Jennifer L. Pehr, “Running the Risk: The co-location of urban planning and public health and the barriers created to high-risk, pregnant, and parenting teens’ ability to access educational and support services in New York City.” Submitted May 2010. Advisor: Dr. Clara Irazabal.

In New York City, approximately 40,000 teenagers become pregnant and almost 11,000 teens give birth each year. Such high rates of teen pregnancy overwhelmingly are co-located in neighborhoods with concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities, high poverty rates, and other public health issues. It is estimated that approximately 70% of pregnant and parenting teens fail to complete their high school education or earn a GED diploma. The New York City Department of Education provides few educational and support services for pregnant and parenting teens, and other efforts put forth in the city are piecemeal and address small populations in relation to the challenge at large.

Different methods were applied for this research, including spatial analysis, site visits, and expert interviews. Results revealed that efforts to address and expand educational and support services in New York City to pregnant and parenting teens has been extremely limited and actually atrophied over the past several years. This has slowed down, and among some cohorts reversed, the downward trends in teen pregnancy rates in New York City. These findings have implications for all individuals in the teen’s life, as well as urban planners and public health professionals. Investing in place-based services in communities and schools, coupled with characteristics of successful program interventions, can help support high-risk, pregnant, and parenting teens to stay connected to the educational system and help this population achieve their educational goals.