



Tuning In to Teens:

Early Head Start's Relationship-Based
Approach for the Well-Being of Young
Parents

Presenter - Patty Marickovich

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Comfort Meter



- On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you talking with teens about the challenges they face as expectant parents?
- One = Not comfortable at all
- Five = Very Comfortable



The Challenges of Teen Parenting



- Social isolation: Most peers aren't parents
- Single parenthood: Most teens are unwed
- Economic insecurity: Increased expenses while pursuing education or career
- Dual development: Establishing self-identity at same time need to care for a baby's healthy development

Early Head Start Home-Based



Early Head Start (EHS) home-based is a federally funded program that offers high-quality **comprehensive services** to low-income families with infants and toddlers.



Early Head Start and Teen Parents



Early Head Start National Research and Evaluation Project

- Thirty-Nine percent were teenage parents.
- Two of the 17 programs specifically targeted teen parents.



Favorable Impacts



Positive impact on :

- Child development
- Social-emotional development
- Parent-child interaction
- Access to services



Reductions in:

- Use of physical punishment
- Negativity and aggression in children
- Enrollment in public assistance programs

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Making a Difference in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers and Their Families: The Impacts of Early Head Start*. 2002.

Home-based Services



- Promote secure parent-child relationships
- Help parents provide high-quality early learning experiences to enhance child's developmental progress
- Provide comprehensive services to child and family

Home-based: Unique Characteristics



- Occurs in home
 - where children & families are most comfortable
- Provides flexibility
 - services at times that are convenient to families
- Engages families
 - as child's first and most important teacher
- Supports families

Home-based: Unique Characteristics



Home Visits

- Minimum per year:
 - 46 for EHS
 - 32 for Head Start
- At least 90 minutes each week
- Occurs in child's home

Group Socializations

- Minimum over the course of the year:
 - 22 for EHS
 - 16 for Head Start
- Occurs in classroom or community facility

Building Supports to Win Teens



- Socializations – networking
- Intentional
- Parent meetings - flexibility
- Group activities tailored to address issues important to Adolescents and Teens
- Using technology to communicate and share resources
- Accountability is a two-way street

Why is Head Start Effective With Teen Parents?



- Provides strength-based, relationship-focused services;
- Helps teen parents balance teen life with parenting demands;
- Supports the development of healthy and safe relationships;
- Integrates services from a variety of community partners; and
- Services are culturally and linguistically responsive.

Relationship-Focused Services



It's All About Relationships!

Relationships: Critical Components



1) Time

2) Effective communication strategies, such as:

- Non-threatening questions
- Listen non-judgmental
(and listen more than you speak)
- Open-ended questions
- Avoid “why” questions
- Match emotional state (unless it is hostile)
- Model rational decision-making



Strengths-Based: Building Resilience & Hope



Resilience and hope are often strengths we see in teen parents.



Strengths-Based: Building Resilience & Hope



Testimonials:

“Young Families Early Head Start is the only place where I don’t feel like a criminal or the society’s screw-up. Young Families Early Head Start gives me the chance to make my mistake an opportunity....”

“Young Families Early Head Start has saved my life! Without them, I wouldn’t be able to finish school and pursue college.”

“Young Families Early Head Start has given me the motivation and means to finish high school and make something of my life....”

Source: Young Families Early Head Start, Billings, Montana,
<http://www.youngfamiliesehs.org/>

Strengths-Based: Building Resilience & Hope



“Young parents grow from experiences that repeatedly remind them that they are worthy and that their program partners care for and believe in them.”



Strengths-Based: Building Resilience & Hope



*“My main dream is
to give my baby
the life
I didn’t have . . .
a home, a family,
that I didn’t have
when I was
growing up.”*



Strengths-Based: Building Resilience & Hope



Resilience can be built by having a stable, positive relationship with at least one caring adult.



