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ABSTRACT

This evaluation of the New York Public High Schools' Infant/Toddler Care Program (ITCP) delineates staff and student characteristics and perceptions of the program. In 1987-88, the ITCP program, which has a dual focus of supplying early childhood and secondary education, provided 526 teenage parents at 20 public high schools with comprehensive services designed to help them complete high school. Data on the early childhood and secondary education services was collected through interviews with a sample of 64 student participants, and surveys and interviews of staff. Emphasis was given to ascertaining the staff's education and related work experience; staff perceptions of program strengths and weaknesses; student attitudes toward the program, and student perceptions of program benefits, strengths, and weaknesses. Findings indicated that student and staff perceptions of ITCP goals coincided to a great degree. Interview data showed that over half the students felt that participating in the program gave them a greater sense of the realities of parenting. Many students said their grades had improved since they entered the program. More than 90 percent of the staff rated the program as moderately to highly successful in improving student progress and providing child care services. The program was less successful in improving student parenting skills and preparing students for life after high school. A list of recommended readings is appended. (RH)

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April 1990

ED 318 559

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

INFANT/TODDLER CARE PROGRAM
STAFF AND STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAM
1987-88

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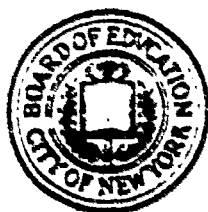
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SUMMARY

The Division of High Schools' 1987-88 Infant/Toddler Care program provided 526 parenting teenagers at 20 public high school sites with an array of comprehensive services designed to help them complete their high school education. While mothers pursued their high school education and received personal and academic counseling, parenting classes, and referrals for vocational and social services, their children received professional daycare at school or at satellite centers near their homes.

This evaluation report is based on three main sources of data: interviews with a sample of 64 student participants, survey data obtained from all program staff, and interviews with staff from a representative sample of seven program sites. The data collection aimed, on the one hand, at ascertaining the staff's education and related work experience as well as their perceptions of the program's strengths and weaknesses; and on the other hand, at discerning students' attitudes toward the program and their perceptions of its benefits, strengths, and weaknesses.

PROGRAM FINDINGS

The evaluation found that students' and staff members' perceptions of the goals of the Infant/Toddler Care program largely coincided. Both groups understood the program's primary aims to be for students to complete high school, become economically self-sufficient, and achieve these goals while assuring their children appropriate daycare.

Interview data showed that more than half the students felt that since participating in the program, they had a greater sense of the responsibilities, practicalities, and realities of parenting. In addition, more than twice as many students said they were receiving higher grades in school since participating in the program than before they entered it. There was a further suggestion that some of the student mothers may have benefitted from the inspiration and influence of role models provided by program staff.

More than 90 percent of the staff members rated the program as moderately to highly successful in improving students' progress toward graduation and in providing child care services. The long and stable tenure of program staff, unusual in a field characterized nationally by high turnover, probably contributed strongly to this success. The program was less successful in achieving the goals of improving students' parenting skills and preparing them for life after high school. Nearly one-fifth of education staff members rated these program components "not very successful," or "very unsuccessful." The lack of a formally instituted job training component in the program hindered progress toward the goal of economic self-sufficiency for these

parenting teens.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For both students and staff, the program has produced generally positive outcomes. The recommendations included in the evaluation report are the following:

- The component of the program dealing with parenting skills should be examined and revamped. Moreover, staff should be trained and hired to deal specifically with this very important aspect of the program.
- Job training and job-readiness training for students should be enhanced, expanded, and systematically incorporated in the Infant/Toddler Care program's goals. Since an important goal of the program is to enhance students' self-sufficiency once they finish high school, it seems that the absence of a job readiness/training component is a serious shortcoming of the program.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE ISSUE

The Infant/Toddler Care program is a contemporary response to the problem of teen pregnancy which tries to ease the consequences of teen parenting for mothers and their children. First implemented in 1982-83, the program provides pregnant/parenting teenagers with a range of comprehensive services to help them complete their high school education. Previous attempts to deal with this problem rarely integrated schooling with other necessary services. Before 1972, when the Federal Education Amendments prohibited discrimination against pregnant and parenting students, many such students were allowed to quietly leave school or were expelled outright. In some systems, schools for pregnant girls or "home instruction" were available; after giving birth, however, the new mothers were generally given no special consideration in terms of class load, scheduling, health needs and so forth. Consequently, many simply dropped out.

