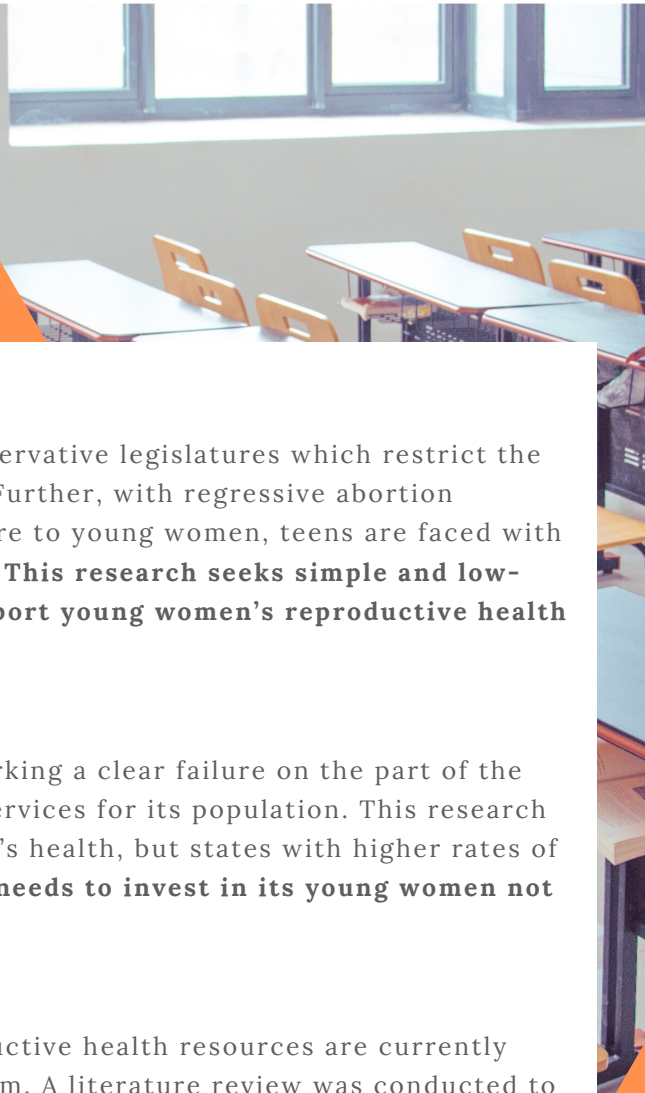


BARRIERS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN DURHAM, NC



Objective

Young women in the South are subject to the policies of conservative legislatures which restrict the quality and duration of their reproductive health education. Further, with regressive abortion legislation limiting clinic's ability to provide quality healthcare to young women, teens are faced with few options to confidentially seek healthcare for themselves. **This research seeks simple and low-cost ways that Durham, North Carolina can continue to support young women's reproductive health despite the political barriers posed by the state legislature.**

Why This Matters

The teen pregnancy rate rose **6% between 2017 and 2018**, marking a clear failure on the part of the state to provide enough reproductive health resources and services for its population. This research shows that this matters not just for the sake of young women's health, but states with higher rates of teen pregnancy suffer from higher rates of poverty. **Durham needs to invest in its young women not just for their health but also their economic futures.**

Methods

First, this research evaluated what organizations and reproductive health resources are currently available to young women in middle and high school in Durham. A literature review was conducted to indicate the importance of reproductive health education both to sexual health and to positive economic outcomes for Durham's young women. In order to identify solutions to decrease the rate of teen pregnancy, thereby improving life chances for young women, a comparative analysis of Durham and two identified peer cities; Little Rock, Arkansas and Nashville, Tennessee, was conducted. The analysis was based on political environments, size, the socioeconomic burden and demographics.

Conclusions

1. Increased and continuing investments in young women's reproductive health education and services **will potentially reduce teen pregnancy and increase economic empowerment in Durham.**
2. The City of Durham must ensure that it is clear to its citizens what resources are available to them and how to access them because **information sharing and accessibility is key to both reproductive health and economic empowerment.**

Policy Recommendations

The following two recommendations were developed through the evaluations of Little Rock, Arkansas and Nashville, Tennessee, as well as through the compilation of relevant literature.

1. Local Level: Durham County Public Health Officials should actively engage teens to take part in **youth-focused programs**. There should also be **accessible active links to nonprofit internet resources for students and teens** should they need additional information.
2. State Level: Given North Carolina's restrictive curriculum standards, the City of Durham should continue or expand funding for programs like **FOCUS and Shift NC** which **continue reproductive health education and provide services to young women beyond 9th grade.**