

Executive Summary:

Resiliency Among Hmong Women Who Were Teen Mothers

Central California Area Social Services Consortium

By

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**ABSTRACT****RESILIENCY AMONG HMONG WOMEN WHO WERE TEEN MOTHERS**

Hmong teen mothers have endured many hardships throughout their lives, including financial and educational struggles along with cultural dilemma. This study was an in-depth qualitative research on the lived experiences of 10 Hmong women who were teen mothers between the ages of 13 to 20. This study focused on the adolescent mothers' experiences and how the role of young motherhood has shaped their lives and impacted their educational and career attainments. This study highlighted the positive outcomes of Hmong women who were teen mothers and provided a deeper understanding of how these women became resilient despite adversities in life. In order to better understand them and capture their resiliency, all of the participants were asked to share their unique life stories through their own perspectives. The important themes that emerged from the young mothers' interviews were resiliency, positive outcomes, traditional family and cultural expectations of oneself, the experiences of becoming teen mothers, and support systems. The findings from this research indicated that these Hmong women have become resilient despite hardships; therefore, being culturally married and having children at an early age did not hinder their abilities to achieve positive outcomes and educational and professional goals. In contrast, their experiences as teen mothers were the driving forces that motivated them to obtain higher education, professional careers, and financial stability.

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### **Introduction**

Teenage pregnancy and parenting have been recognized as one of the most critical social problems among adolescents in the United States. In addition, the negative perceptions regarding teen mothers' inability to succeed in life continues to exist in today's society. There are many research studies illustrating how teen pregnancy and motherhood have destructively impacted the teen mothers' educational attainment and future in America. On the other hand, there are few research studies that focus on the resilience and positive outcomes of adolescent mothers. Therefore, this research study concentrates on the positive achievements and lived experiences of teen mothers who have become resilient despite adversity. This study empowers teen mothers' voices to be heard from their own perspectives so they can change the negative perceptions and beliefs that are held in society concerning teen mothers.

### **Description of Population**

Teen pregnancy and parenting is often viewed negatively by society and as a social problem. Further, teen mothers and their children are adversely affected by this social problem because policies and communities do not provide enough educational, financial, and emotional support to this population. However, another view is teenagers who became pregnant and made the decision to raise their children should be viewed as resilient and not as welfare dependents. The perception of welfare dependency among teen mothers is strongly held by society and that dependency should be discouraged. For instance, government welfare policy negatively impact teen mothers because policy makers strongly believe that programs such as cash aid, food stamps, and Medicaid are an attractive financial opportunity for single young mothers (Berglas, Brindis, & Cohen, 2003). In reality, teen mothers make up 5% of the welfare caseload and only 1% of the total is under the age of 18 (Berglas et al., 2003).

Despite of all the hardships that teen mothers have to face and overcome, they want to become successful in school, thrive in life, and be productive citizens if given the opportunity to do so. What society needs to realize is that majority of teen mothers are willing to work longer hours, more jobs, work and attend school, and work much harder (in addition to the stress of motherhood) in order to provide for their children compared to other non-teen or adult mothers (Bowman, 2013). Teen mothers need positive role models, mentors, and caring adults in their lives to help pave the way to success. Teen mothers can become resilient when they have the support of their family, friends, extended families, and communities. Weed, Keogh and Borkowski (2000) state that with support, teen mothers will exhibit resiliency by learning to manage and cope with the challenges of childbearing and can place their lives back on track to achieve educational and employment success within five years after giving birth. Pregnancy and having parental responsibilities have been motivating factors for some teens to attain their education. Studies have shown that adolescent mothers actually want to do better in school and work harder once they have a child because they not only want to do well for themselves but also for their children (Klaw, 2008). The best outcomes for teen mothers are to graduate from high school, obtain a vocational or college degree, get a well-paying job, and become self-sufficient.

### **Problem Statement**

The social problem of teen pregnancy and childbearing is largely present in families who are experiencing poverty. Poverty is strongly associated with causation and consequences of teen pregnancy and early motherhood (Berglas et al., 2003). Teen pregnancy and parenting are more likely to occur in minority groups that are economically and socially disadvantaged such as living in poorer and racially segregated neighborhoods with high crime rates, inferior housing, poor and low performing schools, and limited health services (Berglas et al., 2003). Youths who

live in disadvantaged neighborhoods have less access to economic resources; which will make them more likely to engage in risky and sexual behaviors and become pregnant. Other community characteristics and contributing factors are the parents or household members' level of education, the unemployment rate in the neighborhood, income level of adults in the community, religious and cultural beliefs, and the labor force participation of females in that community (Berglas et al., 2003).

