The Young Parenthood Program

Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

The Young Parenthood Program targets young fathers and provides couples counseling and case management services to help support positive relations and a secure family environment.

About You

Location

- Project Street Address
- Project City
- Project Province/State
- Project Postal/Zip Code
- Project Country

Your idea

- Year the initiative began (yyyy)
  2004

YouTube Upload

Project URL (include http://)

http://www.psych.utah.edu/lab/ADOP/index.html

Plot your innovation within the mosaic of solutions

Which of these barriers is the primary focus of your work?

- Low self-value and stability leads to risky choices

Which of the principles is the primary focus of your work?

- Create stability and safety without condescension or judgment

If you believe some other barrier or principle should be included in the mosaic, please describe it and how it would affect the positioning of your initiative in the mosaic:

This field has not been completed

Innovation

Describe your program or new idea in one sentence.

The Young Parenthood Program targets young fathers and provides couples counseling and case management services to help support positive relations and a secure family environment.

What makes your initiative uniquely positioned to create change in your community?

The Young Parenthood Program is the first empirically supported program designed to help young fathers as they make the transition to parenthood. The program is based on three principles: (1) Most at-risk fathers want to remain positively engaged with their children, but some lack the interpersonal skills to make that happen on their own; (2) Working to develop communication skills and to secure the co-parenting relationship will help young fathers stay engaged and positively involved with their children, regardless of what happens to romantic liaison with the child's mother; (3) By targeting expectant fathers BEFORE their child is born, we use a "window of opportunity" when many young men are receptive to prevention programs and social support. We are well positioned to disseminate this program through schools and prenatal clinics, helping increase stability, self-esteem, and responsibility among at-risk fathers. By supporting young fathers, this program is designed to impact the social and psychological well-being of the current generation of young men and their children.

Describe how you organize and carry out your work?

Young Parenthood Program staff recruits young expectant fathers with the help of their pregnant adolescent partners, through clinics and schools.
Young couples are invited to participate in a 15 week program in which they are taught communication skills related to co-parenting and provided with case management services to address basic needs. The program is continuously evaluated by a research team, which allows us to assess its impact and ensure quality improvements. The program involves University of Utah students/faculty and community partners.

What is your plan to scale and expand your innovation into your community and beyond?

To date, the Young Parenthood Program has included 220 young fathers and their families. Over the next 3 years we hope to double this number, and disseminate the program to other agencies. We also hope to collaborate with the Nurse Family Partnership Program, hoping to integrate more fatherhood support into this exemplary mother-focused program. We are particularly interested in developing a program that can be delivered by teachers, school counselors, and nurses and that can be adapted to different cultural and social contexts. We have developed a series of user-friendly manuals to assist the dissemination process. In support of these efforts, we are currently applying for additional grants and working with members of the Nurse Family Partnership Program research staff. Our research efforts are essential to further establishing the credibility of the program. We expect that future funders, including foundations, community partners, and state legislators, will require concrete indicators of success.

What other resources, institutional, or policy needs would be necessary to help sustain and scale up your idea?

The Young Parenthood Program is growing faster than our ability to sustain it. We require additional staff support to help meet the demand for services, to process and present research findings, and to begin testing the program in other venues. We also would like technical assistance in learning to communicate with legislators and policy makers at the state and federal levels, as this would help support long term sustainability.

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Impact

Describe your impact in one sentence, commenting on both the individual and community levels.

Our impact has been to help young men develop the interpersonal skills to function as positive co-parents and parents, supporting their children's health.

What impact has your work achieved to date?

We are currently conducting a research study in which we randomly assign young fathers (and partners) to either the Young Parenthood Program or a control group. We then follow both these groups of young men over time from before their children are born to when their child is 16 months old. Thus far, our research findings indicate that fathers enrolled in the Young Parenthood Program report more positive relations with their partners over time, compared to fathers in the control group. Our findings also suggest that young men in the Young Parenthood Program are more nurturing toward their children and report that their children are functioning well, relative to fathers in the control group. This data suggests that the Young Parenthood Program is having a positive impact on young men with respect to their fatherhood responsibilities and their capacity to both co-parent and parent.

Number of individuals served

We have provided services to 220 young fathers and their partners. Because our program is fully bilingual (Spanish and English) we have been able to provide services to a diverse group of young men. Most of our current participants are Latino. Our greatest impact has been on the lives of these individuals and their families. Our preliminary evidence indicates that program participants are healthier and more psychologically fit to meet the challenges of adulthood and parenting.

