



What can be done

When prevention fails

The national Department of Education (DoE) believes that women and men should only become parents when they're ready for the practical and emotional realities of having a child.

What's more, the DoE believes that, as young adults, all learners should be focused on achieving education success, planning for bright futures, and simply enjoying their youth.

For these reasons, **prevention** is the primary strategy outlined in the DoE's *Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy*. See *Generations editions 1 and 2 for more on prevention strategies*.

A MATTER FOR CONCERN

However, the DoE accepts that schoolgirl pregnancy is a reality, and is concerned about the high levels of unplanned teen pregnancies occurring at many of our schools.

Of equal concern is that young people are engaging in sexual behaviour at a relatively young age. While some choose to do so, in many instances teens are forced to engage in sexual activity.

A COMPLEX ISSUE, NO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Research shows that the reasons for unplanned teen pregnancy are complex.

It is not a matter of a learner just behaving "badly" or being irresponsible. Some factors linked to learner pregnancy are:

- **Unequal power relations between the sexes.** This arises from how each person's identity is shaped by what society expects from us as "men" and "women". Often, men are expected to be dominating, while women are expected to be obedient and passive. Likewise, "to be a man" is seen as being sexually assertive, while "to be a woman" means being sexually attractive, and available, to men;
- **Low self-confidence and self-esteem among young women.** This causes women to seek affirmation through being sexually desirable, rather than appreciating their own value as individuals;
- **No clear vision of a worthwhile future.** The choice to partake in irresponsible sexual intercourse can be motivated by a sense that there is no bright future to build towards; and
- **Pressures linked to poverty.** Exchanging "sexual favours" for food or goods – known as "transactional sex" – is sometimes a survival strategy used by women trapped in poverty.

AN EMOTIVE SUBJECT

Another factor which can make managing teen pregnancies that much more of a challenge for educators is that people often have very strong, personal views on the matter.

Teachers therefore also need to address any negative or judgmental responses from members of the school community so that the pregnant learner can be given the support that she needs.

POINTING SCHOOLS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

In the *Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy*, the DoE sets out some useful guidelines to help schools manage learner pregnancy fairly and effectively.

However, educators must not regard unplanned schoolgirl pregnancy as their sole responsibility.

Any school management plan for learner pregnancy must be designed to draw on a support network involving parents/guardians, as well as the expertise of professionals such as social workers and those in the health sector.



A GLOBAL CONCERN: Schools in the USA are developing new policies to support teen mothers such as Ronika Bryant (16), pictured above. Picture by Javier Manzano, courtesy of Rocky Mountain News (www.rockymountainnews.com)

Turn to page 2 and 3 to find out more!



Parents/guardians/family members of the pregnant learner must take the lead in working with the school to support and monitor their child's health and progress. These caregivers must also take steps to support the school in continuing their child's education. For example, they could fetch tasks and assignments from the school to give to their child to complete; and then return the completed tasks and assignments back to the school for assessment.

Create a network of support

Besides the work done by schools, managing a learner pregnancy successfully needs the combined effort of a network of people and organisations. Schools are advised to set up **care committees/support teams**. These committees/teams should include a number of professionals and members of the school community. For example, the committee/team could include educators; members of the school management team; responsible senior learners; parents; members of the school governing body; and officials from other departments, such as Health and Social Development. The committee/team should have clear lines of communication and responsibility, and be ready to act to support the learner concerned.

Organisations that can help

Be sure to find out about organisations based in your area that can provide welcome expertise and support in managing the pregnant learner's situation. Institutions of higher learning near your school, such as universities, may also have resources and professionals that can be of assistance. Here are some organisations working nationally in fields linked to teen pregnancy:

LOVELIFE:

PO Box 45, Parklands, Gauteng, 2121
Phone: (011) 523 1000
Youthline: 0800 121 900
Parentline: 0800 121 100
Fax: (011) 523 1001
Email: talk@lovelife.org.za
Online: www.lovelife.org.za

PLANNED PARENTHOOD ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA:

PO Box 1023, Saxonwold, Gauteng, 2132
Phone: (011) 634 1500
Fax: (011) 634 1501
Email: info@ppasa.org.za
Online: www.ppasa.org.za

SOUL CITY INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION:

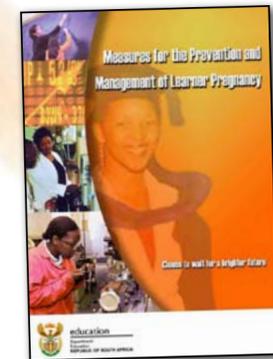
PO Box 1290, Houghton, Gauteng, 2041
Phone: (011) 341 0360
Fax: (011) 341 0370
Email: soulcity@soulcity.org.za
Online: www.soulcity.org.za

Online resources

PRODDER: <http://prodder.org.za>
The Prodder Directory lists NGOs and development organisations. This is a good source of information on regional organisations or local/regional offices of national organisations. For a copy of this SANGONet directory in book form, **phone:** (011) 403-4935.

