

## KEY MESSAGES from **p.a.p.a.**

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- 1** Parenting is a rewarding and wonderful job that is also very challenging and expensive.
- 2** Becoming a parent as a teenager (or becoming a teen parent for the second time) can make it more challenging to accomplish your goals and dreams for the future.
- 3** Make a life plan...decide on your ideal sequence for key life events such as finishing school, starting a career, getting married and having children.
- 4** The sequence that makes it easiest to be a successful parent is 1) finishing school, 2) getting a career, 3) entering into a healthy committed relationship, such as marriage, and 4) having children with that partner.
- 5** If a couple has a baby together and they aren't married, the biological father is not automatically the legal father of the child.
- 6** There are two pathways for an unmarried biological father to become the legal father – by signing an AOP or by court order.
- 7** Children, fathers and mothers benefit when a child has a legal and involved father.
- 8** If parents are not together, the custodial parent should not have all of the financial responsibility alone.
- 9** Child support laws are designed to increase the chances that children get financial support from both parents in a fair manner.
- 10** Paying child support is a long-term commitment to the child.
- 11** If noncustodial parents (NCPs) do not pay their child support, the child support agency has enforcement tools to help encourage or force the NCP to pay.
- 12** Keep thinking about when you want to be a parent, the kind of parent you want to be, and the kind of relationship you want to have with your child's other parent.
- 13** Learn and practice skills for building healthy relationships. The relationship between parents has a big impact on children. Make sure you can have a healthy relationship with your child's other parent. Conflict and violence can be very damaging for children.
- 14** Make decisions that will allow you to become the kind of parent you want to be.