

encyclopedia of
**human
services
and
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edited by
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Pregnancy and Parenting Services

Many services are provided to parents to assist them in their parental roles. Susanna Rautio contends that parenting can be a challenging task, especially for first time parents; they often need support and information. Services are offered during pregnancy and extend into the teenage years of the child to provide support and information to parents. These services are geared toward fostering healthy parental relationships through educational and support services. Community agencies, governmental agencies, and religious entities work to support parents by providing everything from education, counseling, and support to nutrition, medical, and career services.

Pregnancy Services

Pregnancy services are geared toward preparation of the birth of the infant. Community agencies including hospitals offer medical services including

prenatal care. Many community agencies provide pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, counseling, and abortion services. These agencies are often referred to as pregnancy centers or pregnancy clinics. They are often nonprofit agencies that usually provide immediate temporary services and will provide clients with medical referrals for prenatal care. Community agencies also offer educational services. Clients are educated on the symptoms of pregnancy, alternatives to pregnancy, and the use of contraceptives. Pregnancy centers can be found in all of the United States but are often located in inner cities to service low-income populations. There are controversies over abortions being conducted at these centers. Antiabortion critics often protest near these centers.

Religious entities such as local churches provide various services to those who are pregnant. Services include shelter, food, and clothing. Many churches have food and clothing pantries. Some have clothing pantries that are geared toward providing clothing for babies. These services are typically run by volunteers. Participants must show some proof of pregnancy.

Governmental agencies such as local health departments offer a number of services for pregnant clients. These services include pregnancy testing, communicable disease testing and education, prenatal care, infant development education, and nutritional programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), services that are often free to those who qualify. Qualifying may include income level for services such as WIC. However, most pregnancy services are free to the public such as testing and prenatal vitamins.

Crisis centers are agencies that provide emergency services to pregnant teens. Crisis centers offer teen parents shelter and educational services. The services provided include temporary housing for those who have been kicked out of their homes due to pregnancy, interventions for abortions, motherhood education, and skills trainings. These agencies focus on providing teens with education and skills needed to live on their own. They assist teens in finding housing and employment. These agencies often do not endorse abortion procedures.

Hospitals offer a variety of services during pregnancy. Doctors care for patients and provide prenatal care. Specialty doctors provide care for at-risk pregnancies. These are generally patients with

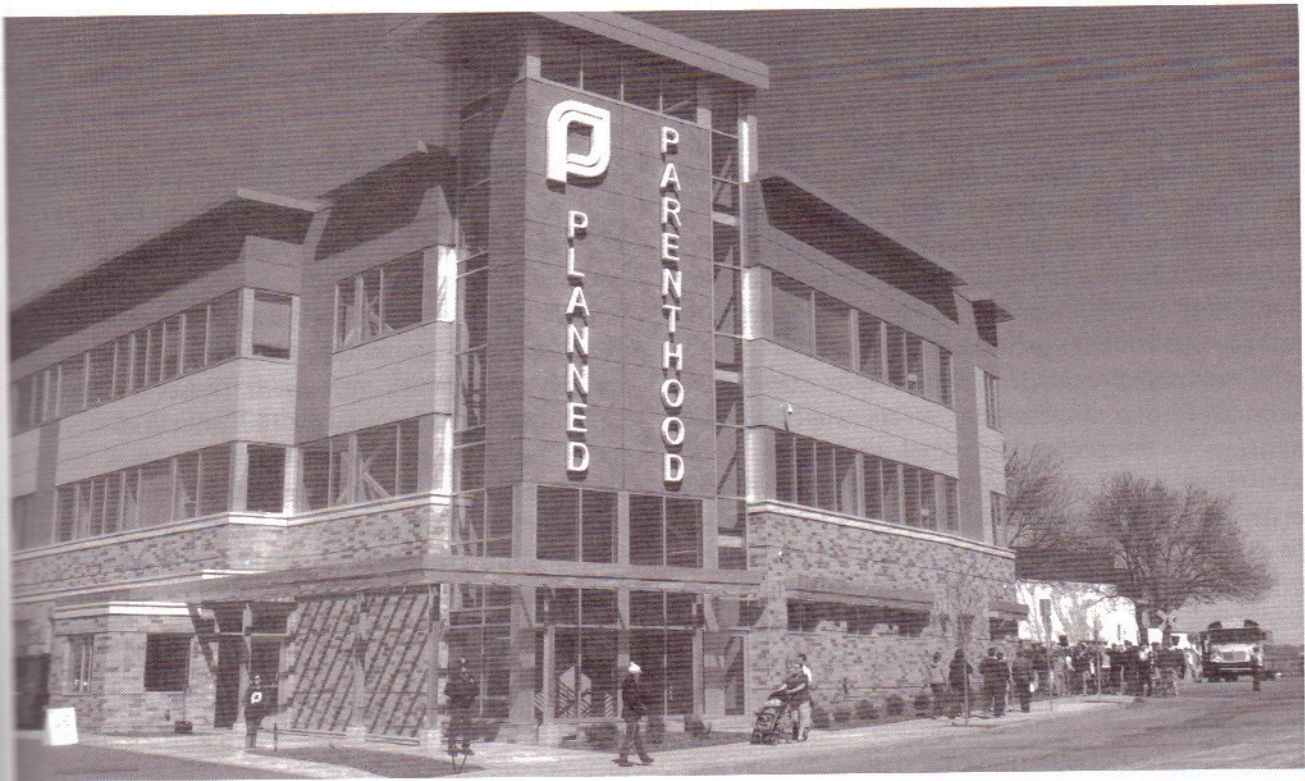
higher risk of loss of the infant during the pregnancy. Hospitals also offer educational courses on breast-feeding, childbirth, and delivery options. Many hospitals offer midwives for those who want home births as well as other alternative birthing locations for those who do not want to be in traditional hospital settings. Child safety seat distribution and education are offered by most hospitals. This program educates parents on proper usage of child car seats. It is a requirement that an infant have a child car seat before leaving the hospital and must leave in one. Hospitals will distribute free car seats and diaper bags to those who meet the requirements.