After 1972 there developed two basic approaches to the education of pregnant/parenting teens: the "inclusive" and "exclusive" approaches (Zellman 1981, 1982). Students attended either general purpose high schools which included all students, or self-contained schools exclusively for pregnant and newly parenting teens. In New York City, the first special school for pregnant and parenting students was established in 1965; there

are now five such schools (designated P-900) located in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.*

In addition, New York City has a system of alternative high schools for "at risk" students, of whom pregnant and parenting teens comprise one significant component.** These alternative schools are smaller than the other high schools, and attempt to keep students in school and working toward graduation by providing additional counseling, smaller classes, more flexibility, and more individualized help with school work.

As the incidence of teen pregnancy increased during the 1970s and 1980s, new approaches to the problem were sought. Research pointed clearly to the intersection of teen pregnancy, dropping out of school, and poverty. Studies found that school-age mothers are twice as likely to drop out of school as similar women who postpone childbearing until their 20s (Card and Wise, 1983, p.199), and that 50 to 60 percent of all female dropouts are or soon will be pregnant (McGee and Archer, 1989). In 1985, 63 percent of New York City adolescents who gave birth had not yet completed high school (New York City, Mayor's Office on Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services). Undereducated, and often single, such women face a future of welfare dependency, unemployment, or at best underemployment. The long-term social,

* An alternative high school in Richmond provides similar services as the P-900 schools, but is not officially designated as such.

** "At risk" students are identified/defined by attendance and lateness problems, poor grades, and so forth.

economic, and health care costs are devastating for themselves, their children, and society at large.

The Infant/Toddler Care program is an attempt to break this negative cycle and keep options open for pregnant/parenting students by making it easier for them to stay in school. The school itself becomes the locus of efforts toward this end through the provision of such program services as: pregnancy prevention interventions, academic counseling, health care for mothers and children, the enhancement of parenting skills, job readiness and/or job training, and social services including housing, public assistance, and child care.

Since its inception, the Infant/Toddler Care program has been funded by a combination of federal, state and tax-levy monies. A number of sites are partially funded by the New York City Human Resources Administration (H.R.A.) through its Family and Children's Services Agency (FACSA). The 1987-88 program budget, obtained through direct allocations from the Division of High Schools, was approximately \$2.5 million.

The Infant/Toddler Care program is administered by the Office of Alternative High Schools and Special Programs, and is directly supervised by the acting director of the Office of Adolescent Parenting Programs. In addition, two of the four main components of the program, the Hotel and Satellite Day Care projects (see below), have project coordinators responsible for implementation.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

For the 1987-88 school year, the Infant/Toddler Care program consisted of four elements: Living for the Young Family Through Education (LYFE) and satellite sites, both of which provided infant/toddler care; the LYFE hotel project, which provided referrals to other program components; and LYFEbrary, which made books and materials available to parenting teens.

LYFE Hotel Project

The dramatic increase in the number of people living in single-room-occupancy (S.R.O.) hotels over the past 10 years has contributed to the development of the LYFE hotel project. The hotel project is different from other Infant/Toddler Care program components in that it does not include day care; in theory, its goals are merely to identify and refer prospective students to the appropriate program, a task that is complete when a student enrolls in an educational institution. In practice, hotel project staff members provide a wide range of services (e.g., social service referrals, counseling, weekly rap sessions) in addition to referral.

