



# OAH TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM: SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS

## Mission West Virginia: Teaching Health Instead of Nagging Kids (THINK)

In July 2015, the HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) awarded 84 Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program grants, which are expected to reach 1.2 million youth over the course of the five-year project. Some of the grantee organizations, including Mission West Virginia, had been previously funded by OAH and are now building on earlier successes by expanding efforts to reach more youth in more settings with evidence-based programs. Mission West Virginia is collaborating with Community Action of South Eastern West Virginia (CASE), Rainelle Medical Center (RMC), and Regeneration, Inc., to replicate evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention education for youth age 11-19 who reside in the high-need communities within rural West Virginia Appalachia. Because of these partnerships, Mission West Virginia will expand its programming to include six additional counties and 40 new sites, nearly tripling the number of youth served by the previous grant.



- ▶ In 2015, Mission West Virginia was awarded an \$8.6 million, five-year grant award from the HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program to implement evidence-based programs.
- ▶ By 2020, Mission West Virginia expects to reach nearly 58,000 youth age 11-19 in 19 counties, where teen birth rates range from 32.0 to 81.0 per 1,000 females age 15-19.
- ▶ Youth are served in a variety of settings including alternative schools, group homes for foster youth, juvenile justice centers, high schools, and middle schools.
- ▶ The project actively engages youth and adults in the community through six Community Advisory Groups (five regional and one statewide) and seven Youth Leadership Councils.
- ▶ Mission West Virginia and their partners implement two evidence-based programs: *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* and *Love Notes*.

### About Mission West Virginia

Mission West Virginia is a non-profit organization that collaborates with public, private, and faith partners to build stronger communities in West Virginia. Through their *Teaching Health Instead of Nagging Kids* (THINK) program, Mission West Virginia takes a holistic approach to addressing teen pregnancy. The goals of Mission West Virginia's OAH-funded project are to positively impact the communities they reach by reducing rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. They also aim to increase awareness and access to youth-friendly health care services, provide positive youth development, and mobilize community members to become more active in the organization and the wider community.





Student artwork from a Love Notes relationship activity.



THINK educator discusses with youth how puberty begins.



Students make fun sculptures out of Playdoh to demonstrate healthy v. unhealthy relationships.

In addition to implementing two evidence-based program models, they engage the community through five regional Community Advisory Groups (CAG) and seven Youth Leadership Councils (YLC). The CAGs and YLCs convene a number of community-sponsored events throughout the year in order to foster positive youth development and reduce high-risk behaviors. Mission West Virginia's participation in a statewide CAG has played an integral part in their ability to expand programming, build support, and reach communities without duplicating services.

*"The role plays were fun and kept the class going. They got me to really think about what I would do in those situations."*

*- High School Student*

### Why It Matters?

The work that Mission West Virginia does:

- **Serves youth in rural communities with the greatest need.** West Virginia has the sixth highest teen birth rate in the country, which continues to decline at a slower pace than other parts of the country. In the state's rural counties, the teen birth rate remains higher than in its urban counties. West Virginia also experiences high rates of generational poverty and the social problems closely linked to it, including child abuse and neglect, drug abuse, and domestic violence. Mission West Virginia is serving rural youth with the greatest need by delivering evidence-based programming in safe and supportive environments, in trauma-informed ways, and with linkages and referrals to a wide range of youth-friendly health care services.

- **Reaches some of the most vulnerable youth.**

West Virginia had the highest teen birth rate in the nation for both youth entering foster care and in foster care at any point in time in 2012. Teen girls in foster care are two and a half times more likely to experience a pregnancy by age 19 than their peers who are not in care. More than half of all youth in foster care have had a child by age 21. Mission West Virginia is using OAH funding to ensure that all the schools and sites in the community they reach, including youth in foster care and juvenile justice centers, are receiving evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programming.

- **Plans to nearly triple their reach.** From 2010 to 2015, Mission West Virginia served 22,000 youth with OAH funding. They anticipate reaching almost 58,000 in the next five years by using OAH funding to deliver evidence-based programs to youth at 100 sites across 19 counties in the state. They will also reach youth through community-supported events, such as health fairs, teen expos, and an annual teen leadership conference.

### Mission West Virginia By the Numbers

- National Teen Birth Rate (2015\*): 22 per 1,000 females age 15-19;
- West Virginia's Teen Birth Rate (2013\*): 40.1 per 1,000 females age 15-19;
- Teen Birth Rate (2013\*) in areas served by Mission West Virginia: range from 32.0 to 81.0 per 1,000 female age 15-19.

*\*reflects the most recent year for which data are available.*

### For more information or to schedule a site visit, contact:

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### About the Office of Adolescent Health TPP Program

The OAH [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program](#) is a national, evidence-based program that funds diverse organizations working to prevent teen pregnancy across the United States. OAH invests in the implementation of programs identified as evidence-based by the HHS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review, and provides funding to develop and evaluate new and innovative approaches to prevent teen pregnancy.