

AFL Care Programs: Lessons Learned

Lessons learned with clients, partners, and communities

Programming should plan for and meet the multiple needs of the clients being served

- Teen parents have many needs that may or may not be related to the program, but that must be met in order for the program to be successful.
- It is challenging to address the wide range of issues that teen parents face. Programs should be flexible to allow for meeting these needs.
- Client crises must be dealt with before other services will be effective.
- Client's basic needs must be met before they can effectively participate in programming.
- Wrap around services are important for effective service provision.
- Programs should be tailored to meet the client population being served and their specific needs.
- Dropout is common once clients receive the immediate service they need to solve their current crisis.

Using multiple strategies and combining services is effective when working with teen parents

- Integration of case management with medical care is an effective strategy.
- Using a team approach that focuses on the needs of the family is effective.
- Allow participants to take ownership in the program to encourage active participation.
- Involve young fathers and other family members in addition to the teen mom to improve benefits of the program.
- Programs can incorporate older moms into the program to serve as mentors.
- Co-parenting services can be an effective strategy for the teen mom and teen dad.
- Providing legal advocacy for young fathers is beneficial for the entire family.

Location and timing of services is important to consider when implementing a program

- Services should be provided where teen parents are and should be tailored to their needs.
- Home-based care is beneficial and is an effective strategy for reaching teen parents.
- Provide services to teens where they are – home or school.
- Programs should plan adequate time to fully set-up the program prior to implementation.

Program staff is key to effective programming

- Teens should be able to relate to program staff.
- Male staff members are important when serving male clients.
- Bilingual, culturally sensitive staff and evaluators are important.
- Program staff should focus on strong relationship building with teens.
- Case managers provide a wide range of services. They can even serve as nurturing caregivers and provide support and guidance that teens may not have received from parents
- Therapists working with teen parents must be able to help clients deal with trauma.
- Retaining strong program staff should be a program priority.

- Program staff should be provided with a supportive environment to help deal with job-related stress.

Meaningful and useful incentives can enhance participation

- Free childcare services can help clients to better participate in the program and follow through on goals.
- Transportation is key (rides, bus passes, etc.) when programming for teen parents.
- Make sure that incentives reflect a need that the teens have (childcare, transportation, food, baby supplies, etc.).

Recruitment and retention is critical and various strategies should be employed.

- Making sure the program is well known in the community helps with recruitment efforts.
- Programs need active recruitment by all program staff. Recruitment should not be delegated to one person.
- Incentives are helpful in the recruitment process.

Intensive services appear to be more effective

- Providing long-term services helps establish rapport and has shown more positive results.
- Long-term, one-on-one services work best for high-risk teen parents.
- More frequent meetings with clients (bi-monthly) are shown to be more effective than less frequent meetings.

Collaborating with schools is important in order to provide effective wrap around services

- Strong collaboration with local schools and school districts is critical.
- Implementing the program in a school setting is an effective strategy.
- Being in close proximity and maintaining a presence in schools are important strategies for reaching teen parents.
- Show the schools you work with how your program aligns with their goal of reducing the number of drop outs.
- Allow for plenty of time to build relationships with schools. This process can often take a long time.
- Involve a variety of school staff in your project and ensure that staff know who you are and what you do.

Programs should focus on relationship building with all partners

- To be effective, programs must continuously work to build relationships with community partners.
- Collaborative relationships are important when serving this population. Individual agencies may not have the time or resources to provide all required services on their own. Working collaboratively helps to meet the needs of the clients.
- Establishing a referral system is an important step in working with community partners. This process helps ensure clients receive appropriate services.
- Collaborating with other agencies enables staff to share work load.
- Identifying a partner to assist with recruitment is helpful.
- Recruiting a control group through WIC clinics can be an effective strategy.

Market your program successfully

- Program promotion within the community helps raise awareness of the issues and services available.
- Invite your partners to observe the program in action to obtain a better idea of what services are being offered.
- Programs should be visible and active in the community.