



# Minnesota Family Investment Program Longitudinal Study:

## Special Report on Teen Mothers

*Eighth report in a series*

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All reports from the MFIP Longitudinal Study series are available on the  
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## **Executive Summary**

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) longitudinal study has been following two groups of MFIP participants since 1998: new applicants and ongoing recipients sampled from one-caregiver cases in the baseline month. This report focuses on new applicants who were teens at baseline – 30 percent of new applicants sampled.

Teen pregnancy has a major impact on the use of family assistance. Many welfare participants were teens when they became parents. In the MFIP longitudinal study, 49 percent of participants in the new applicant sample and 57 percent in the ongoing recipient sample were teens when their first child was born. Hennepin county (including the city of Minneapolis) found that 76 percent of the 200 families in the county receiving the most social welfare dollars began with a teen giving birth. By contrast, 24 percent of all first births in the United States were to teen mothers in 1998, as were 17 percent of Hennepin county first births in 1999.

Births to mothers under age 18 are also more common among welfare participants than in the general population. Twenty-one percent of the new applicants and 30 percent of the ongoing recipients in the MFIP longitudinal study were minors when they had their first child. Ten percent of all first births in the U.S. in 1998 were to mothers under age 18.

The 248 women who completed this survey – 71 percent of all teens in the applicant sample – told interviewers about a lifetime of experiences. While findings on numerous topics are presented in the body of this report (and summarized in the highlights section), this executive summary focuses on four areas of concern that emerged from discussions with policy staff within and outside the Department of Human Services:

- Ending the cycle of poverty across generations.
- Engaging biological fathers in the lives of their children.
- Improving services for teens.
- Supporting teens' planning for their futures.

### **Ending the Cycle of Poverty across Generations**

Many of the teen mothers interviewed for this study grew up under difficult circumstances. Forty-five percent remembered their family receiving welfare when they themselves were children. This is probably an underestimate of public assistance receipt because children do not necessarily know or remember that their family received assistance. Thirty-one percent reported times when they were homeless or lived in a foster or group home, jail, an in-patient treatment center, or transitional housing during their childhood. Many of their own parents were involved in violence, crime, or chemical dependency (26 percent of their mothers and 38 percent of their fathers). Only one in three came from a home with both parents present for most of their childhood. Ten percent had no contact with their mother and 19 percent had no contact with their father while they were growing up. Sixty-one percent of their mothers were teens when they had their first child, including 25 percent under age 18.

Very few of the teens in the study made a conscious decision to start their own family. Only 9 percent of the teen mothers said that they *intentionally* conceived their first child. At the same time, only 16 percent of the teens reported that they were consistently using birth control around the time of the conception. More than half of the teens were under age 16 when they became sexually active.

For teens who already have a child, a subsequent birth makes positive outcomes much more difficult. For example, significantly fewer of those with more than one child were working. Forty-four percent had already had a second child or were pregnant again approximately two and a half years after their initial MFIP application.

For teens surveyed, there was an apparent disconnect between marriage and having babies. Only 16 of the 248 teen mothers ever married the father of their firstborn child and 207 had *never* been married by 30 months after the MFIP application. Much speculation has centered on the marriageability of the males teen mothers know and on the mothers' self-esteem and own presumed marriageability. The participants themselves spoke about problems in the fathers' lives, as described below, and the teens' own independence as single parents as factors in their not marrying.

For this group, completing education usually did not precede childbearing. Only 26 percent of the teens finished high school before their first baby was born. Eighteen percent dropped out of school *before* they became pregnant, 11 percent immediately after the birth, and the rest during pregnancy. Nearly half of those who had dropped out by the time of the birth had not returned to their studies by 30 months after they first applied for assistance.

While most had some employment history, consistent full-time work was not the norm. Half worked while they were pregnant with their first child, and 94 percent had been employed since their first child was born. But by month 30, only 23 percent were working steadily (30 hours or more per week for the last six months), and average earnings for the total group were \$713 per month.

Many of these young women thought that more should be done to prevent other teens from becoming pregnant. One-third volunteered that someone should tell teens how hard it is to be a parent, and that the most credible messengers would be teen parents themselves. A third said it was important for teens to be busy with other activities and encouraged the community to offer more opportunities. One in seven stressed the importance of teaching teens about sex, birth control, and sexually transmitted diseases. About the same number suggested that adult mentors would give teens needed emotional support and encouragement (what teens most often said they wanted for themselves as parents). Many more teens knew about existing community programs and how to access them than actually used these programs.

### **Questions to consider about changing the cycle of generational poverty**

How can teen parents be supported as parents so they can advance and their children can thrive?

How can teen pregnancies be prevented or delayed until greater age and maturity are achieved and perhaps also until problems many teens reported like mental health issues and chemical dependency have been addressed?

## **Engaging Biological Fathers in the Lives of Their Children**

The biological fathers of the teens' first children had numerous barriers to successful parenting and economic stability. According to the teen mothers, 59 percent of these fathers had experienced problems with substance abuse, violence, or crime, including 34 percent with alcohol, 29 percent with drug use, and 30 percent with violent behavior. Forty percent had been involved in criminal activities, including 18 who were in jail during the study month. Twenty-five percent of the fathers were five or more years older than the mothers, including 5 percent who were more than 10 years older. Half of the fathers were unemployed when the baby was born. At month 30, 46 percent were known to be working, 24 percent were unemployed, and the employment status of 30 percent was not known to the mother. Less than half were known to be high school graduates at the time of the baby's birth. Paternity had *not* been established for 27 percent of the firstborn children, and 80 percent of the fathers not in the household 30 months after MFIP application paid *no* child support. Twenty-three percent of all the fathers had had *no* contact with the child for at least a year.

Very few of these couples had married. Desertion, physical and emotional abuse, drug and alcohol use, unfaithfulness (including being married to someone else), and fathering children with other women (one father reportedly had 10 other children), as well as not getting along or sharing the same values, were reasons mothers gave for not marrying the father of their firstborn child. Up to 30 months after they first applied for assistance, only 16 of the 248 teen mothers had *ever* been married to the father of their first child and only 9 were still married to the father while 18 percent of the mothers were living with the father without marriage. While the mothers cited a number of advantages to not being married (independence, lower expenses, eligibility for benefits, and avoiding divorce and domestic violence), only 12 percent rejected marriage itself. Besides reasons for not marrying cited above, many said they themselves were too young or immature to marry.

### **Questions to consider to better engage biological fathers in their children's lives**

What is the right mix of enforcement of child support obligations and outreach to engage fathers in the lives of their children?

What social and employment supports might help low-income men improve their earnings and nurture their children?

How can fathers be helped in dealing with issues like chemical dependency, violence, and crime to be better equipped to be good fathers?

## **Improving Services for Teens**

Minnesota statute requires the commissioner of Human Services to “offer appropriate social services to any pregnant woman who is in need of social services” and also “to the woman and her child after the birth of the child.” After the birth, a minor mother on MFIP is required to have a plan, which the county social services agency can help her formulate. The social service agency can also provide case management services as needed. The plan must consider the minor’s age, the involvement of the minor’s parents or other adults, the involvement of the father of the child, a decision whether or not to keep and raise the child, and completion of high school or a GED or plans to do so. The plan must also detail current economic support, plans for self-sufficiency, parenting skills, living arrangement, child care and transportation for education or employment, and health care. It must outline services needed to address problems or facilitate the personal growth and development and economic self-sufficiency of the minor parent and child. All minor MFIP recipients must have a social worker. The county decides whether a social worker or job counselor will work with 18 and 19 year olds who are active MFIP recipients and still in high school or GED completion classes. In the majority of these cases, a job counselor at an employment services provider monitors school plans.

There is no routine monitoring of MFIP social service requirements for teens, according to both state and county human services representatives. Some minor teens decide not to accept assignment to a social worker. County staff report that those working with teens (whether social worker, financial worker, or employment counselor) often do not have training about teen parents’ needs and focus primarily on their living arrangement and school attendance, rather than the full range of services detailed in statute.

Over 60 percent of the teen mothers who were under age 18 when they first started receiving MFIP said they could not remember the rules or they were unaware of any rules concerning their living arrangements. Of those who were required to work toward a high school diploma or GED when they first received MFIP, nearly half did not remember anything about these rules. Nearly half of all teen participants did not remember anything about work rules for teen parents who have finished high school. A majority of those who remembered school and work rules made positive comments about them. Others brought up problems they encountered in trying to comply. Three-quarters reported that no one helped them with meeting MFIP requirements. Half were sanctioned for not complying with MFIP rules during the 30 months following their first application. Understanding the purpose of the program and having a plan are important for cooperation and successful outcomes.

### **Questions to consider about improving services to teens**

Rather than services for teens being piecemeal and spread across a number of institutions, should responsibility and funding for supporting teens be focused in one institution, concentrating expertise and resources?

Should MFIP be more consistent and systematic in how it serves teen parents, perhaps using specially trained staff?

## **Supporting Teens' Planning for Their Futures**

Thirty months after application for assistance, teens in the study had made some progress toward the MFIP goals of increased employment and income, decreased welfare dependency, and reduced poverty, as the following indicators show:

- 60 percent had finished high school.
- 60 percent were working.
- 55 percent had left MFIP.
- 18 percent had family incomes above 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG).

These indices were all lower for teens than for the whole applicant sample at 24 months, when 76 percent of applicants surveyed had completed high school, 67 percent were working, 66 percent were MFIP leavers, and 23 percent had family incomes above 200 percent of FPG.

And there were still many challenges for teen mothers for meeting MFIP goals:

- 44 percent had given birth to a second child.
- 26 percent of all the teen mothers were on MFIP and not working.
- 40 percent had incomes below the poverty level.
- Problems with transportation, children's behavior, child care, and housing made it hard for many to get or keep a job.
- 11 percent had suffered a serious illness or injury in the previous six months.
- 9 percent of children had special needs.
- Mental health issues were reported by one in five, and one in five scored high on a depression screener.

Teens reported many changes in their outlook on life since becoming parents. For many, a desire for education and recognition of its importance for their future came *after* having a child. This future orientation was credited by many for getting them to finish high school. Many endorsed the work orientation of MFIP, even when it was difficult for them. Eighty-four percent had career goals that they wanted to work towards. Most of these would require some post-secondary education – technical education or even college or beyond. There was also a realization of how hard it is to be a parent. Some teens reported finding help with staying in school, parenting, job search, and dealing with MFIP.

### **Questions to consider about helping teen parents plan for the future**

Do low-income youth have a special need to learn how to navigate an educational and career path that may be outside their community or their family's experience? How can this be done most effectively and efficiently? Are specially trained staff needed?

## Minnesota Family Investment Program Longitudinal Study: Teen Mothers

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as the public assistance program in Minnesota during the first half of 1998. The MFIP Longitudinal Study started in May of that year, with the goal of following two samples of MFIP participants over the next five years: ongoing recipients and new applicants. The purpose of the study is to find out what happens to people under a new welfare program, including those who leave the program. A history of the study is included in the appendix.

MFIP goals are to increase employment and income, decrease welfare use, and reduce poverty. New emphases included work requirements, sanctions for not complying, and a time limit on welfare receipt. MFIP also has rules for teen parents about high school attendance and living arrangements.

When selected, all longitudinal study participants were receiving MFIP and were the sole caregiver of their children. Thirty percent of the new applicants in the study were pregnant teens or parenting teens when they first applied for MFIP (an additional 19 percent of applicants had given birth as teens but did not apply until they were over age 20). At the midpoint of the study, a telephone survey of teen applicants reached 248 participants (a response rate of 84 percent of the 297 applicants<sup>1</sup> who were less than 20 years old at baseline and still participating in the study and 71 percent of all teen applicants originally sampled).<sup>2</sup> Interviewers asked about their life history, experiences as young mothers, and the services they received. Many questions focused on the firstborn child and the 30<sup>th</sup> month after baseline. Most of the teen mothers had never been married as of the time of the interview. All received welfare at least part of the time during the previous two-and-a-half years.

The following brief consideration of the literature on birth rates by age and marital status, poverty rates and welfare receipt, and the effects of early childbearing on teen mothers and their children gives some context for this study.

**Birthrates and first births.** U.S. birthrates<sup>3</sup> for teens declined to a record low in the year 2000 – 48.5 per thousand for all teen women ages 15 to 19 (39.6 per thousand for unmarried teens ages 15 to 19) – after declining every year since 1991. For teens aged 10 to 14, the rate was 0.9 per thousand, unchanged from 1999 but declining from 1994 to 1998. However, these numbers are far higher than in other developed countries, about four times the teen birthrate in the European Union as a whole and more than seven times the rates in the developed nations with the lowest birth rates for teens.<sup>4</sup> In Minnesota, the birthrate for teens aged 15 to 19 was 29.6 per thousand in the year 2000.

Of all births in the United States in 1998, 4.6 percent were to teens under age 18 and 7.9 percent to teens age 18 and 19.<sup>5</sup> The births to teens under age 18 made up 2.7 percent of all births in Minnesota.<sup>6</sup>

In the United States in 1998, 10 percent of all *first* births were to minor teens (under age 18) and 14 percent were to 18 and 19 year olds. Fewer than 1 percent of subsequent births were to minor teens and 4 percent were to 18 and 19 year olds in the United States that year.<sup>7</sup>

U.S. birth rates vary greatly by racial/ethnic group. For ages 15-19, 93.4 per thousand Hispanic teen women gave birth in 1999, 81.0 for blacks, 67.8 for American Indians, 34.0 for whites, and 22.3 for Asian/Pacific Islanders. In Minnesota, the rates varied even more across racial/ethnic group: 137.5 per thousand for Hispanic teens, 109.9 for black teens, 97.0 for American Indians, 64.8 for Asians, and 21.0 per thousand for white teens.<sup>8</sup>

The share of births to unmarried women in the year 2000 rose slightly to 33.2 percent. The share of births to unmarried mothers in Minnesota was 25.8 percent of all births.<sup>9</sup> Seventy-nine percent of U.S. teen births were nonmarital.<sup>10</sup> More than 85 percent of teen births in Minnesota were to unmarried mothers.<sup>11</sup>

**Poverty and teen mothers.** The U.S. poverty rate was 11.7 percent in 2001. The overall poverty rate for children under age six was 18.2 percent, but it was 48.9 percent in households headed by a female with no spouse present.<sup>12</sup> Large proportions of welfare recipients were teen parents. In the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) longitudinal study, 49 percent of participants in the new applicant sample and 57 percent in the ongoing recipient sample were teens when their first child was born.<sup>13</sup> MFIP administrative records for the total caseload in July 2002 showed that at least 56 percent had a child before turning 20. Hennepin county (including the city of Minneapolis) found that 76 percent of the 200 families in the county receiving the most social welfare dollars were formed by a teen giving birth.<sup>14</sup>

The Minnesota Department of Health summarized the relationship of teen birth to poverty: “It is estimated that 80 percent of all adolescent mothers will at sometime receive government assistance during the 10 years following the birth of their first child. Teenagers who become pregnant are less likely to graduate from high school, are more likely to be single parents, to live in poverty and to depend on welfare programs.”<sup>15</sup> A national study also concluded that “due to their weak educational and skill levels, low rates of marriage, and inadequate support from nonresident fathers of their children, young mothers face significant challenges in trying to provide for their children.”<sup>16</sup>

**Outcomes for families of teen parents.** Because teen parents are “less likely to become financially self-sufficient, more likely to live in poverty, and less likely to finish high school or go on to college, the children of teen parents inherit the following risks from their parents: low birth weight, infant mortality and childhood health problems; cognitive and emotional delays that will affect their ability to learn and succeed in school; school problems; greater likelihood of repeating a grade; poor performance on standardized tests; and greater risk of dropping out of high school.”<sup>17</sup> Both TANF legislation and many research and advocacy organizations call for a reduction in teenage and out-of-wedlock pregnancies as a way to improve the lives of children and families in the future.<sup>18</sup> In Minnesota, there are many organizations involved in that effort as well as helping teens that have already become parents.<sup>19</sup>

**Other issues.** National and state statistics were available for several of the issues affecting teen parents that the survey addressed. Frequency of smoking tobacco daily was 21 percent in the U.S. and 26 percent in Minnesota among 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2001. Smoking is one factor related to low birth weight. Low birth weight babies were 7.6 percent of births in the U.S. and 6.1 percent in Minnesota in the year 2000. Sexual abuse was reported by 13 percent of female 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Minnesota in 2001.<sup>20</sup> “Many (as many as two-thirds) of young women who become pregnant as adolescents were sexually an/or physically abused at some point in their lives – either as children, in their current relationships or both, according to several studies.”<sup>21</sup>

## Highlights of the Teen Study

### Reproductive History and Plans

- Of the 248 Minnesota teen mothers<sup>22</sup> interviewed in our study, only 9 percent planned to get pregnant. Twenty-nine percent did not plan to get pregnant *and* used birth control around the time they got pregnant. Only half of this group, however, used birth control consistently. Nearly two-thirds of the teen mothers did not plan to get pregnant but did nothing to prevent it.
- Fifty-three percent first had sex when they were under age 16.
- The average age of these young mothers when their first child was born was 17.5 years. The youngest was 12 years old.
- Fifty-seven percent had a subsequent pregnancy by the time of the interview (about 32 months after initially receiving MFIP), including 21 percent with three or more pregnancies altogether.
- Fifty-two percent said they did want more children, while 38 percent said they would not have more children. The remaining 10 percent were undecided.

