



OAH PREGNANCY ASSISTANCE FUND PROGRAM: SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

Supporting Native American Young Families

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

In July 2013, the HHS Office of Adolescent Health awarded the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma a four-year Pregnancy Assistance Fund Program grant to support expectant and parenting teens, women, fathers, and families in the Native American community.

Through the Choctaw Support for Expectant and Parenting Teens (SEPT) program, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma serves teen mothers and fathers ages 13-21 throughout the Choctaw Nation's 11-county tribal service area in southeastern Oklahoma. SEPT is a multicomponent program that provides comprehensive and integrated services to improve family health, education, social, and safety outcomes. SEPT provides linkages to critical resources (such as transportation to prenatal and well-baby check-ups), ongoing support for health and education, and positive parenting and relationship skills instruction.

A central part of the SEPT program is the Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum, an evidence-based, nationally-validated model, which addresses adolescent development, child development, parent-child interaction, and family well-being with teen parents. Support specialists provide the curriculum to all participants through home visits twice a month for 24 months of service.

In order to assess young parents' needs and make the proper referrals, support specialists utilize the Life Skills Progression (LSP) survey, an outcome measurement and intervention planning instrument designed specifically for use with low-income parents during pregnancy and early parenting. The LSP monitors parental life skills in the following areas: relationships, education & employment, parent & child health, and mental health & substance use. It particularly assesses how well families receive information about services around these topics and proactively use them to address their needs. A field-tested tool shown to have high reliability, the LSP is administered both at intake and semi-annually thereafter. Once referred, support specialists track services to make sure participant goals are being met. Between August 2014 and January 2016, changes in the LSP survey scores indicated 95 percent of participants made progress in exploring, participating in, or attaining services.

Why It Matters:

- Despite recent reductions in teen birth rates, in 2014, birth rates among U.S. Native American females ages 15-19 (27.3 per 1000) were higher than their white counterparts (17.3 per 1000).¹
- Teens that live within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma service area have higher rates of poverty (29 percent) and teen birth (51.8 per 1,000) than the state as a whole.^{2,3}
- Choctaw teens face many challenges including limited economic opportunity, unemployment, substance abuse, child maltreatment, domestic violence as well as high percentages of school dropouts and high rates of premature birth and low birth weight.⁴
- Supporting expectant and parenting young families helps increase educational attainment and reduce the rate of repeat pregnancies.^{5,6}

Education is another key element of the SEPT program, and all participants must set an educational goal within 60 days of enrollment. SEPT support specialists visit participants in their homes to assist them



Choctaw SEPT participants at a monthly Family Celebration Night.

with their educational needs, including securing funding for college, providing transportation to classes, or tutoring. Reading activities during home visits and monthly Family Celebration Nights also help promote literacy with Choctaw teens and their children.

To maintain current achievements and continue to fill service gaps, SEPT is planning to increase the number of fatherhood support staff.

Additionally, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma will continue to review and evaluate

organizational capacity for sustaining the SEPT program after PAF funding ends.

Grantee Contact Information

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Choctaw Support for Expectant and Parenting Teens / <https://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/member-services/choctaw-support-expectant-and-parenting-teens-sept>

About the Office of Adolescent Health Pregnancy Assistance Fund Program

The Office of Adolescent Health Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Program awards grants to states and tribal entities to provide expectant and parenting teens, women, fathers, and their families with a seamless network of supportive services. PAF Program funds are used to help these populations complete high school or postsecondary degrees and gain access to health care, child care, family housing, and other critical supports. The funds are also used to improve services for pregnant women who are victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

¹ Hamilton, B.E., Martin, J.A., Osterman, M.J.K., & Curtin, S. C. (2015). Births: Final Data for 2014. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved August 20, 2016, from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Community Facts- Selected Economic Characteristics: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5 year estimates.

³ Oklahoma State Department of Health (2016). Oklahoma Teen Birth Report: 1991-2014. Retrieved August 20, 2016, from https://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/TeenBirthReport_061616.pdf

⁴ Office of Adolescent Health. (2015). Pregnancy Assistance Fund Annual Progress Report: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

⁵ Philliber, S., Brooks, L.P., Oakley, M. & Waggoner, S. (2003). Outcomes for teen parenting programs in New Mexico. *Adolescence*, 38(151), 535-53.

⁶ Sadler, L.S., Swartz, M.K., Ryan-Krause, P., Seltz, V., Meadows-Oliver, M., Grey, M. & Clemmens, D.A. (2007). Promising outcomes in teen mothers enrolled in a school-based parent support program and child care center. *Journal of School Health*, 77(3), 121-30.