

Parenting Adolescent Empowerment Model: Employing an empowerment-based group education approach to assess changes in the emotional preparedness of pregnant adolescents in underserved communities in Rhode Island



Denise Marte¹, Jordan White MD MPH²

¹Medical Student at Alpert Medical School, ²Assistant Professor of Family Medicine and Medical Science at Alpert Medical School

Background

Non-optimal parenting is defined in the literature as a form of neglectful and/or abusive parenting that can have detrimental effects on child development. These include psychological (failure to receive responsive care and have social-emotional needs met) and educational neglect (inadequate opportunities provided to learn basic language and cognitive skills). Children born to adolescent mothers have among the highest rates of suspected and confirmed early neglect. The **PREP (Parental Readiness and Emotional Preparedness)** survey is a 3-point screening tool validated to assess for risk of non-optimal parenting in teens¹.

In Rhode Island, parenting programs for teens, including home visiting services, are a great resource but often compete with school, work and other responsibilities. This hinders adolescent participation in these programs and thus the benefits they confer. In an attempt to address the need for more targeted parenting education within adolescents' schedules, a **six-week curriculum** on child development and parenting was created.

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| <p>Medical Student Facilitator + Pregnant and Parenting females ages 15-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of child development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal sensitivity • Parenting roles and responsibilities • Breastfeeding and Bonding strategies • Toxic stress and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stress management • Positive self esteem promotion in children and parents |
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Objectives

The mission of Parenting Adolescent Empowerment is to empower pregnant and parenting female adolescents to make informed, healthy decisions about their child rearing through child health and wellness education. Our program objectives are to:

- **Educate** pregnant and parenting teens about key health issues including stages of physical and socio-emotional child development, maternal sensitivity, toxic stress and stress management, and parent-child bonding strategies.
- **Provide** adolescents with a safe environment in which to address their questions or concerns related to childcare and parenthood.
- **Teach** adolescents how to avoid reactive parenting as a result of high stress levels and promote responsive parenting and healthy parent-child relationships
- **Create** individualized plans, including goals for stress management, parenting roles within existing family structures, and parent-child bonding.

Development

The goal of this project was to create a formalized curriculum about child development and parenting and test whether this educational intervention can lower pregnant adolescent's risk for non-optimal parenting as per the PREP screening tool.

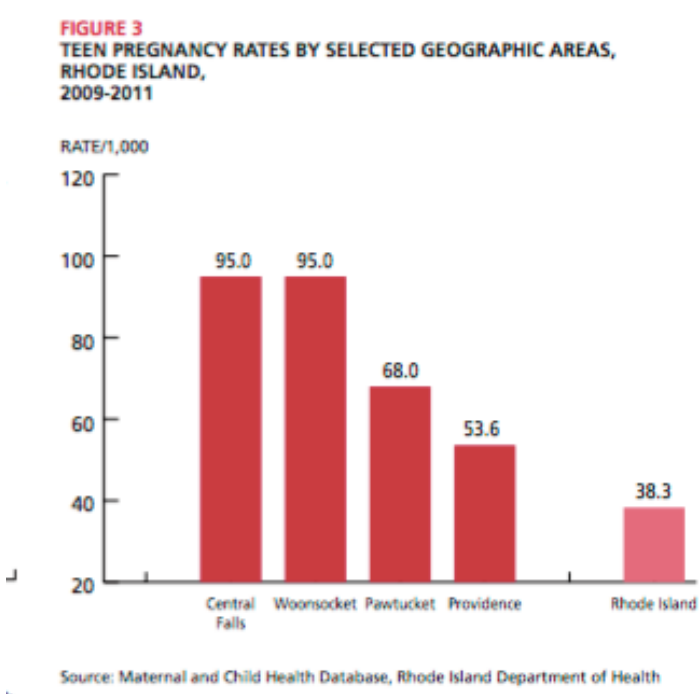
Steps in program development:

1. Collaborating with Nowell school nurse to create and finalize the curriculum in Summer 2016.
2. Piloting a version of the program in Fall 2016.
3. Recruiting additional facilitators to aid in editing and to maintain sustainability of the program.
4. Repeating the program in Spring and Fall of 2017 with further emphasis on qualitative data collection to assess for presence of empowerment factors in participants' lives and whether that influences PREP scores.

