) cost approximately **\$240,000**.⁷

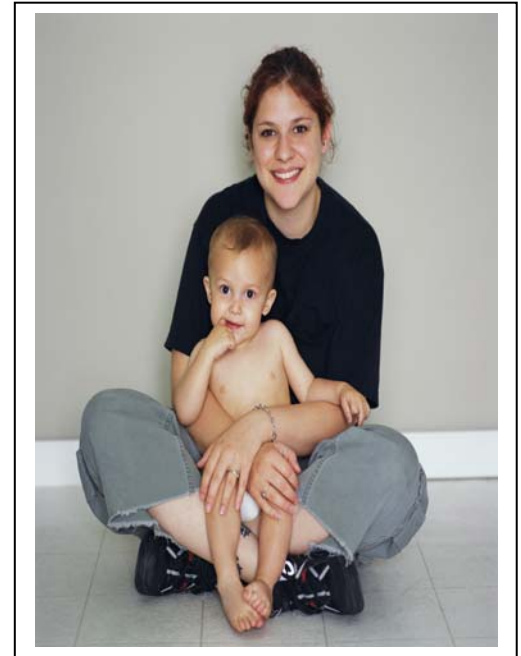
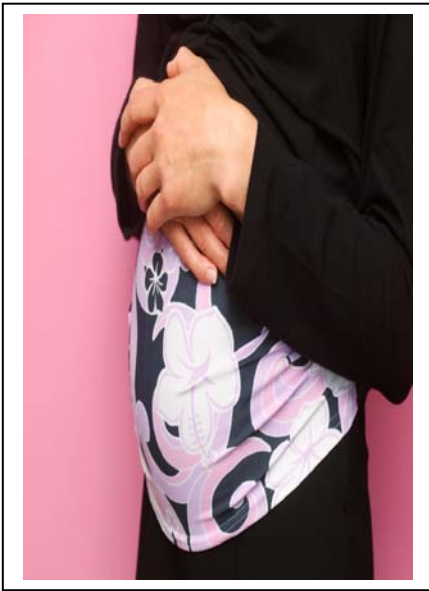


⁴ <http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=30&articleid=49§ionid=175>

⁵ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/acs-09.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/acs-09.pdf>

⁷ <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/45852/2/crc2007.pdf>



Why Teach About Child Support?

The media and the public have focused increased attention on what many consider a child support crisis. Part of that crisis is teen parents who do not finish high school or college limiting their ability to obtain a good job. Unprepared teen parents cannot provide the emotional and financial support for the remainder of their child's life which also typically leads to developmental difficulties for their children.

Douglas W. Nelson, executive director of The Annie E. Casey Foundation, describes the problem and its effects in *The Kids' Count Data Book*. "If we permit resources and support available to families to continue to erode, the proportion of children who are undernourished, undereducated, underachieving and unprepared for parenthood will continue to grow."⁸

Teen Statistics on Marriage and Unplanned Pregnancy

In the United States, one in three teenage girls become pregnant at least once before the age of 20, and the rate of teen pregnancy remains far higher than in other comparable countries. For some subgroups, the news is even more alarming. For example, 51% of Latina teens become pregnant by the time they leave their teen years.⁹

Compared to women in other age groups, teens made the most progress in reducing rates of unplanned pregnancy between 1994 and 2001 (18% decrease).¹⁰ In fact teens are the only age group that made progress in reducing rates of unplanned pregnancy between 1994 and 2001. However, there was a **3% increase** in the national teen birth rate between 2005 and 2006,

⁸ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, www.kiscount.org.

⁹ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/briefly-unplanned-in-the-united-states.pdf>



Unplanned Pregnancy Is Not Just A Teen Problem:

- 21% of all unplanned pregnancies occur to teen girls.
- 55% of all unplanned pregnancies occur to women in their twenties.
- 1 million unplanned pregnancies occur to women in their early twenties.
- 2.2 million unplanned pregnancies occur to unmarried women of all ages.¹¹

The share of unplanned pregnancies to unmarried women is very high: 74%. This compares to 27% of unplanned pregnancies among married women. In 2007, Michigan recorded 56,996 marriages and 34,522 divorces!¹² Both mothers and fathers who have an unplanned pregnancy report less happiness and more conflict in their relationships when compared to similar women and men who have a planned pregnancy

If the efforts of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and those of others lead to fewer unplanned pregnancies, more young adults will be deliberate, serious and intentional about pregnancy, child rearing, and family formation. When parents plan for children, they can work together to provide emotional and cognitive support, love, and nurturing, all of which are essential in healthy childhood development.



¹¹ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/briefly-unplanned-in-the-united-states.pdf>

¹² <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/marriage/tab4.1.asp?Mtype=1>

Unit 2: Facts About Teen Parents with Children

Unit Goal – To understand the difficulties associated with teen and unplanned pregnancies.

Defining the Problem – Analysis of data by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy¹³ indicates that **about 1 in 3 pregnancies in America are unplanned!**

The U.S. teen birth rate declined **34%** between 1991 and 2005, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) released data January 7, 2009 confirming a 3% increase in the national teen birth rate between 2005 and 2006 – **the first increase after 14 years of steady decline**. NCHS data indicates 26 states had a significant increase in their teen birth rate between 2005 and 2006, and only three states and the District of Columbia had significant decreases.

The Effects of Unplanned Pregnancy

More than 2 million of the 6.4 million pregnancies in America in 2001 were unplanned. Reducing unplanned pregnancy will bring significant benefits to women, men, children, families, and society in general. Taking into account the existing social and economic factors, women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy are less likely to obtain prenatal care, and their babies are at increased risk of:

- Low birth weight.
- Being born prematurely.
- Infant mortality.¹⁴

Children born from unplanned pregnancies often face a range of developmental risks.¹⁵ Data indicates that these children report poorer physical and mental health compared to children born as the result of an intended pregnancy. Their relationships with their mothers tend to be more distant during childhood when compared to peers born as the result of an intended pregnancy.

A analysis from Child Trends that compares two-year-old children born from intended pregnancies and unplanned pregnancies, indicates that unplanned pregnancy can create a harmful environment leading to **significantly lower cognitive test scores**. These cognitive test scores included a direct assessment of the following skills:

- Listening.
- Vocabulary.
- Exploring.
- Memory.
- Problem solving.
- Communication.
- Overall mental ability relative to other children in their age group.¹⁶

¹³ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/>

¹⁴ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/PlayingCatchUp.pdf>

The majority of children from unplanned pregnancies are raised in single-parent households, and generally, children who are raised in single-parent families face a number of challenges. When compared to similar children who grow up with married parents, children in single-parent families:

- Have lower grade-point averages.
- Have poorer school attendance records.
- Are twice as likely to drop out of high school.
- Are less likely to attend or complete college.
- Are 2.5 times as likely to become teen parents.
- Are 1.4 times as likely to be both out of school and out of work.
- Are 5 times more likely to be poor.
- Have higher rates of divorce as adults.¹⁷



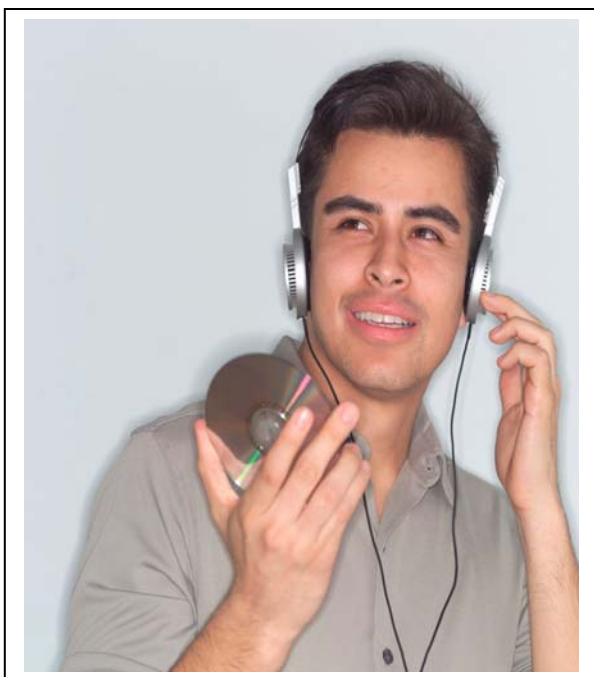
¹⁷ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