LYFEbrary

Established in 1983-84, LYFEbrary is a central toy-lending library for LYFE teenage parents. LYFEbrary was designed to serve two purposes: 1) to enhance program participants'

parenting skills; and 2) to provide early childhood educational supplies and equipment to the LYFE sites.

Satellite Day Care Sites

The satellite day care program component was implemented in 1984-85 to provide home-based, or "satellite," day care for parents who are enrolled at LYFE sites that do not have on-site day care. Satellite care is provided in the homes of Family Day Care (F.D.C.) providers who are licensed by the state of New York. The first satellite program site was established in 1984-85 at Andrew Jackson High School. Seven F.D.C. providers cared for 12 program children (as well as for a number of children whose parents were not registered in LYFE). In 1987-88 the Andrew Jackson site was still operational, with 10 F.D.C. providers caring for 17 children.*

LYFE Sites

LYFE provides a variety of services to teenage parents in New York City public high schools: on-site day care; parenting classes; adult basic education classes; social service referrals; support groups; and counseling.

The number of sites has risen exponentially since the program's inception: In 1982-83, there were only two LYFE sites in the New York City public school system, serving a total of 67

*John Jay High School's LYFE site used both on-site and satellite day care during the 1987-88 school year.

teenage parents; during the 1987-88 school year there were 20 sites, serving 526 teenage parents.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In 1987-88 the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) conducted an evaluation of the LYFE sites, LYFEbrary, and the LYFE hotel project. The evaluation team interviewed a representative sample of 1987-88 Infant/Toddler Care program student participants. Moreover, additional staff data were obtained through surveys sent to all program staff. The sample was selected to reflect the diversity of educational and day care options, as well as geographic locations.

The representative sample of sites where staff and student interview data were collected are:

- Bronx Outreach Project;
- P911/Center for Continued Education;
- High School Redirection;
- Sadie American Offsite Educational Services;
- Satellite Academy High School;
- William Howard Taft High School; and
- Upper Manhattan Outreach Project/West Side High School.

Collection of student data focused primarily on student's perceptions of their school achievement, attitudes concerning program child-care services, the program's impact on their parenting attitudes and behavior, and their plans and goals once they leave the program. All student data cited in this report

are based on the representative sample interviewed by the OREA evaluation team. The reader should bear this in mind when reviewing these data.*

Collection of staff data aimed at ascertaining the staffs' education and related work experience as well as their perceptions of the program's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, ORLA gathered more detailed data specific to the two main teams that comprise the staff: the social work team and the education team. The social work team, which includes a social worker and a family paraprofessional (family para), provides counseling and secures social services for the student mothers. OREA asked social work teams about their perceptions of the students' social service and counseling needs and their efforts to meet these needs. The education team, consisting of the early childhood education teacher and education paraprofessionals (ed paras), works primarily with infants and toddlers. OREA asked education teams about their perceptions of and strategies for the children's development while in the Infant/Toddler Care program.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report examines certain demographic characteristics of the Infant/Toddler Care program staff and participants, and some of their perceptions of the program. Chapter I of this report describes the background and major components of the program.

* The 1987-88 Outcomes Report for the Infant/Toddler Care program's LYFE and Satellite sites is based on a statistical analysis of all 526 participants in the 1987-88 LYFE Program.

Chapter II offers a demographic portrait of a sample of 1987-88 Infant/Toddler Care program students, with comparable data from national and local studies. Chapter III presents the students' perceptions of the Infant/Toddler Care program and its impact on them. Chapter IV gives a career profile of program staff members and examines their perceptions of the major services of the program. Chapter V compares staff and student findings, compares program goals with evaluation findings, and makes recommendations. Finally, a listing of recommended readings related to pregnant/parenting teens appears in Appendix A.

