Bricks, Mortar, and Community:
The Foundations of Supportive Housing for Pregnant and Parenting Teens
The Core Components of Supportive Housing

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Introduction

The goal of Bricks, Mortar, and Community: The Foundations of Supportive Housing is to identify a set of core components for supportive housing programs serving pregnant and parenting teens and to identify case studies of programs meeting these standards. Articulating core components based on what we know ensures success among pregnant and parenting teens. The identification of the core components provides guidance for supportive housing programs to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting teens by providing the supports and resources needed to help them succeed. To achieve this goal, Healthy Teen Network and Child Trends employed strategic approaches, including: 1) working with a national advisory group consisting of partners in the fields of housing, child welfare, transitional living, and pregnant/parenting teen programs to identify a list of core components; 2) utilizing quantitative and qualitative survey methods to assess current supportive housing programs' implementation of the core components; and 3) developing case studies of supportive housing programs demonstrating strong implementation of the core components.

Key Terms:

Supportive Housing is a highly integrated system of living arrangements and professional case management services that provides pregnant and/or parenting teens a safe place to live, 24-hour access to caring adults, and connections to community resources. This system helps young parents develop necessary skills and secure resources needed to maintain housing throughout adulthood. Supportive housing programs can be more effective when young parents shape and direct their future in partnership with case managers and other key staff.

Case managers play perhaps the most critical role in supportive housing, assessing youth as individuals so that their unique needs may be met most effectively. Flexibility, individualization, nurturing, guidance through positive role modeling, and consistent coordination by one caring adult professional are key elements of case management services. While not all supportive housing programs may provide direct services related to each core component (defined below), all supportive housing programs should provide referrals and support access to services and resources in the community, making use of collaborations and partnerships. The case manager oversees, when not personally providing, access to these direct services. The case manager is the professional primarily responsible for creating an equal partnership with the young parent, developing a life plan driven and owned by the youth to help him/her transition to independent living.

Core components are the critical elements—supports and resources—of supportive housing that provide a skills-building foundation to help young parents develop self-sufficiency so that they may be successful and engaged parents and productive members of society. The core components are what make supportive housing "supportive." Programs that incorporate these core components are more likely to achieve desired outcomes. Each core component cannot stand alone to support independent living; rather the core components are complementary because each one builds upon the others, together making up the foundation of a supportive housing program.

Strategic Approaches

To identify the Core Components of Supportive Housing, Healthy Teen Network and Child Trends convened a national advisory group consisting of partners in the field of housing, child welfare, transitional living, and pregnant/parenting teen programs to identify critical elements of supportive housing programs. To generate the core components, the national advisory group completed the following objectives:

1. Agreed on a set of desired outcomes for pregnant and parenting teens upon "graduation" from a supportive housing program;
2. Articulated the needs of pregnant and parenting teens exiting supportive housing, to achieve these desired outcomes, in the context of a) Health and Human Services, b) Housing, c) Education, d) Workforce and Life Skills Development, e) Child Welfare and Development, f) Income Security, and g) Knowledge Development and Transfer;
3. Defined the supports and resources that pregnant and parenting teens graduating from supportive housing need to address the previously defined set of needs;
4. Delineated the essential organizational capacities for supportive housing programs to provide these services for pregnant and parenting teens exiting their care.

The national advisory group extensively reviewed and commented on the draft of core components, helping Healthy Teen Network and Child Trends to revise and finalize the resulting list of core components.

Background: Pregnant and Parenting Teens

After falling for several years, teen pregnancy rates in the United States began to rise again in 2005; this increase in the teen birth rate was sustained in 2007, yielding an overall rate 5% higher than 2005 (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2009). Currently the United States has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in the developed world, with a pregnancy rate of 84/1,000 women ages 15 to 19 (Guttmacher, 2006) and a live birth rate of 41.9/1000 women ages 15-19 (Martin, et al., 2009). Regarding subsequent pregnancies, there were 435,000 infants born to teen mothers in 2006 (Hamilton, et al., 2009).

