

Minnesota Student Parent Support Initiative

PROMOTING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION COMPLETION AND
IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR EXPECTANT AND PARENTING
TEENS AND ADULTS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Background

The Minnesota Student Parent Support Initiative (MSPSI) was established in 2010 with funding from the Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148. The [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health, Pregnancy Assistance Fund](#) awarded funds to Minnesota through November 2017. The Initiative's goals were to improve the health and educational outcomes of expectant and parenting male and female teens and adults enrolled at Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), *e.g.*, colleges and universities. Expectant and parenting college students are also called student parents.

Student Parents are Non-Traditional College Students

Non-traditional college students are more likely to leave post-secondary education without earning a degree.ⁱ The National Center of Education Statistics defines non-traditional college students based on several characteristics, including being independent for financial aid purposes, full-time employment, part-time student status, delayed entry into post-secondary education, having one or more dependents and having a GED or other high school completion certificate.ⁱⁱ

Increasing the percentage of expectant and parenting teens and adults with a

GED/diploma and/or post-secondary degree is crucial because more education, employment and higher incomes are all closely linked to improved health outcomes.ⁱⁱⁱ

Program Goals

The Initiative's goals:

- For student parents to accomplish their post-secondary education goals (*e.g.*, Associate's or Bachelor's degrees, certificates, or diplomas)
- For student parents to maintain and improve their health, and the health and well-being of their children
- For colleges and universities to create policies and supports for student parents

Student Parent Centers

During the 2013-2017 grant cycle, nine IHE received \$4,399,227. These organizations included four-year universities, two-year technical and community colleges, tribal colleges and one private college.^{iv} Student Parent Centers delivered voluntary, free academic and health-related resources and services to student parents and their children.

Services and Activities

Program participants determined their level of involvement in the Student Parent Centers' activities. Centers' staff assessed program participants' health, academic and basic needs, and referred them to study groups, public health agencies, and child care referral

services. Optional parent education classes were provided and reduced student parents' social isolation.

Individuals Served

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the MSPSI served 974 unique student parents and 1,571 children. Eighty-four percent were female participants, 16% were male, 44% were single/not married and 27% reported being married. Thirty-nine percent of program participants were older than traditional college freshmen. Approximately 65% of participants who completed a self-report survey reported working. More than one-third of participants surveyed had their first child at 19 years of age or younger. Student parents self-identified as 18% African American, 10% American Indian, 7% Asian, 55% White, 4% as more than one race, and 7% were unknown.

Outcomes and Summary

According to data from the Institute for Women's Policy Research,^v students with children are especially unlikely to complete a certificate or degree within six years of enrollment, with only 33% attaining a degree or certificate. Program participants' re-enrollment is an important indicator for measuring progress towards graduation. According to MSPSI data for academic years

2015-2016 and 2016-2017, an average of 70% of the program participants re-enrolled in the next semester. Re-enrollment statistics, organized according to students' race indicate that:^{vi}

- 44% were American Indian participants;
- 68% were Asian participants;
- 74% were African American participants;
- 78% were White participants; and
- 62% reported more than one race.

Student Parent Centers offered voluntary health screenings for depression. Over 600 students were screened and 16% scored positive results; 100% of those were referred for diagnostic assessment and/or for care from a provider.

The Minnesota Student Parent Support Initiative indicates that student parent programs positively affect student parents' academic achievement and self-sufficiency goals, and helps to identify potential, significant health issues that may impede course completion.

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ⁱ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Equity. "White Paper on Income and Health" (2014).

^{iv} Century College, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Leech Lake Tribal College, Metropolitan State University, Pine Technical and

Community College, Riverland Community College, St. Catherine University, St. Cloud State University, and Winona State University.

^v Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2014. IWPR Analysis of Data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-2004.

^{vi} Students who graduated are not included in the numbers listed for each race. They were missing the next semester enrollment as well for the cross-tabulation.