### Education

- Sixty percent of the teen mothers had completed high school by month 30 of the study, 26 percent finishing before the baby was born and 34 percent after their baby was born.
- Forty percent had not completed high school, including 28 percent who had returned to school after the birth and 12 percent who had not.
- School missed due to the pregnancy and birth (29 percent) and child care problems (29 percent) were issues most frequently giving participants trouble with finishing high school. Realizing the importance of education, help with child care and transportation, and support from others were most powerful forces keeping teens in school, they reported.

### Marriage Choice

- Only eight of the teens were married when their first child was born. Eventually another eight married their child’s father, for a marriage rate of 6 percent for the biological parents of the firstborn children. Only 9 of the 16 couples were still

married at month 30. Another 18 percent of the teens were living with the firstborn child's father but were not married to him.

- Two-and-a-half years after they started receiving MFIP at the start of the study, 83 percent of the teen mothers had never been married.
- Of those not currently married, 74 percent were sure they wanted to marry someday and 12 percent said they would not. Three-quarters of those who were not married saw benefits to *not* being married, especially greater independence.

### **The Baby's Biological Father**

- The average age of the fathers when their baby was born was 20.6 years, the range 14 to 40 years old. Twenty-five percent of the fathers were five or more years older than the mother.
- Forty-two percent were known to be high school graduates and 50 percent employed at the time of the baby's birth.
- In month 30, 19 percent of the fathers were living with their child, most also with the mother. On the other hand, 23 percent had no contact with their child for at least a year. Paternity had been established for 73 percent of the babies, and 20 percent of fathers not in the household regularly paid child support.
- More than half (59 percent) had a history of substance abuse, violence, or crime.

### **Health Care**

- Nearly all of the teen mothers received prenatal care. Twenty-three percent reported medical complications at the delivery of their firstborn child. The average birth weight of the 248 babies was 7 pounds and 3 ounces. There were 20 babies (8 percent) weighing in at less than 5.5 pounds.
- Nearly all the mothers said their children had regular well-child exams (98 percent) and that their immunizations were up to date (96 percent). Three-quarters (74 percent) had continuous health care coverage since birth.
- Medical Assistance (MA) covered all but two of the children at some point. Other health care coverage included insurance through the child's father's employer (17 percent), MinnesotaCare (16 percent), the participant's employer (10 percent), the participant's parent's employer (8 percent), and the child's stepfather's employer (3 percent).
- Sixty-six percent of families had coverage for all family members, while 8 percent of families had no health care coverage for anyone in the family at month 30.
- Nine percent of the children had special needs at month 30.

### **Living Arrangements**

- More than half (58 percent) were living with at least one of their parents in the month before the baby was born, and nearly as many (54 percent) afterwards.
- The majority of the teen mothers were satisfied with their living situation after their baby was born (78 percent).
- Adoption was considered by 15 percent of these mothers before the baby was born, considered by 5 percent after the birth, and then chosen by 2 percent.
- All but 14 of the firstborn children were living with their mother at the time of the interview.

- As children themselves, 31 percent of the teen mothers had lived in foster or group homes, been incarcerated or homeless, received in-patient treatment, or lived in transitional housing.
- Twenty-two percent of the young mothers said they had been homeless at some point in their lives, including 13 percent at some time since their first baby was born.

### **Family Background**

- One-third of the teen mothers were from families in which their parents stayed together most or all of their childhood. Altogether 88 percent lived with their mother and 50 percent with their father during most of their childhood.
- Many of their own mothers had their first child while still in their teen years (25 percent under age 18, 36 percent at age 18 or 19). Their average age was 19, ranging from 14 to 30 years old.
- The teen mothers reported that 26 percent of their mothers and 38 percent of their fathers had one or more of the following serious problems: alcohol or drug abuse, incarceration, or committing child abuse.
- Nearly half the teen mothers (45 percent) remembered their family receiving cash assistance when they themselves were children.

### **Parenting by Young Mothers**

- Nearly all the firstborn children had another adult besides their own biological parents who was very involved in raising them, according to their teen mother. This was most often the teen's own mother.
- When asked what their most difficult problem was since becoming a parent, the largest number of participants (43 percent of all teen mothers) focused on parenting problems, especially those concerning child behavior.

### **Economic Status**

- **Employment/welfare outcomes:** Sixty percent of teen mothers were working at month 30 (compared with 67 percent at month 24 for all study participants who started as new applicants) and 55 percent were MFIP leavers (compared with 66 percent). Forty-one percent of the teen mothers were both working and off MFIP. Some analyses are reported for four outcome groups based on employment and welfare status: not working and on MFIP, not working and off MFIP, working and on MFIP, and working and off MFIP.
- **Employment:**
  - Half (53 percent) of the teen mothers worked while pregnant with their first child.
  - Nearly everyone (94 percent) had worked at some time since the baby was born. Eighty-one percent had worked within the last six months, and 60 percent were employed in month 30. Twenty-three percent worked steadily (30 or more hours per week for at least the last six months).
  - Most worked either in services (55 percent) or in clerical or sales positions (37 percent).
  - Two-thirds of employed leavers and half of employed MFIP recipients had jobs with benefits.

- **Child care:** Of the 175 mothers whose firstborn child needed care while they were at work or training, the largest number (46 percent) took the child to someone else's home. Thirty percent had someone who would care for the child in their own home, and 20 percent took the child to a school or child care center.
- **Family income:**
  - The average family income for the teen mothers in month 30 was \$1,566, including earned and unearned income. Working leavers had the most income (\$2,200) month and those not working and on MFIP had the least (\$755), on average.
  - Most of the families in the group on MFIP and not working had income below the poverty level. Among working leavers, 1 in 8 families were below the poverty level. Eighteen percent of all the teen mothers were off MFIP and had income at least twice the monthly Federal Poverty Guideline for their family size.
- **Demographics and economic outcomes:**
  - Minor parents were significantly more likely to be nonwhite, to live in Hennepin or Ramsey County, and to have had a subsequent pregnancy than those who had their first child at age 18 or above.
  - Being over 18 at first birth, high school completion, being white, having lived in the suburbs when applying for MFIP, having only one child, having a second parent in the household, coming from a two-parent family, and not having been sanctioned were related to a number of more favorable economic outcomes.
  - Ever being sanctioned was highly related to worse economic outcomes.

### **Hardships and Problems**

- Having enough money for the family was a problem for 41 percent of the teen mothers. Problems with transportation, children's behavior, child care, and housing were each reported by more than 1 in 5 participants.
- Participants were also asked which problems were big problems. Those not working called child care a big problem (18 percent of all unemployed) more often than workers did (3 percent).
- Eleven percent of the mothers had suffered a serious illness or injury during the preceding six months.
- Mental health issues were most often cited by those on MFIP and not working (21 percent).
- Reported current drug and alcohol abuse was fairly low (2 percent and 1 percent), but several times that number had been treated for chemical dependency in the past (7 percent for drugs and 6 percent for alcohol).
- Seven percent reported problems with the law in the last six months.
- Twenty percent had personal problems with a spouse or partner in the previous six months.
- Nine percent had someone in the household with a serious illness or injury.
- Nineteen percent of the teen mothers scored high enough on a depression screener to indicate the possibility of current general depression.

## **MFIP Support**

- **MFIP experiences:**
  - By July 2002, after 60 months of TANF in Minnesota, 61 percent of these participants – who applied for MFIP as teens during the May to October 1998 period – were MFIP leavers.
  - Many participants did not remember the MFIP rules for teen participants (minor parent living arrangements, teen parent school and work requirements).
  - Thirty-eight percent had some months exempt from work requirements. The most common exemption was for care of a child under age one. There was no difference across the four outcome groups in whether they had exemptions.
  - Forty-nine percent of the teens had been sanctioned for not complying with employment services or child support. Significantly fewer working leavers had been sanctioned than those in the other three outcome groups had. Twelve percent had been sanctioned for not pursuing the required high school education.
  - About half of all thought MFIP was working well as is and half thought the program needed improvement. Positive areas included financial help and the emphasis on work. Complaints were mainly about financial workers.
- **Anticipated MFIP use:**
  - Over half of current recipients at the time of the interview (59 percent) made positive comments about the time limit, and over half (58 percent) indicated they had taken some action because of the time limit.
  - Seventy-three percent thought they would get off MFIP within one year, and another 17 percent thought two years would be enough time.
  - At least 75 percent said they had to get a job, find a better paying job, or work more hours to get off MFIP.
  - Almost half (47 percent) said they had to rely on themselves alone and nobody else.

## **Community Supports for Teen Parents**

- **Professional helpers:** Most of the teen mothers (92 percent) said that a caring adult professional went out of their way to help them at some point since their MFIP application. Teachers and child care providers were the most frequently cited.
- **Programs:** The best-used service was job search and job training, reported by 62 percent of all the participants. Twenty-one percent had been in teen parent support programs, 15 percent got child care through the high school, 13 percent used family planning programs, 8 percent a housing program for teens, and 5 percent a crisis nursery.
- **Suggestions:** To prevent teen pregnancy, participants asked for more activities for teens, efforts to “teach teens how difficult it is to raise children before they actually get pregnant,” sex education, and emotional support. To help teens that were already parents, they wanted emotional support and encouragement in the role of parent, help with child care, more affordable housing, and parenting classes.

### Future Career Goals

- Aspirations were quite similar for the four outcome groups, with around a quarter of each wanting to eventually acquire professional employment and half having a career goal for which technical education is either required or desirable.
- Seventy-six percent of all the teen mothers said that they had a goal and needed more education to do the kind of work they wanted to do, so education was a major component of their plans toward reaching career goals.

## The Story of MFIP’s Teen Mothers

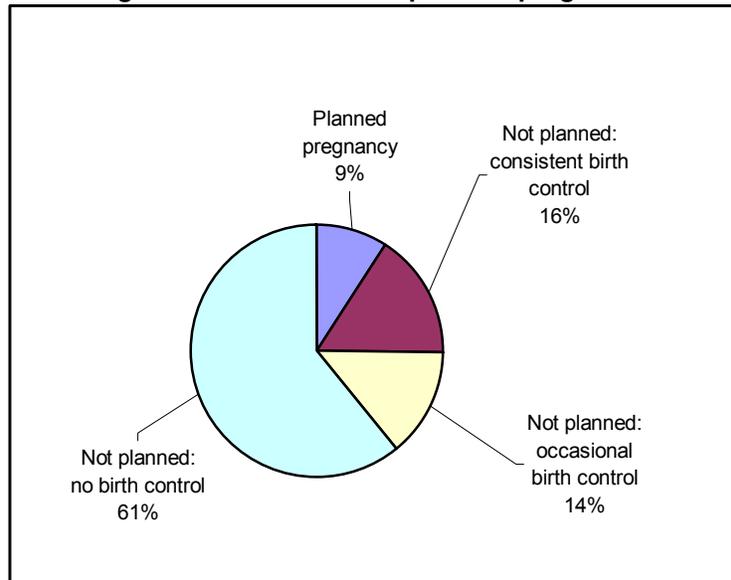
The teen mothers told interviewers about their reproductive history and plans, their education, the marriage choice, the baby’s biological father, health care during and since the pregnancy and birth, their living situations, their family background, and parenting their own children. All the data in this section came from the survey.

### Reproductive History and Plans

#### How many teens planned to have a baby when they did?

Only 23 teens (9 percent) planned to get pregnant. When asked why, most simply said that they wanted a baby. Only three described a joint decision made with the child’s father. However, only 74 of the 225 teens who did *not* plan to get pregnant (30 percent of all teens) were using birth control around the time they got pregnant, and only 40 (16 percent of all the teens) said they were using birth control consistently at that time.<sup>23</sup> Figure 1 illustrates planning and pregnancy in this group.

Figure 1. Planned and unplanned pregnancies



#### How old were these teen mothers when their first child was born?

The average age of these young mothers when their first child was born was 17.5 years, and their ages ranged from 12 to 20 (20 year olds started to receive MFIP and joined the

study as pregnant teens). Forty-three percent were under age 18 when their first child was born. These first births took place between 1992 and 1999.

### **When did they become sexually active?**

All but six people answered this question. Fifty-three percent were under age 16 when they became sexually active, including two who were 11 and seven who were 12. Only 4 percent were age 18 or over. Thirty-eight percent had given birth at the same age they became sexually active or when only one birthday had passed. (The survey asked age at earliest sexual activity and age at first birth, not the time between the two events.) The survey did *not* ask whether sex was consensual.

### **How many times had they been pregnant?**

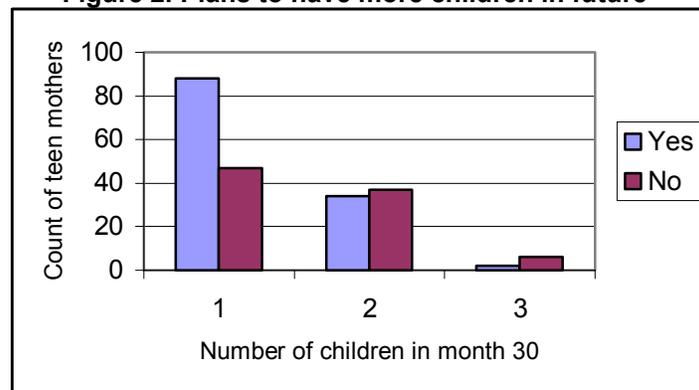
Fifty-seven percent had more than one pregnancy by the time of the interview (typically occurring about two months after month 30), 36 percent had two, 15 percent had three, and 6 percent had four or more pregnancies. Thirty (12 percent) were pregnant when interviewed. Some pregnancies had not ended in a live birth. Nineteen percent of the participants had a miscarriage, 12 percent had an abortion, and 2 babies were stillborn.

