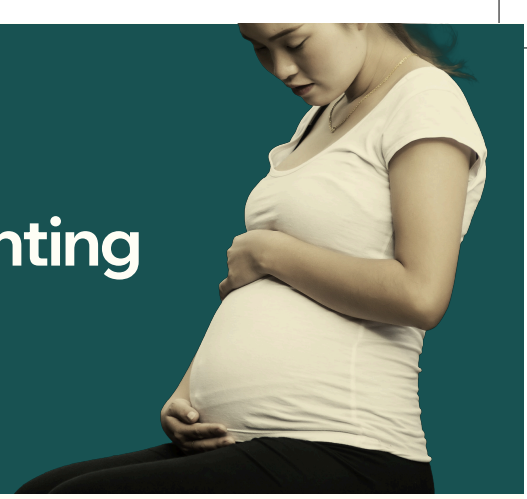


Unaccompanied Pregnant and Parenting Youth require care and support that meets their needs.



The Child Advocate Program (CAP) at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights (the Young Center) has always served unaccompanied pregnant and parenting immigrant youth in federal government custody, managed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Pregnant and parenting youth in government custody face significant challenges within a system that often fails to account for their unique and particular needs. To better serve this population of vulnerable youth, the Young Center regularly tracks and analyzes data on the pregnant and parenting youth with whom we work.

Based on this data and the experiences of CAP, we have identified the following systemic issues affecting pregnant and parenting youth in custody as of Spring 2026:

1. The need for Child Advocate services for unaccompanied pregnant and parenting youth far exceeds capacity.
2. Despite ORR policy prioritizing pregnant and parenting youth for placement in foster care, the overwhelming majority of pregnant and parenting youth are held in restrictive congregate care facilities rather than family-or community-based settings.
3. Many pregnant and parenting youth spend long periods of time in federal custody.
4. Some parenting youth face restrictions on breastfeeding while in custody, due in part to ORR's lack of a policy on breastfeeding.
5. ORR policies restrict the time and schedules of parenting youth in ways that are not in their or their children's best interests.
6. ORR facility staff threaten parenting youth with calling child protective services.
7. ORR does not ensure that parenting youth turning 18 have adequate childcare supplies upon release.
8. Pregnant youth in custody have raised issues—particularly related to access to information—that they experienced while receiving abortion services.



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Under the current Administration, the challenges faced by pregnant and parenting youth in federal custody have only increased as unaccompanied children—including pregnant and parenting youth—face prolonged detention. **In order to better meet the needs of pregnant and parenting youth in ORR custody, ORR must implement the following policy changes:**

1. ORR must increase the capacity of its Child Advocate program to ensure that Child Advocates are available for all children who need them, including pregnant and parenting youth. Additionally, ORR should ensure pregnant and parenting youth receive fully funded counsel for immigration removal defense.
2. ORR must ensure pregnant and parenting youth are prioritized for foster care placements, which are the least restrictive placements (the legal standard for children in ORR custody) short of reunification with family. ORR also needs to rapidly expand foster care options available to vulnerable youth, including pregnant and parenting youth.
3. ORR must develop a wholistic breastfeeding policy for parenting youth, which includes flexibility for case-by-case accommodations and must regularly train ORR staff on these requirements.
4. ORR must also develop policies for pregnant and parenting youth that allow for other accommodations related to parenting and pregnancy and regularly train staff on these requirements.
5. ORR must ensure that ORR facility staff are not improperly threatening parenting youth with contacting child protective services or removing their children from their care. ORR should develop policies, guidelines, and trainings to ensure that ORR facility staff provide parenting youth with services that are strengths-based, consistent, and unbiased, while respecting their autonomy to make decisions for their families.
6. The federal government must ensure that parenting youth who age out of ORR custody are provided with adequate childcare supplies as part of the youth's post 18-plan.
7. ORR should refer all pregnant and parenting youth for appointment of a Child Advocate to accompany and support the youth and assist the youth (and their child(ren)) in addressing any concerns or issues they may face as they navigate pregnancy and parenting.