The rate of teen pregnancy within the child welfare system is of particular concern, as youth living in foster care or kinship care (with relatives) are prone to higher rates of sexual risk-taking behaviors, including earlier age of first intercourse, greater numbers of sexual partners, and earlier age of first pregnancy than their peers not in foster care (Carpenter, Clyman, Davidson, & Steiner, 2001). Adolescent girls in foster care are 2.5 times more likely to get pregnant by age 19 than their peers not in foster care (Bilaver & Courtney, 2006), and half of young men, 21 years old, aging out of the foster care system report having gotten someone pregnant, compared with 19 percent of their peers not in the foster care system (Courtney et al., 2007). This does not mean that living in foster care is itself the impetus to these risky behaviors. Rather, the behaviors may be sequelae of their experiences prior to being placed in foster care, as the majority of children in foster care are victims of sexual or physical abuse, neglect or abandonment, or have a parent who is incarcerated or otherwise unable to care for them (Wertheimer, 2002). Currently, there are insufficient data to accurately report the number of pregnant and parenting teens living in out-of-home care.

In addition to higher rates among foster care youth, there is a high occurrence of pregnancy among homeless youth, with a national study reporting the pregnancy rate among 13-15 year old homeless girls to be 14 times the rate among non-homeless girls (Levin, McKean, & Schoggen, 2005). Females who reported being away from home for longer periods of time were more likely to report being pregnant (Thompson, Bender, Lewis, & Watkins, 2005). Among those who do become pregnant, 46% become pregnant more than once (Courtney & Dworskey, 2005). Elevated rates of sexual risk-taking behaviors were also reported, including initiating intercourse earlier, a greater likelihood of multiple sex partners, inconsistent condom use, sex while intoxicated, as well as survival sex (Levin, et al., 2005; American Civil Liberties Union, 2003).

While most young parents want to be good parents, the lack of available supports and services often results in a negative outcome for both young parents and their children. For example, after having a child, young mothers are more likely than older mothers to need public assistance and to experience disruption in family structures, even when the fact that young mothers tend to be from disadvantaged backgrounds is taken into account (Hoffman et al., 2008). Furthermore, the children of young parents frequently experience higher rates of poverty, dropping out of high school, drug abuse, incarceration, etc. (Klerman, 2002; Hoffman, 2006; Hoffman et al., 2008).

A recent study found that slightly more than one-half of young mothers received a high school diploma by the age of 22, compared with 89 percent of women who had not had a child during their teen years (Perper, et al., 2010). These young women are also more likely to have mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Panzarine, Slater, & Sharps, 1995). Pregnant teens are also less likely to receive adequate prenatal care, while they are more likely to smoke during pregnancy, be unmarried, have inadequate nutrition, and give birth to low-birth weight and pre-term infants. Thus, the consequences of teen pregnancy are not isolated to the mothers; their children are also greatly affected (March of Dimes, 2009).

While less is known about young fathers, they face the same risk factors as young mothers in their daily lives. Children born to young parents often have a unique set of needs which leave them at increased risk for repeating early parenting, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty among future generations (Meade & Kershaw, 2008).

Core Components of Supportive Housing

The core components are made up of the following supports and resources:

1. **Supports and Resources to Promote Self-Sufficiency**: Help youth to develop basic self-sufficiency skills, so that s/he will be able to transition to independent living, accessing resources and services as needed without the assistance of a case manager.

2. **Supports and Resources to Promote Housing Stability**: Facilitate attainment of affordable housing in a safe neighborhood, and continued housing stability and independent living upon completion of the program.

3. **Supports and Resources to Promote Financial Stability**: Help youth to work toward financial stability by facilitating educational attainment and employment at a livable wage, as well as financial literacy.

4. **Supports and Resources to Promote Successful and Engaged Parenting and Attachment**: Facilitate successful and engaged parenting skills, fostering attachment between parent(s) and child.

5. **Supports and Resources to Promote Healthy Relationships**: Cultivate a sense of self-worth and right to healthy relationships with partners, peers, family, and the community, as well as the skills to resolve conflict, solve problems, and negotiate.

