



Goal 1: Human and Family Development

Desired Community Condition: **Families are healthy and stable.**



Indicator: **Births to Females 15 to 19 Years of Age**

Progress Rating: **Local Trend: POSITIVE** **National Comparison: WORSE**

Indicator Description

Birth rates for teenagers are declining in Bernalillo County, New Mexico, and the U.S.; although the Bernalillo County and New Mexico birth rates among females 15-19 remain higher than the national birth rate. Ventura, et al. note, however, that the variability among the states is substantial and differences in overall rates by State reflect difference in teen population by race and Hispanic origin. Bernalillo County and New Mexico have a unique population and this uniqueness should be taken into account whenever comparison to the nation or other states are made.

Why is this indicator important?

Teen childbearing commonly translates into diminished opportunities for the baby, the teens, their families and the larger community. Less than one-third of female teens who begin their families before age 18 ever earn a high school diploma. In 1990 teen births cost New Mexico taxpayers \$88 million dollars. According to The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition, children born to teen mothers are more likely to:

- Have health and developmental problems
- Grow up in homes without fathers
- Become runaways
- Be placed in foster care
- Experience abuse and neglect
- Fail in school
- Become incarcerated
- Perpetuate the cycle of poverty and teen pregnancy

The primary risk factors are: early school failure, early behavioral problems, dysfunctional families, and poverty. Protective factors are: a strong connection to family and school.

Data Sources

“Bernalillo County Health Profile,” New Mexico Department of Health; “Bridging our Past, Present, and Future,” May 8, 2002, The New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition; “Teen Pregnancy and Birth Rates in the United States,” December 2003, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; “Variations in teenage birth rates, 1991-98: National and State Trends,” Ventura SJ, Curtin SC, Mathew TJ.; “Births to teens in New Mexico,” New Mexico Department of Health

What can we tell from the data?

- In Bernalillo County, the birth rate for females 15 to 19 years of age decreased 11.4 % from 1990 to 2000. In the same time period the rates decreased 15.7% and 18.7% in New Mexico and the United States, respectively.
- In 2000, the birth rate to teens per 1,000 was 58.6 in Bernalillo County and 48.7 in the United States.
- New Mexico had the third highest rate for births by teens of all the states in 2002. Arizona and Texas ranked 4th and 2nd, respectively.

Birth Rates per 1,000 for Females 15 to 19 Years of Age