Handout 2a: Glossary

Affidavit of Parentage	A sworn statement establishing paternity of a child signed by the mother and father and witnessed by a taker of oaths, such as a notary public .
Alleged father/Putative father	The man claimed to be the biological father of a child when the child has no legal father .
Arrearage	Unpaid payment for past periods owed by a parent who the court has ordered to pay child support.
Biological father	The man from whom one inherits half of one's DNA (genetic material).
Child support	The physical, emotional and financial support provided by the non-custodial parent for the support of his/her child.
Child support order	The ongoing obligation for a periodic payment made directly or indirectly by a non-custodial parent to a custodial parent, caregiver or guardian, or the government, for the care and support of a child.
Custodial party	The person with legal custody and with whom the child lives; may be a parent, relative or guardian.
Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)	A nucleic acid that contains the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living organisms . DNA analysis offers a reliable way to determine the biological parent. Normally, every person carries two copies of every gene , one inherited from their mother, one inherited from their father.
Department of Human Services	The Michigan department that administers public assistance (FIP, Medicaid etc), child and family benefits.
Dependent	Child(ren) for whom the parent is legally and financially responsible. Child(ren) remain dependents until they are 18, graduate high school or are emancipated (released from parental responsibility) by a court.
Establishment of paternity	The legal acknowledgment of the parental relationship between a man and a child based on an Affidavit of Parentage or a court order.
Family Independence Program (FIP)	FIP is temporary cash assistance for low-income families with minor children and pregnant women. FIP helps families pay for living expenses such as rent, heat, utilities, clothing, food and personal care items.
Friend of the Court	The Friend of the Court is part of the family division of the circuit court and enforces court orders for child support and visitation.
Genetic test	A test conducted to establish whether a person is the biological mother (maternity test) or biological father (paternity test) of a certain individual. There are two possible results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion – The tested individual is not within the range, and is not considered the biological parent • Non-Exclusion – A high probability of paternity, greater than 99%, and the individual will be named the biological parent if no further testing is requested
Income withholding	A legal process in which a part (up to 50%) of a person's wages are withheld and applied to payment of a child support debt.
Legal father	The man the law recognizes as the father of the child.
Lien	A claim upon property to prevent sale or transfer until a debt is satisfied.

Handout 2a: Glossary (Continued)

Medicaid	A program jointly funded by the states and the federal government that reimburses hospitals and physicians for providing medical care to qualifying people.
Non-custodial parent	The parent who does not live with the child but has responsibility for providing physical, emotional and financial support.
Notary public	A person legally recognized by the state to administer oaths and take affidavits and statutory declarations , to witness and authenticate the execution of certain classes of documents.
Office of Child Support	The Office of Child Support (part of the Department of Human Services) administers and supervises the child support program for the state of Michigan.
Paternity	The legal determination of the father.
Paternity and/or child support complaint	The legal document filed in a court to request paternity establishment or to begin a child support case.
Prosecuting Attorney	An official who files and prosecutes actions to establish paternity and establish child support orders.
Support obligation	Amount of money to be paid as support by the legally responsible parent and the manner by which it is to be paid.
TANF	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a federal assistance program which replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program. The Michigan Department of Human Services provides TANF benefits on behalf of children who are deprived due to death, disability or lack of income. In Michigan, this is called the Family Independence Program.
Third-party custodian	An individual who is not the father or mother of the child, but may be a person or an agency, like foster care, that has physical and/or legal custody of the child.



Activity 2a: Glossary Matching

Child Support Glossary Activity

Match the definitions with the terms. Write the correct definition number for the term in the number box.

Definitions	Term	Number
1. The man from whom one inherits half of one's DNA (genetic material).	Dependent	
2. The legal acknowledgment of the parental relationship between a man and a child based on an Affidavit of Parentage or a court order.	Alleged father/ Putative father	
3. The ongoing obligation for a periodic payment made directly or indirectly by a non-custodial parent to a custodial parent, caregiver or guardian, or the government, for the care and support of a child.	Arrearage	
4. The legal determination of the father.	Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)	
5. Unpaid payment for past periods owed by a parent who the court has ordered to pay child support.	Genetic test	
6. A sworn statement establishing paternity of a child signed by the mother and father and witnessed by a taker of oaths, such as a notary public .	Custodial party	
7. The parent who does not live with the child but has responsibility for providing physical, emotional and financial support.	Lien	
8. Amount of money to be paid as support by the legally responsible parent and the manner by which it is to be paid.	Child support order	
9. The man the law recognizes as the father of the child.	Establishment of paternity	
10. A test conducted to establish whether a person is the biological mother (maternity test) or biological father (paternity test) of a certain individual. There are two possible results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion – The tested individual is not within the range, and is not considered the biological parent • Non-Exclusion – A high probability of paternity, greater than 99%, and the individual will be named the biological parent if no further testing is requested 	Non-custodial parent	
11. The person with legal custody and with whom the child lives; may be a parent, relative or guardian.	Biological father	
12. A claim upon property to prevent sale or transfer until a debt is satisfied.	Legal father	
13. The man claimed to be the biological father of a child when the child has no legal father .	Support obligation	
14. A nucleic acid that contains the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living organisms . DNA analysis offers a reliable way to determine the biological parent. Normally, every person carries two copies of every gene , one inherited from their mother, one inherited from their father.	Affidavit of Parentage	
15. Child(ren) for whom the parent is legally and financially responsible. Child(ren) remain dependents until they are 18, graduate high school or are emancipated (released from parental responsibility) by a court.	Paternity	

Unit 3: Establishing Paternity and a Legal Father

Unit Goal – To understand the importance of establishing paternity and providing a legal father for child(ren).



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nZW3I2CW4>

What Is Paternity Establishment?

When the parents of a child are not married, the child is “**born out of wedlock.**” Paternity establishment is the process of determining the legal father of a child born out of wedlock. There are many father relationships, such as stepfather, biological father, or custodial father. However, the legal father is the man who is recognized by law as the male parent of a child.

[Michigan Court Rule \(MCR\) 3.903\(A\)\(7\)](#) defines a “legal father” as:¹⁸

- A man married to the child’s mother at any time from conception to the child’s birth.
- A man who legally adopts the child.
- A man who has been determined to be the child’s legal father in a judgment of paternity (court order).
- A man judicially determined to have parental rights.
- A man whose paternity is established by the completion and filing of an acknowledgment of parentage, now called the [Affidavit of Parentage](#) (see handout 3a) in accordance with the provisions of the Acknowledgment of Parentage Act (Michigan Compiled Law Act 305 of 1996).

Why Is a Legal Father Important?

When a child is born to an unmarried woman, the only legal parent for the child is the mother. A legal father must be determined for the child to obtain the same rights and benefits as a child born during a marriage. When there is no legal father for the child, the Office of Child Support may send a referral to the Prosecuting Attorney’s office to establish paternity.

¹⁸ <http://coa.courts.mi.gov/rules/documents/1Chapter3SpecialProceedingsandActions.pdf>

A putative father is a man who is alleged to be the biological father of a child with no legal father. Paternity must be established by the parents completing an Affidavit of Parentage or the court must determine a legal father before issuing a child support order to provide the child with the medical and financial support of both parents.

Methods of Establishing Paternity

In Michigan, the following two methods are used to determine the legal father of a child:

- The parents' completion of the [Affidavit of Parentage](#).
- A court order establishing paternity.

Genetic (DNA) testing can be used to determine that a man is the biological father of a child. However, to determine a legal father, the genetic testing must be **accepted by the court**. Parents may complete DNA testing without the court's involvement, but this **does not establish a man as the legal father for the child**.

In Michigan, when a woman is unmarried, the initial birth certificate for her child **will not contain** the father's name unless paternity is established. Unmarried parents of any age can sign the [Affidavit of Parentage](#) to acknowledge that they are the legal parents of the child. Signing the Affidavit of Parentage is voluntary, and gives the child the same rights as a child born to married parents.

The Affidavit of Parentage is most often completed in the hospital by both parents when the baby is born. To become a legal document, the Affidavit of Parentage must be witnessed by a notary public. To notarize the form, both parents **must show a valid picture ID (a driver's license, state ID card, work ID, high school ID) and proof of Social Security Number** to the notary public.



