

ASKED & ANSWERED

School counseling legal and ethical issues can run the gamut of topics. Here we've gathered some of the more frequently asked legal and ethical questions to help guide you in your daily work.

BY CAROLYN STONE, ED.D.; MARY A. HERMANN, J.D., PH.D.;
AND RHONDA WILLIAMS, ED.D., LPC, NCC

Pregnant Students



WHAT DO I DO WHEN A STUDENT WHO IS A MINOR TELLS ME SHE THINKS SHE IS PREGNANT?

There are many issues to consider when dealing with this difficult situation. It is most important to know your state laws around this topic (i.e., what is the age of consent, issues around pregnancy decision-making, etc.) as well as your school board policies regarding this issue and community norms. Find out how or if the student has confirmed her pregnancy. Other issues to consider include whether the sex was consensual and the age difference of both parties. Understanding the student's relationship with her parents will help you initiate how to approach having the student tell the parents.



IF A MINOR STUDENT TELLS ME SHE'S PREGNANT, HASN'T TOLD HER PARENTS AND PLANS TO HAVE AN ABORTION, DO I HAVE A LEGAL OBLIGATION TO SHARE THE INFORMATION WITH HER PARENTS AND/OR ADMINISTRATION?

Every state has different laws and legal age ranges regarding teenage pregnancy. Knowing this information and school board policy will answer a lot of your questions. It is also important to understand the legal issues on parental rights vs. student's right to confidentiality before proceeding any further. It is imperative to monitor your own biases while at the same time helping the student process how to best disclose to the parents if at all possible.