The concerns of teen mothers impact the entire country on a daily basis. More than ever, teens nowadays have more access to sex education, birth control, and abortions but they are still having babies. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Vital Statistical Reports (2013), there were 3,952,841 babies born to females between the ages of 15 to 44 throughout the United States. Out of the total births, 116,212 babies were born to teenagers aged 15 to 19. Of this number, there were 11,981 babies born to teenagers of the Asian or Pacific Islander race. In California alone, 4,385 babies were born to teenagers from all different ethnic backgrounds (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Vital Statistical Reports, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This section will emphasize on defining and discussing resiliency theory and how researchers have applied it to the positive outcomes of teen mothers. The importance of the strengths-based approach and self-efficacy theory for empowering teen mothers will also be discussed.

The term "resiliency" is referred to the process that disrupts the negative trajectory from the risk to psychopathology; however, still results in adaptive outcomes even in the face of adversity (Weed, Keogh, & Borkowski, 2000). The word "resilience" is described as the ability

to successfully cope or bounce back regardless of substantial adversity (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007). Similarly, Dyer and McGuinness (1996) explained that resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity; however, it is a challenge that every human being will eventually have to face because there is no escape. In addition, the American Heritage Dictionary (as cited in Dyer & McGuinness, 1996) defines resilience as “the ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune” (p. 1534). Another interpretation of resilience is that humans often survive and thrive despite risk factors, such as various types of problems and dysfunctions (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). Therefore, resilience implies that there is hope embedded in adversity and to believe in oneself that something positive will result from misfortunes (Dyer & McGuinness, 1996).

In order to promote resiliency among teen mothers, educators and professionals in the field must learn to sensitively work with teen mothers using the strengths approach. The strengths approach is intended to understand the clients’ strengths, which involves examining their skills and abilities to survive against great challenges, gain knowledge, access resources, obtain goals, and require desires in life that may contribute to their success (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). While using the strengths approach to work with individuals and families, it is also important to utilize the empowerment perspective to motivate them to become competent in defining their problematic situation, how to find realistic solutions to the problem, and to gain the ability to advocate for self and/or others. Since teen mothers are frowned upon from every angle in society, it is extremely vital that social workers eliminate their biases and use the strengths perspective to identify teen mothers’ strengths and build upward to enrich their skills. The strengths approach is in line with the humanist approach, in which it is believed that humans have the capacity to grow, change, and adapt in life; the idea that humans are resilient (Early &

GlenMaye, 2000).

Also associated with resiliency is self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy theory can be described as individuals' beliefs in the capacity to successfully accomplish given tasks and the impact that self-belief have on motivation and achievement (Bandura, 1993; Martin & Dowson, 2009). In addition, Schultz (2014) explains that self-efficacy deals with individuals' beliefs about how well they will achieve their goals; therefore, personal self-efficacy is a strong factor in determining how a person thinks, feel, behave, motivate themselves, and how he/she functions in society. It is believed that individuals develop self-efficacy from mastery experiences such as the goals were achieved through perseverance, overcoming obstacles, and from observing others succeed through persistent efforts (Jamal, 2014). Similarly, academic self-efficacy has been found to be a predictor of teen mothers' educational aspirations or achievements. It is believed that the teen mothers who trust their capacities and efforts, despite having doubts about passing classes or graduating on time, are more willing to try harder and put forth more efforts in their attempts toward achievements (Jamal, 2014). Academic self-efficacy does not pertain to the amount of skills that teen mothers have but what they can do with their existing skills to enhance their future (Jamal, 2014). Therefore, it is definitely possible that teen mothers can be successful in school and in life if they believe in their abilities.

### **Methodology**

The data were gathered from 10 Hmong female participants in Fresno County. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with participants to collect in-depth information about their life journeys. A phenomenological approach was used to conduct this qualitative study. Phenomenology is the best approach for this research because it allows participants to describe the meaning of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon such as adolescent

mothers (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, phenomenology provides a deeper and more in-depth understanding of the individuals' experiences, emotions, opinions, and perceptions. The phenomenological framework will benefit this research study because it will enhance society's understandings on how the teen mothers "experience the world, how they experience their everyday lives, and how it feels to walk in their shoes" (Creswell, 2007, p. 76).

