



## Success Story: Washington State Department of Health

### *Developing sustainable local systems, changes in policy and practice, and providing training and information improves access to resources and services for pregnant and parenting teens and women*

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) partners with multiple entities to create a strong collaborative model that supports pregnant and parenting teens and women statewide. Washington DOH engages the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI), ten local health jurisdictions, the Attorney General's Office (AGO), and Within Reach (a community-based organization) to take a comprehensive approach to address the needs of the community. Each of these primary partners works within their own arenas to build collaborations. Each partner also cross-collaborates with one another to ensure that the support being offered to pregnant and parenting teens and women is multidisciplinary in nature.

Over the past few years a significant number of Graduation, Reality, and Dual-role Skills (GRADS) teachers in Washington State retired, which left a large void to be filled. Since few teachers have experience teaching pregnant and parenting teens, the void that developed had the potential of collapsing the support for many pregnant and parenting teens. As part of this grant, OSPI provides increased teacher training and support to the GRADS programs, which are in-school, secondary programs for pregnant students and young parents, both male and female. The trainings provided confidence and tools to the new teachers and ensured continuous, skilled support for the pregnant and parenting students.

The GRADS teachers and students also receive support from their respective communities due to the grant and the collaborative work between DOH, OSPI and Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJ). Each of the ten identified LHJs created stakeholder groups that meet on a regular basis. These stakeholder groups are comprised of representatives from a variety of disciplines. Through the partnerships with these stakeholders, the local health jurisdictions have been able to identify resources and gaps in services related to pregnant and parenting teens. These resources have helped to support the in-school GRADS programs and the youth who attend. One local health jurisdiction (Snohomish County) has created a blueprint that provides a framework for the supportive services needed for this population. All of the stakeholders are committed to this blueprint and to ensuring that the work outlined in it is accomplished, even after the grant funds end. LHJs are also reaching out to pregnant and parenting teens that have dropped out of school to identify specific barriers that keep them from re-enrolling. The LHJs will work with stakeholders to address the barriers that can be resolved with local solutions. Multiple grant partners will engage the appropriate state agencies to begin addressing those barriers related to state program policies and processes.

Through cross-disciplinary partnerships, the AGO partners with two state-wide coalitions to address intimate partner violence and sexual assault. These efforts have resulted in the development of cross-disciplinary practice guidelines for screening for domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking with pregnant and newly parenting women and teens. The disciplines covered in the practice guidelines are health care providers, domestic violence and sexual assault advocates,



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law enforcement, and prosecutors. Three communities throughout Washington are piloting the practice guidelines and are being evaluated to identify key lessons learned that will help others who want to use this tool. Through the development and demonstration process, several Washington State communities began new dialogue and relationships with community partners centered on the much-needed services for pregnant, parenting women, and teens.

WithinReach, a statewide nonprofit, has connected Washington State families to health information and resources for many years, but had never focused on the teen parent population specifically. Recently, WithinReach developed a new teen-focused website and public awareness campaign through this grant. The website, [WashingTeenHelp.org](http://WashingTeenHelp.org), was developed with input directly from teens and providers, including GRADS students and instructors. The site also links to the resources identified through each of the ten targeted local health jurisdictions. This year, WithinReach is planning to pilot a text message component to the website. Currently, the State Maternal and Child Health hotline is connected to the site. In order to better serve teens, the call centers will communicate via text messaging to answer questions and link youth to needed resources.

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