



<b>Policy Name: School-Age Pregnant and Parenting Young Persons</b>	
<b>Policy Code:</b>	<b>ED 13</b>
<b>Approved in:</b>	March 2013
<b>Next Review in:</b>	March 2016
<b>Cross References:</b> This policy should be cross-referenced with the following: Cayman Islands Constitution Bill of Rights, Non-Discrimination Section 16 (1) (2) The Gender Equality Law, 2011 Sex and Relationship Policy, 2010 (Draft)	

**Introduction:**

Internationally, gender-based discrimination in education is recognized as both a cause and a consequence of deep-rooted disparities in society. Harmful practices such as early marriage, pregnancy, gender-based violence, and discriminatory education laws, policies, contents and practices still prevent millions of girls from enrolling, completing and benefitting from education. (UNESCO)

The Cayman Islands Constitution Bill of Rights, Section 20, provides that every child on the Cayman Islands has the right to a primary and secondary school education. That provision must be in accordance with Section 16 for Non-Discrimination. Government “shall not treat any person in a discriminatory manner . . . on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, age, mental or physical disability, property, birth or other status.”

Specifically in legislation, The Gender Equality Law, 2011, prohibits any Cayman Islands educational authority providing facilities for training for employment to discriminate on the grounds of:

- a) Sex, marital status or pregnancy; or
- b) Any characteristic based on gender which pertains generally or is generally imputed to persons of a particular sex or marital status or pregnant state.

For the purposes of The Gender Equality Law, 2011, an “educational authority” means a body of persons administering an “educational institution”. An educational institution is defined as a school, university or other institution at which education or training is provided.

Historically, in the Cayman Islands, school principals have employed the common practice of requiring young women to leave school as soon as it was found that they had become pregnant. No formal policy exists in this regard.



In 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education Services (DES) and Division for Children and Family Services (DCFS) provided guidance for educational and social welfare support for pregnant students and school-age parents living on Grand Cayman through an off-site Young Parents Programme (YPP). This programme has since been restructured without an educational component.

**Aims:**

This policy defines the Ministry's expectations and administrative procedures regarding levels of educational support and services for young women within government schools in the Cayman Islands who become pregnant and are young mothers. It also defines the nature of support for young men who may become or be fathers.

The spirit and intent of this policy is to ensure that the quality of education afforded to pregnant young women of compulsory school age is not compromised during the term of their pregnancy or after child-birth.

It is the aim of this policy to ensure that the pregnant or school-age mother is kept in learning while also developing effective parenting skills. This means:

- 1) keeping the student engaged as long as reasonably practicable in her current educational programme,
- 2) providing educational support even if the student may not be able to attend school for a period of time,
- 3) regularly reviewing and monitoring students' academic progress, and
- 4) working with school officials to identify a suitable time to reintegrate young mothers back into a school setting.

The needs of young men as fathers (e.g. parenting education, financial planning, etc.) should also be considered and addressed.



## Policy statement

Students of compulsory school age who are pregnant and those students who are young parents, both mothers and fathers, are entitled to the same level of educational opportunity as other students. To achieve this, schools must:

1. recognize and preserve the rights of students who may become pregnant so that they may continue their education in the most inclusive environment, with their peers, to the maximum extent possible, until such time that it may no longer be physically, medically or emotionally possible for the student;
2. develop flexible pathways for continued learning by implementing individual service plans;
3. broker additional services (e.g. counselling, financial support, parenting education, family planning, etc.) for these young persons by coordinating with multiple external agencies;
4. recognize and preserve the rights of students who are young parents in order for them to resume their education following childbirth in the most inclusive environment, with their peers, based on an individualized plan.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

### The Ministry of Education will

- Develop educational policy
- Ensure that programmes and services reflected in this policy are subject to regular review

### The Education Quality and Assurance Unit will

- Evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum provision in schools for pregnant and parenting young people, using the criteria set out in the *Handbook for the Evaluation of Educational Provision*
- Make recommendations for improvement
- Provide information to inform policy decisions

### The Department of Education Services (School Improvement Officers) will

- Provide support to enable schools to meet policy requirements
- Provide, as needed, additional educational services (e.g. school counselling) for school-age students who face barriers to learning because of their pregnancy and child-rearing responsibilities



### **School principals and leaders will**

- Track and maintain contact with pregnant and parenting young people
- Promote awareness of the range of education pathways and the support available
- Coordinate with community agencies to support pregnant and parenting young people
- Monitor and review provision and practice in their schools
- In government secondary schools, provide sex and relationship education (including education about contraception as a means to reduce the incidence of pregnancy) and teach personal, social and moral learning in regard to responsible relationships as set out in the national curriculum

### **School staff will**

- Effectively collaborate with school principals and leaders in regard to implementation of the policy

### **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:**

1. Each school should identify a member of staff who will oversee the implementation and monitoring of the policy. In most cases, this will be the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO).
2. The SENCO, or other designee, when receiving a report of suspected pregnancy shall:
  - a. First contact the young person and encourage the young person to tell his/her parent or caregiver if that has not yet occurred. This information must be treated in strictest confidence with other staff members and should be shared only on a confidential and need-to-know basis.
  - b. Inform the School Principal.
  - c. Inform the Multi-Agency Liaison within the Registration Office of the Department of Education Services for purposes of tracking. This person is additionally available for consultation and assistance at meetings.



- d. Conduct a case conference to develop an Individual Support Plan (ISP) for the pregnant student or father to be. The SENCO from the high school, the Teacher in Charge of the school's Young Parent Unit, the Family Resource Centre's coordinator for Young Parent Services, parents, and the student should participate in this conference. Additional participants based on the needs of the child may be Health Services Authority personnel, DCFS social worker, the School Counsellor, or a Family Support Unit officer (if the case is one of defilement). The components of this ISP should detail the student's current social service, health, and learning needs. Objectives should establish outcomes of proposed interventions on behalf of the student and clearly cite the agency responsible for supporting those outcomes. The ISP will detail which areas of current educational provision will be continued during the pregnancy and immediately following the birth. It also will include an educational reintegration plan, including plans for childcare provision.
  - e. Schedule monthly review dates for the plan so that participants can monitor progress and revise the plan as necessary. At the end of the second trimester of a pregnancy, a final review will be held whereupon educational services will be transferred to the school's Young Parent Unit. Only in exceptional circumstances will another plan be made available based on the ISP.
3. There should be flexibility around when students return to formal education after giving birth, whether within the school's Young Parent Unit or to their high school. The process to be followed should include:
- a. Students should have a post natal health check to ensure they are medically fit to return to education. If students are breast-feeding, enough time should be allowed for a feeding schedule to be established. Students should, under normal circumstances, be expected to return to classes between 6 – 16 weeks after giving birth.
  - b. Once these criteria are met, a reintegration case conference will be held to review and revise the student's ISP. The plan should continue to be in place and reviewed until such time as the team believes that support for the student is no longer required.
  - c. The SENCO should advise the Multi-Agency Liaison within the Registration Office of the Department of Education Services of the young mother's return to school.