The primary questions for this research study are 1) How do Hmong teen mothers become resilient against all odds?, 2) What are the barriers to resiliency among Hmong teen mothers?, and 3) How does teen motherhood impact and shape Hmong women's overall quality of life? The main concept examined in this study is resiliency among Hmong women who were teen mothers. This research study identified the positive outcomes of Hmong teen mothers and described how they were able to bounce back and become resilient despite hardships.

## **Findings**

### Demographics

The 10 participants in this research study currently reside in Fresno County. All participants were mothers before the age of 20. Other demographic findings include:

- One participant had one child, 2 participants had two children, and 7 participants had three children.
- Three (3) of the 10 participants (30%) were between the ages of 18 to 28 and 7 of them (70%) were between the ages of 29 to 39.
- Eight (8) of the participants were born in the United States and 2 were born in other countries: Thailand and Laos.
- Of the 10 participants, 3 of them were culturally married at the age of 14; 3 were culturally married at age 15; two (2) were culturally married at age 17; one (1) was

culturally married at age 18; and 1 was culturally married at age 19.

When participants shared that they were culturally married, they meant that they had traditional Hmong weddings in which the grooms paid an endowment to the brides' parents; however, they were not civilly (legally) married nor obtained marriage licenses through the court system in this country. Three of the 10 participants disclosed that they became pregnant before they were culturally married to the fathers of their children who were their boyfriends at that time. All of the participants were culturally married by the time their first child was born. Therefore, these Hmong participants do not fit the stereotype about unwed single teen mothers.

Of the 10 participants, nine obtained high school diplomas and one obtained a General Educational Diploma (GED). From the 10 participants, four have achieved their bachelor's degrees, two have achieved their master's degrees, two have achieved their doctorate degrees; and two participants are currently pursuing their bachelor's degree in which one will be graduating in May, 2015. The participants had career goals that pertain to the helping professions such as social workers, school counselors, pharmacists, and lawyers.

All participants grew up in large families, which consisted of their parents and five to 13 siblings living together in one household. Nine of the 10 participants' families were low-income and received public assistance such as cash-aid, CalFresh (previously known as Food Stamps), Medi-Cal, and low-income housing or Section 8. All the participants reported that their biological parents were strict, over protective, and had high expectations for them.

### The Thematic Experiences of Becoming Teen Mothers

The women in this study have lived through positive and negative experiences that have shaped their lives as young mothers. Each woman has a unique story that defines who she is as an individual and her meaning of life. As they shared their personal stories, these themes were

gathered to highlight the teen mothers' experiences and include: reaction to pregnancy, their challenges in obtaining personal and educational goals, society's perceptions of teen mothers, their thoughts on how being a teen mother has impacted their lives, their advice to teen mothers and support systems.

### Initial Reaction to First Pregnancy

All 10 participants had mixed reactions when they found out that they were pregnant. Their initial reactions or feelings vary from happiness, excited, and accepting to being shocked, questioning, nervousness, scared, and unprepared. Although the pregnancies were unplanned and the participants had different reactions to becoming a mother, they stated that it was "normal" in the traditional Hmong culture to have children before the age of 20. Seven of the 10 participants who became pregnant after marriage stated that they were accepting of becoming young mothers because the purpose of marriage was to procreate; therefore, it was a "normal" role for a Hmong female. For a few participants who described that they were happy to learn about the pregnancy, they now realized that they were too young at that time to understand how hard it were to be young mothers.

In addition to the stress of becoming teen mothers, the participants between the ages of 14 to 17 who were culturally married and became pregnant while in high school were fearful of the law in this country. Eight of the participants' husbands were more than three years older. In the traditional Hmong culture, it was acceptable for under aged females to marry adult males or males who were more than two years older than them. For this reason, four of the eight participants were more terrified of their husbands having to go to jail for statutory rape compared to finding out that they were pregnant. This fear forced these four participants to obtain their marriage licenses to avoid the chance of their husbands going to jail.

Due to the different cultural expectations between the Hmong and Western cultures, the participants had a difficult time integrating both of cultures into their lives. Being a Hmong woman who is trying to adapt into two different cultures in the United States is unbearable at times. The Hmong culture had always believed in marriage and procreation at an earlier age. On the other hand, Western society looks down upon early marriages and pregnancies. The expectations of these two cultures clash, which places the teen mothers in the middle and not knowing where they belong in society.

