

## Introduction

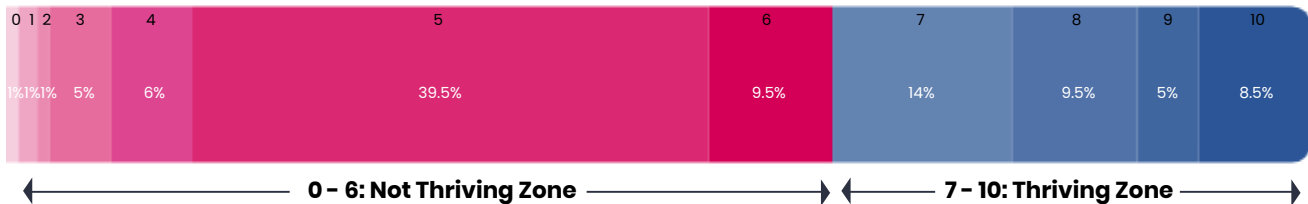
In 2022, the DC Network for Expectant and Parenting Teens (DC NEXT!) piloted a Well-Being Survey of young parents in Washington D.C. This report presents emergent finding and policy actions for consideration developed from survey data, deep-dive interviews with young parents in the District, and focus groups and dialogues with service providers and youth.

Teen pregnancies across the US and in the District of Columbia have dramatically declined over the last decade. Yet despite an almost 20% reduction in teen births between 2019 and 2021, 265 teen mothers under the age of 20 gave birth in the District of Columbia in 2021. We estimate that at any given time in DC, at least 800 teen mothers and young fathers are endeavoring to care for their children, continue their education, and find meaningful work in the hopes that their families can thrive.

## Emergent Findings

- 1 | **Most young parents (63%) reported that they are not thriving, highlighting that barriers related to housing instability as well as inadequate access to employment, childcare, and transportation stand between young parents and the futures they yearn to create.**
- 2 | A subset of young parents in DC are facing severe challenges including frequent hunger, frequent housing insecurity, poor mental health, and social isolation.
- 3 | Overall, young parents in DC feel confident and motivated in their parenting role.

## How would you rate your personal status right now? Self-Reported Well-Being From 210 Respondants Using Cantril's Ladder



**Respondants with the lowest personal status ratings (0-4) are almost 3x as likely to have worries about housing and 3.5x as likely to have worries about having enough to eat as compared to those who rate their current personal status as THRIVING (7+).**

The young parents we surveyed and interviewed show us that there is nothing inevitable about bad outcomes for teen parents and their children. If we change our response to teen parents, if we drop the stigma and instead raise our expectations and see the powerful, critical opportunity to redirect teens newly committed to their success, we can change the outcomes for young parents and their children.



## Recommendations for Policy Makers

- 1 | **Make teen parents the first priority in the District's investments in effective two-generation income, education, and workforce strategies that impact not only teen parents' own trajectory, but also that of the young children they parent.**
- 2 | Develop and fund a teen parent system of care tailored to meet the needs of adolescent parents and their children including:
  - a. Robust pathways/roadmap to educational attainment and career opportunities
  - b. High quality childcare
  - c. Quality, affordable healthcare
  - d. Affordable, convenient transportation
  - e. Housing for young parents who lack family options
  - f. Access to healthy food, particularly through WIC and SNAP
  - g. Mental health support and navigation assistance
- 3 | Support the efforts of DC NEXT! to promote high quality, youth-centered services that recognize teen parents' commitment and capitalize on their new motivation to achieve.