



## Success Story: New Jersey Department of Children and Families

### *Expanding Comprehensive Services to Meet the Needs of Expecting and Parenting Teens in New Jersey*

The Parent Linking Program (PLP) is a program offered through Promoting Success for Expectant & Parenting Teens New Jersey (PSNJ). PSNJ has partnered with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families to identify additional PLP sites funded through the New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) which serves expectant and parenting teens and their children (6 weeks – 36 months of age) enrolled in 10 of the 67 high school program sites across New Jersey. Established in 1980, PLP was developed to reduce the barriers that impede the ability of expectant and parenting teens to complete their education, reduce the likelihood of repeated teen pregnancies, increase parenting skills to prevent child abuse and neglect, strengthen young father involvement and understanding of co-parenting responsibilities, and decrease intimate partner violence.

As a part of the PSNJ project, PLP offers an array of services to meet the needs of expectant and parenting teens. A critical component of the program is offering intensive case management services to connect expectant and parenting teens to coordinated comprehensive services that meet their ongoing needs. Furthermore, the program offers prevention oriented counseling, support, and education services to help parenting teens cope with daily living. Additional services include prenatal education and

parenting skill building, which are designed to help parents reach their highest potential including, experiencing healthy

births, preparing for family life, and meeting the responsibilities of school and parenthood. The program also offers childcare for a subset of enrolled teens on high school grounds or within a mile of the high school. The child care center is designed to be a safe, healthy learning environment designed to promote healthy child development through relationship building and a range of healthy child development activities.

Although the PSNJ project is in its first funding year, PLP has already made great strides. All of the sites have extended services from 10 to 12 months so that, for the first time, summer services will be offered to participants. With this expansion of services, there is no longer a waiting list for expectant and parenting teens and the program expects to reach 500 participants this year. Several programs have already seen an increase in enrollment of young fathers who are actively engaged and receiving services that are targeted specifically for them.



Children and their mothers playing. Credit: Parent Linking Program



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To help scale up for the expansion, the program has implemented monthly conference calls/webinars for program staff. The conference calls/webinars are focused on specific programming topics, such as case management, father engagement, and program implementation.

Additionally, the program has forged collaborations with several state and community agencies, including the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Children and Families offices of Early Childhood Services and Education, New Jersey Department of Education, and Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey. New Jersey Department of Children and Families is hopeful that these partnerships will continue to help expand and enhance the effectiveness of PLP's capacity and sustainability in the years to come.

### **Contact Information**

Lee Fowler

Program Coordinator

609-888-7583

Lee.Fowler@dcf.state.nj.us