



Success Story: North Carolina Division of Public Health, Women's Health Branch

Young Families Connect in North Carolina

Young Families Connect (YFC): Engaging Communities serves expectant and parenting teens and young adults in five counties across North Carolina including Bladen, Onslow, Rockingham, Robeson, and Wayne. Originally called Young Moms Connect, the Women's Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health expanded the program this funding year to engage and provide services to young fathers. The program was initially developed to address relatively high (compared to the state rate) infant mortality rates in the funded counties as well as teen pregnancy and repeat teen pregnancy rates that were higher than the state rate.¹ Furthermore, the rate of child maltreatment was greater than the state rate in four of the five counties in 2010, with Onslow County having a rate twice as high as the state's.² The program expanded to serve young fathers in part because compared to women, men ages 18-24 are less likely to have a postsecondary degree and the employment rate for men is lower than the state rate in all five counties.³ Further, adolescent fathers earn less annually than those who delay fathering and are therefore not as prepared to contribute financially to the well-being of their children; low socioeconomic status has been tied with many risk factors for children including poor nutrition and low-quality child care.^{4,5}

Designed to increase self-sufficiency, improve health and wellness, and improve parenting skills among expectant and parenting young women and men, YFC offers a range of services for expectant and parenting families. These services include providing financial assistance to complete the General Education Development (GED) test or facilitating continuing education at a community college or technical program. In addition, assistance is provided to help with securing employment, reducing child care costs, and providing transportation services to those obtaining a GED or enrolled in a community college. The program's health and wellness services include financial support with medical services, health and wellness training, and domestic violence prevention workshops.

The Women's Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health experienced impressive results with Young Moms Connect, including a 36 percent increase in home-based visiting participants who enrolled in a continuing education program or who are employed, and a 4 percent increase in high school graduation rates in the funded counties. Though the Division just began implementing the expanded version of the program for expectant and parenting men in February of this year, they are hopeful that with promising strategies, they will see equally notable results. Such strategies include using social media and public education channels to reduce barriers to existing services and promote healthy behaviors, as well as partnering with local health departments, social service agencies, lay outreach workers, faith-based communities, and domestic violence agencies to enhance systems of care to better help young parents become self-sufficient. This involves improving coordination of care and ensuring that providers understand the needs of expectant and parenting teens. Additionally, the program will implement a community-based needs assessment to identify community-specific support services for each county.



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Contact Information

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¹North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics.

²Duncan, D. F., Kum, H. C., Flair, K. A., Stewart, C. J., Vaughn, J., Bauer, R., et al. (2014). *Management assistance for child welfare, work first, and food & nutrition services in North Carolina*: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families.

³U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *American Community Survey*. Washington, DC.

⁴Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2008). *Teen pregnancy prevention and support*. Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved July 24, 2014, from <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/teenpreg/teenpreg.pdf>

⁵Child Trends. (2012). *Children in Poverty*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.