The Affidavit of Parentage must be notarized at the time of the signing, so it may be completed at the hospital or later at another location where a notary is available, such as a Department of Human Services office, Prosecuting Attorney's office, a Friend of the Court office, or a private attorney's office, or even a bank. After completion, the original Affidavit of Parentage document must be mailed to the Department of Community Health for filing.

Establishing paternity gives a child born outside of marriage the same legal rights as a child born to married parents. Mothers and fathers have a responsibility to support their children emotionally and financially even when they are not married to each other.

The Benefits of Paternity Establishment for a Child:

- Identity – Having both parents' names on the birth certificate.
- Assurance that the parents cared enough to acknowledge paternity.
- Medical or life insurance from both parents, if available.
- Information about family medical history.
- Financial support from both parents, including:
 - Social Security.
 - Veterans' benefits.
 - Inheritance rights.
 - Child support.

The Benefits of Paternity Establishment for the Mother:

- Sharing parental responsibility.
- Information about the father's medical history.
- Improving the financial security of the family.
- Medical insurance coverage for the child from the father's medical insurance, if available.

The Benefits of Paternity Establishment for the Father:

- Sharing parental responsibility.
- Rights regarding parental decisions.
- Legal establishment of the father's parental rights.
- Having the father's name on his child's birth certificate.
- The right to seek court-ordered custody and visitation.
- The right to be informed and have a say in adoption proceedings.



Handout 3a: The Affidavit of Parentage



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
Vital Records and Health Data Development

AFFIDAVIT OF PARENTAGE
(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

State File Number

We affirm under penalty of perjury that we are the natural parents of:

(First) (Middle) (Last)

who was born in (Hospital Name, City, County, State) on (Date of Birth)

and that we sign this affidavit to establish the paternity for this child. We hereby consent that the name of the natural father may be included on the certificate of birth for the child.

We wish the child's name to be recorded as:

(First) (Middle) (Last)

In signing this form, we understand that:

- a) This is a legal document.
b) Completion of the acknowledgment is voluntary.
c) The mother has initial custody of the child, without prejudice to the determination of either parent's custodial rights, until otherwise determined by the court or agreed upon by the parties in writing and acknowledged by the court.
d) Either parent may assert a claim in court for parenting time or custody.
e) Both parents have a right to notice and a hearing regarding the adoption of the child.
f) Both parents have the responsibility to support the child and to comply with a court or administrative order for the child's support.
g) By signing this acknowledgment, we waive the following:
i) The right to blood or genetic tests to determine if the man is the biological father of the child.
ii) Any right to a court appointed attorney, including the prosecuting attorney, to represent either party in a court action to determine if the man is the biological father of the child.
iii) The right to a trial to determine if the man is the biological father of the child.
h) In order to revoke an acknowledgment of parentage, an individual must file a claim as provided under Michigan Compiled Law 722.1011.

Further, the mother states that she was not married when this child was born or conceived, or that this child, though born or conceived during a marriage, is not an issue of that marriage as determined by a court of law.

FATHER

MOTHER

Name (Father's Name - Printed)

Name (Mother's Name - Printed)

Current Address Name and Street Number

Current Address Name and Street Number

City State ZIP Code

City State ZIP Code

Date of Birth

Date of Birth

State or Country of Birth

State or Country of Birth

Social Security Number

Social Security Number

To the best of my knowledge, the above information is true

To the best of my knowledge, the above information is true

(Signature of Father)

(Signature of Mother)

Signed and sworn to before me in County, Michigan, on

Signed and sworn to before me in County, Michigan, on

Notary Public, State of Michigan, County of:

Notary Public, State of Michigan, County of:

(Notary Public's Signature)

(Notary Public's Signature)

(Notary Public's Name - Printed or Typed)

(Notary Public's Name - Printed or Typed)

My commission expires

My commission expires

DCH-0682w (06/2006) By authority of Act 305 of 1996

Handout 3a: The Affidavit of Parentage - Page 2

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
Vital Records and Health Data Development Section
AFFIDAVIT OF PARENTAGE

Instructions

This form can be used to establish the parentage of a child and may be used to have information on the father of a child added to the certificate of birth for the child. This affidavit may be completed at the time of the child's birth or at any other time after the birth.

It is intended for use by couples who were not married at the time the child was conceived nor at the time of birth. In instances where the mother was married to someone other than the father when the child was conceived or delivered, a court ruling of her husband's nonpaternity is necessary in order to first establish that the child is not the husband's child.

Completion of this affidavit is voluntary. It indicates the parents wish to acknowledge parentage of a child. The form may be used by parents who were not married when the child was born or when the child was conceived to legally establish their parentage of a child.

Proper completion of the form is very important. Forms that are not properly completed will not be accepted for filing. Among other things, the form must be legible, must be typed or printed in ink, must be signed by both parents, and must be properly notarized. At a minimum, the following items must be provided: the full names of the child, the mother and the father, the date and place of the child's birth, the address of each parent and the birth places of each parent.

There is no fee for filing the affidavit with the Central Paternity Registry. Once filed, copies of the affidavit can be obtained by either parent, by the child or a guardian or legal representative of a parent or the child. Certified copies of the affidavit are available from the central registry for \$26.00 (additional copies are \$12.00 each) and can be requested at the time of filing.

Adding a Father to the Birth Certificate

Establishing Paternity at the Hospital – If this affidavit is completed at the time of birth and provided to hospital staff before the birth certificate is prepared and filed, the birth certificate will be completed to include the father with no need for a separate application or fee. When completed at the time of birth and used as the basis for recording the father on the original certificate of birth, hospital staff must forward the original affidavit, along with the original birth certificate, to the local registrar. The local registrar will forward the affidavit to the Central Paternity Registry for final filing.

Establishing Paternity After Leaving the Hospital – Birth certificates are not automatically changed when an affidavit is filed, except when completed in the hospital at the time of the birth and before the birth has been registered. Changes to registered birth records can be requested based upon a properly completed affidavit and an Application to Add a Father on a Michigan Birth Record.

If the affidavit is going to be used to add the father's name to a Michigan birth record, the affidavit **SHOULD NOT BE MAILED TO THE CENTRAL PATERNITY REGISTRY**, but should be mailed along with the correction application to add the father to the address listed on the application. A birth record can be changed to reflect the father listed on the affidavit if no other man is recorded on the record as the child's father. Should a conflict exist, a court determination of paternity may become necessary.

There is a fee for each birth record change, as is noted in the payment section of the correction application. An application to correct a birth certificate is available from the office of the county clerk, the State Vital Records office recorded message (517) 335-8656, or can be downloaded from the Michigan Department of Community Health Web site at:

www.michigan.gov/documents/add_dad_6589_7.pdf

To file the affidavit and request a copy and/or to change the birth record, mail the completed affidavit, the required fee and, for a birth record change, a completed Application to Add a Father on a Michigan Birth Certificate (form DCH 0848) to:

VITAL RECORDS CHANGES
P.O. Box 30721
Lansing, Michigan 48909

To simply file the affidavit to establish paternity and not request a copy or a change to the birth record, mail to:

Central Paternity Registry
Vital Records & Health Data Development Section
Michigan Department of Community Health
P.O. Box 30691
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Completion of this Form is Voluntary

ALTERATION OF THIS FORM OR THE MAKING OF FALSE STATEMENTS WITH THE AFFIDAVIT FOR THE PURPOSES OF DECEPTION IS A CRIME. [MCL 333.2894]

Activity 3a: Multiple choice	
Who Is The Legal Father?	
1) According to Michigan law, a man who marries a woman with a child becomes either:	Answer
a) The legal father of the child.	
b) The putative father of the child.	
c) Responsible for paying child support.	
d) The legal husband of the mother of the child.	
2) In Michigan, a man who signs the Affidavit of Parentage form for a child born to an unmarried mother becomes:	Answer
a) The legal father of the child.	
b) The putative father of the child.	
c) Responsible for paying child support.	
d) The legal husband of the mother of the child.	
3) In Michigan, when a man signs the Affidavit of Parentage form for a child born to an unmarried mother, the child receives:	Answer
a) The same legal rights as a child born during a marriage.	
b) Most of the legal rights of a child born during a marriage.	
c) None of the legal rights of a child born during a marriage.	
d) Only the legal rights granted by the court.	
4) In Michigan, a man is determined as the legal father of a child born to an unmarried woman by:	Answer
a) Signing a notarized Affidavit of Parentage form.	
b) Receiving genetic test results proving he is the father.	
c) A court order establishing paternity.	
d) Either a) or c).	
5) When an unmarried woman gives birth to a child, the father's name will appear on the baby's initial birth certificate if:	Answer
a) The parents get married.	
b) The father signs the Affidavit of Parentage at the hospital at the time of the birth.	
c) The father signs the Affidavit of Parentage six months after the baby's birth.*	
d) The court orders the father to pay child support.	
6) What is the minimum age requirement for a teen parent to legally sign an Affidavit of Parentage?	Answer
a) 17.	
b) 16.	
c) There is no minimum age requirement.	

