

## More Minnesota kids having kids

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A new report finds a second year of increases in the state's teen pregnancy and birth rates; a trend that has teen advocates worried. A study by the *Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting* shows the state's teen pregnancy and birth rates increased by two percent over the past year.

Spokeswoman Brigid Riley says Minnesota has decreased efforts to educate kids about the consequences of pregnancy, and this is the result.

“There's a lot less being invested in prevention activities, and in making sure that young people know about how to prevent pregnancy - both boys and girls. Also, there's been a big spike in the cost of prescription contraception.”

That, she says, makes it unaffordable for many. Riley calls this year's teen birth rate increase, while less than last year's, troubling. Relying on abstinence-only doesn't work, she adds, and advocates a balanced approach, including teaching young people the consequences of and alternatives to parenthood.

“If there's not any other path that they see for themselves, such as technical school, a good job, something in their adult lives, then becoming a parent may seem like a viable alternative to them.”

Adults must do better at talking with kids about their concerns, says Riley, and the conversations should include families, schools, neighborhoods and the faith-based community.

The report uses data from the Minnesota Dept. of Health Center for Health Statistics.