

# PREGNANCY & PARENTING

## Lesson 1

GRADE  
**CALM**

### LEARNER OUTCOME<sup>1</sup> P12:

Examine aspects of healthy sexuality, sexual wellness and responsible sexual behaviour. Assess the consequences of being sexually active.



#### MATERIALS:

1. **HANDOUT: Scenario Problem Solver**
2. **CARDS: Making Choices Scenario Cards**
3. **FACTSHEET: The Cost of Raising a Child (Canadian Council on Social Development)**



#### INTRODUCTION:

The Comprehensive School Health model stresses the need for students to make decisions and respect the decisions and values of others. Perhaps one of the hardest decisions a teen could ever have to make is if she or he was faced with an unintended pregnancy. While there is a decline in pregnancy and live birth rates among teenagers aged 15-19 in Alberta<sup>2</sup>, provincial rates are still higher than the national average<sup>3</sup>. The abortion rate for teens has also steadily decreased since 1996<sup>4</sup>.

Having a baby too young can have significant adverse impacts on the health and well-being of the mother, the baby, the father and society. Teen pregnancy is associated with increased school drop-out rates, low socio-economic status and increased likelihood of repeat pregnancies. Health risks to the baby may include pre-term birth, low birth weight and infant death<sup>5</sup>.



#### APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

##### A. GROUND RULES (5-10 min)

Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.



It can be challenging to create a balance between prevention and positive messages related to motherhood and pregnancy outcomes. Prevention programs must consider different views and perceptions to be effective. Some cultures support earlier pregnancies and in these cases delaying pregnancy could alienate these Canadians from their culture. Addressing teen pregnancy is two-fold: interventions focusing on prevention and interventions addressing relevant support and services for effective and positive health outcomes for young parents and their children<sup>5</sup>.

Students will then be asked to think about what it means to be a parent and the physical, emotional, lifestyle and financial changes that come with parenting.

Teachers need to understand the objectives and be aware of personal biases when discussing teen pregnancy. It may be useful to complete the [Your Values Quiz](#).

### **B. MAKING CHOICES (25-30 min)**

*Students use problem-solving skills to determine what choices could be made when a teen discovers they are pregnant.*

1. Distribute the handout: **Scenario Problem Solver**, one to each student.
2. Divide students into small groups.
3. Provide each group with a **Making Choices Scenario Cards**.
4. Allow each group to read the scenario.

It is important to explain that each person who is faced with an unintended pregnancy is dealing with their own unique situation. It should be emphasized that the choice is ultimately the personal decision of the young woman who is pregnant. However, the boyfriend or partner of the young woman and their families will have feelings and be impacted by the situation and decision as well. Making the decision about what to do can be very difficult and stressful. Some women may not have the non-judgmental support of a partner, family or friends. Agencies and counselling services can help. A list of agencies and resources is included in [Community Resources](#) on our website.

5. Give groups time to discuss and fill in the handout **Scenario Problem Solver**



Be aware that various community agencies and groups have different philosophies and beliefs about pregnancy options. Certain cultures and religions also have differing views on pregnancy options. Students may raise these types of issues in this class. It is important to be prepared to answer questions in a factual way. If questions regarding personal values arise, it is important to redirect the students to resources that may help them in their self reflection on these topics rather than stating your values.

6. Debrief by having each group present their scenario and respond to the class. Write the possible choices across the board:

- **PARENTING**
- **ADOPTION**
- **ABORTION**

The following background information will enable you to provide the group with information about the three basic options.

### Parenting

- Having a baby involves lifestyle, emotional, physical and financial implications. While parenting is a joy, it is also hard work. Some questions to ask yourself about parenting and what it means to be a parent include: How will raising a child affect my current lifestyle and the lifestyle I want to have? Am I ready to change my lifestyle to meet my child's needs?
- Do I like children? How do I feel about having a child around all the time?
- Do I know enough about raising children? Which skills can I share with and teach my child?
- Have my partner and I talked about how we would manage parenthood? What do we know about parenting? How do you learn to be a parent?
- Is it important to have a partner involved? If a partner is not involved, is parenting still an option?
- What type of support do I need to help me raise my child? Does that support exist in my life right now? Is it possible for me to get that support?
- What are my reasons for wanting to have this child?
- Can I handle a child and school or work at the same time?
- Can I afford to support a child right now? In the future?

Parents are not born, they are created. Whether you parent with a partner, on your own or with the support of family and friends, the most powerful thing you can do is to give your child loving, consistent and supportive care<sup>7</sup>.