*For an **existing birth record**, parents may complete the DCH-0848, Application to Add a Father on a Michigan Birth Record, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/add_dad_6589_7.pdf

Unit 4: Marriage and Parenting Realities

Unit Goal – To understand legal responsibility, custody and parenting arrangements, and the realities of marriage and parenting.

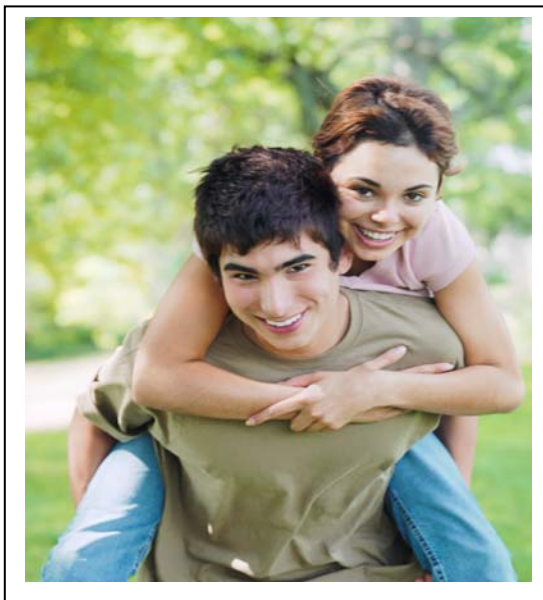
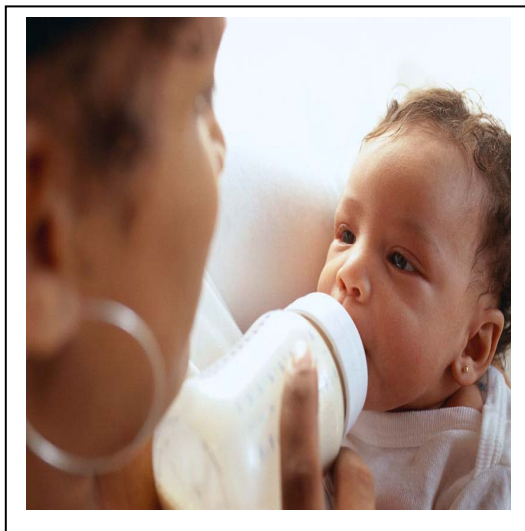
What Makes a Parent Responsible?

Becoming a parent is not so difficult, but being a responsible parent involves knowledge and making appropriate decisions that are in the best interest of both you and your children. The following are parental responsibilities:

List parental responsibilities....

• Establishing paternity	• Providing guidance	• Providing values
• Providing identity	• Providing medical care	• Providing clothing
• Providing financial support	• Providing family	• Providing time
• Providing medical support	• Providing love	• Providing crib
• Establishing medical history	• Providing food	• Providing car seat
• Cooperative parenting	• Providing parenting	• Providing sheets
• Providing shelter	• Providing education	• Providing toys
• Providing diapers	• Providing morals	

Parental responsibilities includes establishing paternity, providing an identity, and providing financial and medical support for your children!



To have a legal father, unmarried teen parents must establish paternity for their children!

In Michigan, establishing paternity can be accomplished by either:

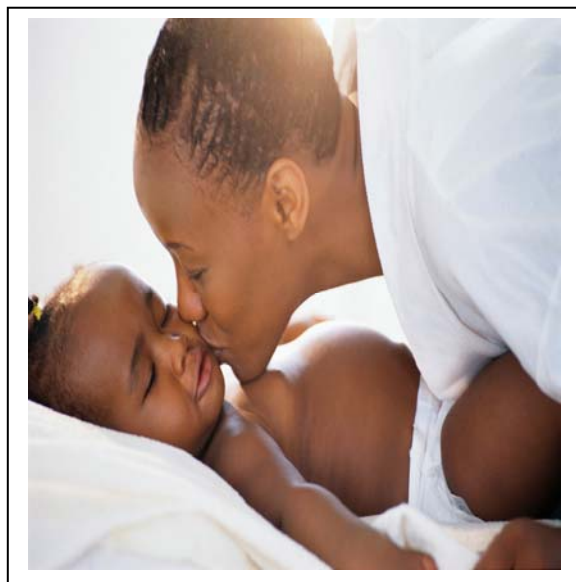
1. Signing an Affidavit of Parentage in the presence of a notary public.
2. A court order which may include genetic (DNA) testing.

All of the responsibilities involved in raising a child should be shared by both parents, even if they are unmarried. Children have the greatest opportunity to prosper with two parents who cooperate in parenting and provide physical, emotional and financial support. Unit 5 of this teaching packet will provide further information about providing financial and medical support for children.

Types of Custody and Parenting Arrangements

Parents have certain responsibilities and obligations to the children for whom they provide care. Parents who are unmarried or divorced and who care for a child are said to have "custody" of a child. However, in more recent times, the term "custody" (which infers that children are merely possessions) has been quickly losing ground to the term "parenting time," which is less adversarial and a friendlier term.

In the Friend of the Court program, any party who applies for custody/parenting time will be given equal consideration based on guidelines for the best interests of the child. It is in the child's best interest to have a meaningful relationship with both parents. Shared custody/parenting provides protection and well-being for most children. In families experiencing domestic violence issues, however, a judge may determine that shared custody/parenting is not in the best interests of the child.¹⁹



¹⁹ http://courts.michigan.gov/mji/resources/focdv/FOC-DV_Chap4_2004-2008.pdf

Judges can order different custody arrangements. Parents can also agree to a custody arrangement and judges will usually sign the court order for the arrangement as long as they believe the arrangement is in the best interest of the child. The following are descriptions of various custody arrangements:

Sole Custody: Sole custody occurs when primary *physical and legal custody* are given to one parent.

Physical custody is when a parent provides most of the daily care for the child.

Legal custody is when one parent has the responsibility of making all major decisions regarding the child's upbringing, including:

- Medical treatment.
- School enrollment.
- Religious instruction.
- Participation in extracurricular activities.

If the judge believes the parents cannot work together for the benefit of their child, sole custody is usually awarded to one parent (the custodial party). The other parent (the non-custodial parent) may be given parenting time, as determined by the court. If parenting time is ordered, the non-custodial parent is responsible for making routine and emergency decisions for the child during parenting time.

Two Types of Joint Custody:

Joint Legal Custody: Joint legal custody means the parents share decision-making authority regarding the important decisions affecting the welfare of the child. Joint legal custody does not determine the amount of time the child is with each parent.

Joint Physical Custody: Means that there will be specific times when each parent will have the child with him/her. However, it does not mean the parents will necessarily share decision-making authority unless the judge has also ordered joint legal custody. As an example of joint physical custody, one parent could have physical custody during the school year, alternate weekends, and alternate holidays, with the other parent having physical custody during the summer months, alternate weekends, and alternate holidays.

If the judge awards joint physical custody, the court order will usually include a statement regarding when the child shall reside with each parent. The court order may provide that the parents share physical custody to make sure the child has contact with both parents. During the time a child resides with a parent, that parent decides all routine and emergency matters concerning the child.

Judges can only change custody if it is clear and convincing that there has been a significant change in circumstances and that the custody change is in the best interest of the child. A parent may have custody, but that does not mean the child looks to only that parent to provide guidance, discipline, the necessities of life, and parental comfort.

Marriage Realities

Many family-related factors affect how children fare and develop over time, and marriage is one of them. Research suggests that children thrive when they are raised by two parents who have a stable marriage.

