

The Bi-Monthly Broadcast

The calendar year is coming to a close, and the grant year is nearly half-way through. It's a good time to reflect on all that you have accomplished this year and all that is to come in the new year.

In this edition, you'll find information about free tax assistance just in time for tax season along with recommendations and tips from the Institute for Women's Policy Research Student Parent Success Initiative on encouraging your participants to pursue postsecondary education. Your questions about the MTmechv data system are answered, and find out about an important stroller recall. We also hear from Harmony House in the Contractor's Corner. Thank you as always for your work supporting young families across Montana!



Wishing you all a happy and healthy new year!

~ Kelly Hart, Healthy Montana Teen Parent Coordinator

Free Tax Assistance—VITA sites

Tax season starts with the new year and there are a few options for free tax filing services. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites offer 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 Credit to Know About: the *Earned Income Tax Credit*— a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families. When the EITC exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim and qualify for it. To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they do not have a filing requirement:

# Children	Maximum Earned Income	Maximum Tax Credit
3 or more qualifying children	\$46,997 (\$52,427 married filing jointly)	\$6,143
2 qualifying children	\$43,756 (\$49,186 married filing jointly)	\$5,460
1 qualifying child	\$38,511 (\$43,941 married filing jointly)	\$3,305
No qualifying children	\$14,590 (\$20,020 married filing jointly)	\$496

For more information on the Earned Income Tax Credit, visit www.IRS.gov.

Contractor Corner: HRDC Harmony House

By Amy Ensign

HRDC Harmony House is a Transitional Living Program for homeless, pregnant and parenting young women, ages 18-21. The program can house up to 5 young women and their children. Residents may stay in the house for up to 12 months and receive an additional 6 months of aftercare once they transition from the program. The program's purpose is to provide a safe environment for young women and their children to live in while mothers learn essential life skills that will allow them to become self-sufficient and prepare for independent living. Harmony House is a program within District 7 HRDC and is located in Billings, MT.



Harmony House Staff utilizes the Positive Youth Development (PYD) Approach as its core program focus. PYD employs the philosophy outlined in *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth* developed for the Family and Youth Services Bureau. Harmony House recognizes that parenting youth have a powerful voice and they are part of the solution. The program focus is on helping youth parents reach their full potential by helping them to develop their innate skills, build leadership capacity, and to become involved in community.

Participants take part in life-skills training, parenting classes, peer support groups, budgeting and financial literacy and recreational activities and are required to complete 30 hours of productive time each week. They also attend the weekly dinner and life skills night. Program participants are required to be enrolled in high school or an alternative education program if they have not received their High School Diploma or High School Equivalency Degree. An Education Instructor is available on site through the Alternative Education Program to assist with preparation for the HiSET exam and provide tutoring for HS classes. Participants also receive job skills trainings and assistance finding and maintaining employment and may be referred to Employment and Training Programs in the community for additional resources and services.

We are excited to now be able to offer services to fathers through the "Pathways to Fatherhood Program". Fathers may receive case management, life skills trainings, job skills trainings, mediation services, and take part in support groups with other fathers.

To learn more about Harmony House, please contact Amy Ensign at aensign@hrdc7.org or 406-247-7888 or visit our website at: <http://www.hrdc7.org>.



****GRACO AND CENTURY BRAND STROLLERS RECALLED****

Graco and Century brand baby strollers are being recalled due to a problem that can result in severe finger injuries including amputation. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the model names being recalled are: Aspen, Breeze, Capri, Cirrus, Glider, Kite, LiteRider, Sierra, Solara, Sterling and TravelMate Model Strollers and Travel Systems, and their manufacture dates range from Aug. 1, 2000 to Sept. 25, 2014. Graco will be offering free repair kits for the strollers. For more information, contact the company at 1-800-345-4109 between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, or go to Graco's website www.gracobaby.com. Specific information about this recall can be found [here](#).

Encouraging Postsecondary Education

The Institute for Women's Policy Research has a Student Parent Success Initiative which seeks to improve access and graduation for low-income student parents. A recent working paper (Pathways to Postsecondary Education for Pregnant and Parenting Teens) provides information on programs throughout the country and some recommendations for programs interested in this topic. Below are the recommendations, along with some examples of each recommendation:



- **Provide quality, subsidized child care and wrap-around services.**

Example: Inform young parents about child care resources and programs that may be available for student parents who are enrolled in college, including campus child care where it is available.

- **Deliver a strong and consistent message about the importance of postsecondary education.**

Example: Incorporate messages about the importance of postsecondary education into all aspects of the program and train professional staff (e.g., case managers, teachers, and counselors) to engage teen parents on this topic.

- **Provide one-on-one guidance, counseling, and advising.**

Example: Offer one-on-one counseling about college options and direct assistance with college applications.

- **Offer intensive academic supports and opportunities in high school.**

Example: Develop individualized learning plans, track students' attendance and performance, and intervene with academic supports (e.g., tutors and mentors) and other supports (counselors) where needed.

- **Expose students to positive college experiences.**

Example: Visit college campuses to expose students to the college environment and introduce them to young student parents who successfully navigated the transition to postsecondary education.

- **Provide linkages to financial aid and other supports.**

Example: Link students to scholarship opportunities, including corporate and individual sponsorships in the community.

- **Provide access to family planning.**

Example: Through peer and one-on-one counseling, discuss the importance of delaying a subsequent pregnancy until academic and other goals are reached.

To read the working paper for more examples of the recommendations and to learn about other programs, download the paper here: <http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/student-parent-success-initiative/resources-publications>

Get to Know MTmechv:

The MTmechv data collection system, also referred to as "Mitch" is our new data system. This will be a new section of the newsletter, so if you have questions, send them to mtmechvhelpdesk@mt.gov.

Q: Mom is already in the system with a six-month old. She is newly pregnant. Where do I note this new pregnancy?

A: This new information would be included on the upcoming Update Form, when you have the opportunity to update the parenting status. Under "change in parenting status", select "Yes, new pregnancy." You may also wish to add a case note in the meantime in the client's filing cabinet; just select "HMTTP Case notes form" and add a note.

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

*Have training opportunities to share? Send them to Khart2@mt.gov *

December

National Indian Child Welfare Association—Positive Indian Parenting, ICWA Basics, Advanced ICWA

December 1-3, 2014

San Diego, CA

<http://www.nicwa.org/training/institutes/>

Native Wellness Institute *Adults Working with Native Youth Training of Trainers*

December 3 –5, 2014

San Diego, CA

<http://www.nativewellness.com/events.html>

January

Healthy Children's Center for Breastfeeding *21st Annual International Breastfeeding Conference*

January 12–16, 2015

Orlando, FL

<http://www.healthychildren.cc/conferences3.htm>

Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs *AMCHP 2015: United to Build Healthier Communities*

January 24–27, 2015

Washington, D.C.

<http://www.amchp.org/Calendar/Conferences/amchp-conference/Pages/default.aspx>

February

National Healthy Start Association *Spring Conference*

February 28–March 3, 2015

Washington, D.C.

[http://www.nationalhealthystart.org/what we do/spring conference](http://www.nationalhealthystart.org/what_we_do/spring_conference)



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