



The Bi-Monthly Broadcast

Greetings! As I begin working on the second newsletter of the Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program, it seems so long ago that we came together at the end of October. The contractor training was a great opportunity to meet one another, to learn about the work that is being done, and to hear about resources that benefit pregnant and parenting teens in Montana. I am looking forward to seeing the progress made by each of the organizations involved in the Program, and for the opportunities for us to learn from and support one another.

In this issue of the newsletter, you will learn about ideas for addressing the core service of flexible education, the Title IX rights of pregnant students, the work of the Young Parent's Education Center, and tax information for the upcoming tax season from Karen Heisler. Training opportunities are also included on the back.

With the upcoming holidays, it's a good time to reflect not only on our own lives, but also of those we have the opportunity to serve, support, and touch- young moms, dads, and their children. With your hard work, young families are empowered and emboldened to achieve their dreams, live healthy lives, and succeed as parents. Thank you for all that you do for pregnant and parenting teens and their children.

~ Kelly Hart, Healthy Montana Teen Parent Coordinator

CORE SERVICE: FLEXIBLE EDUCATION *Thinking beyond high school diplomas*



Obtaining a high school diploma or GED is vitally important for teen parents and their children for their future economic security, health, and opportunities.

One way to help teens focus on finishing their high school education is to get them thinking about the possibility of postsecondary education, whether that be an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, an apprenticeship, or vocational school.

At the 2011 Healthy Teen Network Conference in Pittsburgh, one presenter had the following ideas to encourage teens to think about high school and beyond:

- Look for online college prep or vocational options;
- Host former teen parents who are now in college at an event at your program to talk about their experiences in college;

- Host a career day at your organization;
- Plan a field trip to a college campus;
- Collaborate with the college in your area to put together an event for teens;
- Invite a financial aid officer to come and talk about financial aid opportunities for your teens;
- Utilize the Higher Education Alliance of Advocates for Students with Children website to connect with other advocates: <http://heaasc.org>;
- Locate college prep programs for under-represented populations;
- Ask your local school district to share their college guidance resources;
- Start a career library;
- Request free catalogues for colleges around the state; and,
- Talk to them about their life plans early!

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Contractor's Corner

By Linda Bennetts and Brittany Challinor, Young Parents' Education Center

The Young Parents' Education Center (YPEC) is a school-based community agency that works in partnership with Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) to serve pregnant and parenting teens. Our strong partnership with the school district and other community agencies has allowed us to serve Great Falls for over 30 years and is responsible for our continued success. YPEC's mission is to empower teenage and young adult pregnant and parenting teens to pursue educational opportunities that lead to independence, to promote positive parenting practices, and to provide nurturing developmental care for their infants and toddlers.

YPEC has three main service components to meet this mission: (1) Hands on parenting and prenatal education; (2) On-site licensed infant-toddler child care; and (3) Family support and community outreach. Our services are provided through easy-to-access, sustained daily and weekly activities in each of the three area high schools. Services for mothers and fathers that are provided in all schools include assistance accessing

and applying for services, weekly support groups and parenting education activities, individual needs assessments and goal setting, and educational/vocational planning.

YPEC is located at the alternative high school in Great Falls, but provides community outreach to all school environments upon referral (i.e. traditional high schools, middle schools, and GED program). Many, but not all YPEC students are enrolled at the alternative high school. This location allows students to be in the same building as their child during the school day and access immediate one-on-one support services from YPEC staff, while completing their high school education in a smaller and more flexible learning environment. YPEC understands that each individual has unique educational needs, and works hard to advocate for students who choose more traditional high school settings so that their needs can be



met within their chosen environment. The YPEC teen parent specialist/outreach coordinator works closely with school counselors and other school personnel in each school in order to provide intensive and individualized services within the students' environment.

If you are interested in learning more about our program please visit our website www.wix.com/youngparentscenter/edu. Or if you are looking into collaborating with a school district and want more information on YPEC's partnership with GFPS, please give Linda Bennetts a call at (406)268-6665 or Brittany Challinor (406) 268-6638.

LEARN ABOUT THE FLORENCE CRITTENTON IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

Quick Facts About Teen Pregnancy and Education

- Less than 40% of moms who have a child before the age of 18 have a high school diploma.¹
- Fewer than 2% of moms who have a child before the age of 18 get a college degree by the age 30.¹
- Children of parents who have not finished high school are more than 6 times as likely to be in poor or fair health as children of college graduates.²
- By 2018, only 10 % of jobs will be open to those who have not completed high school and 28% of jobs will be open to those with only a high school diploma.³
- Workers with some college or an Associate's degree earned 26% more than high school graduates.³
- In 2008, the median of the earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree was \$46,000, while the median was \$36,000 for those with an associate's degree, \$30,000 for those with a high school diploma or its equivalent, and \$23,500 for those who did not earn a high school diploma or its equivalent.³

Sources:

1. *National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*
2. *Commission to Build a Healthier America, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*
3. *Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)*

The Educational Rights of Pregnant and Parenting Students

Under Title IX, pregnant and parenting students have the following basic rights:

- Equal access to school and activities; special services provided for temporarily disabled students must also be provided to pregnant students.
- If a school has a separate program or school for pregnant and parenting students, it is the student's choice whether or not to attend; these programs must also provide the same opportunities that other students receive such as classes and activities.
- Schools must excuse an absence due to pregnancy or childbirth for as long as a student's doctor says is necessary.
- Students do not have to turn in a doctor's note to continue attending school or doing activities unless all students must do so.

