



Success Story: New Mexico Public Education Department

Making College and Careers Attainable for Expectant and Parenting Teens in New Mexico

Expectant and parenting teens face a range of challenges such as juggling multiple roles without co-parent support, poverty, risk of dropping out of school, behavioral health issues, and homelessness. Serving 26 sites across New Mexico, New Mexico's Graduation Reality and Dual-role Skills: Making Connections for Success (NM GRADS) is a school-based program for expectant and parenting teens that aims to address these challenges. The program encourages teen parents to stay in school, access needed services, become self-sufficient, graduate, and pursue postsecondary opportunities or employment. NM GRADS includes a host of services such as a for-credit class using 10 GRADS+ competencies, case management, home visitation, peer education, and on-site child care in 19 sites. New components of the program include supporting young fathers, college and career readiness, and early childhood/infant mental health.

NM GRADS reaches approximately 500-700 expectant and parenting teens each year and has experienced many exciting successes. GRADS Career Academies, which is comprised of inspirational speakers and opportunities to meet with career advisors, has helped expectant and parenting students realize their career interests, career pathways, and available postsecondary options. Additionally, ten NM GRADS sites are utilizing on-site mentors to meet the needs of young fathers, and the program developed an iPad-based questionnaire to identify the unique needs of NM GRADS students.

The New Mexico Public Education Department also partners with the New Mexico Attorney General's Office (NMAGO) to increase awareness about healthy relationships and teen dating violence through a statewide teen dating violence program. Approximately 2,000 youth, including NM GRADS students, receive teen dating violence presentations each year. As part of this effort, youth-led teen dating violence campaigns were launched in four school districts to increase the capacity of students, schools, and communities to prevent, recognize, and respond to teen dating violence.

In addition to NMAGO, the GRADS+ initiative has developed a number of strong state and local partnerships, including partnerships with the New Mexico Department of Health, New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care, New Mexico Forum for Youth and Community, school districts, school-based health centers, workforce partners, and early childhood programs.

NM GRADS has made a profound impact on hundreds of expectant and parenting teens. One of the GRADS programs shared a story of one student for whom the program made all the difference:

Rhonda has a two-year old daughter who is frequently ill due to her premature birth. Last school year, Rhonda was on the verge of dropping out. Her grades were low and she had many absences. The GRADS+ Teen Support Specialist (TSS) and teacher developed a strong, supportive relationship with her. They encouraged her to stay in school and worked with her to bring up her grades. The TSS also worked with teachers, counselors and school administrators to advocate for her. Rhonda is now a senior at her high school and is currently on the honor roll.



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The TSS helped arrange for her to take online courses so that she could stay on track academically despite numerous absences. Rhonda is planning to attend college after high school at New Mexico State University and wants to become an ultrasound technician. Rhonda is proud to be a mother and says her daughter is her heart, soul, and motivation.

Contact Information

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