The Core Components of Supportive Housing

1 **Supports and Resources to Promote Self-Sufficiency:**
Help youth to develop basic self-sufficiency skills, so that s/he may access resources and services needed without the assistance of a case manager, thus aiding in her/his transition to independent living. To do this supportive housing programs need to:

- Cultivate:
    - A vision of a positive future;
    - Self-advocacy, internal locus of control, and an increased sense of personal responsibility, rather than a sense of entitlement; and
    - Positive values-based decision-making.
- Partner with youth in developing, updating, and using her/his life plan that covers the major life domains (i.e., education, employment, housing, financial, family, and community).
    - An effective life plan process includes the youth in its development, in order to reinforce accountability and responsibility for her/his success, and a sense of ownership in her/his future.
    - Continued use of the life plan includes check-in meetings, celebration ceremonies, and everyday opportunities to interact with staff; a recognition system for good behavior; opportunities for responsibility in the home; and discharge planning, separate from after care, that allows youth to stay connected with the program after completion.
- Help youth to partner with their case manager to identify needs and how to access services, facilitating connections and access to community resources.
    - Help youth identify health services s/he and her/his child need, and how to access such services.
        » Health care includes general physical health care, sexual and reproductive health care (including and family planning), medication management, wellness planning (e.g., immunizations, nutrition, obesity, exercise, etc.), dental health care, vision and hearing screening and care, mental health care, and violence prevention (e.g., healthy relationships, domestic violence prevention, gang violence prevention, etc.).
        » Work with youth to prioritize preventing or delaying subsequent pregnancies, and HIV/STI prevention, as well as other risk reduction skills.
        » Work with youth to document health history of parents.
        » Work with youth to secure access to health insurance coverage.
    - Facilitate access to formal life skills training covering the basics of self-sufficiency and responsible living in the community. Skills include time management, stress management, decision-making, coping skills, multi-tasking, and prioritization skills, as well cooking, budgeting, employment, parenting, laundry, and grocery shopping.
- Provide peer learning opportunities and support.
- Recognize the youth as an individual, incorporating her/his adolescent developmental needs, beyond being a parent.
- Allow youth opportunities to "fail safely": provide opportunities for youth to make mistakes and learn from those experiences, with natural and logical consequences for their mistakes, without being expelled from the program.
- Facilitate access to spiritual resources as desired.
- Facilitate access to education and employment supports; safe, stable, and affordable child care; and safe, stable, and affordable transportation, which are critical services for a young person to become and maintain self-sufficiency.

2 **Supports and Resources to Promote Housing Stability:**
Facilitate attainment of affordable housing in a safe neighborhood, and continued housing stability and independent living upon completion of the program. To do this supportive housing programs need to:

- Provide financial support and facilitate access to housing support (e.g., assistance, vouchers, etc.).
- Function as a housing navigator to locate safe, appropriate housing.
- Provide a variety of options (e.g., group homes, scattered sites, etc.) to meet the needs of individuals.
- Provide varied levels of supervision and structure in the housing options to facilitate the experience of living independently while still in contact with caring, supportive adults.
- Facilitate access to moving help, setting up and maintaining utilities, and access to and/or provision of basic supplies, furnishings, and supplies for children.
- Educate and advocate with youth on landlord/renter rights and laws.
  - Provide education for landlord on tenant management to help resolve conflict and prevent eviction;
  - Educate youth on leasing options and legal rights when roommates are involved;
  - Facilitate communication with landlord;
  - Ensure tenant lease compliance (including on time rental payment), safe housing maintenance, and cleanliness.
- Upon completion of the program, facilitate uninterrupted, continued housing stability, including:
  - Facilitate transition to a new stable housing situation, in same community as appropriate, and provide assistance with securing furnishings and moving;
  - Reduce level of disruption with transition as much as possible;
  - Provide access to emergency funds (i.e., first/ last month's rent, utility deposits, utility allowance, etc.) to sustain housing for the short-term as needed; and
  - Help set housing goals and educate about the possibility of home ownership; educate on first time home buyer programs, if available.
  - Offer the opportunity to keep all furnishings and to stay in current housing after discharge from program–eliminating the need to move again after discharge from program—if possible;
- Facilitate access to education and employment supports; safe, stable, and affordable child care; and safe, stable, and affordable transportation, which are critical services for maintaining safe and stable housing.

