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Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency shares results of Minneapolis Teen Parent Program, supporting teen parents and their babies

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis touts economic impact of nurse-based home visiting programs

MINNEAPOLIS – (May 12, 2010) – For decades, public health nurses at nonprofit Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency (MVNA) have visited the homes of young families to provide support, helping ensure healthy babies and model positive parenting.

In 2001, MVNA began a formal, structured approach to working with some of the most vulnerable new moms. Mary Ann Blade, CEO of MVNA, cited four key components to the program. “We have public health certified nurses visiting regularly, along with a curriculum that meets the needs of a broad range of clients. We also can help provide some basic material goods for these young families. And the fourth component connects these moms with community resources. For school-aged clients, our nurses work with their schools to make sure we are both delivering the same messages to keep teens on track to graduate.”

For the first time, a study of MVNA’s Minneapolis Teen Parent Program by Wilder Research, and funded by the City of Minneapolis, is being done to gather data to support the results and demonstrate the impact the program is having on two generations of Minneapolis residents.

The first-year results from the two-year study, including data gathered Jan. 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009, show the program helps both teen moms and their babies by ensuring positive birth outcomes. Preliminary results also show the program may be helping to increase economic self-sufficiency and keep teen parents in school.

“The benefits of MVNA’s public health nurse visits to pregnant and parenting teens not only accrue to the young parents and their children, they spill over to all of society,” said Rob Grunewald, associate economist, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

As part of the study, MVNA public health nurses administered several assessments to both mother and child as part of their regular home visits. Birth outcomes and other data

for mothers who participated in MVNA's program also were compared on a preliminary basis against mothers who did not participate.

The study included 526 pregnant and parenting teens, with the two largest ethnic groups being African American (43 percent) and Hispanic (27 percent). Specifically, among teens who received support from an MVNA public health nurse:

- 95 percent had babies with a healthy birth weight, versus 90 percent of teens not enrolled in the program; and
- 95 percent of teens carried their babies to full term, versus 89 percent for teens who were not in the program.

Many of the teen parents, or 81 percent, received referrals to community resources, with 48 percent receiving donated non-medical essential items to meet health and safety needs, such as: cribs, food, clothing and other items through MVNA's Club 100 program.

Based on confidential feedback from 72 teens, program participants indicated a high level of trust with their MVNA nurse, had positive feedback about the program, and said it had a positive impact on their lives, including helping them succeed at school and improve their parenting skills.

At follow-up, preliminary results show teens may increase self-sufficiency in several areas, including more stable housing situations, increased school attendance and employment, among others.

“When pregnant or parenting teens focus on future goals for themselves and their family, graduate from high school, and go on to further their education and join the workforce, their family is more nurturing and stable,” said Grunewald, who cited additional research that shows nurse-based home visits deliver a positive economic impact.

“In this environment a young baby is more likely to thrive. If these children arrive at kindergarten fully prepared to succeed in school, they will be on a trajectory toward success that avoids the pitfalls that are costly to society, such as requiring remedial education or social services, or committing crime,” Grunewald said.

Added Blade, “The beauty of MVNA's approach is that we can use a variety of curricula, work with a variety of community resources and stay true to the four components we believe are essential to successful models. This approach allows us to serve any pregnant woman that is referred to us.”

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