### **How many children did they have and plan to have?**

Fifty-nine percent had one child, 37 percent had two children, and 4 percent had three children when interviewed. Forty-four percent either already had two or more children or were pregnant with their second child.

Fifty-two percent were sure they did want more children, while 38 percent planned not to have any more. Only 10 percent were undecided. Those with one child were the most likely to want more, as Figure 2 shows.

**Figure 2. Plans to have more children in future**



Nearly half of those who wanted more children wanted to add one child to their family (48 percent of 128 mothers), a quarter (27 percent) wanted two more, 9 percent wanted three or more additional children, 3 percent wanted a girl, and the rest were undecided. While time was an important factor for many in deciding when to have their next child, some specified a precondition. Fourteen percent of those planning more children wanted to get married first, and 5 percent planned to finish school, get a job, or reach a certain age or level of stability first. Sixteen percent said their next child was at least five years away or farther in the future, 21 percent in three to five years, 17 percent in one to two

years, and 9 percent were either pregnant or hoping to be soon. Eighteen percent did not know when they wanted to have the next child.

## Education Before and After the First Baby's Birth

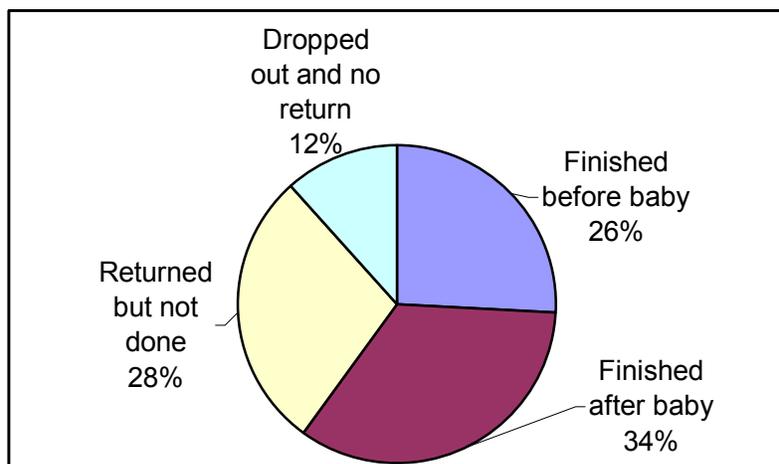
### How many teen mothers had finished high school and when?

The following was the educational status of the 248 teen mothers:

- 26 percent had completed high school before the baby was born, and 74 percent were not done with high school at the time of the baby's birth.
- 62 percent returned to school to finish a high school diploma or GED after the birth and 12 percent did not go back to school by month 30.
- 34 percent had finished high school or a GED since the birth and 28 percent had taken some classes but not enough to graduate.
- 60 percent had completed high school or a GED by month 30 and 40 percent had not. The completion rates were not significantly different for those who were under age 18 when their first child was born versus those at least 18 years old.

Figure 3 illustrates high school completion both before and after the baby's birth. At month 30, of the teen mothers with a high school diploma or GED (60 percent of all), half (30 percent) had pursued additional education, including college (13 percent of all) or a technical program (17 percent). Twenty people (8 percent) had completed a technical program, and two people (1 percent) had completed associate degrees. The careers they were prepared for encompassed nursing (6 certified nursing assistants (CNAs), 1 LPN, 1 RN), cosmetology (6), business (4), medical assistant (2), child care assistant (1), and real estate (1).

**Figure 3. High school completion by teen mothers by month 30**



At month 30, of the teen mothers who had *not* yet finished high school (40 percent of all), 3 percent of all teens had not yet started high school, 5 percent had finished ninth grade, 9 percent had finished grade 10, and the majority (23 percent) had one year or less to go. Rather than returning to a traditional high school, many teens who had left high school opted to work toward a GED.

### **Did the timing of dropping out of school before the baby make a difference?**

The nongrads who attended school up to the time of the birth were significantly more likely to return to school after the birth and to graduate than those who dropped out earlier (73 percent vs. 52 percent). Actually 63 percent of those who dropped out before the birth had done so *before* becoming pregnant and were less likely to have subsequently finished high school (23 percent vs. 50 percent of those who dropped out during the pregnancy).

The nongrads who dropped out earlier were significantly more likely to have been attending a regular secondary school than the nongrads who stayed in school until the birth (66 percent of those who dropped out before the birth vs. 50 percent of those who stayed in school up to the birth were enrolled in regular high schools). These others were enrolled in alternative or area learning centers (ALCs) (24 percent and 33 percent, respectively) or other special programs, such as a teen parent school, GED classes, home school, or homebound instruction.

Parents were most frequently cited as encouraging the pregnant teens who stayed in school (50 percent of those who did so). Sadly, 35 percent said that *no one* tried to get them to stay in school. Other people who motivated the teens included friends (13 percent) and other relatives, boyfriends, school personnel (12 percent each), and a few other professionals (MFIP workers, parole officer, foster parent, counselor).

### **Who went back to high school after the baby was born and who finished?**

At the birth, 74 percent of all the teens were nongrads and 62 percent went back to school sometime after the birth. Those who were on MFIP in month 30 were significantly more likely to have gone back to school than those who were leavers (92 percent of non-high school graduates at the baby's birth vs. 77 percent). Perhaps the MFIP school requirement for recipients under age 20 played a part in this difference by getting more teens back in school. Those who were working in month 30 were not more likely to have gone back to school than those who were unemployed.

While 62 percent of all teens went back to high school or GED classes after the birth, 34 percent had gone back to school *and* finished. Participants who returned to high school after the birth turned to GED classes (40 percent of all teens), ALCs (39 percent), and regular secondary schools (34 percent), as well as instruction at home (5 percent) and teen parent programs (3 percent) for finishing high school. (Some enrolled in multiple types of schooling.)

### **What helped teens finish high school?**

The 34 percent of teen mothers who finished high school or a GED after the birth cited many reasons that they had made it through high school, an average of 9 out of 13 possible reasons read to them plus the open-ended "other." Table 1 on the next page shows that they were thinking about the future in their responses, as they noted the importance of finishing high school for their own future and that it would help their child. Family support again ranked high, as did two things that are formidable barriers to work

or education if not available: reliable child care and transportation. Other supportive people beyond home and school included friends, relatives, boyfriends, and child care providers. Teen programs were not universally available (see Table 16 on page 40), but nearly half of those who participated in them (24 of 52) said they made the difference. Some participants named additional things that kept them going, like wanting to graduate, to go to college, to prove to her parents she could do it, and to get a good job.

**Table 1. Supports for school attendance by teens who finished high school after first birth**

<b>Helped teens who graduated after baby stay in school</b>	<b>Percent (N=84)</b>
Important to my future	96%
Reliable child care	94%
Doing it for my child	93%
Family support	88%
Reliable transportation	85%
Doing well in school	82%
Other supportive people	82%
Getting along with other students	71%
Flexible school schedule	71%
Liking school	65%
Support from school personnel	63%
Teen parent program	29%

**What things made it hard for teens to finish high school?**

All the teens were asked what made it hard to finish high school. School missed due to the pregnancy and birth (29 percent) and child care problems (29 percent) were the most frequently mentioned issues. Other problems nearly as common included depression, bad grades, problems at home, transportation problems, not liking school, and housing problems. Those who finished high school had significantly fewer problems on average (2.6 versus 4.6 for those who had not finished). Nearly every type of problem was more common for those who had not finished high school, as Table 2 on the next page details.

**How did the total group of teen mothers describe their special school programs and grades?**

Nearly half (46 percent of all) reported that they had been enrolled only in regular schools and classes. Other program participation was in teen parent programs (22 percent), school-to-work (17 percent), special education (12 percent), advanced placement (11 percent), and home tutoring supplied by the school district (10 percent). For the whole group, there was no difference between those who had finished high school and those who had not in whether they had been enrolled in special programs. Significantly more high school grads had been enrolled in advanced placement courses (17 percent versus 3 percent) and fewer in teen parent programs (17 percent versus 28 percent). There was no difference in enrollment in special education or the other programs. There was a difference in reported grades. Sixty-two percent of high school grads reported their grades were mostly As or Bs compared to 37 percent of those who had not finished high school.

**Table 2. Problems for teens who had not finished high school by month 30**

Problems with returning to and finishing high school	High school status at month 30		
	Finished	Not finished	All
Count	149	99	248
Mean number of problems	2.6	4.6	3.9
Missed school due to pregnancy / birth	26%	33%	29%
Child care problems	19%	38%	29%
Depressed	20%	30%	25%
Bad grades	15%	33%	24%
Problems at home	15%	33%	24%
Transportation problems	8%	37%	23%
Did not like school	18%	28%	23%
Housing or moving problems	12%	33%	23%
School schedule not flexible	12%	30%	21%
No family support	9%	30%	20%
Baby sick a lot	16%	17%	17%
Problems with boyfriend	11%	18%	15%
School not supportive for teen parents	14%	14%	14%
Learning problems	11%	17%	14%
Problems with school personnel	14%	9%	11%
School not considered important	5%	16%	11%
Another pregnancy	4%	15%	10%
Problems with other students	6%	12%	9%
Alcohol or drug problems	4%	5%	4%
Other	8%	18%	14%

## The Marriage Choice

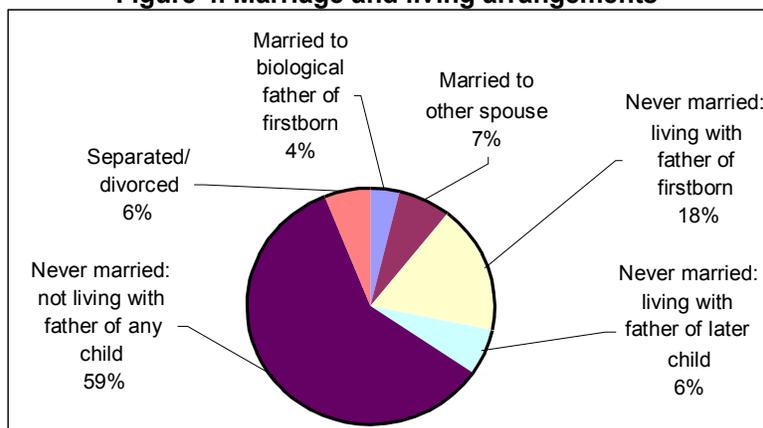
The decisions to marry and to have children have become increasingly separate in the U.S. over the last several decades. Childbearing without marriage was the most common pattern for this group of young mothers.

### What was the marital status of the young mothers at the birth of their first child and in month 30?

Only eight of these first children were born during their parents' marriage. Eventually eight more couples married. Nine of the 16 fathers were still in the home at the time of the interview (three who were married before the birth and six who married afterwards).

Two and a half years after they started receiving MFIP (and joined the study), 207 of the 248 teen mothers had never been married (83 percent). Fifty-nine percent had never been married and were not currently living with the father of any of their children. Twenty-seven (11 percent) were married and living with their spouse. As mentioned above, nine of these spouses were the father of the participant's first child. Six percent of the young mothers were separated or divorced. Fifty-nine were living with a partner with whom they had a child in common; 44 of these partners were the fathers of the firstborn child.

**Figure 4. Marriage and living arrangements**



### **Why did so many of these couples never marry?**

In response to an open-ended question, people volunteered the one or two reasons for not marrying that were most important to them. The most frequently cited reason was that the relationship was over (21 percent). Couples had broken up because they “didn’t see eye to eye” and argued a lot, because they did not like each other, because the father-to-be opposed the pregnancy, and sometimes because outside forces made them stay apart (specifically parents or courts). The young women had the following complaints about the fathers of their children: desertion (9 percent), abuse (8 percent), chemical dependency (6 percent), unfaithfulness (5 percent), poor character (6 percent), incarceration (3 percent), and fathering other children (2 percent). Five percent said there never was a relationship. Four fathers were deceased.

Many mentioned their youth (17 percent said they were “too young”) or not being ready for marriage (12 percent, typically citing lack of maturity and/or money problems). Some participants were opposed to marriage itself (6 percent), and some were still together but either did not feel a need to get married or had been waiting for something before getting married, such as the divorce or sobriety of the father (6 percent). There were many other reasons individuals gave for not marrying, such as wanting to finish their education first, age differences, cultural differences, and the father being unable to come to the United States.

### **Did the unmarried plan to marry in the future and when would the time be right?**

Of those who were not currently married, 74 percent were sure they wanted to marry someday, 12 percent were certain they would not, and the rest were undecided. The unmarried were asked under what conditions they would get married. Fourteen percent said they did not believe in marriage. Eleven women had already set the date. People described many situations and reasons as prerequisites for them to marry:

- Financial stability, as in being able to pay all the bills (20 percent).
- Falling in love (15 percent).
- Potential spouse having specified good qualities, such as being responsible, supportive, nice, good-hearted, honest, not controlling, not lazy (13 percent).
- Finding the right man (10 percent).

- A good father to her children (10 percent).
- A good relationship between potential spouses, that they be happy together (8 percent).
- Many additional conditions were mentioned: feeling ready, having a long-term relationship, being asked, maturity, finishing school, her children liking him, no drug or alcohol problems, money for a wedding, employment, getting a house, and the birth of another child.

**What advantages did these mothers of young children give for not being married?**

A quarter of those not married saw *no* benefits in being single (24 percent). But many of those not currently married did see some advantages to their status. Nearly a quarter (23 percent) said they valued their independence (the freedom to do what they want and go where they want, make their own child rearing and spending decisions, not answer to anyone else). Eight percent cited financial advantages, such as lower bills, lower taxes, and easier eligibility for things like educational benefits, welfare, and subsidized health care. Some liked having more time to spend with their children (5 percent) and avoiding the problems and stresses of living with another person (5 percent). Other advantages were avoiding divorce and domestic violence and gaining time to mature.

**The Baby’s Biological Father**

Each teen mother described the age, education, work, and problems of the father of her first child and told about his current relationship with his child. Table 3 summarizes this information.

**What were the fathers’ situations when the babies were born?**

The average age of the fathers was 20.6 years, but the range was between 14 and 40 years old. Thus the range of age differences between the fathers and mothers was great. Twenty-one percent of the fathers were the same age or younger than the teen mother, 55 percent were older by up to four years, 20 percent five to nine years older, and 5 percent more than 10 years older than the mother.

**Table 3. Biological fathers of firstborn children**

<b>Biological fathers (N=248)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Five or more years older than mother	25%
Known high school completion at birth	42%
Education status at baby’s birth unknown	17%
Known working in month 30	46%
Work status at month 30 unknown	30%
No contact with child for year or more	23%
Living with child in month 30	19%
Paternity established	73%
Regular child support payments (nonresident)	20%
Substance abuse, violence, or crime	59%

Seventeen percent of the teen mothers did not know how much education the father had at the time of the first baby’s birth. Forty-one percent said the father had not yet

graduated from high school, 27 percent had a high school diploma, 8 percent a GED, and 7 percent had schooling beyond high school, including four college graduates. Twenty percent were attending school when the baby was born. Exactly half said the father had been employed at the time the baby was born.

