



Tom Barrett  
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE  
Commissioner of Health

**Health Department Administration**

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## **Teen birth rate at its lowest level in nearly three decades**

### *City of Milwaukee on track to reduce Milwaukee's teen birth rate among 15-17 year olds by 46% by 2015*

Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker were joined by community partners today to announce the birth rate among Milwaukee teens is at its lowest level since 1979. Public health officials attribute the decline to implementation of evidence-based education and prevention campaigns, including programs that target boys and parents of adolescents and continuous media messaging.

The announcement was made Tuesday, November 18 at Running Rebels Community Organization, a nonprofit organization, located in Milwaukee's central city, that's committed to helping the youth in their neighborhood stay off the street and in school through recreation, discussion groups, and educational field trips.

Health officials looked at birth data of females aged 15-17 years-old and found that there were 50.03 births per 1,000 females in 2007. This is a 10% drop from 2006 when there were 55.43 births per 1,000 in the city.

"This news is extremely encouraging," said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. "Teen pregnancy is a public health crisis in our community and this is one step in the right direction for bringing about change."

"The social and economic impacts of teen pregnancy have a devastating effect on our city," said Mayor Tom Barrett. "I'm confident a true commitment from the community and a strategic partnership to maximize limited resources is a recipe for successfully reducing teen birth rates in Milwaukee. We are well on our way and I'm greatly encouraged."

In April, the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and City of Milwaukee Health Department announced a goal to reduce the birth rate to teens by nearly 50% to a rate of 30 births per thousand teens 15-17 years.

“We are definitely headed in the right direction to meet this goal,” Baker said.

Over the past two years, the United Way and partner organizations have implemented an extensive marketing campaign that resulted in poster displays in all Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) Middle and High Schools, and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms.

And May marked the launch of [www.babycanwait.com](http://www.babycanwait.com), a sexual health resource for Milwaukee’s youth that includes information about healthcare, laws and legal rights, anatomy, and an opportunity to confidentially email medical providers with sexual health questions. The site also houses an extensive list of local and national resources for young people.

Through its Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, United Way of Greater Milwaukee is funding the training of all MPS 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in the newly updated Human Growth and Development curriculum. MPS recently requested a community review of the curriculum, which is expected to be widely incorporated throughout the MPS system.

“The commitment to solving the teen pregnancy crisis is starting to pay off, and this is the perfect example of how United Way donors can see their dollars really at work,” said Nicole Angresano, Vice President of Community Impact at United Way of Greater Milwaukee.

“But this is just the beginning. We’ve got a lot of work to do by 2015 to reach our goal of reducing births to teens by 46%,” she said. “That is why it is so important for everyone to give as much as they can to this year’s campaign. In partnership with the community, we will be able to continue to fund programs that can help prevent teen pregnancy and get Milwaukee off the Top-10 list of cities with the highest rates of births to teens.”

Running Rebels teen pregnancy prevention program, R.O.S.E.S., is funded by United Way’s Healthy Girls Initiative, which recently awarded \$525,000 to 11 programs addressing the critical issues of teen pregnancy and sexual violence against girls. The program provides young women with life skills to cope with immediate everyday struggles and focuses on life-long achievement.