

Promoting Self-Sufficiency with the Teen Age Services Act (TASA)

Services authorized under the Teen Age Services Act of 1984 requires local social services districts to offer pregnant and parenting teenagers, and/or at-risk teenagers, who are recipients of public assistance, case management services to assist them with accessing medical, educational, employment and other services. New York State requires that each county have a TASA coordinator. We sat down with Karla Boyce, Youth Development Coordinator/Teenage Services Coordinator with Monroe County's Teen Age Services Act (TASA) to talk about how she links teens with supportive programs like individual and group counseling, educational services, assistance with prenatal care, and more to help them become more self-sufficient and gain greater family stability.



Who Can TASA Support?

TASA supports teens in Monroe County and the City of Rochester who are pregnant or are already parents, under the age of 21, and want to become self-sufficient and independent. To be eligible for this program, teens are either the mother-to-be, father-to-be, mother, father, and/or the child, and receiving Medicaid benefits. Assistance is available to help them better manage their concerns, take control of their lives, and learn how to provide a better future for themselves and their children. Teens can also qualify for TASA if they have recently had a miscarriage or if their child was placed in foster care. Assistance is also available to their brothers and sisters.

Why is TASA important?

So many young people find themselves in positions where they are pregnant or parenting, and they need programs and services, but they don't know what's out there. Also, some may not have many supportive relationships, so I want to do everything I can in my role to ensure that they feel connected to and supported by me. Using person-centered approaches, I build trust to strengthen our relationships, and then help them get connected to the programs and services best for them. They tell me what they need and what they think would help, and then I identify service options they can choose from. We're really working together to identify what services would be best. Many of these youth don't have the "soft skills" needed to be successful in employment and their everyday lives, so I coach them on these important skills. School attendance is generally poor for these youth, and many drop out of school. It's so important that TASA intervenes and keeps youth on track for graduation.

How can youth get connected with you?

Oftentimes youth are from homeless shelters or are referred to me by school counselors and social workers. A referral form can be completed by anyone though, including the youth. Referral forms can be found on the [TASA webpage](#), or you can contact me at kboyce@ccsi.org.

Can you share an example that illustrates your role and how youth can benefit?

A couple of years ago, a 16-year-old pregnant woman was referred to me from a homeless shelter, and she was displaced out of her family home with no family support and no support from the father of her baby. I connected her with mental health services where she received treatment for depression, including postpartum depression. She also gained employment skills through part-time summer employment with GreenVisions, and more recently, she continues to maintain two part-time jobs. Her daughter is now one-year-old and doing well.