

Closely Supervised Foster Care Linked With Reduced Pregnancy Rates For Delinquent Teens, Study Says

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Teenage girls with a history of delinquency who were placed in individualized foster care programs were less likely than their peers to become pregnant, according to a [study](#) in the June issue of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, [HealthDay/Forbes](#) reports. Teen girls in foster care have an elevated risk for pregnancy, according to *HealthDay/Forbes*. For example, an earlier survey of teens in three states found that nearly half of girls in the foster care system reported a pregnancy by age 19, according to David Kerr, an assistant professor of psychology at [Oregon State University](#) and lead author of the new study.

For the study, researchers followed 166 girls ages 13 to 17 with court orders to receive treatment for criminal behavior in either specialized foster care or a group-care facility. The specialized programs, known as Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, were created in the 1980s. Under the programs, foster parents who are trained in behavioral management provide one-on-one care to severely delinquent youths, and the parents receive consultation, support and crisis intervention services from program supervisors. One of the most important aspects of the program is that, unlike group care, the teens are isolated from other troubled youths. There are 51 such programs in the U.S.

After two years, 26% of the girls in MTFC became pregnant, compared with almost 47% of those in group care, according to the study. The MTFC group also showed lower levels of criminal activity and arrests, and increased school engagement. Kerr said, "One of the most interesting aspects of this research is that the MTFC program was created to reduce crime, not pregnancy." He added, "It specifically targeted changing the girl's environment: her home, her peers and her school experience. The focus was on giving her lots of supervision, support for responsible behavior, and consistent, non-harsh consequences for negative behavior" (*HealthDay/Forbes*, 6/17).

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