3 **Supports and Resources to Promote Financial Stability:**
Help youth to work toward financial stability by facilitating educational attainment and employment at a livable wage, as well as financial literacy. To do this supportive housing programs need to:

- Facilitate access to education supports.
  - Work with youth to develop education and career goals.
    - » Work with youth to track attainment/progress toward education goals; provide exposure to education options; provide information about resources, services, and support that can connect them with education; and cultivate a positive attitude toward education.
    - » Help youth complete high school or earn a GED by helping youth stay in same school, or enter an alternative school, to best meet her/his needs: facilitate access to tutors or a structured learning program; and/or facilitate access to a point of contact for vulnerable youth, on campus.
    - » Prepare youth to engage in post-secondary education (e.g., college, vocational

school, job training, etc.): educate youth on range of post-secondary options and career paths; help youth develop a financial plan for education and access financial support; help youth navigate the application system; and/or facilitate access to tutoring services, job training, technical internships, and/or voluntary services.

- Facilitate access to employment supports in order to help youth attain sustainable employment, with a steady income at a livable level; facilitate access to an employment liaison, job coach, and/or connections to employers and/or mentors; cultivate hard and soft skills (e.g., interviewing skills, professional attire, resume-writing, time management, etc.).
- Provide legal assistance: educate youth on child support laws and how to access child support; help youth secure needed documents; conduct a credit check; and/or expunge juvenile records.
- Facilitate access to publicly funded programs, including food stamps, WIC, and support for health care coverage, etc.
- Provide education to increase knowledge and skills related to financial literacy: educate youth on credit cards, income security, rights and responsibilities; and help youth start a savings account.
  - Take field trips with youth to local bank and grocery shopping, as well as other shopping as appropriate.
  - Develop monthly budget with youth and review pay stubs and monthly bills with youth;
  - Develop short-term and long-term financial goals with youth.
- Facilitate access to safe, stable, and affordable child care and safe, stable, and affordable transportation (may include acquisition of car insurance, driver's license, state ID, etc.), which are critical services for maintaining financial stability.

4 **Supports and Resources to Promote Successful and Engaged Parenting and Attachment:** *Facilitate successful and engaged parenting skills, fostering attachment between parent and child. To do this supportive housing programs need to:*

- Facilitate access to prenatal/postpartum health care as well as to a doula or similar program for pre- and post-birth support.
- Facilitate access to parenting and life skills training (formal, informal, and on-going):
  - Facilitate access to safety training (including infant CPR and First Aid);
  - Educate youth to develop an understanding abuse and neglect;
  - Educate youth to develop an understanding of early childhood developmental milestones, and the knowledge of when and how to seek help;
    - » Help youth to develop relationships with pediatric care providers, cultivating the idea of parent and medical provider working as a team.
  - Work with youth to ensure access to child development and readiness to learn services for her/his child.
  - Cultivate an understanding of the importance of reading and talking to children and facilitate the young child's enrollment in educational program/school, and encourage parental participation;
  - Provide education on basic health and nutrition; and
  - Provide youth with opportunities to connect with other young parents.
- Cultivate parent/baby bonding, attachment (parenting skills) with opportunities for positive interaction.
- Facilitate access to structured and supervised opportunities both with, and independent of, youth's parent (maternal and/or paternal grandparents), as appropriate.
- Cultivate the belief that the youth can be safe, secure, and raise her/his baby:
  - Help youth develop a sense of realism as to how s/he is viewed in society as a teen parent, and how to navigate this (often negative) perception.,
  - Ensure that youth is in a position to stay with baby; for example, provide support to apply for sole custody and educate on legal rights as parents, including establishing paternity

through local District Attorney's office.
- Provide options for youth that cannot provide a safe and secure environment for her/his child by educating the youth on guardianship, adoption, and foster care services and resources.
- Facilitate access to education and employment supports; safe, stable, and affordable child care; and safe, stable, and affordable transportation, as these services play a role in maintaining engaged parenting.