### **What were the fathers doing in month 30, as reported by the mothers?**

Two and a half years later, 70 percent of the mothers knew what the fathers were doing. Forty-six percent said the father was working, 5 percent that he was in school (4 in high school, 9 post-secondary, 3 also working), 7 percent in jail (18 fathers), and 13 percent in none of the above activities.

Excluding cases in which the child had been adopted or the father had died, 19 percent of the fathers were living with the child (nearly all also with the mother) in month 30. At the other extreme, 23 percent of the fathers had *no* contact with their child for at least a year. Twenty-two percent of the firstborn children had seen their father less than once a month in the last year, 19 percent one to four times per month, and 16 percent several times each week.

Of nonresident fathers (those *not* living with their child), 22 percent were very involved in the child's life, according to the mothers, but 47 percent were not at all involved. Of the nonresident fathers involved with their child, 18 percent were always involved in making important decisions for the child, and 45 percent were never involved in these decisions, the rest sometimes. According to the mothers, 71 percent of resident dads and 34 percent of nonresident dads had good parenting skills versus 7 percent of resident dads and 31 percent of nonresident dads who had poor parenting skills.

### **Did noncustodial fathers cooperate with the child support system?**

Paternity had been established for 73 percent of the firstborn children by month 30. Of the fathers not living with the firstborn child, 51 percent had never paid child support for the child and only 20 percent had done so on a regular basis. Forty percent had made payments through the child support system. Thirty-five percent of these fathers had sometimes helped out by giving the mother things like diapers, food, or clothes for the child, 12 percent on a regular basis.

### **What serious life problems did the mothers report for the fathers?**

Many of the fathers had serious problems in their own lives. Fifty-nine percent of the mothers reported that the fathers of their firstborns had difficulties with substance abuse, violence, or crime at some time in their lives. This included 40 percent with criminal activity, 34 percent with problems due to alcohol, 30 percent with violent behavior, and 29 percent with drug use. As noted above, 18 fathers were in jail during the month the survey focused on.

## **Health Care**

### **How many had difficulties during pregnancy or delivery?**

Nearly all of the teen mothers received prenatal care (97 percent); most had at least five prenatal exams (91 percent). Twenty-nine percent suffered medical complications during

the pregnancy. The most common were toxemia/edema, pre-term labor, kidney problems, bleeding, and gestational diabetes. Nine pregnant teens were ordered to be on bed rest. One was treated for cancer while she was pregnant.

Twenty-three percent reported medical complications at the delivery of their firstborn child. Fourteen percent of the births were premature, including six that were 8 to 13 weeks early. Eight percent of the mothers mentioned a stress to the baby (for example, a slowed heartbeat, umbilical cord wrapped around the neck, or stopped breathing) and 21 percent recalled a threat to their own health (such as high blood pressure, loss of blood, and infection). Six percent of the births were by Caesarian section.

### **Did any of the babies have medical problems?**

The average birth weight of the 248 babies was 7 pounds and 3 ounces. There were 20 babies (8 percent) weighing in at less than 5.5 pounds (the smallest, 1 pound and 13 ounces). This compares with 6 percent of all babies born low-weight in Minnesota in 1998. The most common problems the newborn babies had were respiratory problems (8 percent) and jaundice (4 percent). A few had serious acute or chronic conditions such as cerebral palsy, heart murmur, sleep apnea, sickle cell anemia, and meningitis. At the time of the interview, 22 firstborn children (9 percent) had special needs, according to their mothers. The most common were asthma and allergies, and the rest were unique and serious.

### **What was their health care coverage history from birth on?**

Nearly all the mothers said their children had regular well-child exams (98 percent) and that their immunizations were up to date (96 percent). Three-quarters (74 percent) of the firstborn children had continuous health care coverage from birth through the time of the interview. Fifty-five percent had Medicaid (called Medical Assistance (MA) in Minnesota) the entire time from birth to the interview date. Twenty-six percent of the children had a gap in their health care coverage. There was a significant difference in coverage between children whose mothers were on MFIP (15 percent had a gap) and leavers' children (36 percent). Most MFIP recipients and many leavers with a gap said that their MFIP had been closed resulting in MA being closed. MA was reopened for those who returned to MFIP. Some leavers also talked about gaps between types of insurance. The most common situations were the wait for employer insurance to take effect and a pending application for MinnesotaCare. Some also talked about how expensive these other types of insurance were. A couple of children lost insurance when the noncustodial parent dropped their insurance. An immigrant noted that there was no insurance when her baby was born in Africa. MA covered all but two of the children at some point. Other sources during the 30 months included insurance through the child's father (17 percent), MinnesotaCare (16 percent), the participant's employer (10 percent), the participant's parent's employer (8 percent), and the child's stepfather's employer (3 percent).

### **What health care coverage did the whole family have in month 30?**

Most families had health care coverage for at least some family members, as Table 4 shows. Eight percent of families had *no* health care coverage for anyone in the family.

Twenty-six percent of families had some members covered, but not all. MA was the most common insurance for the mothers and children, followed by mother’s employer insurance. Second parents – both spouses and partners – were most often covered by their own employer insurance and also were more often uninsured than the mothers and children. Multiple insurers during month 30 were reported for 5 percent of each adult group and 8 percent of the children.

**Table 4. Family health care coverage in month 30**

<b>Health care coverage</b>	Participant	Spouse	Partner	Children
Count	248	25	40	333
None	19%	28%	38%	8%
Medical Assistance	54%	8%	18%	63%
Participant's employer insurance	15%	4%	3%	9%
Medicaid in another state	4%	0%	0%	7%
Spouse or partner's insurance	4%	48%	43%	7%
MinnesotaCare	4%	8%	3%	3%
Participant's parent's insurance	1%	0%	0%	1%
Indian Public Health	0.4%	0%	0%	1%
Private insurance	0.4%	4%	0%	0.3%
Noncustodial parent's insurance	0%	0%	0%	5%

## Living Arrangements

### Where did the teens live around the time of the birth of their first child?

More than half (58 percent) were living with their own family (including at least one parent) the month before the baby was born. Other living situations were with a husband or boyfriend (17 percent), alone (11 percent), with other relatives or friends (11 percent), or in some kind of placement (3 percent in foster care, jail, shelter, transitional housing, or teen parent home).

After the birth, 54 percent were living with a parent. In fact, most (84 percent) were living in the same type of setting during the month after the baby was born as they were the month before. The biggest number of changes in type of living arrangement was into cohabitation with the child’s father (6 percent). Unmarried minors who did not live with their parents after the child was born gave several reasons. Either their parents would not let them (“kicked out”) or they did not want to live with their parents (“didn’t get along”) or their parents lived far away or were not involved with the teen or were homeless themselves. The majority of the teen mothers were satisfied with their living situation after their baby was born (78 percent). Half of those who did not like their living situation complained about the housing itself, mainly that it was too crowded, and half spoke about personal conflicts with the people they lived with, either parents or boyfriends. Their living situation at the time of the survey with respect to spouses and second parents is illustrated in Figure 4 on page 14.

### Where did the children live at the time of the interview?

All but 16 of the children were born in Minnesota. All but 14 of the children were living with their mother at the time of the interview. The children not living with their mother

had been adopted (6) or were living with their father (3) or another family member (4) or were in foster care (1). Adoption was considered by 15 percent of these mothers before the baby was born, considered by 5 percent after the birth, and then chosen by 2 percent. Only one of the teen parents gave up the baby for adoption at the time of birth; the rest did so 3 months to 2 years afterwards. At the time of the interview, 19 of these teen mothers had children (first or later born) living out of the household, including 12 children placed for adoption, four with the child’s father, four living with grandparents, two with other relatives, and two in foster care.

**What kinds of emergency and other alternative housing have the teen mothers lived in during their entire lifetimes?**

Table 5 summarizes the lifetime housing history of the 212 teens in this study who also completed the three-year survey (report not yet released). As children, 31 percent had been homeless or lived in alternative housing, including one or more of the following: foster or group home, jail, in-patient treatment center, or transitional housing. As parents, 17 percent had periods without regular housing, 6 percent had lived in a homeless shelter, 6 percent in a battered women’s shelter, and 6 percent in jail.<sup>24</sup> The percentages in each column add up to more than 100 percent because some participants had more than one type of emergency or alternative housing during the time period.

**Table 5. Types of alternative housing throughout lifetime**

<b>Emergency and alternative housing history (N=212)</b>	<b>Housing as a child</b>	<b>Housing as a parent</b>
History of alternative housing or homelessness	31%	17%
Foster home	15%	1%
Group home	13%	0%
Detention center, jail, or correctional facility	13%	6%
Homeless shelter	8%	6%
Drug or alcohol treatment facility	4%	1%
On the streets	4%	2%
Mental health care facility	3%	0%
Battered women's shelter	2%	6%
Transitional housing	2%	4%
Orphanage	0%	0%
Physical health care facility	0%	0%

**Family Background**

The participants described the families they grew up in, focusing on their biological mother and father and any other primary caregivers. Table 6 and Figure 5 summarize data describing the teen mothers’ parents and their relationships with their parents. Findings are reported in the table separately for parents the teen mothers lived with and those they did not live with most of their time growing up. These groups of parents were significantly different from each other on almost all characteristics described. Those who were caregivers to a participant in this study were more successful in their own lives, on the average, than those who did not raise their child who became a teen mother in this study.

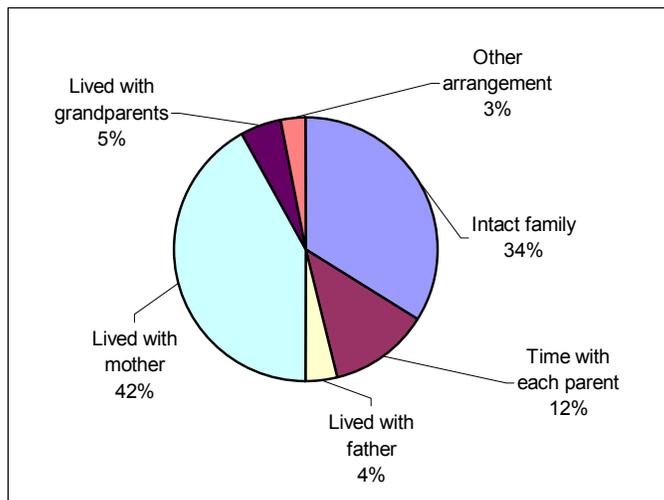
**Table 6. Backgrounds of parents and their relationships with teen mothers**

Parents of teen mothers	Mother			Father		
	Lived with	Lived apart	All surveyed	Lived with	Lived apart	All surveyed
Count	217	31	248	124	124	248
Percent	88%	12%	100%	50%	50%	100%
Age at first birth	19	19	19	---	---	---
Known high school completion	75%	48%	71%	72%	48%	60%
Worked most of teen mother's childhood	69%	47%	66%	85%	44%	65%
Chemical dependency	17%	52%	21%	30%	38%	34%
Child abuse	5%	23%	7%	6%	9%	7%
Incarceration	3%	16%	4%	6%	19%	13%
Mostly good relationship	80%	39%	75%	84%	42%	63%
Involved in raising her	91%	48%	85%	93%	47%	75%
No contact during childhood	0%	10%	1%	0%	37%	19%
No contact now	4%	10%	4%	14%	44%	29%

**Who were their primary caregivers while they were growing up?**

Altogether 88 percent of the teen mothers lived with their mothers during most of their childhood and 50 percent half lived with their father during that time. Figure 5 identifies the primary adult or adults responsible for participants during most of their childhood. A third (34 percent) were raised in two-parent families by their own mother and father. More lived only or primarily with their mother (42 percent), few only or primarily with their father (4 percent), and 12 percent split time between their parents. Five percent lived most of their childhood with grandparents and neither parent, and 3 percent were in other arrangements (half of these participants with other relatives and half in foster care).

**Figure 5. Primary childhood caregivers of teen mothers**



Instability in the mother's life was the main reason 31 study participants did not live with their mothers for most of their childhood, evidenced by reports of maternal drinking, partying, abandonment, abusive men, and lost custody. More than half of the teens who grew up apart from their fathers said their fathers left or rejected the family, a third mentioned divorce and loss of custody, many fathers moved out of state, four were jailed for long periods of time, and nine died.

**What were their parents' backgrounds?**

Many mothers of the teen mothers had their first child while still in their teen years. Twenty-five percent were under age 18, 36 percent were 18 or 19 years old, and 39 percent were 20 or older when they had their first child. The mothers of the teen mothers were 19, on the average, when their first child was born. The youngest was 14 and the oldest was 30 years old. Seventy-one percent of mothers and 60 percent of fathers were known by their daughter to have at least finished high school (another 8 percent and 25 percent did not know how much education their mother or father, respectively, had completed). Thirteen mothers and 17 fathers were college graduates. About two-thirds each of mothers and fathers worked for pay most of the teen mother's childhood. Fifteen percent did not know their father's work history, however, and 3 percent did not know whether their mother worked. Only 5 percent of participants knew their dads did not work for pay and 11 percent knew their mothers did not during the participant's entire childhood.

**Did the teen mothers' parents have major life problems?**

The teen mothers reported that 26 percent of their mothers and 38 percent of their fathers had one or more of the serious problems they were asked about. Abuse of drugs or alcohol was the most common, reported for 21 percent of mothers (including half of those not living with the participant during her childhood) and 34 percent of fathers. Thirteen percent of fathers and 4 percent of mothers had been in jail or prison. Seven percent each of mothers and fathers had abused their children, including 23 percent of the mothers who were not the primary caregiver for the majority of their child's growing years.

**What was the relationship between the teen mothers and their own parents during their childhood and at the time of the interview?**

More of the teen mothers were close to their own mothers than to their fathers. Most characterized as mostly good their childhood relationships with their mothers (75 percent) and with their fathers (63 percent). These approvals were over 80 percent for both parents if the teens had lived with them. Most parents they lived with were very involved in raising them (those whose resident parent were not involved often had another adult in the household who took that role), as were just under half of those not living with them. Most of the nonparents who raised some of these teen mothers (17 of 21) had good relationships with them and none of the major problems listed above.

Not surprisingly, given that more than three-quarters lived with their mothers most of the time when they were growing up, a majority (57 percent) said the person who was most supportive during their own childhood was their mother. Another 10 percent said mother and father equally, and 7 percent depended mostly on their father. A grandparent was the mainstay of 12 percent of the teen mothers, and other relatives (primarily siblings) for another 8 percent. One person said foster parents and another a friend of the family. Four percent said they could rely on no one beside themselves as children.

More fathers than mothers lost contact with their children. Nineteen percent of fathers had no contact with their daughter during her childhood, and 29 percent had no contact with adult daughters. Only 1 percent of moms lost contact during childhood and 4 percent with their grown daughters. Forty-four percent of dads who did not live with the participant during her childhood also had no contact with their adult daughter.

**Did they remember their family receiving welfare when they were children?**

Nearly half the teen mothers (45 percent) had a childhood memory of their family receiving public assistance. There were significant differences depending on welfare status at month 30 and also differences depending on childhood living arrangements. Fifty-five percent of those on MFIP remembered their childhood families receiving welfare compared to 38 percent of leavers. Twenty-three percent of those from families with both parents in the household, 50 percent of those who divided their time between their separated parents, and 57 percent of those who lived mainly with their mother remembered welfare receipt during their childhood.

