



Success Story: Children's Home + Aid Society of Illinois

Relationship With a Trusted Adult Changes Everything

Overview

Although teen births have decreased significantly in both the U.S. and in Chicago over the last decade, huge geographic and ethnic disparities remain.¹ On Chicago's Southside, the Englewood and West Englewood neighborhoods are known to be among the most dangerous. These neighborhoods have high unemployment, low earnings, low educational attainment, high rates of arrest, and high teen pregnancy when compared to Chicago as a whole.¹ These individual and community risk factors experienced by young people in these communities will impact their future achievement.

Children's Home + Aid of Illinois has a long-standing and deep commitment to the greater Englewood community of Chicago. The agency offers a continuum of services in this geographic area with the goal of helping families achieve economic self-sufficiency and ending the cycle of poverty and violence in this community. In greater Englewood, Children's Home + Aid has attracted over \$1 million in private philanthropic investments and over \$4 million in local, state and federal dollars to fund a comprehensive pipeline of services.

Program Description

Supported with funding from the Office of Adolescent Health, the Children's Home + Aid of Illinois has implemented the evidence-based Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program in the Englewood and West Englewood neighborhoods since 2010. The elementary and high school students enrolled in the program face extremely high teen parent and pregnancy rates, chronic violence, and academic failure.

Through the Carrera program, seven core components are implemented to support youth: education, employment, family life and sexuality education, mental health services, medical and dental care, self-expression, and lifetime individual sports. While these core components are each important to youth success, the development of strong, caring relationships between participants and adults is critical; the Carrera program fosters such relationships. In each of these components youth have the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with adults in large group, small group, and individual settings.

Program Outcomes

As an evidence-based intervention, the Carrera program has been shown to decrease teenage pregnancy and increase protective factors. Through the work at Children's Home + Aid, positive adult relationships have helped transform youth lives. Star, for example, began Carrera programming when she was in 6th grade. Her school behavior resulted in

¹ Yonek, J., & Hasnain-Wynia, R. (2011). *A profile of health and health resources within Chicago's 77 communities*. Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Center for Healthcare Equity/Institute for Healthcare Studies. Retrieved April 18, 2014, from <http://chicagohealth77.org/uploads/Chicago-Health-Resources-Report-2011-0811.pdf>

numerous detentions and suspensions during the course of the school year, and culminated in a felony battery charge. Carrera participants are not dismissed from the program for misbehavior – as it is often youth who act out who are in greatest need program supports.

While in the Carrera program, Star participated in individual counseling with one staff member, and was mentored by another. Her participation was inconsistent; frequent suspensions made attendance challenging. However, demonstrating their dedication and strong relationship to Star, staff maintained regular contact with her when she was not in school. After the school year, she continued with Carrera's summer programming and was transported each day to the program site. Soon after, staff noticed a dramatic improvement in Star's behavior. Not only was she less aggressive towards other participants, she was respectful towards staff, open to new activities, and even took a leadership role among her peers.

Through the OAH funded program, Children's Home + Aid has served over a 140 youth in the Englewood and West Englewood communities. Each element of the Carrera program supports healthy youth development, but the true key to its success is the ability to build strong, trusting relationships between participants and a caring adult.



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