WOMEN'S NET:

<http://www.womensnet.org.za>
This is a networking support programme where you can find people, issues, resources and tools related to women's social activism.



To get your own copy of the Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy:
Online: www.education.gov.za or use the contact details below

GENDER EQUITY DIRECTORATE

TEL: (012) 312 5420/8
FAX: (012) 312 5218
EMAIL: ramatlo.c@doe.gov.za
mononela.m@doe.gov.za

YOU'RE NOT ALONE
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HELPLINE
0800 202 933

Contact details:
Website: www.education.gov.za
Thutong Education Portal: www.thutong.org.za

MANAGING LEARNER PREGNANCY:

It's a balancing act

CENTRAL PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE YOU

When developing your school's management plan, make sure that each step in your plan is guided by the following central principles:

Safeguard her educational interests

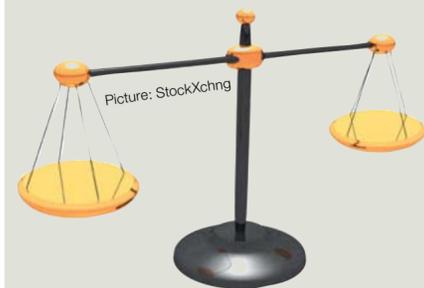
Every learner has a right to education, to dignity and to equality that educators have a duty to protect.

Therefore, **no pregnant learner may be discriminated against**, such as by being expelled or prevented from attending school.

Educators should do what they can to **offer educational support** to the pregnant learner.

For example, arrangements should be made so that lesson notes and assignments are made available to her.

Schools must also strongly **encourage learners to continue with their education** prior to, and after, giving birth.



Protect the rights of others affected

As much as the learner has rights that must be protected, so do others.

In managing learner pregnancy, the rights and needs of a number of groups and individuals must therefore be balanced against those of the pregnant learner:

- **The (unborn) child.** This is primarily the responsibility of the young parents, as well as of their own parents/guardians and families.

However, the school will need to support the young mother in a number of ways so that she is able to meet these responsibilities.

For example, after giving birth, educators should refer the young mother to organisations that offer advice and counselling on motherhood and childrearing.

- **The school community.** The rights and needs of other learners, educators and other members of the school community also need to be taken into account when managing a learner pregnancy.

For example, learners sometimes give birth in classrooms. This not only exposes the young mother and the newborn child to unacceptable risks; the whole school community can also suffer negatively when a birth occurs at school.

Managing the learner's pregnancy therefore requires steps to protect the school community from such risks.

To support schools in managing the sensitive area of learner pregnancy, the Department of Education (DoE) recommends that certain procedures are followed by schools.

These procedures are outlined in the DoE's *Measures for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy*, and inform the guidelines set out below. Keep in mind, though, that each learner's situation is unique. Educators must therefore also be flexible and creative in responding to the specific needs of the individual.

1. **Schools must be informed when a learner is pregnant** so that support can be provided. The pregnant learner should immediately inform a trusted educator at the school.
2. The teacher who has been told this information should **seek assistance** from the principal and/or other senior members of the school community. If the school has a **care committee/support team** (see right), then those on the committee/team must be informed and begin their work to support the pregnant learner.
3. **Every case must be dealt with confidentially.** For example, the name and other personal details of the learner should not be shared with others in the school community, until such time as it is appropriate to do so. Parents/guardians should only be informed after consultation with the learner/s involved, although confidentiality is not an option when the learner or others are at risk.
4. Schools should ensure that pregnant learners have **access to health facilities** during their pregnancy and at the time of birth. Schools are also encouraged to provide **advice and counselling on parenting**. There also needs to be a strong emphasis on the **responsibilities of the father**, especially when the father is a learner.
5. The young mother and the father are expected to exercise

full responsibility for parenting their child. The young mother may therefore request or be required to take a leave of absence from school. There is no prescribed time period for this, but it must be sufficient time for addressing the learner's pre- and post-natal health concerns, as well as the initial caring for the child.



In cases where prevention measures fail and learners do fall pregnant, the education system must manage the situation by balancing the best interests of the individual against those of other learners, educators, the school and the community.

6. **On returning to school**, learners must submit medical reports declaring that they are fit to resume classes. They must also show that proper arrangements have been made for the care and safety of the child.

7. **Schools must maintain a record of all learner pregnancies** that occur. These records must be submitted to the relevant provincial education authorities where possible.

8. Where possible, **provincial education departments** have the responsibility to provide each school with a copy of the *Measures*, and strive to equip all educators with the knowledge and support they need to meet these challenges. Provincial departments are also encouraged to build relationships with other departments – such as those of **Health and Social Development** – to ensure that professionals such as nurses and social workers are assigned to clusters of schools.