#### Teen Mothers Proving Society Wrong

In addition to becoming pregnant and trying to pursue their education, these participants had to deal with stigma and stereotypes from society and family members. Some of the family members doubted the young mothers' ability to achieve higher education, and the traditional Hmong men frowned upon the young mothers due to the believe that Hmong women should not be educated. Moreover, it is clear that society holds negative perceptions about teen pregnancies and teen parents. All participants felt as though they had been discriminated against as teen mothers. They felt that people were constantly judging them and starring at them as though they had committed a crime. The discrimination and stereotypes was aimed at teen mothers from multiple angles and sources: their own neighborhoods, communities, cultures, and families. The participants felt that society doubted their abilities and strengths; often they experienced the societal stereotype that teen mothers would not amount to anything. In addition, the participants had heard people snickering and labeling them as welfare mothers.

Moreover, these women reported that their physicians were doubtful and discriminatory against them as teen mothers. Those women who had Caucasian physicians faced more stereotypes compared to those who had Asian physicians. Four of the 10 Hmong women stated

that their Caucasian physicians assumed that they were incapable of parenting their own children; therefore, these physicians only provided them with the option of having abortions or giving their children up for adoptions. These participants reported that they were upset and scared at the same time. For these reasons, they changed physicians and sought prenatal services from Asian physicians because they were more understanding and nonjudgmental toward them for having children at a young age.

### Challenges of Being a Teen Mother

Besides the negative energy from the external forces, all of the participants also faced life challenges of obtaining their personal and educational goals. All participants shared that they have had financial struggles and faced the challenges of balancing life as students, mothers, wives, daughter-in-laws, and employees. They felt that time management was difficult because they had to sacrifice their time between homework and children. Other challenges that the majority of the participants had in common were 1) the power struggle and relationship conflicts within their marriages, 2) the days when they had to choose between their sick children or going to school, 3) fighting hard for their education while losing focus on their children's education, and 4) lacking quality time with their children and spouses.

The two participants who obtained their doctorate degrees described that there was an internal struggle for them when they got accepted to go to college out of town. As they planned their career paths to becoming a lawyer and pharmacist, they had to sacrifice and feared the possibility of losing their education or husbands and children. However, through the support of their husbands and their in-laws, they achieved their dreams and continue to have the two most important things in life: education and family.

### Role Models

Nine of the 10 participants stated that their biological parents were not formally educated in the United States. Their parents arrived to the United States when they were adults and were encouraged to find employment to support their families. Even though their parents did not have educational opportunities in this country, they had always motivated their children to pursue higher education. These participants shared that their role models were their mothers, fathers, or both parents. Two participants believed that their fathers had profound impacts on their lives and instilled words of wisdom that laid the foundation for them to fight against all odds in order to achieve their dreams.

#### Goals that Were Put on Hold

Six of the 10 participants stated that they did not have to put any goals on hold due to getting pregnant early and becoming a teen mother. These participants maximized their support systems and did not put their education on hold. They sacrificed and remained focused on their educational and career goals; therefore, they finished high school and went directly to college. They were willing to suffer financially during their younger years in order to provide their children with a better and financially stable future. The participants stated that being a young mother did not affect them because they were goal-oriented, had college plans, and were willing to struggle to accomplish their dreams.

Four of the 10 participants admitted that they had goals that they had to put on hold due to the unplanned pregnancy. One participant stated that she did put her college education on hold due to the challenges of raising two children, working full-time, and having household responsibilities as a wife. However, she resumed when her children were a few years older to obtain her bachelor and master degrees. Although three of the participants accomplished their educational goals, they felt as though they had put other aspects of life on hold. For example,

they shared that they wanted to travel the world, study abroad, become more involved in community organizing, and spending more one-on-one time with their newlywed spouses.

#### Most Rewarding Aspects and Positive Impact

The most rewarding aspects for all 10 participants were their children. They expressed that their children had shaped them into who they are today. Their children have made them appreciate the little things in life and to not take life for granted. They believed that their children made them strive tirelessly to become better and stronger people. These participants explained that due to the hardships of being young mothers, they had to work twice as hard to show people that they were worthy and deserving of people's respect as human beings. They hope that someday their children will forgive them for not being able to spend ample time with them during their infant years. However, they want their children to understand that they had to sacrifice and work extremely hard in order to give their children the life that they never had.