**Parenting by Young Mothers**

The teen mothers were asked to reflect on their parenting of their own children.

**What did teen mothers call their most difficult problem since becoming a parent?**

The largest number of participants (43 percent of all teen mothers) focused on parenting problems in answering this open-ended question. Twenty percent talked about discipline and their child's behavior (especially the "terrible twos"), 9 percent were most bothered by child care problems, for 7 percent it was their own feelings and development as a parent (learning to parent, being patient, raising a child while still young themselves). A few mentioned dealing with a child who was sick or had special needs, single parenthood, and difficult relations with the child's father.

Meeting basic needs of their children was the most pressing issue for another 25 percent of the teen mothers. Most simply cited money issues or not being able to make ends meet. Specific problems with housing and transportation were each mentioned by half a dozen participants as their main problem since parenthood.

Another sixth (16 percent) had personal issues resulting from parenthood that were their most difficult problem. The biggest such issue (cited by 10 percent) was the loss of personal time and freedom to go wherever and do whatever they wanted. Others mentioned a variety of issues, including stress, having to grow up fast, effect of children on relationships with men, death of loved ones (including a child), and divorce.

School and work problems were uppermost to another 10 percent, mostly issues of balancing the needs of their children with requirements of work or school or both. Only 6 percent said there were no difficult problems resulting from parenthood.

### **What did they think made them a good mom?**

Nearly every participant who was raising her children had an answer for this question and most often offered a couple different things that qualified her as a good mom. Only six people did not know what to say to this question. The most common responses were loving their children (25 percent), being there for them (20 percent), taking care of them (17 percent), spending time with them (16 percent), being patient (13 percent), giving them what they need (9 percent), caring about them (8 percent), putting their needs first (6 percent), and being supportive (4 percent).

Several people said each of these things: playing with the children, talking with them, reading with them, not using physical discipline, teaching them, not going out, not repeating her parents' mistakes, trying hard, doing it on her own, disciplining, being responsible, understanding, keeping the children neat and clean, being a strong person, a good role model, liking being a mom, working hard, and keeping the children safe. Two people said each of the following: keeping the children healthy, listening, not giving up, being kind, being positive, liking children, staying home with them, doing everything for the child. The following were unique responses: a fun mom, taking parenting classes, experience, providing stability, youth, taking time for herself when she felt frustrated, having her own place, making the child happy, "everything," her children liking her, being involved in her children's lives, and giving up her child when she could not handle it anymore.

### **Who else was *very* involved in raising the firstborn children of these young mothers?**

Besides their own biological parents, nearly all of the firstborn children had another adult very involved in raising them. Only nine of the teen mothers (excluding those whose child had been adopted) did not identify such a person. For 57 percent, it was their own mother (another 30 percent of whom were "somewhat involved"). Other adults "very involved" in raising these children included the teen's father (13 percent), sister (12 percent), partner who was not the child's father (11 percent), brother (6 percent), or spouse (5 percent). The child's paternal grandparents (13 percent) and great and great-great grandparents (10 percent) on both sides also pitched in.

### **Where did the young mothers get their day-to-day parenting support?**

All but 18 of the mothers had someone they could talk with about raising their children or someone who helped them do it on a daily basis, most frequently their own parents (61 percent). Friends (27 percent), siblings (22 percent), the child's father (17 percent) or his parents (12 percent), other relatives (13 percent), their child care provider (9 percent), or their current partner (7 percent) also helped with day-to-day parenting issues. Mothers also mentioned a professional like a teacher, pastor, doctor, or therapist; parenting classes and books; and a mentor family.

## **The Economic Status of Young Mothers**

This section summarizes data on employment, family income from all sources, poverty level of the teen mothers, demographics of the group, and the relation of demographics to

economic outcomes. Welfare data including eligibility, payments, and financial county for MFIP and other public programs, sanctions, and county child support disbursements came from administrative data; the survey provided the remainder of the information. Some results are given for outcome groups based on both employment and welfare use status.

## Outcome Groups Based on Employment and Welfare Status

Four outcome groups for the MFIP longitudinal study are derived from participants' status on two of the MFIP goals: employment and welfare use. These groups are those not working and on MFIP, unemployed leavers, working and on MFIP, and employed leavers.

### What were the 30-month employment and welfare use outcomes for teen mothers?

Table 7 shows working rate, leaver<sup>25</sup> rate, and membership in the four outcome groups for the group of 248 teen mothers. Sixty percent had a job during month 30, and 55 percent had left MFIP. These rates are below rates for the total applicant sample at month 24 when 67 percent were working and 66 percent were off MFIP. Working leavers (42 percent) made up the largest outcome group among the teens in month 30, then came unemployed MFIP recipients (26 percent) and working MFIP recipients (19 percent). The smallest group included those neither working nor eligible for MFIP (14 percent).

**Table 7. Work and welfare status of teen mothers at 30 months**

Teen Moms	Not working	Working	Total	Not working	Working	Total
On MFIP	64	47	111	26%	19%	45%
Leaver	34	103	137	14%	41%	<b>55%</b>
Total	98	150	248	40%	<b>60%</b>	100%

The outcome groups were *not* significantly different on any characteristics or experiences surrounding the birth of their first child discussed so far in this paper with the two exceptions of housing history and health care coverage. Fifty-three percent of the group on MFIP at month 30 had spent some time in emergency or alternative housing compared with 25 percent of employed leavers (and about two-fifths of each of the two intermediate groups). And leavers' children were more likely to have had a gap in health care coverage (36 percent versus 15 percent of children of current MFIP recipients). Significant differences across outcome groups will be highlighted in subsequent sections.

## Employment

### Did the teens work while they were pregnant with their first child?

Half of the teen mothers worked while pregnant with their first child (53 percent). This work history was more common for working leavers (73 percent) than for those who were not working and on MFIP (33 percent) in month 30. On the average, those who worked stayed on the job into their seventh month, with a third of the pregnant workers continuing on the job until the baby was born.

**What was their work history since their first child was born?**

Nearly everyone (94 percent) had worked at some time since the baby was born, starting, on the average, when the baby was nine months old, but as soon as the baby’s first month and as late as age four.<sup>26</sup> Eighty-one percent had worked within the last six months. Only one-quarter of those who were employed had started their current job before the year 2000, including 13 percent of employed MFIP recipients and 37 percent of employed leavers.

Table 8 describes employment patterns in the previous six-month period, months 25 through 30 of the study. These patterns were significantly different for teen participants on and off MFIP. Thirty-nine percent of leavers worked at least 30 hours per week for the past six months, compared to just four percent of MFIP recipients. Twenty-seven percent of current MFIP recipients had not worked at all in the previous six months and another 20 percent had not worked for at least two months, compared to 12 percent and 5 percent of leavers.

**Table 8. Employment patterns in last six months**

<b>Employment patterns</b>	<b>On MFIP</b>	<b>Leavers</b>	<b>All surveyed</b>
<b>Count</b>	111	137	248
<b>Employed</b>	42%	75%	60%
All 6 months for at least 30 hours per week	4%	39%	23%
3 to 5 months for at least 30 hours per week	10%	17%	14%
Others working some hours every month	12%	7%	9%
2 to 5 months with 1 or 2 months at least 30 hours per week	2%	1%	2%
1 to 5 months and all months less than 30 hours per week	15%	12%	13%
<b>Unemployed</b>	58%	25%	40%
All 6 months	27%	12%	19%
2 to 5 months	20%	5%	12%
One month and no months in last 6 months employed at least 30 hours per week	5%	4%	4%
One month and one or more months in last 6 months employed at least 30 hours per week	5%	4%	4%

**What was their work effort in month 30?**

Sixty percent of the teen mothers were employed in month 30. Most worked either in services (55 percent) or in clerical or sales positions (37 percent). Two were self-employed as child care providers. As Table 9 shows, besides having longer job tenure, more leavers worked (75 percent versus 42 percent of MFIP recipients). Leavers also worked more hours (53 percent of the employed worked at least 35 hours compared to 16 percent of working participants on MFIP) and earned more (median hourly wage for leavers of \$8.93 versus \$7.63).

**Table 9. Work, work hours, and hourly wages of teen mothers in month 30**

<b>Work, hours, and wages</b>	<b>Count of surveyed</b>	<b>Employment rate</b>	<b>Median work hours</b>	<b>35 or more hours</b>	<b>40 or more hours</b>	<b>Median hourly wage</b>
On MFIP	111	42%	30	16%	14%	\$7.63
Leavers	137	75%	40	53%	44%	\$8.93
All surveyed	248	60%	39	37%	30%	\$8.45

Forty-four percent of the employed were working at least 40 hours per week. A third of those who worked less said they could only find part-time work, and an additional tenth said their employer defined the 35 to 38 hours per week they worked as full time. Another tenth wanted to spend more time caring for their children, and another tenth needed time for school or training. Besides education, some participants were engaged in formal job search (12 percent of MFIP recipients and 3 percent of leavers), and one person was in a work experience program.

**What benefits did employers provide?**

Working leavers had better benefits than workers on MFIP did, as Table 10 shows. Two-thirds of employed leavers and half of employed MFIP recipients had jobs with benefits. Nearly half of workers had employer medical insurance (47 percent), somewhat higher than the 42 percent of all workers in the total applicant sample with this coverage in month 24. But the percentage with medical insurance was twice as high (56 percent) for employed leavers as for employed MFIP recipients (28 percent). More leavers were receiving each type of benefit, reflecting better jobs or advancement in their jobs.

**Table 10. Employer benefits for workers in month 30**

<b>Employer benefits</b>	<b>On MFIP</b>	<b>Leavers</b>	<b>All surveyed</b>
Counts	47	103	150
Some benefits	47%	66%	60%
Medical insurance	28%	56%	47%
Paid vacation	19%	50%	40%
Maternity leave (paid or unpaid)	21%	44%	37%
Paid sick leave	13%	43%	33%
Retirement / pension	11%	37%	29%
Short-term disability	9%	33%	25%
Long-term disability	6%	31%	23%
Education reimbursement	15%	26%	23%
Medical reimbursement	6%	17%	13%
Dental	6%	13%	11%
No benefits	53%	34%	40%

**What child care arrangements did workers make?**

Of the 175 mothers whose firstborn child needed care while they were at work, school, or training, the largest number (46 percent) took the child to someone else’s home (including licensed family child care). Thirty percent had someone who would care for the child in their own home. Twenty percent took the child to a school or child care center. Three percent took the child to their workplace. The arrangements were not significantly different between leavers and current MFIP recipients. In the whole group, only 14 percent said they had no one who would watch their children if they wanted to go out occasionally for reasons other than work or school.

## Family Income

Total family income is the total of all income from the following sources:

- Earnings of the participant.
- Earnings of the second parent if in the household.
- MFIP grants, including cash and the food portion.
- Other types of public assistance such as stand-alone food stamps and emergency assistance.
- Child support received either from the county or directly from the noncustodial parent.
- Other payments or unearned income received in the month (primarily Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for disabled participants, but also SSI for disabled children, tax refunds, unemployment insurance, insurance settlements, and other miscellaneous payments).

### How much income did families in the four outcome groups receive in month 30?

The average family income for the teen mothers in month 30 was \$1,566, with working leavers the most prosperous, having \$2,200 that month. Those not working and on MFIP had the least amount of income, averaging \$755. These monthly amounts cannot be annualized as some of the participants moved in and out of employment during the year, as described above. Table 11 gives income totals as well as a breakdown of sources and additional information about poverty level and family structure.

**Table 11. Family income, poverty status, and second parents at month 30<sup>27</sup>**

Family income and living situations of teen mothers		Not working/ On MFIP	Not working/ Leaver	Working/ On MFIP	Working Leaver	All Surveyed
Count		64	34	47	103	248
Percent of surveyed		26%	14%	19%	42%	100%
Family income	Total income in review month	\$755	\$1,247	\$1,510	\$2,200	\$1,566
	Earnings of participants	\$0	\$0	\$902	\$1,305	\$713
	Earnings of 2nd parents/spouses	\$82	\$664	\$91	\$591	\$375
	Public assistance	\$646	\$102	\$463	\$31	\$281
	MFIP cash	\$397	\$79	\$276	\$0	\$165
	Food	\$225	\$23	\$177	\$6	\$97
	Other programs	\$25	\$0	\$10	\$25	\$18
	Child support received	\$24	\$89	\$44	\$60	\$52
	Other unearned income	\$3	\$392	\$11	\$213	\$145
Average percent of Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG)		70%	95%	143%	197%	140%
Poverty rate (percent below FPG)		89%	56%	21%	12%	40%
200 percent of FPG or above		2%	12%	13%	39%	21%
Living with biological father of firstborn		13%	24%	9%	25%	19%
Living with 2nd parent or spouse		16%	47%	13%	38%	29%
Living with employed 2nd parent or spouse		8%	41%	6%	32%	22%
Child support paid by noncustodial parent		19%	32%	26%	25%	25%

### What were the sources of this income?

Earnings were the biggest source of income for three of the four outcome groups. For working participants, the earnings of participants and second parents accounted for 86

percent of income for leavers and 66 percent for those on MFIP. For the unemployed leavers, the income of the second parent constituted 53 percent of the family income. MFIP provided most of the income (82 percent) of the group on MFIP and unemployed and nearly a third for those on MFIP and working. MFIP grants provided 8 percent of the income for unemployed leavers, due to child-only cases for people receiving SSI. On the average, leavers received more child support than those on MFIP. Child support was a substantial amount for some of the leaver families.

### **How many families were out of poverty and how many were self-sufficient?**

An MFIP case is closed for “excess income” once the family’s income reaches approximately 120 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG)<sup>28</sup> for the family size. The groups with participants not working averaged considerably below that level. The working groups averaged above it, leavers at nearly twice the FPG. Some people in the group working and on MFIP were close to leaving MFIP. (There is a two-month reporting lag for counting income in eligibility determination.) Most of the families in the group on MFIP and not working had income below the poverty level. Few of the working leavers, 1 in 8 families, had income below the FPG. Twice the FPG is a level some consider enough to meet basic needs.<sup>29</sup> Thirty-nine percent of working had income at this level in month 30 and could be considered self-sufficient according to this definition for at least that one month.

### **How was family structure related to economic status?**

Overall, 19 percent of the mothers were living with the biological father of their firstborn child. Another 10 percent were living with someone else who was either a spouse or the father of a subsequent child (or both) for a total of 29 percent of the families with a second parent in the household. Twenty-two percent of the families had an employed father in the household. Leavers were much more likely than mothers on MFIP to have a father in the household. One-quarter of all families received *any* child support received from a noncustodial parent some income from this source.

## **Demographics and Economic Outcomes**

Even within a group of young mothers in a similar economic situation, there may be differences in outcomes depending on demographic variables like age at first birth, current high school status, race/ethnicity, where they lived when they initially applied for assistance, whether they had subsequent children, whether there was a second parent in the household, and whether they grew up in a family with both parents present. Table 12 describes demographic subgroups and their differing outcomes. Two of the variables have not previously been discussed:

- Race/ethnicity: 38 percent of the teens were not white, including 20 percent black, 9 percent American Indian, 5 percent Asian, and 4 percent Hispanic.
- Region of residence at time of initial MFIP application: 38 percent lived in the counties containing Minneapolis and St. Paul, 17 percent in the Twin Cities suburbs, and nearly half lived outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Whether or not the person received an MFIP sanction for not cooperating with program requirements is included as a grouping variable because it has been interpreted variously as a measure of cooperation with the program goals and as a proxy for a general incapacity to cope with not only program requirements but also other life needs parents face.