The 16 Days of Activism is a global campaign led locally by the government. The campaign aims to:

- Raise awareness about the violence suffered by women and children
- Challenge those who commit these violent acts to change their unacceptable behaviour
- Highlight the stories of survivors.

GET YOUR SCHOOL INVOLVED

1. Wear white ribbons during the 16 days

The white ribbon is a symbol that expresses our rejection of violent behaviour towards women and children, and our solidarity with the victims and survivors of violence.

Create 16 Days buttons, stickers or T-shirts, which can be sold to raise funds to donate to an organisation that supports abused women and/or children.

This exercise has many educational benefits. Learners will gain experience in advertising-related skills by choosing the best words and images/logos to put on their 16 Days products. There are also opportunities for them to build economic-related skills, such as costing, pricing and selling these products.

2. Volunteer work at a relevant organisation

Use the 16 Days to nurture a sense of civic responsibility and social justice activism in learners. Identify worthy organisations in your school's area that will benefit from voluntary work by learners.

Besides raising awareness of the terrible effects such violence can cause, this experience is an excellent way to instill a sense of agency in learners, as they witness first-hand how their personal efforts can make a real difference.

3. Make 16 Days the topic of a research project

Use the opportunity to focus on the issue of violence against women and children, as well as how campaigns such as 16 Days function to put an end to such violence.

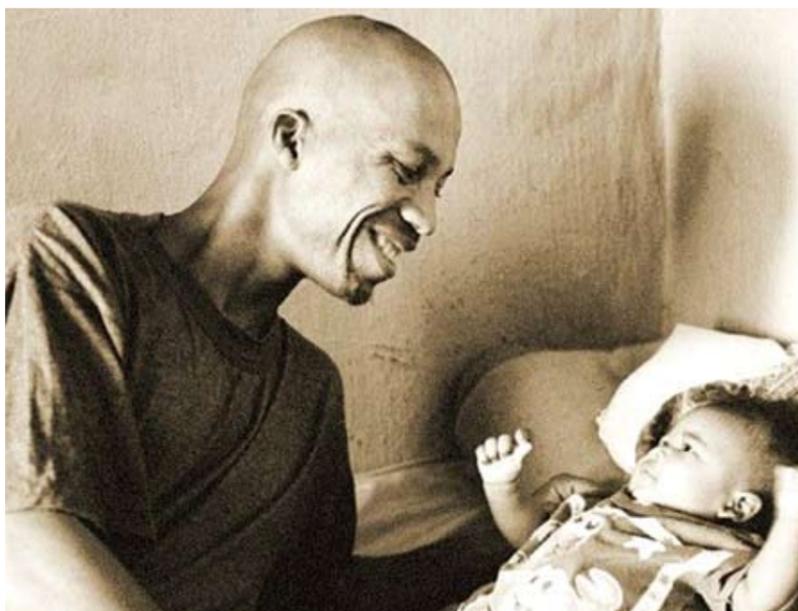


Photo by Jenny Gordon for *The Fatherhood Project*, the Human Sciences Research Council (www.hsrc.ac.za/RPP-Fatherhood-1.phtml).

Here are some suggestions of kinds of research such a project could include:

- **Finding out statistics related to violence against women and children**, such as prevalence, types of violence, and legal action taken against perpetrators of violence. Build in an opportunity for learners to engage in statistical analysis and comparison by asking them to gather statistics from different countries, and/or from different years.

- **Looking at the role played by major organisations in promoting universal human rights**, such as the South African government and the United Nations. Ask learners to provide a brief history of significant declarations related to promoting human rights, and to compile a set of such documents that they regard as the most outstanding.

Get learners to exercise their critical thinking skills by critiquing the effectiveness – or failure – of the work of such international bodies.

- **Examining the causes for violence against women and children occurring.** There are plenty of theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon, although there is no universal agreement on one

particular theory. Use the opportunity to expose learners to the way academic fields approach the same problem from their own particular perspective (for example, psychological, economic, sociological, or historical analysis of the causes of such violence).

- **Set up a class debate** in which the roles and responsibilities of both women and men in causing and in ending gender-based violence are articulated.

OTHER DATES TO NOTE DURING THE 16 DAYS

- 29 NOVEMBER: International Day of Women Human Rights Defenders day
- 1 DECEMBER: World AIDS Day
- 10 DECEMBER: This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Department of Education says:

'Enough! No more sexual violence and harassment in our schools!'

The Department of Education is concerned about sexual violence and harassment that takes place in schools. Acts of sexual violence and harassment are serious offences, not only because they have a negative impact on victims and survivors, but also because they are a violation of human rights, equality and dignity, and contravene the Constitution. Sexual violence and harassment is also against the law.

