

2020 Positive Alternatives Grant Program

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN CARRYING THEIR PREGNANCIES TO TERM AND CARING FOR THEIR BABIES AFTER BIRTH

Overview

The Positive Alternatives Grant Program was established in 2005 ([Minnesota Statute 145.4235](#)) and now provides \$6,714,000 per biennium to non-profit organizations promoting healthy pregnancy outcomes and assisting pregnant and parenting women in developing and maintaining family stability and self-sufficiency.

Background

In response to identified community needs, the Positive Alternatives Grant (PA) Program funds services and activities that support healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. Grantees provide a range of services and supports, and work in collaboration with other community resources. PA grants support healthy pregnancy and parenting outcomes through the provision of activities such as prenatal care services, nutrition education and parenting classes. The PA program funds activities and supports services that reduce the financial pressures a pregnancy may cause such as lack of medical care, food, or housing. The PA program assists women to improve their health by focusing on long-term solutions for self-sufficiency including help in achieving education and employment goals.

Positive Alternatives grantees are required to provide clients/women with information on, referral to, and assistance with securing necessary services to promote healthy pregnancies and caring for their babies after birth, or in making an adoption plan. Necessary services include, but are not limited to:

- Medical care

- Nutrition services
- Housing assistance
- Adoption services
- Education and employment assistance, including services that support the continuation and completion of high school
- Childcare assistance
- Parenting education and related support services

Grant Programming

The July 2016 – December 2020 Positive Alternatives grant cycle recently concluded. Thirty-four grantees provided grant funded services from 41 sites throughout Minnesota. One grantee (through a network of several hundred organizations) serves the entire state providing safe sleep information and cribs to families who do not have a safe place for their infants to sleep. In addition, 6 grantees provide rental assistance, and 2 grantees provide residential housing.

Positive Alternatives activities include educating participants on pregnancy and parenting topics that benefit themselves and their children and strengthen families. Medical services range from providing pregnancy verification to prenatal care. Eighty percent of grantees provide comprehensive pregnancy education along with material support such as maternity clothes and diapers. Parenting education, recognized as facilitating maternal bonding and optimal infant development, which supports positive parenting behaviors and childhood outcomes is provided by 86% of the PA grantees.

Grant Services and Activities

From July 2016 through December 2020, 32,177 women/clients received 400,942 separate grant funded services. A portion of the services incorporate the Maternal Child Health Advisory Task Force strategies to promote healthy moms and babies. The services and the number of women receiving them were:

- 9,261 women attended car seat safety classes and/or were provided a car seat
- 30,664 women received infant sleep safety education
- 11,597 women who did not have a crib were provided a safe crib for their infants
- 12,695 women received shaken baby prevention education
- 12,268 women received child abuse prevention information

Grantee Evaluation

Grantees were required to evaluate their program activity outcomes annually by tracking indicators and reporting the findings. The evaluation studies support quality improvement for funded services.

Highlights of Grantees' Evaluation Reports

- One grantee's evaluation project reviewed their life coaching program. Tools used for program evaluation included *The Perceived Stress Scale* and *The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure*. Clients committed to an 8-week coaching program and were measured on outcomes based on pre- and post-coaching surveys. Surveys included client responses to perceived self-efficacy, perceived stress and overall performance and satisfaction of the program. The evaluation results demonstrated statistically significant changes for

participating clients on each of the four outcome measures from pre-coaching to post-coaching.

- Another grantee evaluated their *Buckle Up Baby* car seat safety program by assessing the impact of their educational component and resulting client compliance. Results of the evaluation affirmed both the grantee's efforts in car seat safety education and for the importance of continuing a one-month follow-up education appointment to further reinforce the car seat safety education originally provided for the client.
- "Shaken Baby Syndrome" (SBS) is a component of most grantees' educational programming. One grantee evaluated their SBS program using a pre- and post-education survey. The session included using a model life-sized doll specifically created to visually exhibit and reinforce the adverse effects of SBS along with informative videos and materials on positive parenting. Through the evaluation, the grantee identified specific needs of clients including language barriers, low literacy, and education levels. In addition, the need for additional time for engaging conversations and questions with clients was confirmed through the evaluation.

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