

## **Best Practices for Working with Pregnant & Parenting Foster Youth**

1. Ask the youth what she/he wants to do about her/his pregnancy/conception (i.e. provide all birthing/parenting/abortion options/alternatives) and what she/he needs.
2. Get on their side and quick!
3. Acknowledge and deal with your own possible bias around young parenting.
4. Empathize with the experience that the youth is experiencing (avoid judging, blaming, criticizing).
5. Always demonstrate and role model parental patience with a youth – make it a teachable moment about what’s needed in parenting.
6. Recognize that teen parenting can be a positive and empowering experience (remember Rita and Ronda’s story!)
7. Have parenting worksheets available. That is, what to expect and how to deal with certain situations and current knowledge on health/safety issues.
8. Have current resource sheets/knowledge on how get financial help/assistance (you may need to do homework).
9. If you don’t have the time and expertise, knowledge of parenting support, refer youth to an appropriate person and follow-up to make sure they get there.
10. Start early! When a youth is pregnant or is an expectant father, assist them with pre-natal care.
11. Acknowledge the pregnancy in a supportive and ritualized manner with a baby shower, a card, a special physical touch of the belly (ask permission first), etc...