Population

The **Sheila S. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy** was founded in 2013 with the mission to increase the educational achievement of at-risk high school students in Rhode Island. There are two campuses in Central Falls and Providence. Both cities have among the four highest rates of teen pregnancy in Rhode Island. The Parenting Adolescent Empowerment program is being piloted in the Fall of 2016.

- 16 participants for Central Falls and Providence
- 10 parenting teens with children ages 4 months – 2 years old
- 6 pregnant teens



Model

Parenting Adolescent Empowerment is a 6-week condensed parenting curriculum taught in both campuses of Nowell Leadership Academy. One medical student instructor facilitates guided activities and discussion with 6-9 pregnant and parenting female adolescents for 6 consecutive weeks, during 1 hour sessions. **It features:**

- Objective Driven Curriculum
- Scripted interactive activities
- Focus on exposure to health topics as they relate to child development and parental sensitivity skills that promote healthy decision-making and optimal child-rearing
- Sharing of personal experiences among participants is encouraged
- Goal setting emphasized in every session
- Wrap up evaluations

Limitations

- Varied attendance rates among participants
- Limited time in Fall 2016 to gather qualitative data about empowerment factors in participants' current lives
- Difficulty with follow-up and tracking of adolescents long term

Future Directions

After the program finishes, we will analyze the differences between pre and post-assessment for individual sessions among participants in the course, as well as PREP scores in pregnant participants. A final exam will be administered to students in the course and to a control group at Nowell. Additionally, we hope to gather qualitative data via a focus group about students' perceptions of the usefulness of the course. Pending results of the pilot study, we hope to continue this course via further medical student involvement at Nowell Academy.

References

- ¹ Lanzi R, Ramey S, Bert S. The Parenting Responsibility and Emotional Preparedness (PREP) Screening Tool: A 3-Item Screen That Identifies Teen Mothers at High Risk for Nonoptimal Parenting. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2012;166(8):749-755. doi:10.1001/archpediatrics.2012.143.
- ² Jeffrey S. Geller, Eileen T. Dube, Glavielyns A. Cruz, Jason Stevens, Kara Keating Bench. Pediatric Obesity Empowerment Model Group Medical Visits (POEM-GMV) as Treatment for Pediatric Obesity in an Underserved Community. *Child Obes.* 2015 October; 11(5): 638-646. Published online

Session 1: Stages of Child Development

Participants will be learning about stages of physical and social/emotional development in children through the child development timeline activity.

IMPORTANCE: Inappropriate parental expectations of age-appropriate behaviors and unawareness of developmental milestones can increase instances of child maltreatment. Additionally, experiences of child maltreatment can have a negative impact on the developmental trajectory of a child.

Objectives:

1. Explain the purpose of the course.
2. Define socio-emotional development in children.
3. Correctly define developmental milestones for their appropriate ages.

Agenda

Topic	Key Messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program & Personal Introductions • Pre-Evaluation • Writing Prompt: What is the difference between physical and socio-emotional development in children? Do they usually happen at the same time? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowing stages of physical development helps parents act early and ask their pediatrician if their child has not reached a milestone when they should. 2. Being aware of socio-emotional developmental milestones helps parents be more responsive to the developmental needs of their children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up, goal setting • Evaluate 	

Child Development Timeline The table displays information from the CDC developmental milestones chart. The individual cells will be used as a reference for the course. Participants will be asked to correctly place them on the chart for the student book and share on the board with all of the other areas. From the program website: www.nowell-leadership-academy.org

Category	Physical	Language	Thinking	Emotion	Life Skills
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Motor Skills • Fine Motor Skills • Self-Care Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive Language • Expressive Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving • Understanding • Memory • Attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Regulation • Social Interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Responsibility • Self-Confidence
Social/Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Regulation • Social Interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving • Understanding • Memory • Attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive Language • Expressive Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Motor Skills • Fine Motor Skills • Self-Care Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Responsibility • Self-Confidence