II. PROGRAM SAMPLE STUDENT PROFILE

Sixty-four student participants of the Infant/Toddler Care program were interviewed during the spring 1988 school term. Their ages ranged from 15 to 22; their median age was nearly 18 with more 17 year old participants than any other age.* In addition, there were 12 students in the sample who were older than 19 (the cutoff for teen mothers) at the time the data were collected. The modal age at which sample students' first child was born was 16, the mean, 16.5 years.

Sample students' average length of time in the LYFE program was around one year ($x = 11$ months); their modal tenure in the program was 12 months. Nineteen percent of the students interviewed had participated in the program for more than one year.

In order to get some sense of the structure and stability of their living situations, students were queried about the number of adults with whom they lived. Their answers indicated that 45 respondents (70 percent) lived with their mother and/or father, and often with other relatives. "Other relatives" frequently included grandparents; husbands were mentioned five times. Only three of the respondents (less than five percent) said they were the sole adult heads of their households. A related issue concerns how often these young mothers and their babies moved

* See the Infant/Toddler Care program LYFE and Satellite Sites' Student Outcomes Report, 1987-88, for data based on all program participants.

from one residence to another. Among the 56 students (88 percent of the sample) who answered this question, a considerable degree of stability was found: 42 students (75 percent of the respondents) had not moved at all in the preceding year, and another 12 (21 percent) had moved only once.

REPEAT PREGNANCY RATE

One of the important goals of most programs for pregnant and parenting teens around the country, including the Infant/Toddler Care program, is to reduce the rate at which participants become pregnant a second time. Most advocates agree that, for a teen mother, a second child drastically compounds the already serious problems posed by the first pregnancy and baby. Only seven students (11 percent) said they had become pregnant and/or had a baby since joining the Infant/Toddler Care program. This is much lower than the national average of approximately 50 percent repeat pregnancies for teen mothers within two years of their first births (Polit-O'Hara, et. al., 1984). However, because the mean age at which sample students had their first babies was 16.5 and their mean age at the interview was 18, it is not possible to tell whether the low repeat pregnancy rate is a consequence of program participation or the relatively short interval between the first child's birth and the time of the interview.

III. STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFANT/TODDLER CARE PROGRAM

Questions about students' impressions of, and attitudes toward the Infant/Toddler Care program focused on several basic issues:

- Their sense of the program's goals and purposes;
- The program's effects on their academic achievement;
- Their life goals;
- Their own roles as parents;
- Their impressions of the program's child care services.

STUDENTS' SENSE OF PROGRAM GOALS AND PURPOSES

Infant/Toddler Care program students shared a largely accurate sense of the program's goals and purposes. The overwhelming majority (87 percent; N=62) said that they had previously discussed the program's goals with a staff person. The students most frequently mentioned either that the program's objective was to help them stay in school (N=37; 47 percent) or, to a lesser extent, that the program aimed to help them care for their babies (N=25; 32 percent).

PERCEIVED EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

OREA queried participating teen mothers about their sense of success in school before and after entering the Infant/Toddler Care program. A large proportion of the students said they are doing better after participating in the program than they were

before entering it. Whereas only 12 percent of the respondents reported that they were getting grades above 80 percent before they entered the program, 28 percent of the respondents indicated that they were receiving grades in this range after entering the Infant/Toddler Care Program.

FUTURE PLANS

Students were asked about the likelihood of their completing high school and their plans for after high school. Given that so many students reported grade improvement, it is not surprising that 93 percent of the respondents expect to graduate. Of the 57 respondents to this question, only two said they did not expect to graduate, and two were "not sure." Nearly all the students (N=58; 91 percent), said that they had thought about what they would be doing after they leave the program. However, 15 of those responding to this item said they never discussed their goals and plans for after high school with anyone in the Infant/Toddler Care program. Most students' future plans included either "work" (42 percent) or "college" (58 percent). Some students mentioned professions requiring substantial education: pediatrician, lawyer, teacher, social worker, and obstetrician/gynecologist, for example. While most participants were pleased with their plans, those who were not stated they would prefer to go to college rather than work.