Age at first birth was *not* related to whether the participant later finished high school, had a second parent in the household, or incurred MFIP sanctions. Age was related to race/ethnicity, with minor parents significantly more likely to be nonwhite, to live in Hennepin/Ramsey, and to have a subsequent pregnancy than those who had their first child at age 18 or 19.

Among the economic outcomes, the younger mothers were also less likely to have left MFIP or be employed by month 30 and more likely to have family income under the FPG than older first-time mothers. High school completion, being white, having lived in the suburbs when applying for MFIP, having only one child, having a second parent in the household, coming from a two-parent family, and not having been sanctioned were also related to a number of more favorable economic outcomes.

Hourly wage and attaining family income above 200 percent of FPG were related to the smallest number of demographic variables. Ever being sanctioned was the variable most closely related to worse outcomes on all economic variables.

## **Hardships and Problems for Teen Mothers**

In a discussion about daily life, the participants were asked whether or not specific issues were a problem for them during the previous six months. These included a number of possible hardships, some personal life problems, and life problems involving others in their household. Finally, a five-item depression screener<sup>30</sup> was administered. The responses are summarized in Table 13 where issues on which there were significant differences across the four outcome groups are marked. All the data in this section came from the survey.

### **What hardships were reported?**

Having enough money for the family was the most common problem, cited by 41 percent of the teen mothers. Problems with transportation, children's behavior, child care, and housing were each reported by more than 1 in 5 participants. Transportation was a problem for more of those on MFIP (36 percent) than leavers (17 percent). Housing was a problem for more of those on MFIP and not working (36 percent) than for the other outcome groups (fewer than 20 percent each). Health care was a problem for more

**Table 12. Relationship of demographic groups to age at first birth and economic outcomes**

Demographics by age and outcomes		Counts	Percent	Percent of age at first birth group		Economic outcomes at month 30							
				Under 18	18 to 19	MFIP	Working	Working	Hourly	Participant	Family	Below	200% FPG
						Leavers	Working	steadily	wages	earnings	income	FPG	or above
Counts		248	100%	107	141	55%	61%	23%	\$8.45	\$713	\$1,566	40%	21%
Age at first birth	Under 18	107	43%	100%	0%	45%	52%	20%	\$8.50	\$625	\$1,404	48%	17%
	18 to 19	141	57%	0%	100%	63%	67%	26%	\$8.36	\$780	\$1,689	33%	23%
High school status at month 30	Not a graduate	99	40%	42%	38%	50%	53%	16%	\$8.00	\$546	\$1,426	49%	17%
	Diploma or GED	149	60%	58%	62%	59%	66%	28%	\$8.76	\$824	\$1,659	34%	23%
Race / ethnicity	White	154	62%	48%	73%	65%	69%	29%	\$8.67	\$824	\$1,718	33%	23%
	Not white	94	38%	52%	27%	39%	47%	13%	\$8.08	\$531	\$1,316	50%	16%
Region of residence at initial MFIP application	Greater Minnesota	111	45%	39%	49%	57%	65%	21%	\$7.88	\$682	\$1,574	38%	18%
	Metro suburban	42	17%	12%	21%	79%	74%	26%	\$8.85	\$983	\$1,936	26%	31%
	Hennepin / Ramsey	95	38%	49%	31%	43%	50%	24%	\$9.32	\$630	\$1,392	47%	19%
Number of children in household at month 30	None or one	162	65%	56%	72%	53%	67%	28%	\$8.18	\$785	\$1,506	36%	25%
	Two or three	86	35%	44%	28%	59%	49%	13%	\$8.76	\$578	\$1,679	45%	13%
Second parent at month 30	None in household	177	71%	78%	67%	46%	59%	25%	\$8.36	\$715	\$1,179	48%	14%
	In household	71	29%	22%	33%	78%	63%	17%	\$8.55	\$708	\$2,530	18%	38%
Living situation during participant's childhood	With parents together	85	34%	35%	34%	62%	68%	32%	\$8.60	\$839	\$1,767	31%	20%
	Other	163	66%	65%	66%	52%	56%	18%	\$8.30	\$647	\$1,461	44%	21%
MFIP sanctions	Any	121	51%	52%	46%	43%	53%	12%	\$7.75	\$534	\$1,295	50%	12%
	None	127	49%	48%	54%	67%	68%	33%	\$9.00	\$883	\$1,823	29%	29%

\*Significant at p=.05 level. \*\*p=.01. \*\*\*p=.001. Ns=not significant. F or t-tests for continuous data and chi-square tests for categorical data.

"Working steadily" is working for at least the last six months for at least 30 hours per week.

Averages are means of all participants in the category except hourly wage where the average reported is the median of all employed wage earners, and the significant test is of mean differences.

leavers than MFIP participants (23 percent versus 6 percent for self and 13 percent versus 3 percent for the child). Participants were also asked which problems were big. The only additional difference found was for child care, which those not working called a big problem (18 percent of all unemployed) more often than workers (3 percent) did.

**Table 13. Hardships and life problems teen mothers reported for the previous six months**

Hardships and life problems in previous six months	All surveyed
Count of teen mothers	248
Hardships	
Amount of money available for family	41%
Transportation problems*	25%
Children's behavior problems	25%
Child care problems	22%
Housing situation*	21%
Health care for self*	16%
Lack of emotional support	13%
Health care for first-born child*	8%
Food shortage	8%
Life problems	
Tobacco use	60%
Own serious illness or injury	11%
Mental health*	7%
Treatment for drug abuse ever*	7%
Problems with the law	7%
Treatment for alcohol abuse ever	6%
Physical disability	2%
Drug use	2%
Alcohol abuse	1%
Life problems with others in household	
Personal problems with spouse or partner	20%
Serious illness or injury of anyone else in home	9%
Alcohol abuse of others in household	5%
Drug use of others in household	4%
Depression scale score above cutoff	19%

\* Outcome groups differed significantly on whether item considered a problem ( $p=.05$  or below).

Participants were asked to describe the problems they had in the areas listed. Their major difficulties surrounding each issue were as follows:

- **Transportation:** Not having a car and having to rely on getting rides (most often) or public transportation (where available) was the main response to the question of how transportation was a problem. There were difficulties with using public transportation, like the time and scheduling it takes to go to multiple places (child care, work, classes) and taking small children. Many of those who did have a car reported frequent and costly breakdowns that left them without transportation.

- **Children’s behavior:** The “terrible twos” and temper tantrums led the list. Other issues mentioned by several mothers each were hyperactivity, aggressiveness, and jealousy of a new baby.
- **Child care:** Availability and cost were the major problems. Others mentioned were quality, reliability, lack of care evenings and weekends, problems qualifying for child care assistance, and getting to a child care provider.
- **Housing:** The cost of rent and unavailability of affordable housing were the biggest complaints. Nearly as frequent and closely related were stories of losing shelter and having to return to their parents’ home or living with a friend. Sometimes this was because of not paying rent, sometimes because of conflicts with the person providing a place to live, and sometimes through a situation no fault of their own, like their home being condemned, flooded, sold, or burned to the ground. People also talked about repairs not made, crime and vandalism, and crowded conditions.
- **Health care:** Another concern was not having health care coverage. Often this was a matter of cost, but some people had employers who did not offer insurance. Some did not know why they had lost MA and some had troubles getting or keeping up with the verifications for MinnesotaCare. Some people put off going to the doctor or dentist for conditions like bronchitis, toothaches, asthma, chronic headaches, and prenatal care because of the cost. There were unpaid bills. Fewer mothers cited health care problems for their children than for themselves. The problems they described for their children also included lack of insurance, cost, and not treating ailments. Situations unique to children were fathers losing health care coverage for the child and the failure of some plans to pay for immunizations.
- **Emotional support:** The most common way people described their lack of emotional support was “I have no one to talk to.” Some wanted a therapist and either did not know how to get one, could not afford to continue, or had one who was not helping. Some had recently moved away from family and friends.

### **What personal life problems did the teen mothers reveal?**

Summaries of the questions about these life problems are also found in Table 13 above. Tobacco use was very common. Problems with the law, drugs and alcohol, physical disability, and mental health were reported by 11 percent or each but are potentially very detrimental to the well-being of the young mothers and their small children.

- **Tobacco use.** This issue was included in the survey because it is a serious health risk, although long-term, and not regarded as such by many young people. Sixty percent of these young mothers were smokers, far above the rate of smoking among Minnesota high school seniors (26 percent).<sup>31</sup> Interviewers reported that some participants were surprised or amused to be asked this question. Three out of five of these smokers said they were interested in quitting.
- **Serious illness.** Eleven percent of the mothers had suffered serious illness or injury during the preceding six months. These included cancer (2 people), gunshot wounds (2), kidney problems (3), back problems (4), pneumonia/bronchitis (3), and various other serious physical complaints.
- **Mental health.** Mental health issues were cited most often by the group on MFIP and not working (21 percent). Most who said they were concerned about their mental

health named depression. Four percent of all the participants had received mental health treatment during the previous six months.

- **Chemical abuse.** The incidence of reported drug and alcohol abuse in the previous six months was fairly low (2 percent and 1 percent), but several times that number had been treated for these chemical dependencies in the past (7 percent and 6 percent). Treatment for drug use was more common for the unemployed (11 percent) than for workers (3 percent).
- **Law enforcement.** Seven percent reported problems with the law within the last six months. Domestic violence, drug felony, assault, speeding, driver's license suspended for unpaid tickets, and barking dogs were violations listed. Several participants and spouses had been ordered to treatment and jailed.
- **Disability.** Two percent said they had physical disabilities. Five people had back, knee, or foot problems, two of which had required surgery.

### **What did they tell about life problems of people in their household?**

Twenty percent had personal problems with a spouse or partner in the previous six months. Half of these broke up (divorced, "left him," "kicked him out"). Some of these were cases of domestic violence involving police, a restraining order, or a battered women's shelter. Eight people said they had talked it out or worked it out. One saw a counselor. Three had child support or visitation issues with noncustodial parents that were being dealt with officially. Nine percent had someone in the household with a serious illness or injury. The majority of these were their children, with pneumonia or ear infections, but also arthritis, cancer testing, car accident, burns, and a SIDS death. The rest were spouses or partners or other relatives. Reported alcohol (5 percent) and drug abuse (4 percent) by others in the household during the last six months was more common than that of the teen mother herself. There were no significant differences across the four outcome groups on any of these problems of others in the household.

### **How common might depression be in this group?**

As referenced above, the survey included a clinical screening instrument for current depression, a five-item subset of the Mental Health Inventory. The items ask, "How much of the time during the last month have you felt...?" A high score on the six-point scale is given for the response "all of the time" for the negative items (nervous, down in the dumps, downhearted and blue) and for the response "none of the time" for the positive items (calm and peaceful, happy). The scale authors recommend that people with a score of 17 or above out of 30 possible points be referred for further screening. Nineteen percent of the teen mothers scored this high, indicating the possibility of current general depression. There was no difference across outcome groups. These are figures for screening, and the actual incidence of depression may be lower.

## **Support from MFIP**

This section describes support for teen mothers from MFIP: welfare use over time, experiences with family assistance in Minnesota, future use anticipated at the time of the survey. Welfare use data came from the administrative data base.

## MFIP Experiences

### How quickly were people leaving MFIP and how much time had they used?

By 30 months after application (November 2000 to April 2001), 55 percent of the teens had left MFIP. By July 2002, this number had increased to 61 percent. Those who had been on MFIP in month 30 had accumulated significantly more counted months than leavers (25 months versus 9 months) by July 2002.

### How many people had been exempted and sanctioned and did they remember?

MFIP participants are required to comply with work requirements, either working a certain number of hours, performing approved work activities for an equivalent amount of time, or meeting school requirements. Participants can be exempted from this requirement for a number of reasons. If they neither comply nor have an exemption in a given month, their case may be sanctioned. Sanction decreases the grant by 10 percent the first month and 30 percent in subsequent months.<sup>32</sup>

Table 14 shows the actual percentages of these participants who received exemptions and sanctions through the 30<sup>th</sup> month following their initial application to MFIP (from administrative data). Thirty-eight percent had one or more exempt months (maximum 20 months) and 49 percent had some sanctioned months (maximum 17 months). There was no difference across the outcome groups in whether they had exemptions, but significantly fewer working leavers had been sanctioned than any other group. One-third of this group had been sanctioned, while nearly twice that percentage of the groups on MFIP had their grant decreased at least once. The average number of months sanctioned across all participants was significantly higher for the two groups on MFIP in month 30, but less than 2 months for the total group of teen mothers.

Twelve percent had been sanctioned for not pursuing a high school education, as required for all recipients under age 20 without high school diploma or GED.

**Table 14. MFIP exemptions and sanctions through month 30**

MFIP exemptions and sanctions		Not working/	Not working/	Working/	Working/	All surveyed
		On MFIP	Off MFIP	On MFIP	Off MFIP	
Count		64	33	47	204	248
Administrative data	Exemptions	44%	33%	40%	36%	38%
	Sanctions*	63%	52%	62%	34%	49%
	Sanction months *	2.9	1.4	2.3	1.0	1.8
Survey	Exemptions	25%	18%	30%	14%	20%
	Sanctions*	70%	49%	68%	23%	47%

\* Significant difference across outcome groups at p=.001 or below.

While the exemption rate was very close to the percentage of participants with any exemptions in the total applicant sample at two years (35 percent), the sanction rate was much higher than the 30 percent of all applicants sanctioned during the first two years of the study.

On the survey, participants were asked whether they had ever had an exemption and whether their case had ever been sanctioned. The levels of those who remembered receiving exemptions was much lower than recorded in administrative records. The overall rates of sanctions recalled were closer to the actual rates, a little higher than actual for those on MFIP and a little lower than actual for leavers.

Records and recall agreed that the most common exemptions were for care of a child under age one. A few said they had been exempted because of an illness, accident, or incapacitating pregnancy. According to administrative records, care of a child under age one accounted for 63 percent of all exempt months for this group. In addition, 13 percent of exemptions were given for being ill or incapacitated for 30 days or more and less than 10 percent each for a personal family crisis, an incapacitating pregnancy, care of an ill or incapacitated family member, and a family violence waiver.

### **Who helped them deal with the requirements of MFIP?**

Twenty-eight percent of the teens remembered someone helping them get done what they needed to stay eligible for MFIP at some point in their welfare use. Failure to turn in required paperwork – household reporting forms, pay stubs, birth certificates, and so on – is frequently the cause of a case being closed. Help with this paperwork was the biggest kind of help recalled. Other types were providing information, help to comply with rules, and job-related help. Financial workers (mentioned by one-third of those who said they had help), their own parents (nearly one-third), other relatives and friends (one-fifth), job counselors (one-sixth), and social workers (one-tenth) were people who helped them with MFIP requirements.