Strengths-Based: Building Resilience & Hope



Sharon's Story



Balancing Teen Life and Parenting



Turning a “me” thing into a “we” thing



Balancing Teen Life and Parenting



Use a research-based curriculum

In EHS, a majority of the programs, 57%, use one of these home-based curriculum:

- Parents As Teachers
- Partners For A Healthy Baby*
- Growing Great Kids

All three have a prenatal curriculum.

*originally designed specifically for teen parents

Balancing Teen Life and Parenting



Offer Services Prenatally

Balancing Teen Life and Parenting



Self-Regulation Skills Important for Teen Parents

- Persisting on complex, long-term projects
- Problem-solving to achieve goals
- Delaying gratification to achieve goals
- Self-monitoring and self-rewarding progress on goals
- Guiding behavior based on future goals and concern for others
- Making decisions with broad perspective and compassion for self and others
- Managing frustration and distress effectively
- Seeking help when stress is unmanageable or the situation is dangerous

Source: *Promoting Self-Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Practice Brief.* (2017) OPRE Report #2015-82

Balancing Teen Life and Parenting



Alecia's Story

*“...responding to his distress would make him a
“mama’s boy...”*



Balancing Teen Life and Parenting



Building Healthy & Safe Relationships



As many as two-thirds of teenage girls who become pregnant experienced physical and/or sexual abuse, either in childhood or in their current relationships.



Source: Serving Expectant Teens: Principles for Practice, Resources, and Curricula.

Building Healthy & Safe Relationships



- Positive peers
- Support father engagement, if appropriate
- Living with a family member, if appropriate



Comprehensive Services



Early Head Start is a Two-Generation Approach

Source: *Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Young Families: Two-Generation Strategies for Working with Young Parents and Their Children.* April 2015.

<http://www.nassembly.org/Uploads2/Resources/BreakingTheCycleOfPovertyInYoungFamilies.pdf>

Comprehensive Goals



Self-Sufficiency Outcomes for Young Mothers and Fathers

- Increase high school graduation/GED completion
- Increase completion of post-secondary education, vocational training, and/or employment at a livable wage
- Increase self reliance and transition to independent living
- Reduce/delay subsequent pregnancies

Developmental Outcomes for Children of Young Mothers and Fathers

- Increase age-appropriate physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development (and readiness for school success)
- Increase appropriate discipline, nurturing behavior, and children who are well cared for

Outcomes for Young Families

- Increase healthy relationships between partner(s), peers, and family

Comprehensive Services



EHS connects teen parents to needed services such as:

- A “medical home” (stable source of health care) for parent and child
- Prenatal and parenting education
- Comprehensive educational programs/work force development
- Family violence intervention/protection
- Mental health/infant mental health services
- Housing/shelter referrals
- Sexual abuse treatment
- Substance abuse education and treatment
- Early intervention

Comprehensive Services



Example: Teenage Parent Program (TAPP) in Billings, Montana

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive



39% of adolescents today belong to non-white racial groups. Population diversity is projected to increase in the decades ahead.



Looking over the Horizon

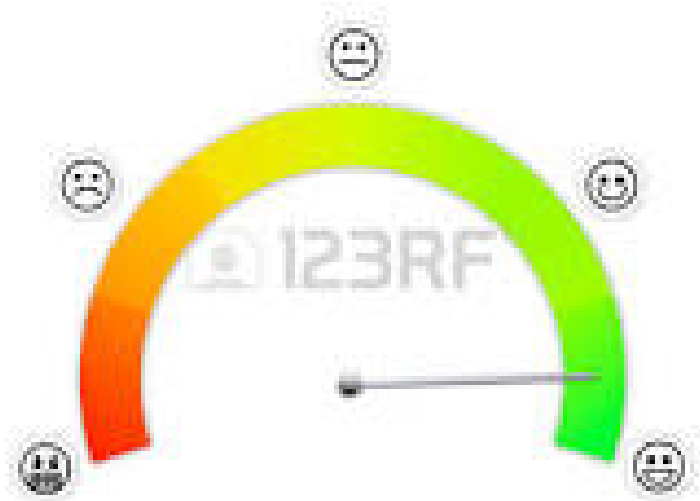


- What are some “ah-ha” ideas that you learned today?
- Jot down a few thoughts about what you learned which you want to incorporate into your work.
- Wait for next steps.

