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Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.

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***Mayor Rawlings-Blake and Health Department Announce
City-Wide Strategy to Reduce Teen Births in Baltimore***

BALTIMORE, MD. (September 17, 2010)—Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake today joined the Baltimore City Health Department, Healthy Teen Network and the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute and Center for Adolescent Health to unveil *A Strategic Plan to Reduce Teen Births in Baltimore City*.

Teen birth rates in Baltimore are among the highest in the nation. Recommendations in the strategic plan to significantly reduce these rates include: increased access to comprehensive sex education and contraceptive services for youth; educating youth about the availability of services and what it really means to be a teen parent; expanding school based or school linked clinical services; identifying a lead agency to implement the plan; and involving youth and community leaders at every step.

“Teen pregnancy is a serious issue for the city,” said Mayor Rawlings-Blake. “Teen parents are less likely to graduate from high school or find a stable, high-paying job. Fortunately, we have many dedicated partners working diligently with us to develop this new strategy to reduce teen births.”

Led by Healthy Teen Network, a national nonprofit organization focused on issues affecting adolescent reproductive health, the plan was developed collaboratively with community partners from many sectors over the last year.

“Some of the more interesting findings came from our youth focus groups and interviews among community leaders,” said Dr. Patricia Paluzzi, CEO of Healthy Teen Network. “Both groups identified the need to treat youth differently—highlighting their value, and engaging them in meaningful ways in their communities.”

Hearing from youth themselves was a significant part of this project. In interviews, youth identified what was missing from their communities, including: “People that care. People that show concern,” and “Someone who can listen; someone we can trust.”

“Some may say: ‘Teen pregnancy is a moral issue and we can’t deal with it.’ We need to ask ourselves what morality would allow us to stand by and do nothing while our children fail,” said Dr. Robert Blum, William H. Gates Sr. Professor and Director Johns Hopkins University Urban Health Institute.

“We hope this information will lead to prioritizing next steps, and discussing ways to maintain the momentum and sustain efforts to provide effective teen pregnancy prevention services for Baltimore’s youth,” said Dr. Oxiris Barbot, Commissioner of Health for Baltimore City.

To view the *Strategic Plan to Reduce Teen Births in Baltimore City*, visit the Baltimore City Health Department Website at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.

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