



# OAH Pregnancy Assistance Fund Program SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Right from the Start (RFTS)

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Right from the Start (RFTS) serves expectant and parenting teens and young adults, especially those that are hard to reach (e.g., transient youth). Through home visiting services and group meetings, the program supports these youth in improving their parenting knowledge and skills and building healthy relationships.

## GOALS

1. Support healthy child development by engaging parents in positive parenting practices.
2. Support young parents in securing a high school diploma or GED, and/or otherwise furthering their education.
3. Increase children's school readiness at kindergarten entry.



## In Focus: Jessie's Story

Jessie\* was abused and abandoned as a child. By 21, she was pregnant and living in a homeless shelter—and participating in Right from the Start. In addition to helping her bond with her new son, her parent educator referred her to a program that helped her earn her high school diploma. Two weeks after graduation, Jessie was offered a job. She is now working and plans to enroll in college to ensure a better future for herself and her child.

\*Name has been changed to ensure the privacy of the participant

## PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

### Population

Hard-to-reach expectant and parenting young men and women (ages 13-24) and their families, with a focus on fathers

### Locations

Areas of Pemiscot County, St. Louis County, and St. Louis City with high rates of teen pregnancy, child poverty, high-school dropout, and infant mortality

### Partners

School districts, shelters and transitional living facilities, continuing education agencies, health care providers, early childhood centers, the University of Missouri

## STRATEGIES

### *Home visits from parent educators*

Parent educators visit youth where they live, starting before their child is born and continuing through the child's kindergarten year. Using the evidence-based Parents as Teachers model, parent educators focus on child development and on promoting the wellness of the entire family, including the parents' needs and their relationship with each other. Visits are generally twice per month and programming can be adjusted based on families' strengths, goals, and needs.

### *Screenings*

Parent educators administer free routine health, hearing, vision, and developmental screenings to children. These start within 90 days of enrollment and enable educators and parents to track children's developmental milestones. The program also offers all families screenings for depression and intimate partner violence.

### *Referrals to community providers*

Right from the Start staff have developed a network of relationships with local service organizations that help them find resources that meet each family's needs, from housing and job training to medical and child care. For example, young families may receive baby furniture, diapers, or nonperishable goods, or assistance in earning a high school diploma or high school equivalency, from partnering organizations.

### *Parent support group meetings*

Group programming helps reach youth who are transient or are uncomfortable with individual visits. They offer presentations on a variety of parenting topics, such as safe sleep, infant CPR, and nutrition, with some programming focusing on topics of special interest to fathers. Group meetings allow youth to socialize with others who are expectant or parenting, and some groups offer free babysitting to facilitate parent participation.

“ I have gotten the needed help with my children as each one had different needs. I have also made stronger bonds with my children, and my three-year-old daughter now loves to read books. ”

- RFTS program participant

## Stats at a Glance

RFTS (2015-2018):

**100%**

Caregivers surveyed reported strengthened relationships with their children

**3,000+**

Personal visits with teens and young adults in homes or shelters

**150+**

Screenings conducted with children for health or development

**200+**

Group meetings facilitated

**900**

Connections made to community resources

## Grantee Information

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## About the PAF Program

The Office of Adolescent Health Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Program provides funding to states and tribal entities to improve the health, educational, social, and economic outcomes of expectant and parenting teens, women, fathers, and their families.