Facts:

- **Less than 10% of teen births occur within marriage.**
 - **Teen mothers are unlikely to marry the biological fathers of their children.**
 - **Teen mothers who do marry often end up in unstable marriages.**
 - **Unmarried fathers are less likely to be involved in their children's lives.**
 - **Reduced involvement of fathers is associated with reduced child well-being.**²⁰
-
- **Teen marriage is rare:** Marriage among teenagers is rare in today's society. In 2002, only 2.5% of teens aged 15 -19 had ever been married, compared to 11% in 1975. The trend over time has been toward getting married at a later age.
 - **Marital status of teen mothers:** Marriage and birth patterns among teens have changed over time, shifting from a general trend of marrying **before** pregnancy, to marrying as a **result** of pregnancy, to becoming pregnant and **not** marrying.
 - **Pregnancy is no longer a strong motivation for marriage:** In the early 1960s, 70% of white teens and 36% of African American teens who became pregnant got married before their child was born. By the 1990s, those percentages had decreased to 20% and 7%, respectively.
 - **Teen mothers' marital hopes and realities:** Although unmarried teen mothers often have high expectations for eventually marrying the father of their child, few ever do.
 - **Many teen mothers have unrealistically high expectations for marriage:** At the time of their child's birth, almost one-third of unmarried teen mothers say they are "certain" that they will marry the biological father of their child. In reality, however, not even 8% of unwed teen mothers are married to the baby's father within one year of giving birth.
 - **Teenage marriages typically are unstable:** One-third of teenage marriages formed before the bride is 18 years old end in divorce within five years, and almost half dissolve within 10 years. This is considerably higher than for women who delay marriage until they are in their early twenties.
 - **Unmarried teen mothers are at a greater risk of poverty:** Unmarried teen mothers have lower educational attainment and lower incomes, and are more likely to receive public assistance. Women who are single mothers for at least 10 years during their lifetime have an increased risk of living in poverty even when they are 65 -75 years old.

²⁰ http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS11_MotherhoodandMarriage.pdf

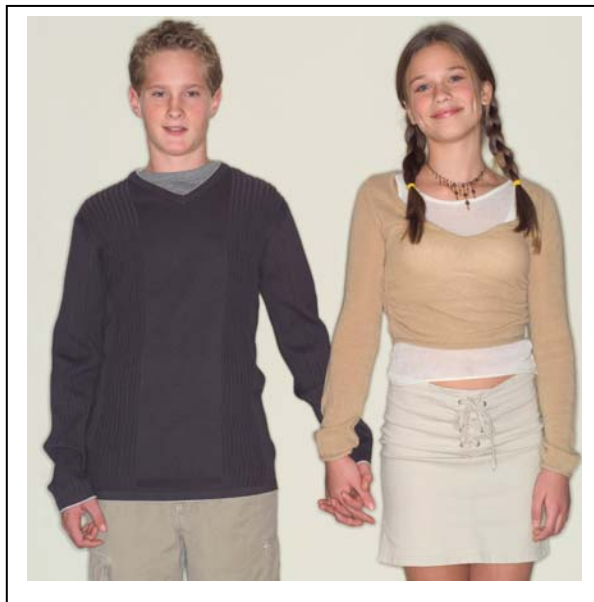
- **Teenage mothers have reduced chances of ever marrying:** Research has shown that childbearing outside of marriage is associated with a decreased likelihood of ever marrying and an increased risk of divorce among those who eventually do marry. A higher proportion of teenage women are having babies when they are single than in the past, a troubling trend given that two-thirds of families begun by a young, unmarried mother are poor.
- **Teen marriage is not a cure-all:** Teens who marry face higher rates of divorce than older couples, whether or not they are parents. When parenthood is added to the equation, the odds of success for these young couples decrease even more.²¹

It's About Timing

It is not simply the pregnancy or disadvantaged backgrounds that cause the many problems experienced by teen parents. It's the timing. If more teenagers would first complete their education, then secure employment, marry and establish stable home lives before becoming parents, everyone would benefit. While many teen parents are economically disadvantaged and behind in school **before having a child**, research also indicates teen parents have a greater likelihood of:

- Dropping out of high school.
- Lower economic productivity.
- Greater reliance on public assistance.
- Higher rates of poverty.
- Single parenthood.

This underscores the strong connection between teen parenthood and many other important social issues – marriage being just one of them. Simply put, if more children were born to parents who were ready and able to care for them, this nation would see a significant reduction in a host of social problems – from school failure to poverty.²²



²¹ http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/SS/SS11_MotherhoodandMarriage.pdf

²² <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/introduction.pdf>

Advantages to Being Older and/or Married Before Having Children

An analysis of data from 1970 to 1996 by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy shows that virtually all of the increase in child poverty over that period was related to the growth of single-parent families. In the 1970s, some of this increase was the result of rising divorce rates. However, since the early 1980s, virtually all of the increase in child poverty has been driven by the increased numbers of never-married mothers.²³

This does **not** mean that all children of never-married mothers suffer; however, over two decades of research indicates that children benefit when their parents are:

- Older (beyond teen years).
- Have completed at least high school.
- Are in stable and committed relationships – **marriage, in particular**.
- Are ready to take on the complex challenges of being parents.²⁴

Most Americans believe young people should complete their education, have the means to raise a child, and be married before becoming pregnant. An unplanned pregnancy can derail an individual's future plans.²⁵ For example, an unexpected, unplanned pregnancy can interrupt a young person's education and diminish future job prospects – a scenario that is becoming ever more serious with the increasing demand for a well-educated workforce. Reducing the high level of unplanned pregnancy in this country will help many teens and adults achieve economic security and more stable relationships. This will benefit not only them, but also their children and society.



²³ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

²⁵ <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/CaseStatement.pdf>

Characteristics of Lasting Marriages and Good Relationships

- Build a sense of togetherness – a sense of “we” instead of just a focus on two individuals. When making decisions, take into consideration what’s best for the relationship. Ideally, a sense of “we” should be created before a couple has a child together.
- Make sure that it’s safe to disagree – conflict is a natural and normal part of any relationship as long as it’s resolved in a healthy, nonviolent way. Learn to argue fairly.
- Provide each other with emotional support, comfort, encouragement, caring and appropriate assistance. Always pay attention to each other’s feelings and emotional reactions. Think of each other as soul mates and a support system!



Handout 4a: 10 Effective Parenting Skills

10 Effective Parenting Skills

- 1. Make your relationship with your child a top priority** – Think of yourself, the other parent and your child as a team. Focus on your commitment to build a healthy child/parent relationship. Ask yourself what impact your decisions have upon your relationship with your child. For example: “I will skip playing basketball this afternoon even though I really want to play because it is my scheduled time to be with my child, and I want my child to know that (s)he can count on me.”
- 2. Be mature and businesslike** – If you and your child’s other parent cannot be friends, treat him/her like a co-worker whom you must work with even if you do not like him/her. Be cordial; keep your feelings in check. Be orderly and avoid making assumptions – get clarifications on everything. Use businesslike communications. When you go to the other parent’s home, act like you’re going to an office to take care of business. If problems occur, set up a meeting to try to resolve the problem. Don’t try to resolve problems when tempers are flaring.
- 3. Keep your child out of the middle** – When issues come up between you and the other parent, do not say negative things to your child about his/her mother/father. Do not conduct such conversations on the phone when your child is in earshot. Do not ask your child questions about the other parent’s business. All families and parents have problems to resolve, but the child does not need to be involved.
- 4. Give compliments to team members** – Frequently problems arise when people feel unappreciated. Make a habit of thanking people for what they do for your child. It takes a community to raise a child.
- 5. Listen, listen, listen** – To resolve problems, each parent must listen to the other’s point of view. Your child’s other parent is likely to listen to you if (s)he feels you listen to him/her. When a team member has an issue, make it your job to listen. When you think you understand, explain what you’ve heard. Don’t get into arguing or defending. Just listen, then discuss.
- 6. Go ahead and apologize** – When you’ve made a mistake, or did not do something you said you would do, simply apologize. Don’t give explanations or excuses. Simply apologize, and use a descriptive word that labels your behavior as wrong. “I’m sorry for being late to pick up our child and not calling ahead to let you know. It was inconsiderate of me.”
- 7. Make changes when necessary** – If something you are doing is causing a problem for a team member, ask what you can do to resolve tensions. If the request is reasonable, make the change – just do it for the good of the team and most of all your child!
- 8. Share your experience** – If something the other parent does is making it hard for you as a parent, explain what it is and request a change. Express this as a reasonable request. For example: “Please do not say negative things about me in front of our child, I feel disrespected and embarrassed. It makes me want to stay away, and that’s not good for our child.”
- 9. Ask for what you want** – When you want something from a team member, ask; don’t tell or demand. “My time with our child is scheduled for this weekend, but my boss wants me to work. It would help me in my job to say yes. Will you switch weekends with me?”
- 10. Be a person of your word** – Do what you say you’re going to do. Keep your promises, and be on time with all scheduled activities. If you can’t keep your word, call immediately and let the other person know. You create your own reputation by how you carry out your promises. As other team members see you being consistent in your actions, they too will cooperate and you will teach your child a very important behavior.

