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Alabama's teen pregnancy rate growing

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Montgomery, Al. (WSFA) -- Having a child can be one of the most rewarding experiences of any parent's life.

The problem? Those parents are getting younger and younger.

The newest numbers from the state's department of public health show teen pregnancy rates creeping higher.

Statistics from 2007 show 39.7 pregnancies per 1,000 teens.

Experts say it's hard to determine an underlying cause.

"To be able to point to one thing and say, 'Oh, that's why. We'll just fix that,' is difficult, so we have to be very thoughtful," explained Jamie Keith of the Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

Health workers suggest communities spring into action.

"We need to pay very close attention and really get very dedicated to designing prevention programs," Keith suggested.

In Montgomery County, teen pregnancy rates dropped a bit last year. Groups like The Gift of Life in Montgomery say programs targeting teens at public schools may contribute to the lower number.

"We go in through the health classes..and teach about healthy relationships, about avoiding risky behaviors," said The Gift of Life's Rebecca Leadingham.

Though classes may help the problem, experts say talking to kids can play a big role in curbing the numbers.

"We all need to be talking about it. Parents need to be talking to their kids, and we as a community need to realize that it affects all of us," Leadingham explained.

The state's 2007 rate accounts for 12,398 pregnancies to females between the ages of 10 and 19.



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