Parenting Services

Many programs have been designed to assist parents in their parenting skills. Much research has been dedicated to understanding parenting styles and dimensions of parenting. Research has provided the foundation of how society can support

parents and encourage parenting that is healthy to the development of children. Amy Romagnoli and Glenda Wall contend that there is an expansion in parenting expectations that includes protecting children from various risks. Parents are considered a risk factor that can negatively impact the development of children. It is further found that parents are expected to meet the needs of their children, which includes physical, emotional, psychological, and cognitive needs. Services have been designed to support parenting in meeting these needs.

Parenting support groups were developed out of the need for parents to receive peer support. Parenting support groups focus on parent-to-parent communication on effective parenting strategies and dealing with some of the challenges in parenting. Support groups have increasingly been developed by parents for parents in addressing parenting of developmentally delayed children, autistic children, and loss. Support groups provide an outlet for parents and support from those who are dealing



A policeman stands guard near the front door when pro-life and pro-choice supporters turned out to this Planned Parenthood location in Saint Paul, Minnesota, to oppose and support the organization. Many community agencies provide pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, counseling, and abortion services. They also offer educational services; clients are educated on the symptoms of pregnancy, alternatives to pregnancy, and the use of contraceptives. Anti-abortion critics often protest near these centers.

with similar issues. These groups can be directed by a parent or an industry professional but are often run by members within the group. Relationships are developed within support groups that extend outside of the group and lead to play dates. Support groups also assist in sharing community resources with participants.

Community agencies have focused on supporting parents during many life transitions. Programs provide educational courses, community resource referrals, and on-site support services. Educational courses focus on discipline, dealing with difficult behaviors, parental roles in child development, as well as various other resource parents can target for additional support. Programs within the community include play groups, prenatal and infant toddler education, early childhood support, school-age parenting education, divorce and mediation, grandparent parenting support, teen parent support, and parenting of developmentally delayed children. These programs offer support in a variety of ways to parents. Some offer case management assistance to assist parents in removing barriers and obtaining resources for which they qualify. Parents are often unaware of resources within their communities. Many community programs offer in-house services in which professionals come in and educate as well as provide a number of services. Dental care, medical shots, testing, tutoring, and physicals can all be done within community agencies. Supports to special populations are also provided through community agencies. There are supports for ex-offenders and substance abusers and specific supports for fathers that encourage involvement.

Government agencies also provide supportive services to parents. Parents can receive child-care assistance, temporary financial assistance, food assistance, and medical care if they qualify. Government agencies also offer parents assistance in obtaining employment and nutritional programs that provide food to needy families. These resources are often temporary and come with many restraints. Parents often look to community agencies for guidance as they go through government processes.

Pregnancy and parenting services often overlap due to the ultimate focus being on the healthy development of children. Support programs and services are offered to parents during pregnancy and extend until the child reaches the age of 18 in many cases. It

is believed that supporting parents creates stronger parental bonds and provides opportunities for positive physical and psychological growth in children.

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See Also: Family Services; Parenting Skills Training; Parenting Styles, Cultural Differences in; Prenatal Care.

Further Readings

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Prejudice, Theories of

In daily life, every man and woman has to deal with prejudice, whether prejudice is used by them unconsciously or they are hurt by it. These incorrect or unjustified attitudes against individuals of another social, racial, or gender background, which build a phenomenon of interhuman relations and human diversity, can be explained through different theoretical approaches. The authoritarian personality theory, the exploitation theory, the normative theory, the scapegoating theory, and the social identity theory are able to explain different forms of prejudice that are visible in human societies and definitely as a consequence of human diversities in the numerous societies around the globe.

Regarding the roots of these prejudices, different factors can determine their establishment, in individual cases or as a part of the whole society, which are responsible for the negative overemphasis of