

Pregnancy Rates Among Juvenile Justice Girls in Two RCTs of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care

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The article relayed the results of a study that compared pregnancy rates among those who were part of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) and those who were not. MTFC is described as a behavioral treatment alternative to in-house treatment for delinquent and at-risk youth. It involves behavioral training for foster and biological parents, skills training and supportive therapy for youth, and school-based interventions where necessary. Findings from the study confirm the notion that programs that target delinquency and other at-risk behavior may more successfully prevent teen pregnancy than methods that directly target sexual behavior.

Information at a Glance:

- Females not involved in MTFC were nearly 2 ½ times more likely to become pregnant than those assigned to MTFC.
- Females assigned to MTFC all attended public schools and had social interactions with community peers
- In contrast, non-MTFC girls were more often segregated from male peers and presumably had fewer opportunities to become pregnant during the intervention period.
- Curriculum-based programs that directly target sexual behaviors and attitudes have generally failed to show reductions in pregnancy rates.
- Prevention programs demonstrating effects on pregnancy rates either:
 - Do not focused on sexual behavior, or
 - Included sexual education as part of a broader youth development program.

Proposed Program Solutions:

Altering general problem behavior pathways that lead to delinquency may reduce teen pregnancy among high-risk adolescent girls. Effective prevention programs focus on multiple components rather than pregnancy prevention alone. Such components include:

- Parent and teacher training in behavior management,
- Tutoring,
- Promotion of social bonding,
- Social and emotional skill-building,
- Mental, medical, and reproductive health care, and
- Facilitation of employment and volunteerism.

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