



Success Story: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Reaching Diverse Expectant and Parenting Teens in Wisconsin through Supportive Staff and Social Marketing

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, through its program InSPIRE ([In School Pregnant/Parenting Interventions, Resources, and Education](#)), is improving the education, economic, health, and social outcomes for school-age parents and their children across 13 school districts. Funded since 2013, InSPIRE supports the comprehensive implementation of Chapter PI-19, a Wisconsin law requiring school-age parenting programs to provide comprehensive services to expectant and parenting teens. Supported with funding from the [Office of Adolescent Health](#) (OAH), InSPIRE serves over 750 students in 37 high schools statewide.

The participating school districts were selected through a competitive grant process. The districts make local decisions about curricula and are required to offer key activities that include:

- Providing academic support
- Promoting post-secondary education
- Improving parenting skills
- Providing case management
- Building a local coalition
- Facilitating access to child-care services

Some districts implement evidence-based parenting programs such as *Parents as Teachers* or *Nurturing Parenting*. Others are building on existing school programs in place. InSPIRE helps these districts modify programming to ensure they includes evidence-informed components. InSPIRE's Project Coordinator Emily Holder noted, "We are working toward evidence-informed program improvements to challenge these districts to really dive into their programs to determine what components might be missing, and what they can do to improve."



Teen participant and child. Source: InSPIRE

Part of InSPIRE's continuous quality improvement is ensuring that services are delivered to those who need them the most. Currently, InSPIRE works with a diverse group of expectant and parenting mothers and fathers ages 13-20; approximately three-quarters of the youth served by InSPIRE are racial/ethnic minorities. Though Wisconsin's four-year graduation rate is one of the highest in the U.S., rates are much lower among racial/ethnic minorities.¹ Considering



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these local factors, and the low graduation rates among expectant and parenting teens in general,² there is a serious need for a program dedicated to keeping these youth in school. To ensure program participation, InSPIRE recently launched a social marketing campaign to recruit expectant and parenting teens who have become disengaged from school. The campaign's ultimate goal is to help these youth complete high school or earn their GED. Ads target certain demographics and zip codes and include messages such as "You can do this," and "Do what's best for your baby, graduate." When a youth clicks on an ad, it brings them to an [informational website](#) where they can learn more about the services InSPIRE provides and the areas served. When the youth clicks on their geographic area, they are provided with contact information for an advisor with whom they can connect.

Another element that helps InSPIRE accomplish its goals is the dedication of its staff. As Ms. Holder noted, "Our students are really an intersection of all of the social determinants of health, and our staff are there every day doing everything they can to help them succeed." Ms. Holder mentioned one school coordinator who chooses to be available to her students at all times: "She is on call 24/7 with her students. She'll get text messages at random hours for guidance and is responsive to their needs."

Ultimately, the program staff feels inspired by the teens' resiliency and dedication to completing school. Ms. Holder notes that participants are there because "they want to complete school. They want to increase their opportunities and those of their children. We frequently see multigenerational poverty, and they are looking to break the cycle."

Contact Information

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¹ Stetser, M., and Stillwell, R. (2014). Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School Years 2010–11 and 2011–12. First Look (NCES 2014-391). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved April 7, 2015 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014391.pdf>.

² Hoffman, S. D., & Maynard, R. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Kids having kids: economic costs and social consequences of teen pregnancy* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press