Activity 4a**Marriage Questions**

Question	Response
1. What do you think is the best age to get married?	
2. What do you think are the most important factors in making a marriage work?	
3. How long should a couple know each other before they decide to get married?	
4. Do you believe in love at first sight?	
5. What TV show or movie portrays your view of a positive marriage or relationship?	
6. Think of a couple who have what you consider a great marriage. What makes the relationship work?	
7. What are the most significant lessons about marriage or relationships you got from your parents?	
8. How do you think men and women differ in their views of marriage or relationships?	
9. What do you think are the reasons that marriages or relationships fail?	
10. What do you think children gain from living in a home with married parents?	
11. What factors do you think make a person ready for marriage?	
12. How do you know when you're ready to get married or become a parent?	
13. Do you think that waiting until you get married to have a child would make you a better parent? Why or why not?	

Activity 4b: Whose Job Is It?

Whose Job Is It?	<u>Mother's = M</u>	<u>Father's = F</u>	<u>Both = B</u>
Newborn to One Year Old (Infants)			
1. Changing your baby's diapers?			
2. Feeding your baby?			
3. Getting up at night to care for your baby?			
4. Cleaning up after your baby spits up?			
5. Taking care of your baby when you are sick?			
6. Figuring out what is wrong with your crying baby?			
7. Handling your baby when (s)he is afraid of strangers and won't let you put him/her down?			
8. Dressing your baby?			
9. Playing with your baby?			
10. Taking the baby to the doctor or clinic?			
Whose Job Is It?	<u>Mother's = M</u>	<u>Father's = F</u>	<u>Both = B</u>
One to Three Years Old (Toddlers)			
11. Teaching your child new words or sentences?			
12. Toilet training your child?			
13. Taking your child to the park?			
14. Taking your child to daycare?			
15. Reading to your child?			
16. Handling your child when (s)he bites or hits?			
17. Dealing with "messes" at mealtimes?			
18. Dealing with your child's problem behaviors: demanding your constant attention, not sharing, making messes, etc.?			
19. Making the house safe for your child: covering electrical outlets, locking cupboards, etc.?			
20. Dealing with your child's emotions: anger, fear, rage, sadness and temper tantrums?			
Whose Job Is It?	<u>Mother's = M</u>	<u>Father's = F</u>	<u>Both = B</u>
Three to Five Years Old (Preschoolers)			
21. Dealing with your child's jealousy?			
22. Answering questions about sexuality/body parts?			
23. Taking care of your sick child?			
24. Dealing with your child's fears: nightmares and monsters?			
25. Keeping your child safe from strangers?			
26. Teaching your child right from wrong?			
27. Bathing and cooking for your child?			
28. Dealing with bed wetting?			
29. Helping your child learn to read?			
30. Teaching your child sports skills: how to throw or catch a ball?			

Whose Job Is It? Six to Ten Years Old (School-Age)	<u>Mother's = M</u>	<u>Father's = F</u>	<u>Both = B</u>
31. Selecting a school for your child?			
32. Helping your child with homework?			
33. Attending PTA meetings?			
34. Disciplining your child for inappropriate behavior: stealing, not wanting to go to school?			
35. Teaching your child values and/or religion and cultural heritage?			
36. Giving your child chores around the house?			
37. Playing sports with your child?			
38. Dealing with your child's feelings: sad, worried, angry, etc.?			
39. Stimulating your child's intellect?			
40. Monitoring what your child reads, watches on TV, or listens to on the radio?			
41. Taking your child to school/family outings?			
42. Teaching your child the facts of life?			
43. Encouraging your child's independence?			



Unit 5: Providing Financial and Medical Support

The source for Unit 5 information is the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO). The Michigan Supreme Court oversees the Friend of the Court offices through the SCAO.²⁶

Unit Goal – To understand parental responsibilities for support.

Financial and Medical Support

One of a parent's most important responsibilities is providing financial support for his/her child. In Michigan, the family court (hereafter referred to as "the court") generally orders the non-custodial parent to provide child support. The court sets the amount of child support, medical support, and child care the parent must provide. The court also provides mediation* services for those parents who have difficulty communicating with each other on parenting time issues.

How Is the Amount of Child Support Determined?

In Michigan, the court orders the amount of child support using the Michigan Child Support Formula guidelines established in state law. Child support guidelines are based upon the monthly income of both parents; however, even if the parents are not working, the court may order them to pay child support. In some cases, both parents may be ordered to pay support for a child not in their care. Child support includes payment for:

- The general care and needs of a child.
- Medical support.
- Child care expenses.

Currently the court may also order the father to pay for the birthing expenses of the child. Approximately 72% of teen births in the United States are financed by Medicaid.²⁷ Teen fathers may incur a debt to repay Medicaid for the birthing expenses. In Michigan, the average birthing cost for a child in 2008 was \$4,000. Generally, the court will determine each parent's share of the Medicaid debt by dividing their combined incomes.

Medical support:

Michigan law requires one or both parents to obtain or maintain health care coverage if it is available to them at a reasonable cost. Each parent must pay for a percentage of the child's medical expenses, based on income. Each parent's share cannot be less than 10% or more than 90%.

Child care obligations:

The court will determine each parent's share for **work-related** child care expenses, based on both parents' incomes, but each parent's share cannot be less than 10% or more than 90%.

²⁶ <http://courts.michigan.gov/>

²⁷ http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/WIM_Full%20Set.pdf

* Settlement of a dispute or controversy between two contending parties in order to aid them in the settlement of their disagreement.

Friend of the Court Questions and Answers

How can I change my child support order?

A parent ordered to pay or receive child support has the right to ask for a review of the support amount. Michigan law provides that parents may request a support review once every 36 months for Michigan child support orders. The review is conducted by the court.

What happens when the Friend of the Court reviews support?

When the court reviews support, it notifies the parents that it is conducting a review and asks both parents for proof of income. The court uses the Michigan Child Support Formula Manual guidelines to determine the support amount based on the parents' incomes. The court must use this formula to calculate support, although it may recommend that support be set at a different amount if it determines that support should not be based on the parents' actual incomes or that use of the formula would be unjust or inappropriate.

The court notifies the parents whether support should be increased or decreased, or if it should stay the same. Notice of a proposed change must be provided to the parents at least 30 days before a hearing is held to change the support amount.

What do I do if I have been ordered to pay child support and I lose my job or earn less money?

The law requires you to inform the Friend of the Court in writing that your income (earned or unearned) has changed. You will remain responsible for paying the old support amount until the court decides to change that amount.

When the court orders an increase or decrease in my child support order, is it permanent?

No, either parent may ask the court to change the support amount any time there is a significant change in circumstances; for example, you marry the other parent, the child no longer lives with you, you become disabled, or you have a significant increase or decrease in income. The support amount will remain the same until the court orders a different amount.

What can I do if I disagree with the amount of support recommended by the Friend of the Court?