PROGRAM CHILD CARE SERVICES AND PARENTING SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Child Care Services

Most students are quite satisfied with the Infant/Toddler Care program's child care services. Sample students typically had not had their children in group child care before they entered the Infant/Toddler program. Sixty-seven percent (N=43) of the young mothers stated that they had previously taken care of their children themselves, while 31 percent (N=20) said their parent(s), grandparent(s), or other relatives had cared for their children. Only four participants (6 percent) indicated that their children had previously been in day-care centers.* When asked to compare current child care arrangements with previous ones, student mothers were very enthusiastic, citing in particular the opportunities for socialization and learning as the most beneficial aspects of the program's child care services.

Parenting Skills Development

The program goal of improving students' parenting skills was addressed at some sites by offering a parenting course. Such courses were required at 66 percent of program sites.

The evaluation team sought to assess the impact of the program on the student participants' knowledge of parenting and effective behavior as parents. More than 50 percent of the

* A few students mentioned more than one caretaker. Hence, the total number of responses slightly exceeds the number of sample students.

students indicated that since enrolling in the program they had noted some sort of change in their understanding of the realities, practicalities, and responsibilities of childrearing. Students' responses clustered under the following rubrics: "more sense of responsibility" (N=16); "more aware of how hard it is to be a good parent" (N=12); "learned new ways to play with, talk and relate to children" (N=20); "acquired specific knowledge about safety, health, and nutrition" (N=19).

Most striking was the convergence of responses concerning the babies' fathers. Nearly all student mothers (89 percent; N=57) felt that it would be very good for fathers to participate in the program. First, they said, the fathers would learn to take care of and get to know their babies. Second, the fathers would see what mothers go through and be more likely to help out and share responsibility. At present, staff members report that the participation of fathers in the program is negligible. They cite legal constraints on school personnel for interacting with non-custodial parents as a *prima* / limitation in this regard. Specifically, 74 percent of staff interviewed estimate that fathers participated with their children in program activities "never" or "less than once a month," and 84 percent say that fathers participated with the mothers of the children in program activities "never" or "less than once a month."

IV. STAFF CHARACTERISTICS AND PERCEPTIONS

The Infant/Toddler Care program staff consists of two functionally distinct although interrelated teams of staff members: the social work teams, which serve the student mothers' social service and counseling needs, and the educational teams which provide child care and education to the students' children.

Each team, in turn, is subdivided into professional and paraprofessional members. Ideally, at each site the social work team has one social worker and one full-time family paraprofessional (family para). In fact, three sites were missing a full-time family para and three others lacked a full-time social worker. An early childhood education teacher (E.C.E.T.) and one to seven education paraprofessionals (ed paras) comprise the educational teams. The number of ed paras at a specific site depends on the number of children enrolled in that Infant/Toddler Care program child-care center. The ideal ratio of education staff to children is one ed para to every four infants or every six toddlers, and one Early Childhood Teacher for each center.

TENURE IN PROGRAM

Social work team members have worked in the Infant/Toddler Care program an average of nearly three years ($x = 34.3$ months). Within the team there is a ten month difference in average term of employment between social workers and family paras. Social

workers average 39 months in the program; family paras average 29 months.

The education team has a combined average tenure of 34.1 months in the program: 36 months for the early childhood education teachers, and 33 months for the ed paras.

OREA found that, while most analysts agree that the child-care market is characterized by high turnover, inadequate education, experience, and training,* both family paras and ed paras in the Infant/Toddler Care program have surprisingly low rates of turnover. Within each team, it should be noted, the professionals have longer tenure than the paraprofessionals; these differences are greater within the social work team than within the education team.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Social Work Team

When asked why they had been chosen for their Infant/Toddler Care program jobs, most of the social workers (86 percent of the respondents) and family paras (71 percent) mentioned their previous related work experience. Social workers and family paras were differentiated more sharply, of course, when it came to relevant educational background. Eighty-six percent of the social workers, but only 43 percent of the family paras mentioned "education" as an important reason in explaining why they were hired in the Infant/Toddler Care program.