### **What did those who were minor parents on MFIP remember about the rules for living arrangements?**

Minor caregivers and pregnant women under age 18 are required to live with a parent, legal guardian, other appropriate adult relative or other caregiver, or in an adult-supervised supportive living arrangement to be eligible for MFIP. Sixty-seven percent of the 93 teen mothers who were under age 18 when they first started receiving MFIP said they could not remember the rules or they were unaware of any rules concerning their living arrangements. Twenty-eight percent did remember that they were required to live with a responsible adult. The remaining 5 percent cited rules incorrectly.

Eight of the teen mothers under age 18 when they applied for MFIP said they were forced to move or find another place to live as a result of this rule. Two of these said they became ineligible for MFIP because of the rules. Four moved to live with relatives, another adult, or in a supported living program. One person said she moved from place to place because she had to live in an approved housing situation.

### **What did the teen mothers think about the school rules for teen mothers?**

MFIP parents under age 20 without a high school diploma or GED must attend school and work toward either a diploma or GED. Of those who had this requirement when they first received MFIP, nearly half (46 percent) did not remember anything about these rules, 42 percent did remember they had to stay in school, and the rest thought either school or work would fulfill the requirements for teens on MFIP.

More than three-quarters of those who had the education requirement and remembered the rule favored it, in terms like the following:

- That's good, it makes people do something helpful for themselves.
- It's good – you need to have education to move along in this world.

On the other hand, most of the rest made unfavorable comments such as:

- The rules are too strict and they don't consider day care and health problems, not flexible enough.
- Difficult to do when you're working and want time for your child
- I didn't like to be forced to do something you weren't ready for.

### **What did they remember about the work rules for teen mothers on MFIP?**

As long as MFIP parents under age 20 who have not finished high school or a GED follow their educational plan, they are exempt from employment services participation. If they do not comply with the plan, they can be sanctioned.<sup>33</sup> After they finish high school or a GED, they must register with employment services and comply with work participation requirements. In the year 2000, that meant work or a combination of work and work activities totaling 20 hours per week if there was a child under age 6 in the family, 30 hours otherwise, for a single parent. Two-parent families were required to participate for a total of 55 hours if they were receiving child care assistance, 35 hours if not.

Nearly half of all teen participants (46 percent) did not remember anything about the work rule for teen parents. Most of the rest thought it required finding work (10 percent), working a certain number of hours per week (14 percent suggested hours ranged from 20 to 40), or a combination of work and work activities such as job search or training (14 percent). A few mainly remembered that school was emphasized over work (7 percent). Several talked about general MFIP rules (11 percent). Some mentioned more than one of these.

### **What was their reaction to these rules?**

Those who remembered the work rules (54 percent of all participants) were much more positive about them (33 percent of all) than negative (14 percent). Another 6 percent had both positive and negative things to say, and only 3 people had no opinion.

Some of the comments beyond good, fine, or fair were that the rules accomplished the following:

- Rules are good – they pushed me to go to school – the rules are beneficial in moving people off welfare and into work or school.
- They are good – makes you realize it won't last forever.
- Fine – people should work & support themselves.
- Good – gives teen moms a chance to save money.
- It's good – it makes you work for your money.
- They were helpful to get going and get a start.

Difficulties people found with the work rule were of three main types: parenting time problems, MFIP program issues, and barriers to work and, therefore, to complying with the rules:

- It's too hard to work when you're a teen mom with a young child.
- Made life very difficult – no time to go to school, work and live the rest of life.
- It was difficult because I couldn't find work.
- Not good, as I did not have transportation.
- Sitting at the Workforce Center for 40 hours per week doesn't make sense, forcing you into taking work.
- Depends on what county you are in – treated differently – County A worked with you and County B against you.
- People need more help finding a career path

Here are a couple of comments from people who endorsed a work requirement but had trouble living with it:

- Work is pushed very hard but the rules are okay, but it is hard - I'd like to be at home with my kids
- It was very hard to accomplish, but I understand that people should be working.

### **What was their overall evaluation of MFIP?**

Most of the teen mothers had an opinion about MFIP (only 5 percent did not) and they were fairly evenly split between those who thought MFIP was “working well as is” (50 percent) and those who thought it “needs improvement” (45 percent). More people currently on MFIP had positive examples to describe their experience with MFIP (58 percent) than did leavers (44 percent).

The most frequently mentioned positive was the financial help MFIP provides; 17 percent mentioned that they were glad to receive money to pay bills, meet living expenses, and provide for basic needs, and appreciative that this support was there when they needed it. The other primary theme (12 percent of all participants) was the benefit of an emphasis on work (for example, “encourages you to work and puts you in job training program to help you get a job” and “more people are going to work and realize they need to work”). The main complaint about MFIP (25 percent) was with the person who was their contact point with the system. They thought their financial workers should be more caring, helpful, and friendly, that they were too hard to reach, did not return calls, and were switched too often. Some addressed one probable source of these problems when they said that there are not enough financial workers and they do not have time to help clients.

### **Anticipated MFIP Use**

#### **What did current MFIP recipients think about the five-year time limit?**

Those who were on MFIP at the time of the interview (typically 2 or 3 months after month 30), were asked what they thought about the five-year time limit for MFIP. Over half of these current recipients (59 percent) made positive comments about the time limit,

and the rest were negative. Many of the positive comments supported the value of limits and their influence on motivation to work. Examples included the following: “pretty good,” “gives people a motive to work,” “it’s cool that they stress the point of you getting a career,” and “OK, encourages people to work.” Comments about the length of time were almost evenly divided between concerns (16 percent) and approval (14 percent). Specific concerns included that the five-year limit is not long enough, some people need more time, and there should be exceptions. Positive comments included that “five years is a good amount of time,” “welfare should be used in an emergency and not for life,” and “fine – gives people time to get on feet.” About 1 of 6 teen mothers on MFIP volunteered that the five-year limit encouraged people to work. Work-related concerns included the difficulty of finding a job, especially a job that allows one to “make it and cover the rent.”

### **What things had current recipients already done differently because of the time limit?**

Over half of the teen parents who were still on MFIP (58 percent) at the time of the interview indicated they had taken some action because of the time limit. Activities included working, trying to find a job, going back to school, and saving money. Another 14 percent indicated they were thinking about or planning for the 60-month time limit. Twenty-eight percent, however, said they were doing nothing differently.

### **What did they think they would have to do to get off MFIP?**

At least 75 percent of the recipients in month 30 had gotten the message that work is a necessity. They said they had to get a job, find a better paying job, or work more hours. Thirty-one percent intended to finish schooling, anything from a GED to a technical program to a college degree. Seven percent specifically said they had to acquire medical benefits to get off MFIP. Other ideas were to budget better, have their spouse or partner go to work, and find a way to get a job despite a felony conviction.

As far as who or what could help them do what they needed to do to get off MFIP, the most common response was that they had to rely on themselves alone (47 percent). Some said family and friends (21 percent) or job counselors (8 percent) could help. Eleven percent said school would help with getting the job they needed to get off MFIP. Others said help with child care, help with transportation, a better business climate to increase work hours, steady work without seasonal layoffs, and ways to pay for school (MFIP, grants, loans). Ten percent could not think of anything or anybody that might help.

### **How much longer did they think they would be on MFIP and what actually happened?**

Of the 103 young mothers who were on MFIP in month 30 and still on at the time of the interview, 73 percent thought they would be off MFIP within one year. Another 17 percent thought two years would be enough time. This left 10 percent who thought they would need assistance for more than two years. The reasons they gave were education plans (4 people), a new baby expected (2 participants, twins for one of them), a personal crisis involving deaths in the family, lack of full-time work experience, and the difficulty of finding a good job. Actually, by July 2002 – a year or more after the interview – 36

percent of those on MFIP in month 30 had left assistance, compared to the 73 percent who thought they would be off within one year.

**What did they plan to do if they used up their 60 months?**

Most of the teen mothers on MFIP at the time of the interview (67 percent) gave a job-related response – that they would try to find a job, work, get a second job, or look for a higher paying job – when asked what they would do. Three of these were going to finish college degrees by then. One-fourth said they did not know what they would do if they used up their 60 months. The rest mentioned people who would support them, said they did not expect to use up the 60 months, said they should get their GED, or said they would do whatever they needed to do.

**Community Supports for Teen Parents**

This section describes additional support participants said they received from the community, from both individual professionals and programs. They also suggested how the community could better help teens, both those who are already parents and those who are not pregnant or parenting.

**Sources of Community Support: Professional Helpers**

The survey asked about specific types of professional helpers and whether the teens felt “any of these people personally cared about you, that they made you feel like you weren’t just another number.” Had they encountered caring adults who made a difference in their lives during the two and a half years beginning with when they first received MFIP?

Table 15 summarizes their responses.

**Table 15. Community support from professionals**

<b>Support from professionals</b>	<b>All surveyed</b>
Count	248
Help from any professional	92%
Teacher	48%
Child care provider	45%
County worker	38%
School counselor	36%
Home visitor / visiting nurse	35%
Religious leader	21%
School social worker	12%
Psychologist / psychiatrist	6%
Emotional support and encouragement	75%
Help with health care needs	35%
Help with school or training	31%
Help with child care needs	29%
Available to teen / took extra time	21%
Help to solve other problems	13%
Providing everyday needs	11%
Help to understand program and rules	8%
Help to plan for future / set goals	4%
Gifts	2%

**How many teens had help from a caring adult professional and what kinds of help?**

Most of the teen mothers (92 percent) said that a caring adult professional helped them. Teachers (48 percent) were most frequently cited. Child care providers (45 percent) were next, and could be an important location for parenting education and support. Some county workers, school counselors, and visiting nurses also got high marks (more than one-third noted each group). The main kind of help was emotional support and encouragement, mentioned by fully three-quarters of all teens and often spoken of in terms of the adult listening to and talking with the teen mother. There were also helps with specific types of problems.

**Sources of Community Support: Programs**

The survey asked teens about specific programs in the community, most directed at young people. The goal was to find out not only which programs they themselves had used but also which they knew about, as summarized in Table 16.

**Table 16. Knowledge and use of community programs**

Community programs serving teens (N=248)	Knew program	Knew how to	Used
	available	access program	Program
Job search or job training programs	93%	90%	62%
Teen parent support programs	58%	52%	21%
Child care in or through the high school	41%	40%	15%
Family planning programs	60%	50%	13%
Housing program for teen parents	29%	26%	8%
Crisis nursery	42%	35%	5%

**What did teens know about programs available in their community?**

The first column of the table shows how many teens said each program named was available in their community. Job activities like job search and training are available throughout the state from employment service providers, and were known to most teens to be available. Other programs listed that the survey asked about may not have been available in all communities. In fact, there were regional differences in perceived availability of high school child care programs (66 percent in Hennepin/Ramsey, 29 percent in the metro suburbs, and 24 percent in other parts of the state), housing programs for teens (40 percent in the urban counties, 24 percent in the other areas), and crisis nursery (57 percent in the suburban metro area, 52 percent in the urban counties, and 27 percent in greater Minnesota). The other programs were apparently more uniformly available.

What services teens thought they could get provides a useful context for the next two questions asked about knowledge about how to access programs and actual program use. For example, while most teens knew they could get job-related services, 40 percent did *not* expect to find family planning programs in their community. Most teens that thought a program was in their community did know how to access it, although there were some exceptions. For example, virtually everyone who knew child care was available through their high school (41 percent) knew how to sign up for it (40 percent). On the other

hand, 10 percent of the participants thought there were family planning programs in their community but did not know how to use them.

### **How many teen mothers used these community programs during the time from their first child's birth to month 30 of the study?**

The most-used service was job search and job training, accessed by 62 percent of all the participants. Twenty-one percent had been involved in teen parent support programs, 15 percent got child care through the high school, 13 percent used family planning programs, 8 percent were in a housing program for teens, and 5 percent used a crisis nursery. The proportions using these services were far lower than the proportions of teens that knew how to access them. There were only two significant differences across outcome groups in use of these programs. Those unemployed at month 30 had used child care provided in or through the high school more often (52 percent) than did workers (6 percent). And those on MFIP at month 30 had used teen housing programs more often (28 percent) than leavers (4 percent) had.

## **Community Support Proposed by Teen Mothers**

### **What did participants think the community could do to help teen who have *not* gotten pregnant or become parents?**

Most of these young mothers (82 percent) volunteered ideas for ways the community can help teens without children. Many focused on ways to help them avoid pregnancy:

- The most frequent recommendation was more activities for teens. One third (34 percent) suggested that teens would welcome activities – sports, arts, entertainment, dances, tutoring, computers, singing groups, theater – in locations such as community or recreation centers, youth groups, before and after school programs, and clubs, that would keep them busy, interested, and occupied. One teen said, “Open up somewhere for them to go and something to do besides partying.” Another asked for “more things to do, there is nothing to do.”
- The next most popular idea was to “teach teens how difficult it is to raise children before they actually get pregnant” and that “the baby’s needs take over life” (29 percent). Many suggested that teen parents themselves would be believable on this subject. Several had the same hands-on idea: “Have a program where a teen could spend a week with a teen parent and take over the care of the baby and go to school and do everything and find out what it's really like.” “Spend more time in the school system on family life classes.”
- Many participants stressed sex education for young teens (14 percent), specifically information about birth control, safe sex, and sexually transmitted diseases. “Have a birth control center locally, readily available as teens don’t have transportation,” one suggested. Some even wanted to make birth control mandatory. On the other hand, three people said *not* to teach about sex because that would make teens want to experiment.
- Emotional support – understanding, listening, talking, praise – may keep teens from becoming parents, according to 9 percent of the teen mothers. One said to help teens

“be able to talk with parents more easily or people at school. They keep a lot of things locked up inside.”

- There was support for adult role models (4 percent), encouragement to finish school (4 percent), and many other ways to help other teens *not* to follow in their footsteps.

### **What more did they think the community could do to help teen parents?**

This again was an open-ended question and people were free to say anything. Five out of 6 had an opinion about what the community could do:

- The most frequent theme was that young mothers want emotional support and encouragement in their new role; 27 percent said this and suggested things like teen parent support groups, centers where teen parents could gather and share experiences, and mentors. “Be more open, listen more,” one teen asked.
- Help with child care was the next biggest issue for these mothers. Nineteen percent brought up this need; many mentioned the desirability of onsite child care at high schools.
- The third need they cited was more affordable housing (12 percent).
- One in 11 teens asked for each of the following:
  - Parenting classes (e.g., “sit them down and tell them what’s really involved in parenting long-term”).
  - More education (mostly help in finishing high school).
  - Less discrimination against teen parents (as opposed to being looked down on, judged, and suffering a “demoralizing stigma”).
- Other requests were for increased funding to current programs, more jobs and job training, better advertising for teen programs, help with budgeting skills, transportation, and medical costs.
- Nine percent said that there already is a lot of help available.

## **Future Career Goals**

### **How many people had clear career goals for the future?**

All but 10 percent said they had a job or career in mind for the future. Only 6 percent said they had already reached this career goal. The other 207 people named goals that Table 17 on the next page lays out. Aspirations were actually quite similar for the four outcome groups, with around a quarter wanting to eventually acquire professional employment and half having a career goal for which technical education is either required or desirable. Medical careers were the most popular (a quarter of all the teen mothers), and child care as a career was *not* common. The biggest surprises may be the number of people thinking about careers requiring extensive training (like lawyer and psychologist, both mentioned by several people) and the number of people who would like to be their own boss.

