

## Executive Summary

As the number of teenage women giving birth at Toledo Hospital each year continued to rise, the Promedica Health System focused on finding a way to counteract the trend and eliminate its associated problems. Levels of child abuse and child neglect among this age group was high and many of the children born to teenage mothers were not receiving proper immunization and checkups for a variety of reasons. In 1994, Promedica founded Toledo Healthy Tomorrows. Participation in the program is available to any woman under the age of 19 who has given birth at Toledo Hospital, lives in the area, and meets certain financial requirements. The program offers support and education to the young women with the goals of increasing the level of health care the new babies receive and decreasing the chances that the young women experience additional teen pregnancies. To date, Toledo Healthy Tomorrows has helped 300 teen mothers, resulting in 300 healthy children.

**Organization Size:** 700 beds

## Program/Initiative Description

**Toledo Healthy Tomorrows:** For several years, Promedica Health System saw an increase in the number of teens giving birth at its hospitals. Also apparent was the fact that the teens giving birth in Toledo did not reflect the overall composition of the city. Approximately 48 percent of the young women were African American, while 48 percent were Caucasian. In addition, the majority of the young women were from the lowest socio-economic background.

When the statistics were released that Lucas County had the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state, Promedica Health System recognized an opportunity to take action and established Toledo Healthy Tomorrows. Any woman under the age of 19 who had given birth at Toledo Hospital and lived in the Lucas County area was invited to become a part of the new program, which provides support and education for the young mothers during the first two years of their child's life. Recognizing that teen mothers are at a high risk for abuse and neglect of their children for a variety of reasons, the program looked at ways to minimize the risk. Healthy Tomorrows was founded with the goals of providing support and education to the young mothers, reducing repeat teen pregnancies, ensuring appropriate immunization and well-care of the children, and reducing the volume of reports of abuse or neglect to Lucas County Children's Services.

Those facilitating the program soon realized that transportation was a major challenge for the young mothers in obtaining follow-up health care for their

children. Many of the young women were either too young to drive or lacked a means of transportation. With the goal of ensuring proper immunization and well-care in mind, Healthy Tomorrows began offering transportation to and from the doctor for its participants. Healthy Tomorrows health providers also made services available to participants in their homes.

Many of the young mothers also lack positive role models, so Healthy Tomorrows relies heavily on providing good behavior modeling for its participants through experienced parental mentors. The education and support provided by the mentors is a cornerstone of the Healthy Tomorrows program.

**Establishment of Program/Initiative:** 1994

**Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address:** A growing teen pregnancy rate in Lucas County, primarily among underprivileged young women, approximately half of whom were African American

### **Major Objectives**

- Reduce repeat teen pregnancies
- Ensure appropriate well-care and immunization of children born to teen mothers
- Support and educate teen mothers through positive modeling
- Reduce reports of abuse and neglect to child service organizations

### **Significant Results**

- Since its inception, approximately 300 parents and 300 babies have participated in the program.
- The repeat pregnancy rate for participants in the program is 4 percent as opposed to 9 percent countywide.

### **External Partners in the Program/Initiative**

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Ohio's Help Me Grow
- Birth to Three

### **Limitations or Problems Encountered**

- Establishing a good trusting relationship with the young women.
- Partnering with a state program has increased opportunities to grow the program but also requires more formalized processes and record keeping.

**Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date:** \$ 200,000/year

### **Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program**

- Gain support from the hospital administration and one to two key physicians from the hospital.

- Utilize the increasing body of data now available that home visits are successful in order to support the program.

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