A Review of National School-Age Pregnancy and Prevention Information Clearinghouses

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ABSTRACT: School-age pregnancy is a major social problem that affects youth, families and communities. The complexities of school-age pregnancy demand that social work practitioners have knowledge across diverse fields and keep abreast of changing sociopolitical trends. Information clearinghouses have been developed to assist practitioners in their efforts to keep abreast of a particular field of practice. This paper identifies major national information clearinghouses that provide resources for practitioners who work in the field of school-age pregnancy and prevention.

School-age pregnancy is a major social problem that affects youth, families and communities. The complexities of school-age pregnancy demand that social work practitioners be able to integrate knowledge and skills across diverse fields such as health, education, and adolescent development. The sociopolitical trends regarding the resolution of school-age pregnancy are also complex and ever changing. To aid practitioners in their abilities to stay abreast of current trends, knowledge and skills, in this field numerous information clearinghouse organizations, also referred to as resources centers and information resource centers, have been developed to assist human service professionals. Clearinghouse organizations integrate research

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Hereafter, in this paper the term clearinghouse will be used to describe organizations that provide a major function and/or serve as information resource centers.
skills, information technologies, and community organizations for the purposes of providing information, technical assistance and support to a particular practice field. The following article identifies the major national clearinghouses on school-age pregnancy and prevention and summarizes the resources these organizations provide practitioners.

Literature Review

Information clearinghouses have emerged as a new information field and have been described by several authors (see, for example, Adam & Hoehne, 1989; Batten, 1991; Hermalin, 1986; Madara, 1990; Madara, Kalafat, & Miller, 1988; Searcy, 1985; Wollert, 1987, 1990). Adam and Hoehne (1989) have described clearinghouses as being centers for coordination, promoting development, and the increased use of resources and support to a field. Batten (1991) defines an information clearinghouse as follows:

An information clearinghouse is an organization (or unit within an organization) that collects extensive and up-to-date material on a clearly defined, specific subject, and disseminates it upon request to a clientele that includes: librarians; students and other researchers; health and social welfare, and other professionals; and members of the general public. (p. ix)

According to Batten (1991) clearinghouses are established and operated by different groups for the purposes of fulfilling specific service functions in a particular practice area or discipline. Some clearinghouses for example, are established and operated by governmental entities, in response to a recognized need for information on a given subject, such as, pregnancy prevention. Others are operated by associations, educational institutions, social service agencies, and other non-profit organizations. A small number of clearinghouses also exist in for-profit organizations.

Rapid accumulation and exchange of information has driven the development of clearinghouses, as well as a need to link information across fields and disciplines (Bickerton, 1987; Madara, 1990). For example, combating a social problem such as school-age pregnancy may require knowledge across the fields of adolescent development, family planning, substance abuse, health, etc. and may additionally require a multidimensional response across the disciplines of social work, education, business and health. Given the large amounts of information available and the rapid rate in which substantive knowledge changes