### **How did they plan to reach their goals?**

Seventy-six percent of all the teen mothers said that they had a goal and needed more education to do the kind of work they wanted to do, so education was a major component of their plans toward reaching career goals. Of the 69 people from this group who had

not yet finished high school, 29 said that after they finished high school or a GED, they wanted to go on to college or technical programs. One hundred and six already had high school credentials, and thought they needed more education, mostly formal education (“school” or “college”), short training courses (4 people), licensure (2). None had any detailed plans for how to go from getting more education to a career path. Of the 17 people who had a goal and thought they had enough education to reach it, 6 had not completed high school.

The nine high school graduates who did not think they needed more education for what they wanted to do had plans including job search, finding night-time child care, getting more experience or passing a test to get a license, sending articles to publishers, and a wedding.

**Table 17. Future career plans**

<b>Career and educational goals</b>	<b>Not working/ On MFIP</b>	<b>Not working/ Off MFIP</b>	<b>Working/ On MFIP</b>	<b>Working/ Off MFIP</b>	<b>All Surveyed</b>
Count	64	34	47	103	248
No goal	8%	12%	4%	14%	10%
Goal already reached <sup>1</sup>	2%	9%	6%	9%	6%
Goal with no educational requirement <sup>2</sup>	3%	0%	4%	7%	4%
Technical education required or desirable	59%	59%	55%	45%	52%
Nursing (CNA or LPN)	11%	15%	17%	6%	10%
Medical <sup>3</sup>	6%	15%	13%	8%	9%
Clerical <sup>4</sup>	8%	0%	15%	7%	8%
Entrepreneur <sup>5</sup>	9%	0%	6%	6%	6%
Personal service <sup>6</sup>	8%	9%	0%	4%	5%
Child care	3%	0%	0%	5%	3%
Other <sup>7</sup>	14%	21%	4%	10%	11%
Degree required	28%	21%	30%	26%	27%
Teacher	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%
Nurse (RN)	3%	6%	6%	5%	5%
Law enforcement <sup>8</sup>	6%	3%	0%	3%	3%
Other professionals <sup>9</sup>	14%	6%	19%	14%	14%

1. Clerical jobs, assembler, hair dresser, dental technician, and stay-at-home mom.

2. Food service, sales, stay-at-home mom, driver.

3. Medical assistant, dental assistant, respiratory therapist, medical tech, pharmacy tech, radiology tech, paramedic, ultrasound tech, veterinary tech.

4. Administrative assistant, secretary, receptionist.

5. Own business, including child care center, casino, photography, laundromat, hair salon, real estate, clothing store.

6. Cosmetologist, beautician, massage therapist.

7. Computer jobs, business jobs, management jobs, photography, home decorating, clothes designer, writer, human services, working with people, working with handicapped, teacher assistant, telecommunications, stable job.

8. Police officer, probation officer, forensics, investigator.

9. Lawyer, psychologist, social worker, computer programmer, pediatrician, veterinarian, electrical engineer, interpreter, midwife, mortician, accountant, pharmacist.

### **Was anyone helping them to plan for the future?**

Thirty-one percent of the teen mothers had an unrealized goal and someone who was helping them to plan for it. For about a third of those who had help, it was parents, for a quarter it was a spouse or partner, and for a sixth it was a job counselor. Others helping included teachers, school counselors or advisors, friends, other relatives, employer, psychiatrist, and prison staff. There was no difference across the outcome groups in perceived need for more education or help in planning for the future.

## **Appendix: History of MFIP and the MFIP Longitudinal Study**

The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as Minnesota's family public assistance program. This followed the enactment of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) that was signed into law in August 1996.<sup>34</sup> By the middle of 1998, all ongoing family assistance cases in Minnesota had been converted to MFIP, and all new and returning cases were entering MFIP. MFIP changed the emphasis of assistance from entitlement to "work first" as required by the act, while also supplementing earnings until the family income reached approximately 120 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG). Minnesota is unusual among states in including poverty reduction among its program goals, which also include increasing employment and earnings and reducing welfare dependency.

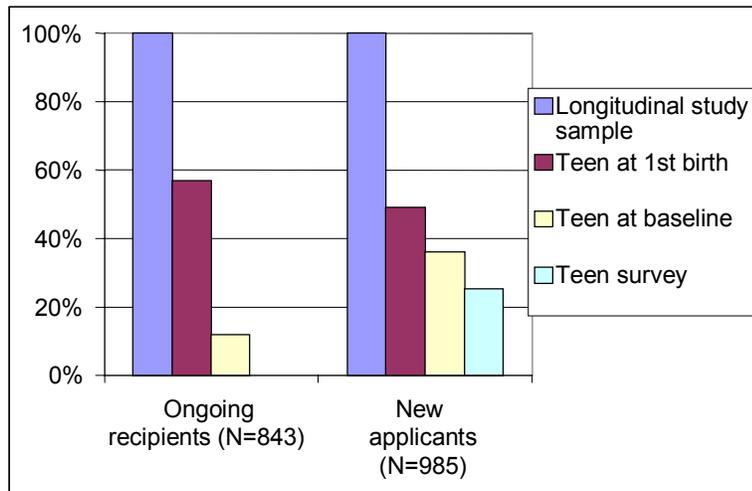
Prior to implementing MFIP statewide, Minnesota policymakers asked what the effects of the new program would be for participants and wanted to follow their progress after they left assistance. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (now called MDRC) and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) executed an experimental design study (the MFIP pilot) in eight counties during the four years preceding statewide implementation.<sup>35</sup> Findings of this study showed that families on MFIP were better off than those on AFDC (still the statewide program during the pilot period) on a number of measures, including income, employment, marriage rates, and mothers' ratings of children's behavior and school achievement.

To follow MFIP participants' progress after the program was implemented statewide, DHS initiated a longitudinal study that sampled 843 ongoing assistance clients (the *Recipient* group) and 985 new clients (the *Applicant* group) in May through October 1998. Study participants were interviewed about the economic and social situations of their families at the beginning of the study, six months later, one year later, and at least once every year thereafter. The study will continue through five years after baseline. Previous reports have described these MFIP participants at the start of the study, six months, one year, and two years later.<sup>36</sup> Special reports examined health care coverage and utilization by leavers at 18 months after baseline and long-term recipients at 42 months after baseline.

Figure 18 illustrates the teen presence in the two study samples. Ongoing recipients were sampled from the subset of the universe of active paid MFIP cases during the May to

October 1998 period that included one-caregiver families with an eligible adult (thus excluding SSI recipients and undocumented noncitizens) not in their initial month of family assistance; 843 persons were selected. Of the recipients surveyed at baseline, 57 percent were teens when their first child was born, and 12 percent were still teens in the baseline month. For the applicant sample, there were 985 first-time family assistance participants chosen in their first month (with the same restrictions noted for the ongoing recipient sample). Of applicants surveyed at baseline, 49 percent had their first child as a teen, and 36 percent were still teens. The teens interviewed for this report were 25 percent of the total applicant sample.

**Table 18. Teens in the recipient and applicant samples of the MFIP longitudinal study**



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> There were 43 applicants study who were teens at baseline and had not dropped out of the study but did not participate in this survey. Only 7 outright refused, saying they were not interested, too busy, or hostile to MFIP. Another 8 could not be located; some were homeless or had their MFIP case closed because their whereabouts were unknown. The other 28 were found but either the contact could not be made – most often when they made an implicit refusal by not returning phone calls or answering notes left at homes with no phone – or the survey could not be completed because the study participant was not home for a home visit or phone appointment made with an interviewer. Seven had left the state, and three were in jail and were not allowed calls or visits. One was under house arrest but still could not be found at home.

<sup>2</sup> Study participants receive an incentive of a 25 dollar gift certificate for each survey completed.

<sup>3</sup> All figures for birthrates except those with a separate endnote are from: Martin, J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Ventura, S.J., Menacker, F., and Park, M.M. *Births: Final data for 2000. National Vital Statistics Reports Volume 50(5)*. Washington: Department of Health and Human Services, February 2002. [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/nvsr50\\_05.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/nvsr50_05.pdf)

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- <sup>4</sup> The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth, and Family Policies. Teenage births in rich nations. New York: Columbia University, May 2002. [www.childpolicyintl.org/issuebrief/infoalert1.pdf](http://www.childpolicyintl.org/issuebrief/infoalert1.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Ventura, S.J., Matthews, T.J., and Hamilton, B.E. *Births to Teenagers in the United States, 1940-2000. National Vital Statistics Reports Volume 49(10)*. Washington: Department of Health and Human Services, September 2001. [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr49/nvsr49\\_10.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr49/nvsr49_10.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Minnesota Planning. Children's report card: Measuring Minnesota's progress. St.Paul: Minnesota Planning, September 2002. [www.mnplan.state.mn.us/children/Children'sReportCard02Summary.pdf](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/children/Children'sReportCard02Summary.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> Ventura, S.J., Martin, J.A., Curtin, S.C., Mathews, T.J., and Park, M.M. *Births: Final Data for 1998. National Vital Statistics Reports Volume 48(3)*. Washington: Department of Health and Human Services, March 2000. [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvsr48\\_03.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr48/nvsr48_03.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> *National Vital Statistics Reports Volume 49(10)*. (Endnote 4)
- <sup>9</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. *2001 Legislative session: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Funding*. St.Paul: Minnesota Department of Health, September 2001. [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/chp/2001factsheet.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/chp/2001factsheet.html)
- <sup>10</sup> Child Trends. *Facts at a glance*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends, September 2002. [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)
- <sup>11</sup> Minnesota Department of Health. (Endnote 8)
- <sup>12</sup> Proctor, B.D. and Dalaker, J, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-219. *Poverty in the United States: 2001*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002. [www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p60-219.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p60-219.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> *Minnesota Family Investment Program Longitudinal Study: Baseline Report*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Human Services, August 1999.
- <sup>14</sup> Hennepin County Community Services Group. *200 Families: A foundation for a Reform in Process*. Minneapolis: Hennepin County, 1999.
- <sup>15</sup> Minnesota Department of Health (Endnote 8).
- <sup>16</sup> Maynard, R.A., Ed. *Kids having kids*. New York: Robin Hood Foundation, 1996.
- <sup>17</sup> National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Research Center. *A work in progress: Building a state plan for teen pregnancy, prevention, and parenting*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, April 2002. [www.moapp.org](http://www.moapp.org) or [www.prc.umn.edu](http://www.prc.umn.edu)
- <sup>18</sup> Manlove, J., Terry-Human, E., Papillo, A.R., Franzetta, K., Williams, S. and Ryan, S. Preventing teenage pregnancy, childbearing, and sexually transmitted diseases: what the research shows. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends, May 2002. [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)  
Minnesota Department of Health (endnote 7).  
National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Research Center (endnote 14).

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Sawhill, I. *What can be done to reduce teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock?* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Policy Brief No.8, October 2001. [www.brookings.edu/wrb](http://www.brookings.edu/wrb)  
Seiler, N. Is teen marriage a solution? Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, April 2002. [www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1018642957.61/teenmarriage02-20.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1018642957.61/teenmarriage02-20.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> The state plan referenced in Endnote 17 lists task force member organizations.

<sup>20</sup> Minnesota Planning (Endnote 5).

<sup>21</sup> Leiderman, S. *Interpersonal violence and adolescent pregnancy: Prevalence and implications for practice and policy.* Center for Assessment and Policy Development of the National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention, October 2001. [www.noapp.org/downloads/FinalreportVIOLENCEANDADOLESCENTPREGNANCY.pdf](http://www.noapp.org/downloads/FinalreportVIOLENCEANDADOLESCENTPREGNANCY.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> “Teen mother” is used to refer to the study participants who started their family as a teen and also first applied for assistance as a teen; not all were still teens at the time of the study.

<sup>23</sup> The most popular methods were birth control pills (29 teens) and condoms (29). Others used the deprovera shot (9) or condoms plus another method (5).

<sup>24</sup> Long-term recipients are the other group in the study for whom the housing history data have been analyzed. Forty-four percent of that group – all of whom had been on MFIP for at least 3 years – had periods without regular housing.

<sup>25</sup> A leaver is defined as someone who was formerly eligible on an MFIP case but has been ineligible for at least two months. Leavers in this study included six participants who were TANF recipients in other states in month 30 and three participants who were the applicants on open child-only cases (two personally ineligible due to fraud and one an SSI recipient). Only two of the nine were working in month 30. The longitudinal study counts these persons as leavers because that is where administrative studies classify them (in most cases not knowing where they have gone or what they are doing after exit).

<sup>26</sup> Some of the teen mothers did not start receiving MFIP until some time after their first baby was born, but they were still teens when they first applied. Thus some could have a child four years old by month 30 after application.

<sup>27</sup> Note that all types of income are averaged across all families, including those having none. Thus, for example, earnings of second parents are zero in families having no second parent and are included in the averaging.

<sup>28</sup> The Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) in the year 2000 set the poverty level for a family of three at \$14,150 annual income (\$1,179 per month), for a family of four at \$17,050 annually (\$1,421 per month), and added \$2,900 more for each additional family member.

<sup>29</sup> For example, in Minnesota, the JOBS NOW Coalition developed “basic budgets” contingent on family composition through research on the local economy. According to their research (*The Cost of Living in Minnesota: The Job Gap Family Budgets*, St Paul, MN, 2001), a Minnesota family with one working parent and two children would have needed \$34,032 in the year 2000 to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, child care, transportation, and clothing (excluding such items as savings, eating out, and vacations). The Minnesota House Research

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Department published a report (*Basic Needs Budgets for Custodial and Noncustodial Parents*, St. Paul, MN, 1999) which pegged the amounts needed for a no-frills standard of living for a single working parent with two young children requiring child care and not on MFIP at \$36,161 in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and \$21,426 outside the metropolitan area in 1999. For comparison, the median 2000 family income was \$68,600 in the Twin Cities metro area, \$44,800 in the nonmetro area of Minnesota, and intermediate amounts in other metro areas (*Legislative Fact Book* by Minnesota House Research, St. Paul, MN, January 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Bersick, D.M., Murphy, J.M., Goldman, P.A., Ware, J.E., Barsky, A.J., & Weinstein, M.C. *Performance of a five-item mental health screening test*. *Medical Care*, February 1991, Vol. 29, No. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Minnesota Planning (Endnote 5).

<sup>32</sup> At the county's discretion, rent can be paid directly to the landlord, and the rest of the grant decreased by 30 percent. After the time covered by this report, counties were given the power to impose 100 percent sanctions under certain conditions.

<sup>33</sup> If the county determines that school attendance is not appropriate for a minor parent, it must refer the caregiver to social services for other services.

<sup>34</sup> The federal program replacing AFDC was named Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). MFIP is Minnesota's TANF implementation.

<sup>35</sup> *Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. Volume 1: Effects on Adults*. C. Miller, V. Knox, L. Gennetian, M. Dodoo, J.A. Hunter, and C. Redcross. *Volume 2: Effects on Children*. L. Gennetian and C. Miller. New York: MDRC, 2000. The results were stronger for long-term recipients than recent applicants and for single-parent than two-parent families. Statewide MFIP has lower support levels (exit for working participants at 120 percent of FPG versus 140 percent) and more immediate work requirements than did the pilot.

<sup>36</sup> Response rates were 85 percent, 83 percent, 79 percent, and 75 percent for *Recipients* when the total sample was surveyed at baseline, 6 months, one year, and two years. The response rates for the *Applicant* sample were 85 percent, 82 percent, 78 percent, and 75 percent for these surveys.

