



## **Minority Teenage Fathers: Rights and Responsibilities**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 94.01.03

by Nancy S. James

The traditional family pattern of father as the major bread winner, mother staying home with several children, often grandparents or other relatives living in the home contributing economically, spiritually, emotionally and therefore providing positive role models for children, contributed to the basic stability of the family unit. Due to this family structure, most families thrived, and male children had a father figure readily available to serve as counselor and often as friend. The mother was able to provide children with everyday living skills, supervision, and general emotional care. It should be noted that grandparents contributed greatly to the spiritual stability of the children. Although some families continue to function on this level, the American family has changed dramatically in the past 40 years. Single-parent families are one variant in this pattern. One way this has been manifested is the great increase of unmarried persons who become parents. These and other changes have caused conflicts and problems that often involve the law. The law requires parents to care for, support and control their children. When parents are unable and/or unwilling to fulfill their responsibilities, the law becomes involved. Teenage fathers are usually not financially or emotionally capable of providing this support.

This unit will focus on several aspects of a teenage fathers' rights and responsibilities.

### I. Statistics

#### A. Scope of problem

1. number of teenage fathers in urban area (New Haven)
2. number of teenage fathers in suburban area (Hamden)
3. national statistics

#### B. How does this affect children?

### II. Contrasting Circumstances

A. Issues involving teen-aged fathers

1. financial—including changing obligations as they age
2. moral—admitting paternity could involve criminal charges
3. emotional—adolescence involves change; added burden of fatherhood greatly complicates this time

III. Current Laws and Programs

A. How much responsibility does government currently place on these fathers?

B. What rights do these young men have?

Lessons will focus on:

1. Brief introduction to the court system
2. Getting young people to realize the need to delay parenthood as well as prepare more fully for this time.
3. Children need a great deal of emotional, and financial support
4. Sexual responsibility (including abstinence)

(Recommended for Social Studies and American History, middle school)

**Key Words**

*Family Life Teenage Parents Law Child Custody Teenage Fathers Adolescence*

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