Community impact

The Young Parenthood Program (YPP) has partnered with a number of community based agencies including the Salt Lake City and Granite School Districts, the Salt Lake County Health Department, Parents as Teachers, and the University of Utah Community Clinics. YPP has helped support these other agencies and institutions meet their goals by attending to the psychological and interpersonal functioning of their clients/students. If we can help increase stability among high risk families (through our fatherhood intervention) we expect to reduce unwanted pregnancies, reduce domestic violence, and reduce child abuse/neglect. Over time, we hope to disseminate the program to other communities and increase our impact.

Society at large

The costs associated with unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, and child abuse/neglect are estimated to be in the billions of dollars. Our long term goal is to reduce these costs, but more importantly to help at risk young men become more fully and positively engaged with society and to fulfill their roles as fathers.

What measure do you use to gauge your impact and why?

We use several well validated research instruments to assess: (a) the psychological and social well being of young fathers, their partners and their children and (b) the parenting and co-parenting behavior of young fathers. Our evaluation strategy is designed to assess the program's impact on co-parenting behavior (positive support, reduction of risk for violence) and parental functioning (responsible, nurturing father behaviors). Our research plan and assessment process is supported by the National Institute of Health and the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs.

Sustainability

How is your initiative currently being financed and how would you finance further expansion and/or replication?

The Young Parenthood Program has received funding through the National Institutes of Health, the Office of Population Affairs, the University of Utah, and several local foundations. We hope to receive more federal and local grants to sustain and expand the program. The expansion effort would involve replication in other contexts (such as Milwaukee, Wisconsin which has a high rate of young fathers). Financing replication would include collaborating with agencies and institutions in other localities. Eventually we hope to partner with the Nurse Family Partnership Program, which has acquired a great deal of expertise in the politics and financing of large scale dissemination.
Provide information on your current finances and organization:

Current Annual Budget is about $400,000. Most of the funding has been provided through grants. Most current funding is provided by the Adolescent Family Life Program in the Department of Health and Human Services. Additional support is provided by the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Psychology at the University of Utah. Local foundations and religious organizations have provided additional support to cover the cost of providing for young families most basic needs. We do not charge clients for our services.

Staff include:
Project Director (part time)
Project Evaluator (part time)
Project Coordinator (part time)
5 Bilingual Research Assistants (part time)
Bilingual Social Worker (full time)
2 Case Managers (full time)
5 Student trainees/volunteers (part time)

Who are your potential partners and allies?

State and local health departments (Utah, Salt Lake County and beyond), Nurse Family Partnership Program (Denver, Colorado), Prenatal clinics (such as those similar to the University of Utah Teen Mother and Child Program), Schools for pregnant and parenting teens, Universities (who can provide student trainees/volunteers).

Who are your potential investors?

Federal Agencies (SAMSHA, CDC, OPA, NIH), State Agencies, national and local Foundations (RWJF, WT Grant Foundation, R. Harold Burton Foundation).

The Story

What is the origin of this innovation? Tell us your story.

Twenty years ago, as a graduate student in Chicago, I witnessed the intergenerational transmission of serious psychological dysfunction. Sad, angry adolescents became sad, angry parents with sad, angry children. However, I also knew adolescents who struggled against the odds to find a way out of difficult situations, who sought support for deeply entrenched psychological problems, and who were able to construct reasonable lives for themselves and their children.

The Young Parenthood Program represents my attempt to both understand and provide developmental support to a highly vulnerable population of youth and children. My focus on young fathers is based on a careful consideration of the critical phases in development: I believe the transition to parenthood provides a window of opportunity for helping fragile families make a positive adjustment to parenthood.

Targeting the co-parenting relationship is a departure from the more traditional approach of providing pregnant and parenting adolescents with parenting skills and information about child development.

I became interested in co-parenting because: (a) my clinical experience suggested that a relationship focused approach would draw in young fathers, and (b) I believed that partners who were warm, nurturing, and affirmatively supportive with one another would be better equipped to provide an emotionally safe, “secure base” for their child.

This work is about the critical role of relationships in the development of adolescent/young adult men and how to target relationships in ways that will promote growth and well-being.

Please provide a personal bio. Note this may be used in Changemakers marketing material.

I am a clinical psychologist and university professor interested in programs for at-risk youth. I write and publish papers about young fathers, adolescent romantic relations, substance abuse treatment, and parenting. I have worked to develop my research credentials but have always remained closely tied to community based clinical innovations, such as the Young Parenthood Program. I am originally from Chicago, where I did my graduate work at the University of Chicago and Northwestern. I live in Salt Lake City with my wife and three sons.

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