



## Success Story: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

### *Overcoming Geographical Barriers to Meet the Multifaceted Needs of Expectant and Parenting Adolescents in Montana*

Developed in 2010, Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program was designed to improve the educational and health status of expectant and parenting adolescents and their children, with a specific focus on serving American Indian populations. Montana's teen birth rate for American Indians is 80.9 per 1,000 women aged 15 – 19 compared to the national average of 36.1.<sup>1,2</sup> Because Montana has a population density of 6.8 persons per square mile<sup>3</sup> with very limited public transportation, accessing services can be challenging for expectant and parenting teens.

Reaching upwards of 500 teens and young adults across Montana (including several reservations), the goals of this school and community based program are to facilitate self-sufficiency of expectant and parenting adolescents, build their parenting capacity, encourage postsecondary education and preparedness for the workforce, and improve the healthy growth and development of their children. To address these goals, program contractors address educational needs of participants to attain either a GED or high school diploma, and address at least two of the following: case management; referral and linkages to prenatal care and reproductive health services; quality child care; nurturing, parenting, and life skills education; and father involvement and support strategies.

The program has implemented a range of successful retention strategies, including using male facilitators to encourage male involvement, flexibility in communication approaches (e.g., Skype, texting, Facebook), providing on-site child care, and having “veteran” program participants lead group meetings. The program's Project Coordinator shared that the best retention strategy has been fostering trusting relationships between participants and the adults working with them. One program contractor noted, “We want to be the incentive.”

Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program has already begun to see promising results. Participants' prenatal care utilization has increased from cohort one to cohort two and the program has successfully secured partnerships with organizations working to achieve similar goals. The program is working with the Montana Office of Public Instruction to help program contractors connect with their local high schools and GED programs so they can increase the program's reach. The program is also partnering with Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies of Montana to provide outreach and training in high need communities on text4Baby, the Period of PURPLE crying, breastfeeding, and the Safe Sleep for Baby Crib Program.

#### **Contact Information**

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Ventura, S. J., Osterman, M. J. K., & Mathews, T. J. (2013). Births: Final data for 2011. National Vital Statistics Reports 62(1). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved September 6, 2013, from [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62\\_01.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62_01.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. (2012). Montana teen birth and pregnancy report 2012, trends in teen births: 2002 – 2011. Retrieved April 18, 2014, from <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/wmh/documents/pregnancyreport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Montana. Retrieved April 8, 2014, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30000.html>