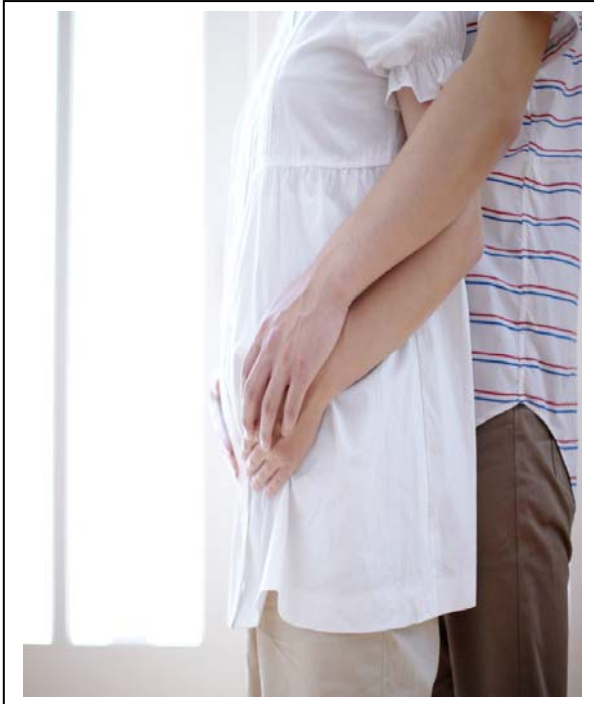
If you disagree with the amount the court recommends, you should follow the instructions you receive from the court concerning a hearing. At a support hearing, you can tell the court what you think support should be and provide information to the court to justify your reasons. The court will determine the child support amount based upon the best interests of the child(ren).

If both parents agree to a change in the support order, do we have to go to court?

Some court offices will help parents prepare an agreement to have the court enter a new order. After both parents sign the agreement, it is presented to the court for its approval. If the court does not help parents prepare their own agreements, one parent will have to ask the court for a change in the support order.

What can be included in the support order?

In addition to an amount to provide for the regular weekly expenses of a child, Michigan law requires a child support order to include an amount for the child's medical/health care expenses, and allows the order to include an amount for child care and educational expenses.



The Michigan Child Support Formula

As part of its responsibilities, the State Court Administrative Office's Friend of the Court Bureau develops a formula for figuring child support amounts. The law requires courts to use this formula when setting or changing child support amounts.

From time to time, the child support formula is reviewed and changed, and its figures updated for economic changes. When these changes occur, a new Michigan Child Support Formula Manual is issued.

The 2008 Michigan Child Support Formula Manual includes:

- Income and asset calculations.
- Allowable deductions.
- Calculations for multiple children.
- Parenting time offsets.
- Medical (health care) obligations.
- Third-party custodian calculations.
- Arrearage guidelines.
- Agreements related to property.



The child support calculations in Activity 5b are **approximations** based upon information from the 2008 Michigan Child Support Formula Manual.²⁸ Due to the complex nature of the information and the calculations required to determine an actual Michigan child support order, Activity 5b is designed to provide you with a comparable idea of child support amounts in various situations.

What Happens If the Non-Custodial Parent Does Not Pay Child Support?

The court can use a variety of methods to find non-custodial parents and/or get them to pay their child support:

- Withholding money from paychecks.
- Liens against property.
- Credit bureau reports.
- Locating unreported employers.
- Withholding money from bank accounts.
- Court hearings.
- Bench warrants for arrest.
- Suspending licenses: driver's, hunting.
- Boot a car.
- Intercepting state and federal tax returns.



²⁸ <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/publications/manuals/focb/2008MCSFmanual.pdf>

Activity 5a: Truth or Myth			
Truth or Myth		<u>T=</u> Truth	<u>M=</u> Myth
1.	If one parent receives TANF (assistance), the court must order the other parent to pay child support.		
2.	Both parents are required by law to support their child(ren) until the age of 18.		
3.	A parent not paying his/her court-ordered child support goes immediately to jail.		
4.	A parent is responsible for paying child support even if (s)he is still in school.		
5.	A parent not paying court-ordered child support can have his/her driver's license suspended.		
6.	The non-custodial parent must pay child support even if his/her only income is unemployment or disability.		
7.	Parents owing court-ordered child support are reported to the Credit Bureau.		
8.	Parents going into the military do not have to pay child support.		
9.	A lien can be placed on the property of a parent owing child support.		
10.	A non-custodial parent can stop paying child support if the custodial parent marries someone else.		
11.	Employed non-custodial parents may have child support payments deducted from their wages.		
12.	If the grandparents are raising the child, only the father is responsible for paying child support.		
13.	If a non-custodial parent marries, the child support payments can be deducted from the wages of the spouse.		
14.	Grandparents are legally responsible for their teenage child(ren)'s child support obligation.		
15.	All information in a child support case is confidential.		
16.	Non-custodial parents in jail still owe child support.		
17.	A non-custodial parent who owes child support is not entitled to visitation.		
18.	Past-due child support incurs an interest penalty.		
19.	Past-due child support can be collected even after a child turns 18 years old.		
20.	Non-custodial parents are responsible for all or part of the medical expenses for their child.		
21.	The court has the authority to refer parents who are delinquent in child support to counseling, job search assistance, or substance abuse treatment.		
22.	When the income of a non-custodial parent increases, the court can increase the amount of child support. When the income decreases, the court can decrease child support.		
23.	The married mother's husband's name is automatically listed as the father on a child's birth certificate unless the mother obtains a court judgment stating her husband is not the father.		
24.	Non-custodial parents cannot apply for child support services.		

Activity 5b: Budgeting for Child Support

Answer questions 1 through 3

Each example is an approximation. An actual Michigan child support order would require additional information.

Example 1

The Mother	The Father	The Child
Age: 16 Housing: Lives with parents Food: Parents provide Car: None Works: Has no income Monthly Income: \$0 Taxes (25% of gross income): \$0 Child Support (Approximately 14% of gross income): $\$0 \times .14 =$	Age: 18 Housing: Lives with parents Food: Parents provide Car: Buying Works: 20 hours/week at \$7.40/hour Monthly Income: \$592 Taxes (25% of gross income): \$148.00 Child Support (Approximately 14% of gross income): $\$592 \times .14 =$	Age: 6 months old (in diapers) Lives: With Mother

Question 1: How much child support would the non-custodial parent pay per month? Note: For child support amount, multiply each parent's monthly income by 14%.	Answer* Choose one of a) through d)				
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>a. \$83</td> <td>b. Nothing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. \$100</td> <td>d. \$65</td> </tr> </table>	a. \$83	b. Nothing	c. \$100	d. \$65
a. \$83	b. Nothing				
c. \$100	d. \$65				

Question 2: Which of the parents is the non-custodial parent who will be ordered to pay child support?	Answer –Choose one of a) through c)
	a) The mother b) The father c) The mother and father

Use the following monthly expenses to determine answers to Question 3

- Car payment = \$150
- Car insurance = \$100
- Gas = \$80

Question 3: After the monthly expenses are paid, how much money remains for the non-custodial parent?	Answer																								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Child support ordered</td> <td>=</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Taxes</td> <td>=</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Car payment</td> <td>=</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Car insurance</td> <td>=</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gas</td> <td>=</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total monthly expenses</td> <td>=</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Child support ordered	=		Taxes	=		Car payment	=		Car insurance	=		Gas	=		Total monthly expenses	=		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Total monthly income</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total monthly expenses</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Remaining money</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Total monthly income		Total monthly expenses		Remaining money	
Child support ordered	=																								
Taxes	=																								
Car payment	=																								
Car insurance	=																								
Gas	=																								
Total monthly expenses	=																								
Total monthly income																									
Total monthly expenses																									
Remaining money																									

**Child support order approximations are based on information from the 2008 Michigan Child Support Formula Manual – see footnote #28 on page 37 of the Student's Guide.*

Activity 5b: Budgeting for Child Support
Answer questions 1 through 3

Each example is an approximation. An actual Michigan child support order would require additional information.

Example 2

The Mother	The Father	The child	
Age: 18 Housing: Rents Food: Buys own Car: None Works: 30 hours/week at \$8/hour. Monthly Income: \$960 Taxes (25% of gross income): $\$960 \times .25 = \240 Child Support (Approximately 14% of gross income): $\$960 \times .14 =$	Age: 17 Housing: Lives with parents Food: Parents provide Car: None Works: Has no income Monthly Income: \$0 Taxes (25% of gross income): \$0 Child Support (Approximately 14% of gross income): $\$0 \times .14 =$	Age: 19 months old (in diapers) Lives: With father	
Question 1: How much child support would the parent(s) pay per month? Note: For child support amount, multiply each parent's monthly income by 14%.		Answer* Choose one of a) through d)	
		a) \$100	b) \$200
		c) \$134	d) Nothing
Question 2: Which of the parents is the non-custodial parent who will be ordered to pay child support?		Answer –Choose one of a) through c) a) The mother b) The father c) The mother and father	
<p>Use the following monthly expenses to determine answers to Question 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent/utilities = \$400 • Food = \$100 • General expenses** = \$50 <p>**May include: Diapers, baby furniture and/or clothes when the child stays with you, cable television, public transportation, cell phone, movie tickets, video games, clothes, hair/nails, and/or chips/candy/magazines.</p>			
Question 3: After the monthly expenses are paid, how much money remains for the non-custodial parent?		Answer	
Child support ordered	=		Total monthly income
Taxes	=		Total monthly expenses
Rent/utilities	=		Remaining money
Food	=		
General expenses	=		
Total monthly expenses	=		
<p><i>* Child support order approximations are based on information from the 2008 Michigan Child Support Formula Manual – see footnote #28 on page 37 of the Student's Guide.</i></p>			

Activity 5b: Budgeting for Child Support - Answer questions 1 through 3.

