

PROJECT BRIEF

The Young Parenthood Study - Milwaukee

Evaluation of the Young Parenthood Program: A Preventive Intervention for Pregnant Adolescents and Their Co-Parenting Partners

Background

The transition to parenthood is a difficult phase in life for many couples but especially difficult for adolescent couples who are learning to be parents at the same time that they face the challenges of adolescence¹⁻³. The Young Parenthood Program (YPP)⁴ is a flexible 8-12 week preventive-intervention couples-focused program designed to help pregnant adolescents and their partners develop the interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive co-parenting and parenting practices and to prevent child abuse/dysfunctional parenting. The approach focuses on the *couple* rather than the *individual parent* to strengthen the co-parenting relationship and improve communication skills, regardless of whether the couple stays together romantically. The YPP is *flexible* – working with each individual couple in the initial sessions to custom-fit the intervention to their particular needs and resources. We believe tailoring the program to address each couple's particular needs will improve the level of engagement.

Purpose

This study is designed to test the Young Parenthood Program (YPP). Our primary hypothesis is that YPP participants will be more warmly engaged with each other and function more positively as parents than participants in the control group.

Population

Approximately 100 couples

Eligibility Criteria

For pregnant teens to be eligible for the study, they must meet the following criteria:

1. Both the biological mother & father must be **willing to participate** at the first interview
2. Expectant **mother** must be **16-18 years old**

3. Expectant **father** must be at least 16 years \leq 5 years older than the expectant mother
4. Expectant mother must be \leq **25 weeks pregnant** at time of recruitment
5. Baby must be the pregnant teen's **first child**

Study Activities

Once enrolled, pregnant adolescents and expectant fathers will be interviewed and will complete questionnaires on risk and protective factors related to co-parenting and parenting.

Couples are then randomly assigned to one of the following groups:

1. Control Group: receiving “treatment as usual” through their prenatal provider.
2. YPP Group: receiving both “treatment as usual” and the co-parenting counseling.

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Follow-up research interviews will occur to assess initial adjustment to parenthood, quality of the co-parenting and parent-infant relationship, health of the adolescent, birthing process and outcome, the infant's health, post-birth contraceptive use (fathers & mothers), and educational status of mother.

Each couple's participation in the study will last up to 1 year after the baby is born.

Timeline

May 2010 – December 2011

Funding and Support

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Key Partners

University Wisconsin-Milwaukee – Center for Urban Population Health

Paul Florsheim, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Social Welfare & Center Scientist

Medical College of Wisconsin

Sheri Johnson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics

Aurora UW Medical Group

Jackie Tillet, N.D., C.N.M., Director, Aurora Midwifery and Wellness Center

Aurora Family Service – Family Therapist Training Institute

The Center for Urban Population Health is a partnership among the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Aurora Health Care, Inc. Our mission is advancing population health research and education to improve the health of urban communities.

Ann Marie Starr, L.M.F.T., L.C.S.W.

Center for Urban Population Health – University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

Melissa Lemke, B.A., Research Specialist

Trina C. Salm Ward, M.S.W., Research Program Manager

The project is also supported by a team of dedicated Research Assistants who are students from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

For more information, contact:

salmward@wisc.edu

(414) 219-4084

References

¹Florsheim, P. and McArthur, L. (2009). An Interpersonal Approach to Attachment and Change. In J. Obegi and E. Berant, P. (eds.). *Attachment Theory and Research in Clinical Work with Adults* (pp. 379-409). The Guilford Press.

²Florsheim, P. et al. (2003). Adjustment to parenthood among young African American and Latino couples: Relational predictors of risk for parental dysfunction. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 17, 65-79.

³Florsheim, P., Tolan, P. & Gorman-Smith, D. (1998). Family Relationships, Parenting Practices, the Availability of Male Family Members, and the Behavior of Inner-City Boys in Single-Mother and Two-Parent Families. *Child Development*, 69(5), 1437-1447.

⁴Florsheim, P., McArthur, L., Varela, A., Hudak, C. Gomez, Y., Heavin, S., Burrow-Sanchez, J. (April, 2009) The Young Parenthood Program: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence among Adolescent Mothers and their Partners. *Biennial Meeting the Society for Research on Child Development*. Denver, CO.