* See Infant/Toddler Care Program Administrative Report for staff training data.

Education Team

In explaining why they were hired for their Infant/Toddler Care program jobs, all of the teachers who were interviewed (N=7) mentioned "previous work" as a factor, while five of the ed paras interviewed (N=7) answered similarly. In a written survey, however, few members of the education team indicated that they had worked with teen parents in the past: 21 percent of the teachers (N=3) and 14 percent of the ed paras (N=4) mentioned such experience.

Of those interviewed, 71 percent (N=5) of the teachers and 57 percent of the ed paras (N=4) mentioned "education" as a basis on which they were hired in the Infant/Toddler program. For both groups, 25 percent of those interviewed said that they had been hired because they had "requested the position."

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAM'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURE

Staff members were asked to assess to what extent the program's policies and procedures facilitated or impeded achievement of its goals. The major aspects of the Infant/Toddler Care program that were explored in addressing these issues included how well the program:

- Improves students' progress toward graduation;
- Prepares students for life after the program and after high school;
- Provides child-care services; and
- Enhances the student-parents' abilities to be good parents ("parenting skills").

In addition, OREA invited staff members to offer general criticisms and recommendations for program improvement. Overall, staff members gave the Infant/Toddler Care program high marks. In nearly every category their responses ranged from "highly" to "moderately" successful. The only real exception concerned "parenting skills;" 16 percent (nine out of 57 respondents) rated this component of the program either "not very successful" or "very unsuccessful."

Social Work Staffs' Perceptions

Nearly all social work staff members felt that the Infant/Toddler Care program improved students' progress toward graduation. Social workers and family paras singled out two particular features of the program--providing child care for the students' children and providing support and motivation to student mothers--that help students move toward graduation.

Social workers' and family paras' most critical suggestions for improving the program converged around "after program life"--preparing students for life after high school and the Infant/Toddler Care program. Half of the social work team members who were interviewed (4 social workers and 3 family paras) said that students should be guided and taught more effectively about job and college opportunities. As things now stand, there is no explicit job training (or even job preparedness training) that is integral to the Infant/Toddler Care program. Nor is there a regularly scheduled class in which

student mothers specifically explore their own future goals and prospects and what they need to do to achieve them. Staff members concur with the view that post-program preparation should be strengthened in the future.

Staff View of Parenting Skills. Staff also indicated that parenting skills should receive greater attention. Nearly 25 percent of the social workers surveyed (two out of nine who responded to this item) believed that the program was not very successful in improving students' parenting skills. In most cases staff felt that because no special person was hired to teach the parenting class, it was taught on a "catch as catch can" basis. Parenting classes were not consistently offered or required in the Infant/Toddler Care program. Three social workers (but no family paras) said there should be a full-time parenting teacher. Perhaps the social workers responded in this way because some of them have taken over this role, for which they lacked time, experience, and specialized training.

Education Staffs' Perceptions

Like the social work team, the early childhood educators (both teachers and paraprofessionals) reported that the Infant/Toddler Care program was successfully achieving its goals: helping students complete high school, providing quality child care, preparing students to live independently after high school, and enhancing student-mothers' parenting skills. Their responses were divided between "moderately successful" and "highly

successful." Almost no education team member ranked the program as less than "moderately successful."

When asked specifically to list their criticisms and recommendations, the education team also mentioned parenting skills. Four teachers concurred with the social workers and stated that the students need more parenting instruction. Education paraprofessionals were even stronger in their criticism of the parenting skills component of the program. Of all staff members, ed paras were in perhaps the best position to assess students' parenting skills since they were direct care-givers to the students' children and had the greatest opportunity to observe the effects of parent-child interactions. Three out of seven ed paras rated the program's parenting skills component as "very unsuccessful."

