



Success Story: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Improving the Health, Education, and Social Service Outcomes for Teens and Babies

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is a federally recognized Indian Tribe, providing services to a Native American population in a vast, extremely rural, and economically deprived area. This leads to challenges in access to services and service delivery. For example, many members of the Tribe must travel two hours to access health services, including childbirth services. Jobs within the Nation are also scarce. The Kids Count Factbook (KCF) indicated that 43 percent of Native American children in Oklahoma live in households in which neither parent has full-time employment. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) released data showing an unemployment rate for Choctaw tribal members of 36 percent.

According to the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and KCF 2008, the highest rates of low birth weight, infant mortality, child abuse and neglect, and child and teen death are in the Choctaw Nation area. The Choctaw Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program reported that 46 percent of participating children are being raised by grandparents, typically because parents are unable to care for them due to incarceration, substance abuse, or abusive domestic situations.

The goal of the Choctaw Support for Pregnant and Parenting Teen (SPPT) Project is to improve the health, education, and social service outcomes for pregnant and parenting teens and their babies. SPPT strives to meet its goal by providing comprehensive, medically appropriate services to participants, including linkages with critical resources, ongoing support for health and educational achievement, and evidenced-based positive parenting and relationship skills instruction using a nationally-validated model.

Twice a month, clients receive the Parents as Teachers (PAT) evidenced-based curriculum. The curriculum's core components include child development education, parent-child interaction activities, and family well-being discussions. Using the curriculum, the Support Specialist engages the entire family unit and identifies resources that will assist them in meeting individual and family goals. Clients also have the opportunity to participate in monthly group meetings that combine the core components of the PAT curriculum with Choctaw specific cultural activities. At each group meeting, fathers or male role-models also have the opportunity to participate in male-only sessions with a Fatherhood Counselor, focused on helping them improve communication, relationships, and parenting skills.

Each family receives a variety of assessments including post-natal depression, child development, parent knowledge, home safety, and immunization status of each child. Goals are set and re-evaluated at each visit until they have been met or are no longer desired by the family. The support specialists also document each referral until the service is received by the family. Data is collected and reported on each of the assessment areas for local evaluation.



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During SPPT's grant funding cycle, over 110 families (an average of three people per family – with a total of over 330 people) were served for a minimum six month period. The SPPT program is a 24-month program and has had over 48 families complete the entire program, with several more families close to their completion date.

The positive impact of SPPT can be illustrated through the story of one young couple with insufficient housing, very little income, and expecting their first child. Through the SPPT program and bi-monthly home visits, the Support Specialist was able to connect the family with services and provide parenting education. The couple experienced a healthy birth, and now has stable housing, a car, a connection with a doctor, and is pursuing admittance to a GED class and a job training class. The mother credits the SPPT program with helping the family move towards their goals. She also stated that they are very grateful to the program for setting them on the right track to a healthier life style and for the opportunities the program has given them. It has made a huge difference in their lives.

Contact Information

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