Making a decision about an unintended pregnancy can be difficult and stressful. It is important to be aware of feelings this lesson may evoke for students related to personal or family situations either now or in the past and to use sensitivity.



This lesson focuses on the three options for a pregnancy: parenting (either as a single parent or with a partner), adoption and abortion. You may also wish to include a brief discussion about the importance of maintaining good health during pregnancy, including:

- accessing good prenatal care from a physician or midwife;
- avoiding alcohol, smoking, drugs and other substances that could cause fetal harm;
- eating a healthy diet; maintaining a healthy body weight;
- taking a multivitamin containing folic acid; and
- regular exercise.

## Adoption

Choosing to place your child for adoption can be very difficult. Some questions to consider include:

- How would I feel about continuing the pregnancy and giving birth but not keeping the child?
- Could I live with the idea that someone else is raising my child?
- How would adoption impact my child's life? Am I able to provide for him/her?
- Do I have the support I need to continue the pregnancy and make an adoption plan?
- What about my partner and family's feelings about adoption?
- Which kind of adoption would be best for me? Do I want to meet the adoptive parents?
- How would making this choice impact my life in the long run?

***There are three ways to place a child for adoption in Alberta:***

1. **Government (Ward/Closed) Adoption:** Ward adoption involves placing a child for adoption through the government social services. These are closed adoptions meaning that birthparents and adoptive parents are not given identifying information on each other. It also means that the child does not know who his or her birthparents are while the child is growing up.
2. **Licensed Private Agencies (Open Adoption):** Through a licensed agency the birthmother has the right to choose the adoptive family by looking at files, meeting the family she has chosen and having ongoing contact with the family before and after the placement of her child.
3. **Direct Placement:** A direct placement adoption is one where the birthmother places the child with a friend, family friend or relative.

Even if you choose to place a child up for adoption, maintaining good health for you and your growing baby throughout your pregnancy is important.

## Abortion

Abortion means choosing to terminate (end) a pregnancy. There are many reasons women choose to have an abortion. An unintended pregnancy may have been a result of not using contraception or contraception failure (e.g. condom breakage). Some women discover genetic defects as a result of tests on the fetus and choose this option. A woman may have been sexually assaulted or became pregnant because of sexual coercion. Sometimes a woman may experience changes in her life situation that makes her re-evaluate the pregnancy.



**Surgical abortion** is the most common abortion procedure performed in Canada and is performed by a doctor in either a clinic or a hospital<sup>11</sup>.

No matter the circumstances it is most important a woman make the decision that is right for her.

**Abortion is a safe surgical procedure when performed by a qualified doctor. If the abortion is performed safely without any complications there is no affect on the ability to become pregnant again in the future<sup>8</sup>.**

In Alberta, surgical abortions are offered from 5 weeks - 20 weeks<sup>9</sup>. If the pregnancy is less than 7 weeks a woman can choose to have a medical abortion. The type of abortion procedure a woman has depends the duration of the pregnancy and services offered by the clinic or hospital.

A surgical abortion takes about 5-15 minutes but a woman can expect to stay in the clinic or hospital for 2-3 hours as the visit will include counselling, an ultrasound if needed, and recovery time<sup>10</sup>. The cost of an abortion is covered by Alberta Health Care.

In Alberta, a parent's consent is not needed to have an abortion. Consent is based on the ability to understand the procedure and its risks 10.

**It is always recommended for young women to talk to their parents/ guardians or a trusted adult.**

Some questions to consider include:

- Do I have spiritual or moral beliefs that may impact my decision to have an abortion?
- Do I have people in my life that will support me with my decision?
- How will making this decision impact my life? What about my partner's feelings?

### **C. CHEESEBURGERS AND PARENTING (15-20 min)**

*Students recognize the importance of skills and characteristics needed for parenting, and the value of acquiring them before becoming a parent.*

#### **Procedure:**

1. Write the word "REQUIREMENTS" on the board and ask students what "requirement" means (something that must happen, not "it would be nice if...").
2. Read the following scenario to the students: "Imagine you own a cheeseburger stand and don't want to run it. You need to hire someone to run it for you and at the end of each month they will bring you the money. You will pay them a certain amount and keep the rest."