One procedural suggestion came up repeatedly: several staff members indicated they would like to have more flexibility and the necessary petty cash to take students and their children on special outings and trips. National advocates and analysts of programs for pregnant and parenting teens repeatedly argue for programs that can respond flexibly to the distinctive needs of these young parents.*

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS

The social work staff stressed that these student-parents,

* Lisbeth Schorr is a particularly eloquent recent spokesperson for this view.

faced with an array of problems stemming from poverty, youth, and under-education, would need a great deal of empathy and assistance to become effective parents, workers, and citizens. Social workers spent most of their time in a typical week counseling, assisting with social service needs (e.g. health, housing, and legal assistance), maintaining records, and writing reports. Their counseling time focused most heavily on issues of self awareness--i.e. esteem, personal growth, support, and motivation-- followed by parenting and academic concerns.

Providing "support and motivation," a central theme in the education, training, and professional identity of social workers, was frequently mentioned as one of the program's strengths by team social workers. Family paras, on the other hand, said that by showing an individual interest in the students, the Infant/Toddler Care program helped teen parents gain control and attain an overview of life. Family paras also stated that the program did a good job of preparing students for post-program life.

As indicated in the Outcomes Report, Infant/Toddler Care program staff spent a good deal of time with the family and friends of program participants; they recognized that in order to have lasting effects they have to deal with/support/strengthen an entire family and network, not just one member of it.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

One thrust of OREA's assessment of the Infant Toddler care program focused on the children's care and development. Overall, the quality of care the children received in the centers appeared to be quite good.

The teaching staff was queried to determine how they defined each child's needs and developmental stage in order to create an appropriate educational/developmental plan. OREA found that the Infant/Toddler Care program's education staff used several methods for assessing a child's educational needs and developmental stage, and creating an appropriate plan--typically a formal Individual Activity Plan (I.A.P.).* The assessment and the plan that it informed covered five main areas: self-help, motor, language, cognitive, and social-emotional skills.

Of the seven teachers interviewed, five said they maintained I.A.P.s and worked on them from three to seven hours a week ($x = 5.2$ hr./wk). After a child had been in the center three to four weeks, the E.C.E.T. consulted with the ed para (who had the most direct contact with the child) and used certain standard assessment instruments to devise an appropriate I.A.P. The plan spelled out what the child's cognitive, motor, and other tasks should be, day by day, for the next two weeks. At the end of two weeks, the E.C.E.T., again in consultation with the ed para, and

* Initially this was called an Individual Education Plan--I.E.P.--but the name was changed after OREA field work was completed because of the Special Education connotations of that label. In keeping with current usage, this report will refer to them as I.A.P.

using whatever assessment instruments she/he found most useful, wrote up a new two-week, day-by-day I.A.P. for the ed para to implement with the baby or child. This provided a clear guide for the ed para, who worked with a few babies or toddlers very closely. The staff/child ratio ranged from 1:3 to 1:5.

The formal I.A.P. was used primarily by the early childhood education center staff. Only three of seven teachers said they even discussed the activity plans with the parents.

An average of 16 children were enrolled at each of the seven sample sites; the number of children per site ranged from 2 to 32. Sample teachers interviewed had completed from 7 to 16 assessments, with a mean of 11. The ratio of assessments completed to children enrolled was 11/16, slightly better than two thirds.

A TYPICAL CHILD CARE CENTER DAY

When asked to describe a child's typical day in the child care center, the education staff singled out several main activities: eating, playing, and napping. Early childhood education teachers elaborated more specifically than the ed paras, but both touched on common themes. Rather than just mentioning "play," for example, four early childhood education teachers mentioned the kinds of play that could be grouped together as "small group activities." Three mentioned various kinds of "motor activities": water play, painting, and art. Several mentioned "exercise" or "outdoor play."