To learn more about education rights and Title IX, visit the National Women's Law Center website:

<http://www.nwlc.org/our-issues/education-%2526-title-ix>

January Marks the Start of Tax Season!

With the start of the new year comes tax season. Here is some information from Karen Heisler of Rural Dynamics to share with your clients.

How Do I Choose a Tax Preparer?

Do you –

Use the same preparer you always have?

Look in the Yellow Pages for someone close to home or with a large ad?

Ask your friends and neighbors for suggestions?

Use an online tax preparer?

All are valid options – however, if you pay someone to prepare your income tax return, the IRS urges you to choose wisely. As a taxpayer, you are legally responsible for everything reported on your tax return, whether you prepare it yourself or have someone else prepare it for you.

Below are some helpful tips in selecting an individual or company to prepare your taxes. While the majority of tax preparers are knowledgeable, honest and professional, there are always some who, as the saying goes, “give everyone else a bad name.”

- Check the person or company's qualifications;
- Check the preparer's history;
- Ask about their service fees;
- Make sure they are accessible after the April due date in case you have a ques-

tion about your return

The preparer you choose should:

- Ask you to provide all receipts and records needed to prepare your return;
- Never ask you to sign a blank return;
- Have you review the entire return before you sign it;
- Sign the return and include their preparer tax identification number.

Where can I go for FREE tax preparation?

Free tax return preparation by IRS certified volunteers.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program or VITA offers free tax preparation for low- to moderate-income individuals (generally, \$50,000 and below). Most locations also offer free electronic filing. To locate the nearest VITA site, check IRS.gov, or www.MONTANAFREEFILE.org.

Tax Counseling for the Elderly.

The TCE program provides free tax help for people aged 60 and older. As part of the IRS-sponsored TCE Program, AARP also offers the Tax-Aide counseling program at more than 7,000 sites nationwide during the filing season. For more information on TCE, call 1-800-906-9887. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit [AARP's website](http://www.aarp.org).

A Quick Look at The Earned Income Tax Credit

- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families. When EITC exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim and qualify for the credit.
- To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they do not have a filing requirement:

2011 earned income limits for single taxpayers:

-\$13,660 with 0 qualifying children
-\$36,052 with 1 qualifying child
-\$40,964 with 2 qualifying children
-\$43,998 with 3 or more qualifying children

2011 Maximum Tax Credit:

- \$464 with 0 qualifying children
- \$3,094 with 1 qualifying child
- \$5,112 with 2 qualifying children
- \$5,751 with 3 or more qualifying children

For more information on the EITC, visit www.irs.gov

Upcoming Training Opportunities

Hosting an upcoming conference? Know of one that might interest those working with pregnant and parenting teens? Send an email or give a call so that it can be included in the newsletter: khart2@mt.gov or 406-444-9702.

January

OAH PAF Grantee Training– *Topic TBA*

January 24–25, 2012 • Washington, DC

February

Wellbriety Training Institute– *Mending Broken Hearts: Healing Unresolved Grief and Intergenerational Trauma*

February 21–23, 2012 • Great Falls, MT



Child Welfare League of America– *Making Children A Priority: Leading Change*

February 26–29, 2012 • Washington, DC

<http://www.cwla.org/conferences/conferences.htm>

Montana Office of Public Instruction– *6th Annual Indian Education for All Best Practices Conference: Understanding our Differences, Valuing our Connections– Building and Maintaining Culturally Responsive Relationships*

February 27 – 28, 2012 • Billings, MT

<http://wellbrietytraining.com/register.php>

March

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention– *STD Prevention Innovation: Solutions in the Era of Health Care Reform*

March 12–15, 2012 • Minneapolis, MN

<http://www.cdc.gov/stdconference/>

Center on Social Emotional Foundations in Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention– *Addressing Challenging Behavior: National Training Institute*

March 28–31, 2012 • Clearwater, FL

<http://www.addressingchallengingbehavior.org>

April

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services– *2012 Family and Community Health Conference– Connecting to the Community*

April 17–19, 2012 • Billings, MT

A Word About the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) Trainings

The Healthy Montana Teen Parent Program is required to attend three OAH grantee training opportunities a year, in addition to one annual OAH conference. A program representative must attend the training, and teams of up to 4 people may attend. While DPHHS cannot provide funding for contractors to attend these meetings, you are invited to attend if you are interested. Contractors hoping to attend will be selected on a first come, first served basis, with consideration going to those who have not attended a previous training.