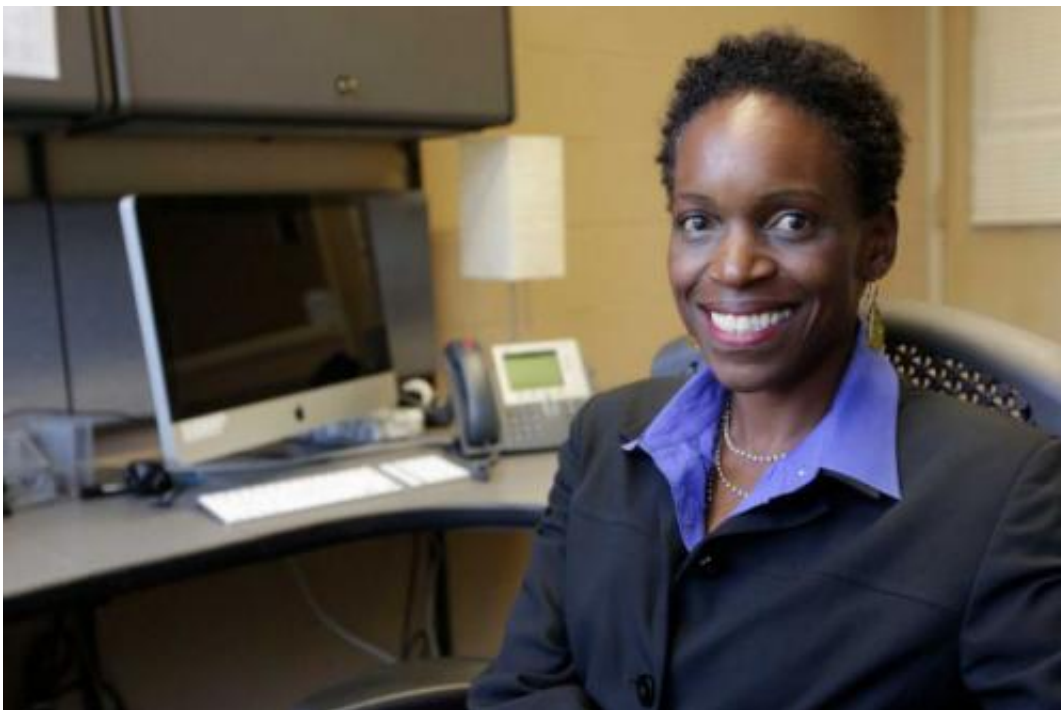


Study finds young women involve parent in abortion when anticipating support

September 15 2014



Melissa Gilliam is the MD Section Chief of the Section of Family Planning and Contraceptive Research at the University of Chicago Medicine. Credit: Associated Press

When an adolescent wants to terminate a pregnancy, how does she decide whether to talk to a parent? A recent study from the Section of Family Planning and Contraceptive Research at the University of Chicago found that pregnant teens will turn to parents and adults who are engaged in their lives and who will offer support, regardless of her

pregnancy decision. Young women will avoid talking with parents who are less involved or may try to prevent them from seeking care.

The study, published online ahead of print in the *American Journal of Public Health*, explored the factors [young women](#) under age 18 consider when deciding to involve a parent. Researchers conducted interviews with 30 minors seeking abortion in Illinois, prior to implementation of the 2013 parental notification law. Currently, there are 38 states with laws requiring a parent to provide consent or receive notification before a minor can access abortion services.

"There's a commonly accepted idea that teens will try to hide their pregnancy or abortion decision. However, pregnant young women actually do turn to parents in the majority of cases," said Section policy researcher Lee Hasselbacher. "In our study, 70% of the young women involved a parent or guardian. They thought carefully about which parents and adults in their lives they could turn to for help in making their decision."

While each young woman's family circumstance was different, there were several common motivations for involving a parent. Factors favoring telling included close and supportive relationships, need for help with logistics like travel or payment, or experiences that made discovery of the pregnancy seem inevitable.

Minors expressed a range of motivations for not telling a parent about their abortion. Some teens worried that if their parent learned of their decision, it would dramatically change their relationship or feared it would even lead to anger or harm. Young women also discussed the lack of a relationship or presence as a reason they did not want to involve a parent.

One of the strongest findings was that among those young women who

did not involve either parent, most were concerned that one or both [parents](#) would directly interfere with their decision to get an abortion.

"Policymakers should not force communication at the time of pregnancy; instead they should focus on supporting family communication long before a [pregnancy](#) or abortion decision," said Dr. Melissa Gilliam, Section Chief of the Section of Family Planning and Contraceptive Research at the University of Chicago and senior author on the study. "This study reveals teenagers will seek adult help."

More information: Hasselbacher LA, Dekleva A, Tristan S, Gilliam ML. Factors Influencing Parental Involvement Among Minors Seeking an Abortion: A Qualitative Study. *Am J Public Health*. Published online. DOI: [10.2105/AJPH.2014.302116](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302116)

Provided by University of Chicago Medical Center

Citation: Study finds young women involve parent in abortion when anticipating support (2014, September 15) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-young-women-involve-parent-abortion.html>

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