

Project Abstract

Name of State: Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Project Title: Massachusetts Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative

Applicant Agency: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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Proposed Activities: The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is applying for \$1,500,000 annually in renewed funding for its currently funded Pregnancy Assistance Fund program: the Massachusetts Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative (MPPTI). MPPTI will serve expectant and parenting youth aged 14-24 in high schools and community centers (Category 2) in the cities of Chelsea, Holyoke, Lawrence, New Bedford, and Springfield, with a specific focus on vulnerable youth under 20. These five communities have teen birth rates between three and five times higher than the statewide average and roughly double the national average. MPPTI will serve approximately 1000 young families over the four year grant period, reaching nearly 20% of women aged 15-19 who give birth in the target communities.

Direct services will be delivered by multidisciplinary teams at partner community-based organizations; these teams use a unique strengths-based, trauma-informed service model that has proven thus far to be highly successful in engaging and retaining both mothers and fathers, and helping guide them towards positive outcomes. Teams will be made up of a program coordinator, case managers, an educational/employment liaison, a registered nurse, and a mental health provider. Service teams will support families with wraparound services including school and career counseling, medically accurate health education and care, reproductive health counseling, parenting skills and infant care training, and social/emotional support services.

A key component of the program model is the development of a life plan by each participant. The life plan will incorporate educational, career, and family goals, including future reproductive planning. The life plan will document known or perceived barriers to attaining goals and action plans to overcome barriers.

An additional component of MPPTI includes the Community Advisory Group, a convening of stakeholders and state organizations that provide services to expectant and parenting teens and their families. This Group will work towards coordinating and improving the consistency of services provided to young families. They will also play a crucial role in developing a sustainability plan to maintain service longevity.

Goals/Objectives: This program will address three main goals: (1) Increase academic achievement through attainment of individualized academic and career goals; (2) Improve reproductive health outcomes through delaying subsequent pregnancy; and (3) Enhance family stability through increased connection with support systems, improved self-sufficiency, and healthy parenting practices.

In addition to satisfying federal performance measure requirements, MDPH has developed state-specific SMART program outcome objectives and performance measures to assess program impact. The state-led evaluation will include an in-depth analysis of a selection of key questions: 1) Are program participants more likely to be in school or to obtain a high school diploma or GED?; 2) Are participants more likely to be enrolled in postsecondary or vocational training?; 3) Are participants less likely to have a repeat pregnancy within 18 months from birth of last child?; 4) Are participants less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy?; 5) Are children of program participants provided with a healthy environment and opportunities for healthy development?; and 6) Are participants on track to achieve family stability and wellness?