Each example is an approximation. An actual Michigan child support order would require additional information.

Example 3

The Mother	The Father	The Child
Age: 27 Housing: Rents Food: Buys own Car: Buying Works: 40 hours/week at \$22.175/hour. Monthly income: \$3,548 Taxes (30% of gross income): \$1,064 Child Support (Approximately 17.5% of gross income): \$3,548 x .175 =	Age: 25 Housing: Lives with parents Food: Parents provide Car: Buying Works: 26.5 hours/week at \$8/hour. Monthly income: \$848 Taxes (25% of gross income): \$210 Child Support (Approximately 10% of gross income): \$848 x .10 =	Age: 2 year old (in diapers) Lives: With maternal grandparents

Question 1: How much child support would the non-custodial parent pay per month?
Note: Multiply both parents' monthly income(s) by the amounts indicated.

Answer* Choose one of a) through d)

- a) Mother pays \$400 and Father pays \$100
- b) Mother pays \$80 and Father pays \$0
- c) Mother pays \$0 and Father pays \$520
- d) Mother pays \$621 and Father pays \$85

Question 2: Which of the parents is the non-custodial parent who will be ordered to pay child support?

Answer –Choose one of a) through c)

- a) The mother
- b) The father
- c) The mother and father

Use the following monthly expenses to determine answers to Question 3

Car payment = \$250	Food = \$100	**May include: Diapers, baby furniture and/or clothes when the child stays with you, cable television, public transportation, cell phone, movie tickets, video games, clothes, hair/nails, and/or chips/candy/magazines.
Car insurance = \$100	General expenses** = \$50	
Rent/utilities = \$600	Clothing = \$25	
Gas = \$80		

Question 3: After the monthly expenses are paid, how much money remains for the non-custodial parent(s)?

Child support ordered =		Car insurance =		Mother's total monthly income =	
Taxes =		Gas =		Mother's total monthly expenses =	
Rent/utilities =		Clothing =		Remaining money	
Food =		Other Expenses =		Father's total monthly income =	
Car payment =		Mother's total obligations =		Father's total monthly expenses =	
Child support ordered =		Gas =		Remaining money	
Taxes =		Clothing =			
Car payment =		Other Expenses =			
Car insurance =		Father's total obligations =			

* Child support order approximations are based on information from the 2008 Michigan Child Support Formula Manual – see footnote #28 on page 37 of the Student's Guide.

Office of Child Support Resources

The Michigan Office of Child Support provides additional resources to supplement the Student Guide including:

- Speakers.
- Publications.
- Videos.
- Posters.

To arrange for a child support guest speaker, please contact:

The Paternity Establishment Percentage Liaison
Michigan Office of Child Support
Department of Human Services
235 S. Grand Ave., Suite 1215
P.O. Box 30478
Lansing, MI 48909-7978

Telephone: 517 373-9202
Email: DHS-OCS-PEP@michigan.gov
Fax: (517) 373-4980

Publications, posters and videos are available to the public free of charge. Please complete and submit the order form on the following page.

**Anyone may apply for child support services in Michigan.
For further information or to apply for child support services,
please call 1-866 540-0008 or 1-866 661-0005.**

Responsible Behavior.

**OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT
PUBLICATION ORDER LIST**
State of Michigan
Department of Human Services

The following publications are available to the public free of charge. Anyone requesting these publications must complete the "Requester Information" section below, indicate the quantity requested in the shaded area of the table, and send the request to:

Department of Human Services
Office Services Division
Grand Tower Suite 203
P.O. Box 30037
Lansing, MI 48909
Call: 517-373-7837

Department of Human Services
Office of Child Support
Grand Tower Suite 1215
P.O. Box 30478
Lansing, MI 48909
Call: 517-373-9202

Requester Information:

Organization	Date
Name	
Mailing Address Line 1	
Mailing Address Line 2	
City, State, Zip	

<u>Order Quantity</u>	<u>Publication Number</u>	<u>Title</u>
	Pub-738	"You Are Special" COLORING BOOK call 517-373-9202 to order
	Pub-748 (rev 3/09)	"Understanding Child Support: A Handbook for Parents"
	Pub-748-SP (rev 3/09)	"Understanding Child Support: A Handbook for Parents" (Spanish Version)
	Pub-780	"What Every Parent Should Know About Establishing Paternity"
	Pub-780-SP	"What Every Parent Should Know About Establishing Paternity" (Spanish Version)
	Pub-806	"Fatherhood: Taking Responsibility for Your Child"
	Pub-849	"Your Child Has a Right to Know its Father" Establish Paternity POSTER
	Pub 850	"Your Child...Is about to become a parent."
	Pub 865	DNA-Paternity Testing Questions and Answers
	Pub 865-SP	DNA-Paternity Testing Questions and Answers (Spanish Version)
	DHS 4821-SP	Spanish Language Worksheet (Affidavit of Parentage form DCH-0682-SP)
	----	"The Power of Two: Voluntarily Acknowledging Paternity" VHS call 517-373-9202 to order
	----	"The Power of Two: Voluntarily Acknowledging Paternity" (Spanish Version) VHS call 517-373-9202 to order

Department of Human Services (DHS) will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to a DHS office in your area.

APPENDIX 1

STATEWIDE DCH – BIRTHING HOSPITAL PEP DATA 1998-2009*						
YEAR	TOTAL LIVE BIRTHS	TOTAL UNWED BIRTHS	% UNWED BIRTHS	PATERNITY ESTABLISHED NUMBER @ BIRTH	PATERNITY ESTABLISHED PERCENT @ BIRTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF REVOCATIONS
1998	132,263	45,175	34.2%	24,094	53.3%	10
1999	132,306	44,772	33.8%	24,452	54.6%	8
2000	134,880	46,253	34.3%	25,907	56.0%	17
2001	132,138	45,560	34.5%	27,280	59.9%	18
2002	127,405	43,721	34.3%	26,352	60.3%	31
2003	129,510	44,829	34.6%	27,334	61.0%	23
2004	128,313	45,224	35.2%	28,085	62.1%	23
2005	126,220	46,380	36.7%	28,595	61.7%	21
2006	125,381	48,035	38.3%	29,731	61.9%	18
2007	124,549	48,259	38.7%	29,799	61.7%	9
2008	119,683	45,033	37.8%	27,139	60.3%	3
Preliminary 2009	116,056	48,342	41.6%	30,788	63.7%	4

* Source: 1998-2009 Calendar Year (CY) year end birthing hospital statistics, Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics, Michigan Department of Community Health. Data is finalized in June of the following calendar year.

Web Links of Interest

Affidavit of Parentage: <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2939-18708--,00.html>

Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse>

Michigan Department of Community Health: <http://www.mi.gov/mdch>

Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS): <http://www.michigan.gov/dhs>

Michigan DHS Office of Child Support: <http://www.michigan.gov/childsupport>

Michigan Department of State (Notary): <http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1638---,00.html>

Michigan Legislature Website: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Michigan Model for Health®: <http://www.emc.cmich.edu/mm/default.htm>

Model Friend of the Court Handbook: http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/publications/manuals/focb/focb_hbk.pdf

Orchid/Genescreen: <https://www.orchidgenescreen.com/>.

State Court Administrative Office: <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/>

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy: <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/>

Understanding Child Support Payment Distribution:
<http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/resources/publications/pamphlets/focb/psa30.pdf>



Mothers and fathers bring different qualities to a child's life, and each is equally important. All children need two parents, whether they live together or not. The Michigan Office of Child Support is committed to working with families to ensure that children receive the support they need from both parents!