#### **Medical Abortion**

uses medication instead of surgery to end a pregnancy. It can only be used in early pregnancy, up to 7 weeks from the first day of the last menstrual period<sup>12</sup>. This procedure requires at least 2 visits to the clinic and if the treatment fails a surgical abortion will be required.<sup>13</sup>

3. Ask students what the "requirements" are for the person they hire? Teachers can list the class responses on the blackboard.
4. Ask students why some of the requirements or characteristics would be important. (For example, trust is important because the person will be handling your money, reliability is important because the person must show up for work, etc.)
5. Ask students if the person they hired doesn't have most of the skills or characteristics listed, what would happen to their business? (The business would most likely fail.) Certainly, a person can learn on the job but there might be some bad cheeseburgers and a loss of some customers.
6. Ask students to think about what the "requirements" are in our society to become a parent? (There are no requirements.)
7. Ask students to think about the importance of running a cheeseburger stand compared to parenting. Does this make sense?
8. Ask students to make a list of "requirements" to be met before becoming a parent. Compare this list to the cheeseburger list. Ask students why some of the characteristics would be "required".

#### D. DISCUSSION 'DOLLARS AND SENSE!' (10 min)

*Students further examine the commitments required to raise a child.*

1. What do children need? Think about everything it takes to raise a child from 0-18 years of age. Encourage students to think of both direct (food, clothing, school supplies, income for activities, childcare, and child support) and indirect (time, education, income or career opportunities)
2. Think about how much it costs in Canada to raise a child 0 – 18 years of age. Take bids and then refer to the fact sheets: [The Cost of Raising a Child, 2004](#)
  - Prospective parents need to be financially prepared for the costs involved in raising a child. Estimates suggest that over \$10,000 is needed to support a child in the first year of life.
  - Many factors influence the cost of child-



Refrain from using the terms "good parenting" or "bad parenting. Being a great parent is a process. Student parents should not view themselves as failures or decide that their own parents have failed. Instead focus on the skills of parenting.



For students who require more reinforcement, you can turn this into a larger activity. You may ask students to brainstorm what a baby would require. Then you can have them visit a store and price out how much each item would cost. Compare this to *The Cost of Raising a Child, 2004* and see how close they are. Further, expand by estimating current earning power and other expenses (rent, utilities, transportation, own needs, etc.)

For the latest edition of CCSD report exploring profiles of Canadian families, visit <http://www.ccsd.ca/factsheets/family/>

rearing, including the child's individual needs, family circumstances and values and the resources or supports available in the community



This quote may promote group discussion: *“What troubles me is when another girl finds out that I have a daughter and she says “that is so neat.” A car is neat, an outfit is neat, a baby is not. They take a lot of time and work. When you become a mom, you become responsible (physically, emotionally, and financially) for a child for the rest of your life”.*<sup>15</sup>



### QUESTION BOX (10min)

Have students fill out questions and address them next class.



### SELF REFLECTION

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?



### STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

#### Knowledge:

- Identify skills and characteristics needed for parenting?
- Outline the importance of learning about parenting?

#### Skills:

- Use problem-solving skills to determine what to do when a teen is faced with an unintended pregnancy?
- Describe options available to pregnant teens?

#### Attitudes:

- Recognized that it is the personal right of every pregnant woman to choose what to do with her pregnancy?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# SCENARIO PROBLEM SOLVER

**STEP 1** Read the scenario card with your group.

**STEP 2** Follow the steps below to provide solutions for the problem presented on the scenario card.

1. **IDENTIFY** the problem (What is the problem presented in the scenario card?):

2. <b>DESCRIBE</b> all the possible solutions:	3. <b>EVALUATE</b> the consequences of each solution:

4. **ACT** on the best solution (Choose the best solution and describe what happens):

**STEP 3** Present your scenario and solution to the class.

## MAKING CHOICES: SCENARIO CARDS

Holly and Mike (both 17 years old) have been dating for a year now. They met at a 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party held for Holly's dad and instantly became friends. Once they started dating they spent a lot of time together. Although they do not go to the same high school they see each other evenings and weekends. A couple of months ago they started to have sex. They had talked about it for a while and decided Mike would use condoms to provide protection against pregnancy and STIs. However, Holly has missed a period and thinks she may be pregnant as she is very tired and feels nauseous all the time. She has shared this information with a friend, but not Mike, or her parents.

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Alicia is 16 and enjoys her life. She is a good student and is aiming for a career in the medical field – she can't decide between physiotherapy and dentistry at the moment but she is working hard as she knows she needs good marks to get admitted to university. She does not have a boyfriend but knows that one guy at school, Mark, is interested in her. She has decided to take his offer of a date to a friend's pool party. At the party Alicia met some friends of Mark's who encouraged her to have a few drinks. It did not take long before she felt quite drunk and before she knew it she and Mark were making out and having sex. The next time Alicia saw Mark at school she tried to ignore him. She was really disappointed and disgusted with herself and hoped that she could forget the whole thing. Now she has missed a period and has taken a home pregnancy test that was positive.