

# STARTRIGHT TEEN MOMS PROGRAM ABSTRACT

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## Introduction

The StartRight Teen Mothers of Mentors (MOMs) Program is an asset-based youth development model that uses multiple approaches to promote positive outcomes for pregnant and postpartum adolescents in low-income urban and suburban areas of Kansas City and Jackson County, Missouri. The program enhances services of the Adolescent OB, and Family Practice Clinics of Truman Medical Centers, Inc. (TMC).

The StartRight Teen MOMs Program matches participating adolescents with mentors who meet with them individually each week for at least one hour to provide emotional support and to assist them in obtaining necessary community resources. This program's primary goal is to delay the second pregnancy for teens beyond their teenage years.

Several of the innovative features of the StartRight Teen MOMs Program are:

- Individualized goal planning meetings to establish and develop each adolescent's short/ long-range goals and support systems
- Support from a trained mentor who meets regularly with a teen to guide her in achieving her goals while utilizing available community resources
- Life Skills training and support programs for adolescent mothers to focus on interpersonal issues, parenting, and education

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine that teens with mentors as a support are less likely to have repeat pregnancies during their teenage years than their non-mentored counterparts and either remain longer or graduate from a secondary education program.

## Methods

The StartRight Teen MOMs Program operates out of two facilities: Truman Medical Center Hospital Hill (HH) and the Truman Medical Center Lakewood (LW). Participants at HH are randomly assigned to either the treatment (HH-T) or control (HH-C) groups. A second treatment group operates at LW (LW-T).

Eligible teens are required to complete intake paperwork and obtain parental consent. This experimental research study randomly selects participants for the treatment and comparison groups. Random assignments to the treatment and comparison groups give researchers the opportunity to explore various hypotheses related to the relative contribution of mentoring and individualized planning to successful outcomes for pregnant and parenting adolescents.

After completing a year with the program, participants complete a follow-up questionnaire which provides updated information as well as post pregnancy data.

While participants in the comparison group are only required to complete a follow-up, the following occurs for participants of the treatment group:

- Goal Planning- occurs 30-45 days after the initial intake assessment, then annually
- Mentor Rating of Teen- is completed quarterly and allows the mentor to rate the life skills readiness of the teen
- Teen Rating of Mentor- is completed every six (6) months and allows the teen to confidentially assess their mentor's support

## Results

The following outcome data was obtained from program, including treatment and control groups:

- Of the 73 participants only one (1) teen had a repeat pregnancy;
- Ninety-two (92%) percent either graduated high school or were involved in an educational program.
- 1614 community referrals were made

\*Analysis numbers are incomplete at time abstract is due- updated outcome information will be included in the poster presentation at the December conference. Current evaluation data is being prepared now.

## Discussion

Basic to the success of this program are the support, guidance, and training of mentors for the teen participants. Various strategies for motivating, rewarding, supporting, and training mentors are employed to support effective mentoring.

Extensive work has been done to implement enhanced interventions that build on the foundation of previously successful programming and findings from research, in order to promote positive outcomes and reduce negative outcomes for pregnant and parenting adolescents and their children.

Detailed protocols for tracking participants and interventions, for assuring accurate and timely intervention and data collection, and for transferring data from program to evaluation staff have been created. Instrumentation was selected or designed to gain informed consent, monitor participant progress, and collect relevant information from participants and program personnel.

- StartRight Teen MOMs' primary focus continues to be prevention of repeat pregnancies during adolescence which is woven through the mentoring and the curricula.
- Participants (both treatment and comparison) are tending to stay in school and schools are tending to offer more varied alternatives for education. Participants expressed a desire to complete their education and belief that their education was instrumental in getting the jobs they wanted.
- The comparison group sample is currently too small to show a statistical difference.

## Implications

Based on participant feedback, the Life Skills training, monthly activities and bi-weekly support groups fosters camaraderie and lends confidence to teens who are challenged with the untimely responsibility of parenting. These interactions connect teens faced with similar circumstances.

Collaboratively, mentors and teens devise plans to assist in the achievement of their short/long-term goals. Mentors and teens spent an average of 70 minutes per week in face-to-face meetings and another 10 minutes per week in phone conversations. More than 1600 community referrals were made during the year by mentors for family planning, education, employment, and family support. Because the StartRight Teen MOMs Program is operated in 2 locations, it is able to serve both urban and suburban populations.

Along with the above mentioned interventions, the StartRight Teen MOMs Program will continue to work to:

- Reduce repeat pregnancies
- Improve school and employment progress
- Improve maternal and child health care
- Increased access to community resources

## Contact Information

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