Retaining and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students
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This policy addresses the inclusion of, and support for, pregnant and parenting students in education.

A. Policy Statement

Pregnancy or parenting are not considered to be valid reasons for a school aged student to be exempted from enrolment (Department of Education Enrolment and Attendance Guidelines 2009, Section 1.3). Schools are responsible for establishing strategies to ensure that pregnant and parenting students are supported in continuing their education.

This policy recognises that pregnant or parenting students are at risk of leaving education and are among the most vulnerable students in relation to retention.

B. Guidelines for implementation

These guidelines are intended as a framework, allowing schools the flexibility to accommodate their local needs and circumstances.

1. General principles

• Schools will be places where pregnant or parenting students are welcome even if their attendance is disrupted due to issues associated with pregnancy or parenting;
• Schools will act to prevent direct and indirect discrimination, including harassment or exclusion, on the basis of being pregnant or a parent (See Appendix 1).

2. Actions around disclosure of pregnancy

• When a student discloses to a staff member other than a social worker that she is pregnant, the staff member should set up a meeting between the social worker and the student as a matter of urgency (See Appendix 2).
• Whenever possible, the consent of the student should be obtained in relation to the sharing of information with the people necessary to ensure her continued support and attendance at school.
• If the student is considered to be at risk her consent is not necessary when information is required to be shared in order to assist her and minimise the perceived risk.

• Information should not be disclosed by the school to the student’s parents without the student’s consent unless the student would be placed at risk through the with-holding of the information.

• If the student is deemed to be in need of immediate medical attention because of the pregnancy, the school will seek medical attention as for any other medical emergency.

**Note:** it is not appropriate for any school personnel to supply pregnancy testing kits without appropriate, recognised health training.

### 3. Provision of support

Schools and Learning Services can provide support to a pregnant or parenting student by

• nominating a case manager (e.g., a social worker, grade co-ordinator or key teacher) to support the student

• developing flexible programs to accommodate the student’s educational needs and actively promoting to the student the importance of completing school

• providing students with advice about school-based support staff to help them make informed decisions about their future

• ensuring that professional development, training, and appropriate resources are available to staff to assist them in supporting the student

• ensuring that curriculum content and teaching practices reflect and support this policy

• developing links with other government and community agencies to ensure that the health, welfare, financial, social, and childcare needs of pregnant and parenting students are met in ways which increase the chances of them completing their education

• developing and promoting a policy to retain pregnant and parenting students in education

• developing processes to monitor educational provisions and outcomes for pregnant and parenting students

• if necessary, in the last few weeks of the student’s pregnancy, seek advice from her doctor in relation to her participation at school

• any other means considered to be appropriate to an individual student’s circumstances.
4. Distance Education

Pregnant students are entitled to enrol with Distance Education if this is medically/psychologically the best option for them. It is the school’s role to facilitate any enrolment with Distance Education.

Appendix 1: Direct and indirect discrimination of pregnant or parenting students

Direct discrimination may include:
- refusing enrolment
- breaking confidentiality unless the student is at immediate risk (medically or emotionally)
- failing to address issues of harassment related to the student and her pregnancy or her/his parenting.

Indirect discrimination may include:
- insistence on wearing a school uniform
- lack of flexibility in the timetable
- refusal to recognise and address the possible needs arising for young parents who must accommodate child care arrangements into their day
- encouraging the student to study off-site.

Appendix 2: Social Workers

In addition to contributing to actions outlined in the Guidelines above, Social Workers may particularly
- support pregnant/parenting young people in informed decision-making, ensuring that they have comprehensive and up to date information
- support young people in maintaining positive relationships with their parent/s or extended family
- develop links with other appropriate agencies
- manage referrals to the appropriate agencies
- develop and maintain communication channels with school staff
- provide professional learning opportunities and advice to staff.

Appendix 3: Suggested reading

Making Choices: Retaining Young (Pregnant and Parenting) People in Learning and