A few participants also recognized that their children strengthen their marital relationship and communication between the families. They believed that their children brought love, joy, laughter, motivation, and hope into their lives. Despite the hardships that these participants faced, they believed that being teen mothers have had made positive impact in their lives. The participants have learned at a young age that their experiences as teen mothers have made them become stronger, independent, brave, hardworking, fast learners, and humble. However, these women are not recommending that all teenage girls should become teen mothers.

#### What Would They Change About Their Life Journeys?

The participants were asked if they would like to change anything about their life journey as teen mothers. All of the 10 participants explained that if they were given the opportunity to go back in time to their teen mother years, they would not change the fact that they had their

children. They also have no regrets about giving births to their children. Seven of 10 participants blatantly stated that they would not change one thing about their life journeys because it would change everything about themselves and who they are today. They are proud and happy in their own skin because they have accomplished so much thus far. In contrast, three of the 10 participants admitted that they would like to change at least one thing. They wished that they could have lived with their parents until they were older instead of marrying so early. They felt as though they did not have the opportunity to spend time with their parents and make them proud.

#### Advice to Teen Mothers

All 10 participants have inspiring advice for the teen mothers who are in their shoes. They are encouraging teen mothers to never give up on their goals and dreams in life. They hope that teen mothers will strive high, believe in themselves, never stop dreaming, keep their heads up during hard times, find and use support systems around them, and prove people wrong.

#### Support Systems

All of the Hmong women who participated in this study had found that in addition to having self-motivation, they also had support systems that played important roles in their educational successes and positive outcomes. The support systems in their lives include their spouses, family members, such as their in-laws, public assistance programs, low-income programs, and teen parenting education.

One of the most common support systems that each participant mentioned was their husband. Although some praised their husbands more than others did, it was apparent that their spouses cared enough to work hard to financially support their children while these women pursued their education. At the same time, their spouses have never tried to stop them or

discourage them from obtaining higher education or careers. During their teen mother years, majority of their spouses worked; therefore, the majority of them did not qualify for public assistance such as cash-aid and CalFresh; however, seven of the participants qualified for Medi-Cal. Only two participants qualified for all assistance such as cash-aid, CalFresh, and Medi-Cal. One participant was not aware of such public assistance; therefore, she did not receive aid. Other programs that helped support the majority of these participants were 1) the CalWORKs Welfare to Work program, 2) the CalLearn program, and 3) the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program.

### **Discussion**

This study was inimitable because it highlighted the cultural strengths and positive outcomes versus the shortfalls in the participants' lives. One of the most important aspects that these Hmong women have in common is resiliency. Despite the challenges, hardships, negative perceptions, and stereotypes that these Hmong women have endured as teen mothers, they have overcome life obstacles and rose above society's expectations of them. These Hmong women have also learned the importance of self-efficacy through their cultural and parental expectations at a young age; therefore, it has positively contributed to their strengths in fighting against all odds when they were young mothers. Being teen mothers with multiple responsibilities have empowered them to set and accomplish lifelong goals without allowing others to interfere. These women have prevailed and are self-determined individuals.

It is evident that becoming teen mothers did not hinder these young women's abilities to set and accomplish lifelong goals. They are ambitious and successful in balancing the Hmong and Western cultures along with their multiple roles as mothers, wives, daughter-in-laws, and students. These Hmong women utilized their cultural expectations and young motherhood

experiences as the primary driving force to obtain positive results in their lives. They have made sacrifices throughout their teen motherhood years in order to pursue and achieve higher education and obtain professional careers. These Hmong women valued their cultural and parental expectations of them, in which failure is not an option in their lives.

The majority of these Hmong women were empowered by their uneducated parents to become educated. In previous studies, it was found that Hmong parents had zero to two years of formal education and the majority were unemployed compared to non-Hmong parents (Swartz, Lee, & Mortimer, 2003). These Hmong teen mothers appeared to have the obligation to fulfill their uneducated parents' dreams of coming to this country for educational opportunities, freedom, and living the American dream. They craved to live the life that their parents had only dreamed of when they lived in their homelands: Laos and Thailand. Therefore, these women also desired to teach their children to strive high and take advantage of the educational opportunities in this country; the opportunity that their grandparents did not have or could not afford in Laos or Thailand.