5	**Supports and Resources to Promote Healthy Relationships:** *Cultivate a sense of self-worth and right to healthy relationships with partners, peers, family, and the community, as well as the skills to resolve conflict, solve problems, and negotiate. To do this*

supportive housing programs need to:
- Provide education to develop understanding of healthy relationships and educate youth to identify abuse, neglect, and trauma. Relationships include child's other parent, peers, partners, family, adults, educator, mentors, case worker, heath care providers, landlord, etc. Help youth develop communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills; provide anger and stress management counseling and mental health services as appropriate.
- Facilitate development of positive social network and organizational relationships. Cultivate supportive relationships with family or family-like individuals; establish relationships with healthy peer network; establish relationship with mentor, caring adult, or family member; established family connection with appropriate boundaries; social resources to call upon, in need; and connection(s) with primary care provider and pediatrician.
- Set house rules and boundaries that reflect those of the adult world; provide education and experiences to learn how to develop and maintain healthy relationships, as well as model healthy relationships.
- Work to engage both young parents, as appropriate.
    ◦ Facilitate access to couples' counseling, with education and support.
    ◦ Facilitate access to prenatal co-parenting classes to keep the father engaged.
- Help youth to develop an understanding of the importance of setting boundaries with her/his family.
- Facilitate access to education and employment supports; safe, stable, and affordable child care; and safe, stable, and affordable transportation, as these services play a role in being able to maintain healthy relationships.

Conclusion

With the support of the core components, built on top of and around the bricks and mortar of supportive housing, pregnant and parenting teens can thrive both as individuals and as parents. The flexibility, individualization, and consistent coordination by the case manager, working in an equal partnership with the youth, establishes a positive and responsive environment in which youth may grow. While a single organization may not be able to address all of pregnant and parenting teens' needs, collaborations and partnerships provide opportunities to leverage capacity and meet those needs. Promoting self-sufficiency, housing stability, financial stability, successful and engaged parenting and attachment, and healthy relationships provides a well-rounded approach to meeting the diverse needs of pregnant and parenting teens, helping them to transition to independent living .

Resources

Healthy Teen Network Resources

- Healthy Teen Network
  - The Core Components of Supportive Housing
  - Trainings and Technical Assistance or email Training@HealthyTeenNetwork.org
  - Helping Teens Help Themselves: A national blueprint for expanding access to supportive housing among pregnant and parenting teens exiting foster care
  - Promoting Successful Transition from Foster Care to Independent LivingA BDI Logic Model for Working with Young Families Resource Kit
  - Young Parent Video Testimonials
  - A Policy Platform to Promote Success among Young Families
  - Advocacy for Young or Expectant Parents in Foster Care
  - Gaining Support for Young Families: Mapping the Perceptual Hurdles
  - Supporting Young Fathers: Advocacy Resource Guide
  - Unique Developmental Needs of Children of Adolescent Parents: Advocacy Resource Guide
  - Another Chance: Preventing Additional Teen Births to Teen Mothers
  - Eating Well During Pregnancy for You and Your Baby: Fast Facts
  - Pregnant and Parenting Teens and Homeless Youth: Fast Facts: [link tbd]

- Advocates for Youth
  - Science and Success: Programs that Work to Preventing Subsequent Pregnancies among Adolescent Mothers
- American Bar Association
  - Adolescent Health
  - Youth Aging Out of Foster Care
  - Fathers in the Child Welfare System
- Center for Assessment and Policy Development
- Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
- Child Trends
- Children's Law Center of Los Angeles
- Corporation of Supportive Housing - Youth Supportive Housing
- Doula Project
- Funding sources for Second Chance Homes
- Housing Options for Independent Living Programs by Mark Kroner
- It's My Life: Housing
- Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, "Opportunity Passport" (Financial Literacy curriculum)
- Lighthouse Youth Services Training Institute
- *Moving In: Ten Successful Independent/Transitional Living Programs* by Mark Kroner
- National Resource Center for Youth Services
  - Power Through Choices: Sexuality Education for Youth in Foster and Group Care
- National Crittenton Foundation (also, developed a Healthy Relationships curriculum, "Within My Reach")
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unintended Pregnancy
- National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
- Nurse Family Partnership
- "Parents as Teachers" (Parenting Skills curriculum)

Acknowledgements

About Healthy Teen Network

Healthy Teen Network is devoted to making a difference in the lives of teens and young families. We are a national organization focused on adolescent health and well-being with an emphasis on teen pregnancy prevention, teen pregnancy, and teen parenting.

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About Child Trends

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at all stages of development. Our mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children, including program providers, the policy community, researchers and educators, and the media.

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