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Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

## news release

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### Cal-Learn helps young parents thrive



The Cal-Learn staff from left to right, Pamela Fishtrom, Kristie Serda, Lara Lee, Alicia Combs and Chloe Brown.

In 2014, almost 250,000 babies in the United States were born to teenage mothers.

Teenage pregnancy and birth significantly contribute to high school dropout rates among girls, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimating that only 50 percent of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by 22 years of age compared to 90 percent of girls who do not give birth during adolescence.

There is, however, help available locally. Staff at the county's Cal-Learn program work with pregnant and parenting teens to address their educational, vocational, health and other social services needs.

Recently, a local teenager became pregnant and moved out on her own. Her child was born with health issues requiring frequent trips to an out-of-area doctor. An enrollee in the county's Cal-Learn program, the teen received case management services to help her prioritize and make a plan. During her time in the program, she graduated from high school while continuing to receive medical treatment for her child. Currently, she is enrolled in college and studying to be a probation officer so that she can help troubled teenagers like she once was.

The statewide Cal-Learn program is administered locally under the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program.

"Teen pregnancy and parenting can have long-lasting social and economic effects for teen parents and their children," said Marti Hufft, CalWORKs program manager at DHHS. "This program makes it possible for pregnant and parenting teenagers to receive assistance in setting and fulfilling their educational goals."

Since the program first started in 2001, hundreds of participants have completed it. Currently, four young mothers and fathers are enrolled.

Through Cal-Learn, participants are provided intensive case management services that help them complete high school or equivalent and connect them to services. Assistance with child care, transportation and educational expenses are also provided to help pregnant and parenting teens attend school.

For more information about this and other CalWORKs programs, and to see if you qualify, visit [humboldt.gov/525/CalWORKs](http://humboldt.gov/525/CalWORKs) or call 877-410-8809.

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