These Hmong teen mothers were able to become resilient against all odds due to their self-efficacy, effective programs, and cultural expectations. In addition, their parents' high expectations and childhood experiences strongly shaped their mentality about how to become good and hardworking females. These expectations had been instilled in them as early as they could remember; therefore, it had inspired them to be independent and tough within their own skin regardless of the challenges of being young mothers.

In addition to facing cultural obstacles, these Hmong women also endured the challenges of poverty and lack of support in the educational arena during their teen parenting years. Two of the main barriers to resiliency were the lack of financial support programs and childcare centers

on school campuses. Those participants whose husbands were working and their salaries were slightly above the CalWORKs income guideline did not qualify for additional monetary assistance besides Medi-Cal. For this reason, these teen mothers and their families remained as low-income households and lived in poverty while their children were young. Due to having low-income, all of the participants lived in multi-generation homes with their in-laws.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There were only few research studies that have shown positive achievements for young parents, especially teen mothers. As a result, the majority of the previous literature on pregnant and parenting teens has been negative, which showcased the teen mothers as having no or little aspirations for higher education and life goals. In contrast, the results from this study suggested that additional research on the resiliency among teen mothers or parents need to be conducted in the future. There is a great need for more qualitative studies to highlight the lived experiences and positive outcomes of teen mothers and fathers from different ethnic backgrounds to find out how social workers, advocacy groups, policymakers, and other professionals can further support them in becoming resilient and successful. Promoting resiliency among teen mothers and parents will help lawmakers and agencies in allotting more funding to develop effective educational, financial, and resiliency-based programs to assist this population and their children.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

The findings from this study have important implications for social work practice with teen mothers in the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, it is essential that social workers are cultural competent and learn to develop a good understanding about the Hmong culture and its historical and present practices. Social workers should act as mediators and educators, and bridge the gaps between the Hmong families and the criminal justice system in this country due

to society's misperceptions of early marriages and statutory rape among Hmong couples. Social workers should advocate for the Hmong teen mothers and their spouses by educating the law enforcement agencies and justice system on the cultural norms within the Hmong community.

Moreover, social workers that work with the teen parents in the CalLearn program need to do thorough assessments on the Hmong teen mothers to become aware of their marital status, whether or not it is cultural or civil. This is an important aspect because it would assist the social workers in developing realistic goals while using their client's environmental support systems.

Due to the fact that the Hmong adolescent mothers have been oppressed within their own culture and in the Western society, it is important for social workers to not segregate them or treat them lesser than their counterparts; instead, help them to increase their self-esteem and self-confident. In addition, social workers must possess positive characteristics of being role models and mentors for these Hmong teen mothers who may not have encouraging or educated adults in their lives. Social workers should provide Hmong teen mothers with ample opportunities to discuss and explore educational and career paths. When working with Hmong teen mothers who are hopeless and uncertain about their futures, social workers need to utilize the strengths-based approach to highlight their positive achievements. Social workers need to acknowledge that young Hmong mothers who are willing to raise their children while pursuing their education are already resilient.

In the foster care system, social workers must learn to be culturally sensitive and resourceful when working with teen mothers. As for the teen mothers who are foster youths in the child welfare system, it is crucial that the social workers become one of their main support system and their strongest advocates. Social workers in the child welfare agencies need to be resourceful and provide the teen mothers with referrals to supportive programs that will help

these individuals connect with caring adults in their families and communities. Therefore, foster teen mothers will learn to make healthy decisions so they will not repeat the cycle of abuse or neglect for their own children. It is believed that social workers can empower teen mothers when they are able to put themselves in their clients' shoes in order to understand their pain, suffer, and hardships. This will encourage the social workers to have faith in the teen mothers and help them to put forth the effort toward becoming resilient.

At the macro level, it is important that social workers and other professionals working with the teen parent population advocate for more financial, educational, childcare, and resilient-based programs to assist them and their young children. School social workers should also advocate on behalf of teen mothers, allow them to voice their needs in school, assist them with their challenges of being students and young mothers, and support them in thriving in the educational arena. School social workers along with the school districts must accurately assess the needs of on-campus childcare centers for the teen mothers and their children. As a result, they should work closely with policymakers to obtain funding sources in order to provide childcare centers on campuses. By providing such services, this will result in an increase of teen mothers' attendance, self-esteem, and motivation to stay in school. In addition, school social workers, counselors, and teachers should work closely with teen mothers and expose them to higher educational opportunities beyond high school. They should not treat teen mothers any different than the non-teen mothers.

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