# Pregnant Teens in Substance Abuse Treatment Face Many Challenges

Pregnant teens, who are more likely than pregnant adults to face medical issues, face a host of additional challenges if they are also being treated for substance abuse, a new government report finds.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found pregnant teens being treated for substance abuse were three times more likely than other female teens in treatment to receive public assistance as their main source of income—15 percent versus 5.3 percent). The report also found 74 percent of non-pregnant female teens in treatment who were not working were students, compared with just 44.2 percent of pregnant teens treated for substance abuse.

Half of pregnant teens in treatment used drugs or alcohol in the month before they started treatment, HealthDay reports. Almost one-fifth used drugs or alcohol daily during that month. The report notes that when mothers use drugs during pregnancy, their babies can show signs of addiction at birth. Long-term effects of a mother's prenatal drug use have been observed in children at 6 years of age.

Marijuana was the most commonly used substance among female teens in treatment programs. The report found 73 percent of pregnant teens and 70 percent of non-pregnant teens used the drug. Pregnant teens were twice as likely to use methamphetamines and amphetamines, compared with other female teens—17 percent versus 8 percent.

Overall, pregnant teens make up about 4 percent of the 57,000 females ages 12 to 19 admitted to substance abuse treatment programs annually, according to SAMHSA.

"Pregnant teens entering treatment face difficult challenges, but the good news is that treatment is a very positive step in helping them regain their lives and generate new hope for themselves and their children," SAMHSA Administrator Pamela Hyde said in a news release.

Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term

used to describe the range of effects that can occur in an individual exposed to alcohol. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities and can have life-long implications. Prenatal exposure to alcohol may cause disabilities that range from mild to severe. Whether it is a wine cooler, a glass of wine or a bottle of beer, any kind or amount of alcohol that a pregnant mother consumes is also being consumed by her unborn baby. The best cure is prevention and FASD is 100 percent preventable if a pregnant woman abstains from alcohol. Click here to learn more.