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Mayor Barrett Releases 2014 Teen Birth Rate Data

City’s African-American teen birth rate reaches historic low; overall teen birth rate sees slight increase, driven by rise in White and Hispanic rates

MILWAUKEE – One year after setting a bold new goal to reduce births to teens by another 50 percent by 2023, Mayor Tom Barrett and the city’s Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, led by United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County, have released the city’s 2014 teen birth rates.

According to data from the City of Milwaukee Health Department, the total number of births to teens aged 17 and under dropped below 300 for the first time in history. However, because there are fewer teens overall, the overall teen birth rate ticked upward slightly from 22.9 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 17 to **23.7** births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 17. The overall rate remains at its second lowest rate in recorded history. Compared to 2006 baseline data, Milwaukee’s teen birth rate has seen a 54 percent decrease since establishing a communitywide effort around the issue.

In 2014, the rate for non-Hispanic Black teens also dropped to a historic low of **27.0**, while the rate for Hispanic teens increased to **25.5** and the rate for White teens increased to **9.2**.

“Last year, we set a bold new goal to reduce teen births by another 50 percent by 2023,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “We know this will take an incredible effort to reach this goal, and this new data proves just how difficult the work will be. Every partner in this effort must rededicate themselves. Our children and families in Milwaukee deserve nothing but our very best work.”

The new goal seeks to reduce the overall teen birth rate by another 50 percent while also decreasing the Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black rates by 50 percent, lowering the overall teen birth rate, as well as the rate for each racial and ethnic group, to below 15 per 1,000 for 15- to 17-year-old girls by 2023. The goal was set after the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative announced it had surpassed its original goal to reduce teen births by 46% by 2015 three years early. Despite the slight increase, the 2014 data remains below the original 2015 goal.

“The data illustrate that we cannot become complacent,” said Nicole Angresano, Vice President of Community Impact for United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “We have new young people entering this critical age group each year, and we need to redouble our efforts to ensure success for them and for our entire community as we work toward our new goal.”

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The goal is supported by the continuation of an unprecedented all-hands-on-deck approach adopted by the Milwaukee community since 2008. The effort is led by United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County, which brought together a diverse collaborative of community stakeholders that included local businesses, media outlets, health care providers, schools, and community- and faith-based organizations.

“Births to girls age 17 and younger are a significant public health problem in our community,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker, who also serves as co-chair of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Oversight Committee at United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “We’ve made great progress since 2008, but these recent data confirm that it will continue to take intensive, innovative, communitywide efforts to reach our aggressive 2023 goal.”

Along with education efforts, a public awareness strategy has sought to speak to teens about how getting pregnant negatively affects both young men and young women in both the short term and the long term. In addition, efforts have emphasized encouraging parents to talk to their teens about the issue. The campaigns have also brought attention to the problems of sexual violence and victimization of teens.

“Our past success shows that we as a community can come together to meet a tough goal,” said Betsy Brenner, President and Publisher of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and co-chair of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Oversight Committee at United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “But to meet this new goal, and to reverse the 2014 data, we will all have to recommit ourselves to a lot of hard work.”

*The State of Wisconsin Vital Records office has not yet confirmed the 2014 birth figures for Milwaukee. Therefore, the currently-reported 2014 rates are based on preliminary City data that have not yet been certified by the State.

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