

**TIP SHEET #2:
ADVOCATING FOR PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS**

WHAT *services are available to pregnant and parenting students?*

Pregnant and parenting students are entitled to the same educational services as other students. A pregnant student cannot be excluded from any school activity just because she is pregnant. Girls who become pregnant have the right to stay in their school during the pregnancy and after giving birth. A pregnant student also has the right to medically necessary accommodations, such as the use of the school elevator if she cannot climb stairs. As with other students, pregnant or parenting teens who miss school for medical reasons should get notes from their doctor for the days they are absent.

NOTE: There are no longer any “P-Schools,” which were special schools for pregnant girls. If a pregnant or parenting student needs to transfer schools for medical, travel hardship or other reasons, school staff should help the student and her family work with their Borough Enrollment Office to find an appropriate placement. A list of enrollment offices is available at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/BEO/BoroughEnrollmentOffices.htm>.

WHY *is it so important for pregnant and parenting teens to complete their education?*

A high school diploma gives all students more options for their future, but it is especially important for young adults who become parents. On average, New York City residents with a high school diploma earn \$371,129 more over their lifetime than residents without a high school diploma. Research also shows that children whose parents don’t finish high school are more likely to drop out themselves. A high school diploma for a parenting student can help break this dangerous cycle.

WHERE *can parenting students get childcare?*

Living for the Young Family through Education (LYFE) centers are Department of Education (DOE) programs that offer childcare, social work services and health referrals to parenting students. Located in every borough, most LYFE centers are attached to high schools, but students do not need to attend these schools in order to use the LYFE center; however, students must be enrolled in some DOE program. LYFE centers serve children 8 weeks to three years old and are free to most student parents, depending on income. To learn more, visit <http://lyfenyc.org/>. The enrollment process for LYFE is simple:

- STEP 1:** Students should speak to their guidance counselor to get an application, or they may download one from the LYFE website.
- STEP 2:** Choose a school site from the Program Directory. You may need to consider multiple sites.
- STEP 3:** Call the site to check availability and schedule an enrollment appointment.

NOTE: Babies must have up-to-date immunizations to be eligible for a LYFE center.

If you need more help enrolling a child in a LYFE center, speak to a guidance counselor or social worker at a Borough Referral Center or contact District 79’s Office of Student Support Services. More information is available at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Documents/MISC/FINAL%20student%20parent%20FAQ.pdf>.



Please contact our Toll-Free Helpline 1-866-427-6033 Monday-Thursday 10am-4pm
www.advocatesforchildren.org

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CAN *pregnant or parenting students receive home instruction?*

Home instruction is only available to pregnant and parenting students whose medical needs, or whose child's medical needs, prevent the student from attending school for at least four weeks or more. A student who experiences a normal, healthy pregnancy and delivery will not qualify for home instruction. The student must have papers from a doctor documenting her or her child's medical condition. Home instruction is 10 hours a week, usually 2 hours per day. In order for a student under 18 to receive home instruction, an adult must be present while the teacher is in the home. Many home instructors will meet with a student in a public place, such as a library, if instruction cannot take place in the home.

To request home instruction, use the attachments included with Chancellor's Regulation A-170 at <http://docs.nycenet.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-12/A-170.pdf>. The student's doctor needs to complete the medical form and include a letter on official letterhead explaining the diagnosis and estimated length of time the student will be out of school. The school must complete the application and send the forms to the local Office of Home Instruction.

Advocacy Tip: To expedite the home instruction process, get copies of all completed forms from the school and be prepared to send the paperwork to the Home Instruction office yourself. It often takes several weeks or more for the DOE to locate a home instructor, so follow up with Home Instruction on a regular basis to make sure services start as soon as possible. Schools are required to provide work to students while they are waiting for home instruction to begin. If you run into problems, call the main Home Instruction office in the Bronx for help. Contact information is at <http://www.homeinstitutionschools.com/sites.htm>.

WHEN *should new parents return to school?*

Unless an absence is medically necessary, pregnant and parenting students are subject to the same attendance requirements as other students. Students of compulsory school age are required to attend school up to the birth of their baby and return immediately after.

However, the first days and weeks after a baby is born present a critical window for bonding between a mother and child. Furthermore, the youngest infants are not eligible for daycare, and new mothers may find it difficult to find caregivers for their child. If a new mother would like to stay at home for a short period immediately after the baby is born, contact her guidance counselor to work out a plan to transition the young woman back to school. Guidance counselors can coordinate assignments with the student's teachers, and parents can offer to pick up packets of work from the school. Schools must mark young mothers absent if they do not return to school immediately, so families should be in regular contact with school staff to avoid any allegations of educational neglect.

When a parenting student is ready to go back to school, school personnel must facilitate the student's prompt return. Under no circumstances may a school refuse to accept a student who is medically able to return. To ensure a smooth transition, the school should schedule a meeting with the student, her family and appropriate school staff to discuss available guidance, academic, and other support services.

For more information on the rights of pregnant or parenting students, refer to Chancellor's Regulation A-740 at <http://docs.nycenet.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-34/A740.pdf>.