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Mayor Barrett Releases 2015 Teen Birth Rate Data

Decreases seen in all racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic and African-American rates reach historic lows

MILWAUKEE – Today, Mayor Tom Barrett and the city’s Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, led by United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County, released the city’s 2015 teen birth rates, showing progress toward the city’s goal to reduce teen births by another 50 percent by 2023.

According to data from the City of Milwaukee Health Department, the overall teen birth rate for 15- to 17-year-old girls in the city of Milwaukee has reached a historic low of **18.1** per 1,000 females. Decreases were also seen across all racial and ethnic groups, with Hispanic and African-American rates reaching the lowest rates in recorded history. The Hispanic rate declined from 25.1 births per 1,000 females to **19.4**, while the African-American rate declined from 27 per 1,000 females to **22.3**. The white rate declined from 9.8 births per 1,000 females to **6.7**, which is the second lowest rate on record for this population.

Compared to 2006 baseline data, Milwaukee’s teen birth rate has seen a 65 percent decrease since establishing a communitywide effort around the issue.

“We have made incredible progress in reducing the teen birth rate,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “We should be proud of what this means for the future of our young residents and for our city as a whole. But we cannot become complacent. To reduce these rates even further, we must continue to work as hard as ever to give each teen the opportunity for a healthy future.”

The current 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.

“This community has fought for these outcomes,” said Nicole Angresano, Vice President of Community Impact for United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “Across zip codes, across demographics, across constituencies, we have come together to demand better for our young people. The new data is gratifying, but we know we still have work to do.”

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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.

“Through a communitywide effort we are not only seeing Milwaukee’s teen birth rate decline overall but are also closing the gap between racial and ethnic groups,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker, who serves as co-chair of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Oversight Committee at United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “All of our children are essential to our city’s future, and we will not leave anyone behind.”

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.

“The decline in the teen pregnancy rate is one of Milwaukee’s enduring victories,” said Betsy Brenner, co-chair of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Oversight Committee at United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “It’s one that so many in our community share: Our health department, Milwaukee Public Schools, our social service support agencies, our faith community, our loyal and determined funders and, of course, the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County. They’ve all come together and devoted themselves to achieving this milestone.”

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