Comfort Meter



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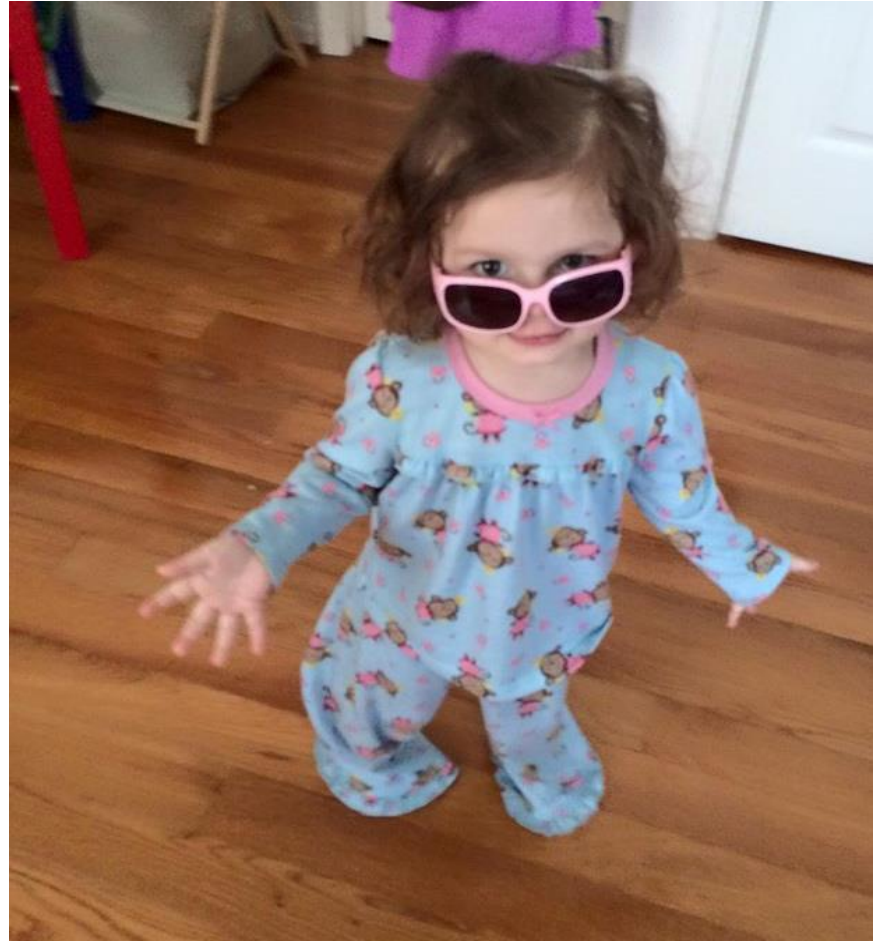


Questions?



Thoughts

Comments



Resources and Suggested Links



- A Healthy Baby Begins with You -
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/health-literacy-family-engagement/family-education/AHealthyBabyB.htm>
- Early Essentials Webisode 3: Expectant Families -
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/early-essentials-webisode-3-expectant-families>

Resources and Suggested Links



- Sensitivity, Screening and Support: Talking with Expectant Families about Substance Abuse - <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/comp/pregnant-women/SensitivityScre.htm>
- Prenatal Brain Development: Nurturing Babies in a Healthy Environment Webcast - 17th Annual Virtual Birth to Three Institute: Plenary B <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/brain-dev/WebcastPlenaryB.htm>

Resources and Suggested Links



- Maternal Wellbeing
 - Depression in Mothers: More than the Blues -
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/depression-in-mothers-toolkit.pdf>
- Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (ELOF)
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework>

Presenter Contact Information



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