



Success Story: State of Tennessee Department of Health

Developing and Utilizing a Teen Advisory Committee to Increase Awareness of the Pregnancy and Parenting Success Initiative

Shelby County Tennessee faces a higher rate of births to teenage mothers than the national average (15% compared to 11%). These teen mothers and their partners face a myriad of other obstacles: high rates of infant mortality and low birth weights, poor maternal health, high rates of abuse and neglect, and poor early childhood development. Reducing the high rate of teen pregnancy and births and improving outcomes for teen parents and their children demands a coordinated, comprehensive approach to providing high-quality, evidence-based services to pregnant and parenting teens and women in Shelby County. The Tennessee Pregnancy and Parenting Success Initiative (TPPS) provides health, education, and social services for pregnant and parenting teens in the Shelby County area through the following ways:

- Establishing group prenatal programs at area high-schools;
- Providing vouchers for resources that pregnant and post-natal teen mothers need;
- Placing outreach workers in high-need neighborhoods to promote the availability of services; and
- Encouraging pregnant and parenting teens to stay in school and participate in early intervention and prevention programs.

To help create effective communications and outreach materials for pregnant and parenting teens, the TPPS Initiative formed a Teen Advisory Committee with two stated goals: (1) to understand the best ways to access and communicate with pregnant and parenting teens and (2) to help create effective and powerful messaging for pregnant and parenting teens using teen-friendly language. When forming the committee, the TPPS partners recruited students ages 15 to 25 with outgoing personalities, who were willing to become involved with community projects and share their thoughts and ideas with adults. The project aimed to recruit a diverse group of teens, including pregnant and parenting teens.

After a series of focus groups were completed, the committee was formed with five “core group” members, consisting of four female members (one parenting and pregnant with second child, one parenting, and two not pregnant or parenting) and one male (not parenting). Over the past year the Teen Advisory Committee has accomplished the following:

- Assisted in selecting the official name for the pregnant and parenting teen initiative, **Teen Plus (Teen+)**, and developing a logo and other useful branding suggestions for promotional items.
- Supported program recruitment efforts. With the active involvement and suggestions from the Teen Advisory Committee, and along with other promotional activities, over 75 participants (approximately 23.4% of the stated goal) were recruited within two months from the official start of the program.
- Participated in a YouTube recruitment and educational video for the **Teen+** initiatives. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38SwwkXShS4s&feature=relmfu> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCHv4chZ4AI>
- Responsible for updating content for the **Teen+** Facebook page and web site to increase awareness and recruit participants.



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- Provided input and suggestions on how to recruit and involve more male teens.
- Participated in two health fairs to distribute recruitment literature.
- Served as “unofficial” ambassadors at respective schools by introducing teens to the **Teen+** program by word of mouth and the distribution of promotional items at schools and among friends. Committee members suggested that one of the best techniques for recruiting those who are early in their pregnancy is by “word of mouth” from trusted friends, like themselves.
- Hosted a community awareness event, “Flippin the Script,” featuring local author and teen mom Summer Owens. Three-hundred teens attended the event. The value of the Teen Advisory Committee has positively impacted the **Teen+** initiative.

The TPPS partners anticipate that the continued involvement and recommendations of the teen advisory committee will help raise awareness about the initiative to teens most in need of services.

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