Guidelines to help schools

To contribute to the prevention and management of sexual violence and harassment in schools, the Department of Education has published the *Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Violence & Harassment in Public Schools*. These *Guidelines* are part of an attempt to reduce sexual violence and harassment in schools and the Department calls upon school management teams, governing bodies and educators to familiarise themselves with its contents.

These *Guidelines* are intended to support schools and school communities in responding to cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence perpetrated against learners and educators within schools, and those that come to the attention of school authorities.

Defining sexual violence and harassment

The *Guidelines* define sexual violence as any sexual act or attempted sexual act using intimidation, threats or physical force, whilst sexual harassment refers to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature.

Furthermore, sexual attention becomes sexual harassment if the behaviour is persistent, or the recipient has made it clear that the behaviour is considered offensive, and/or if the perpetrator knew, or should

have known, that the behaviour is regarded as unacceptable.

Responding to sexual violence and harassment

The *Guidelines* set out standard measures to be taken to respond to situations of sexual violence and harassment across school communities. They provide information for educators, learners and School Governing Bodies to understand their role in supporting learners and colleagues affected by sexual violence and harassment. For example, the *Guidelines* regard the institution's manager (Principal) as the ultimate accounting officer in dealing with reported incidents. The procedures to be followed when the learner is the offender are set out.

The *Guidelines* advocate for each school to implement the Code of Conduct for learners, and for aspects of the *Guidelines* to be incorporated into the school Code of Conduct. When the offender is an educator or any adult, the *Guidelines* refer to the necessary action about how the individual should be charged or disciplined. For educators employed within the Employment of Educators Act, sexual harassment or violence incidents can be dismissable offences.

Step-by-step guide to reporting

The *Guidelines* also provide information for those affected so that they can understand reporting procedures.

Victims are sometimes further victimised by those who do not know what to do when such cases are reported to them. Victims can also become despondent or even drop out of school, if their cases are not handled effectively. The Department of Education regards any form of sexual violence and harassment in schools as unacceptable.

Be informed, be empowered!

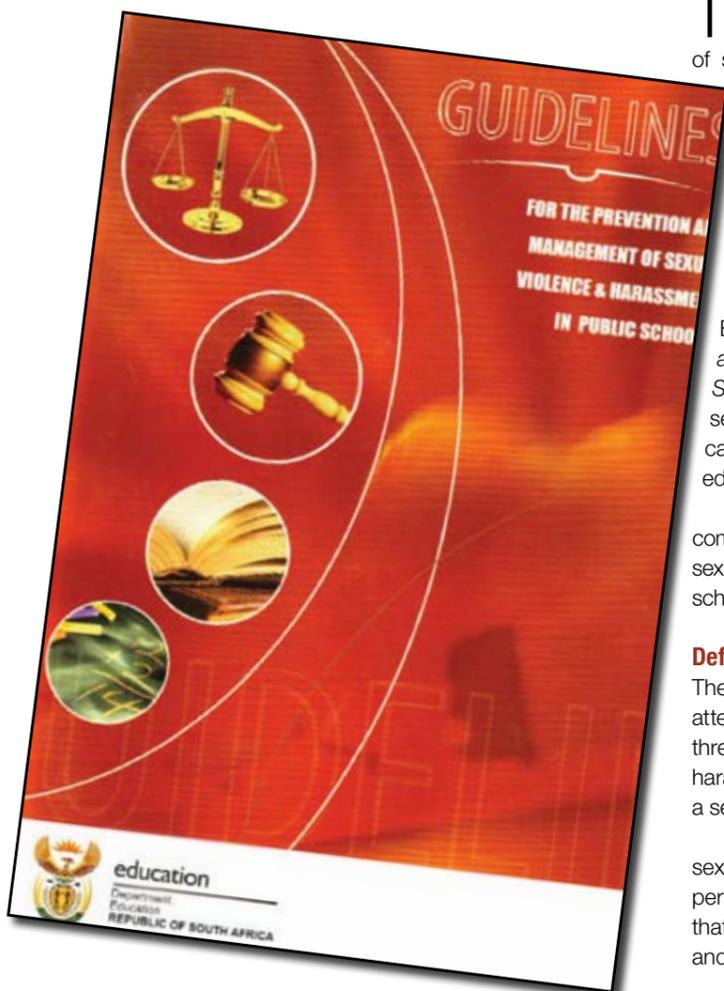
Don't look away, act against sexual violence and harassment in schools!

Get the *Guidelines* for your school from the Department of Education

Tel: (012) 312 5420/8

Fax: (012) 312 5218

email: mononela.m@doe.gov.za



GENDER GENERATIONS 4-6:

YOUR GUIDELINES TO PREVENTING AND MANAGING SEXUAL VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT ... COMING IN JANUARY 2009