In general, a typical day for an Infant/Toddler Care program child-care center began between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., with the parents dropping off their children. Ongoing informal conversations between parents and the education staff members typically occurred at the beginning and end of each day, when children were dropped off and picked up. To focus these parent-staff conversations and explicate those issues staff members wanted parents to concentrate on, ed paras complete and give parents daily report cards that summarize their child's eating, sleeping, playing, and mood patterns during each day. Parents review similar issues (sleep the night before, what the child had for breakfast, any medication the child might be taking, and so forth) with the ed para each morning. These forms and the conversations they "guided" were very important in communicating factual information and, more subtly, in modelling certain behavior (attention to details of child's activities and development) for the teen parents.

In their summary of a typical day, teaching staff did not mention the time spent with teen parents reviewing their child's activities during the day. Perhaps this is because they were concentrating primarily on the child's experience of the day.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation findings indicate a broad consensus among students and staff members concerning the goals of the Infant/Toddler Care program. Both groups understood the program's primary aims to be for students to complete high school, become economically self-sufficient, and achieve these goals while assuring their children appropriate day care. In a review of the relevant literature on pregnant/parenting teens (see Appendix A, "Suggested Readings"), OREA found that the goals of the Infant/Toddler Care program echo those set forth in many programs nationwide. Such programs aim primarily at helping parenting students finish high school, which is valued because it enables young parents to become economically self-sufficient, a status from which many economic, social, medical, and developmental advantages flow. Appropriate and available child care is a necessary means to high school completion, and is widely viewed as a critical advantage to the children of teen parents.

For both students and staff, the program has produced generally positive outcomes. Academic performance for some students has improved significantly, as borne out by an increase of more than 100 percent in the number of students who said they were receiving higher grades after participating in the program

than they had before they entered it. At least 63 percent of the student participants indicated that they had discussed their future plans with Infant/Toddler Care program staff; however, it is unclear whether this is indicative of a discernible shift among them toward a future orientation. There was a further suggestion that some of the student mothers may have benefitted from the inspiration and influence of role models provided by program staff. "Social worker" and "teacher," as well as other social service professions, were mentioned with some frequency in student lists of their post-program aspirations.

OREA found that more than half the students believed that since participating in the program they had a greater sense of the responsibilities, practicalities, and realities of parenting. However, given the nearly complete absence of student fathers from the Infant/Toddler Care program, the student mothers' near unanimous desire to encourage fathers' participation may be interpreted as a plea for further support in their parenting responsibilities. In addition, the generally negative rating given by staff members to the parenting skills component of the program seriously qualifies any self-assessment of improvement in this area by student participants.

Staff members in the Infant/Toddler Care program gave high marks to the program overall. More than 90 percent of staff survey respondents rated the program as moderately to highly successful in improving students' progress toward graduation and in providing child care services. As noted above, however, the

program was seen as much less successful in achieving the goals of improving students' parenting skills and in preparing them for life after high school. Nineteen percent of the education staff rated both of these program components "not very successful," or "very unsuccessful." Moreover, OREA noted that the lack of a formally-instituted student job training component in the program hindered progress toward the goal of economic self-sufficiency for these pregnant/parenting teens.

OREA found that staff members in the Infant/Toddler Care program have longer tenure in the program than is typically suggested in the literature on day-care and pregnant/parenting teens. This literature suggests that issues of staff tenure and turnover are deeply intertwined with the quality and effectiveness of counseling, social services, and child care. Pregnant and parenting teens (like children in day care) need high quality, comprehensive, integrated care provided by professionals and paraprofessionals they come to know and trust over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are offered:

- The component of the program dealing with parenting skills should be examined and revamped. Moreover, staff should be trained and hired to deal specifically with this very important aspect of the program.
- Job training and job-readiness training for students should be enhanced, expanded, and systematically incorporated in the Infant/Toddler Care program's goals.

Since an important goal of the program is to enhance students' self-sufficiency once they finish high school, it seems that the absence of a job readiness/training component is a serious shortcoming of the program.

Appendix A

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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