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**DHR REPORTS: TEEN PREGNANCY RATES DOWN IN GEORGIA**

*Pregnancy rates among Georgia females 15 to 17-years-old down more than 40 percent*

ATLANTA (GA) – Ongoing surveillance of Georgia’s teen pregnancy rates by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) has revealed a significant reduction in pregnancy rates among 15 to 17-year-old females. The data reflects consistent reduction across all racial demographics that were monitored and appears to be a continuing trend.

“Preventing teenage pregnancy is critical to the Department of Human Resources’ vision of Georgians living safe, healthy, and self-reliant lives,” said Dr. Stuart Brown, acting director of the Division of Public Health. “The data that were collected from 1994 – 2003 reflected an overall 41.3 percent drop in pregnancy rates among females 15-17-years-old. That is good news for us.”

Given the fact that teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock parenting is linked to dropping out of school, poverty, welfare dependency, and other risks, these numbers affirm the importance of prevention programs and education conducted through the Family Health Branch of Public Health.

The data collected were also broken down into three racial demographic categories among 15 – 17-year-old females, which revealed a 48.2 percent decline in pregnancy rates among African American non-Hispanic females; a 45.8 percent decline among White non-Hispanic and Hispanic females. However, there has been an alarming 61.8 percent increase amongst Hispanic females in this age group.

“We know the programs offered to Georgia youth, through public health, have reduced high-risk behaviors among young people because of the combined focus of the strengths of individual youth,

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abstinence-based education and promoting healthy lifestyles and choices,” added Brown. “We will continue to focus our efforts, using this combined approach with Hispanic youth in an effort to bring the number of teen pregnancies down. These programs also provide youth with access to screening for health problems and links to other community resources.”

Although progress is being made in the area of reducing teenage pregnancy rates in Georgia, teen pregnancy is still a major issue of concern in Georgia. Through partnerships with state and local agencies and communities, DHR remains committed to continued support of programs that serve to perpetuate this positive trend.

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