

APPENDIX 1

Does She Deserve Honor?

Jennifer Dinesen, a high school senior, was denied induction to the National Honor Society (NHS) because she is an unmarried mother. A faculty selection committee at Streamridge High School invited Jennifer to join the school's National Honor Society but then revoked the offer when it discovered that the eighteen-year-old had a daughter. Students are selected for the National Honor Society based on four criteria: character, leadership, service, and scholastic achievement. Dinesen met the

academic requirements, but the committee felt that because she is an unwed mother her character is in question and she is not a good role model (leader) for other students.

The rules of the National Honor Society state that "pregnancy cannot be the basis for automatic rejection," but each school is allowed to set its own standards as long as they are applied consistently. The superintendent explained that Jennifer Dinesen is not the first student at Streamridge to be denied membership in the school's honor society because of sexual activity.

As a senior, Jennifer has a 3.8 grade point average. She has been a member of the Spanish Club since freshman year and served as secretary of the club her sophomore year. She was a starting player on the junior varsity girls' basketball team her freshman and sophomore years. During her junior year, she was in charge of decorations for the school's homecoming dance, and she also worked as a volunteer four hours a week at a local day care center for disabled children. All of her out-of-school time during her senior year has been spent caring for her baby daughter. She has not received any discipline referrals in four years.

Jennifer says, "I'm deeply hurt by the school's decision because I have worked so hard for four years."

Questions

What is at issue are two qualities the honor society demands: leadership and character. As an unwed mother, has Jennifer lost her character? Will she lead others in the wrong direction? Do you agree with the faculty committee's decision not to induct Jennifer Dinesen into the National Honor Society? Why or why not?
