

Knowledge of Emotional, Social, Legal, and Financial Realities and Responsibilities of Parenting

Report #4
Parenthood Can Wait Program
Department of Social Services
Missouri, USA

February 14, 2023



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Overview

This report focuses on the preliminary results of a new grant funded program called Parenthood Can Wait (PCW) that seeks to enrich Missouri youth by educating them about the emotional, social, legal, and financial realities and responsibilities of parenting. Missouri is successfully using the PCW program to address teen parenthood issues by targeting at-risk youth who are enrolled in an alternative high school or in the custody of the Division of Youth Services (DYS). This program is part of a long-term strategy to prevent the future need for family services and promote responsible parenting choices by raising youths' awareness regarding the financial, legal, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood. Increasing understanding of the financial costs of parenthood can be persuasive in helping youth make responsible decisions around parenting.

The PCW program aims to:

- Help youth identify how their personal finances affect their quality of life, understand how their financial choices affect the family and learn the difference between wants and needs
- Educate and motivate youth to delay parenthood until they have completed their education, started a career, and entered a committed relationship
- Teach healthy relationship practices and independent living skills that lead to self-sufficiency
- Improve outcomes for children, families, and communities by tapping the students' skills, strengths, leadership, and resilience to improve the health, safety, educational success, and overall well-being of children and families

Long-term goals include:

- An increased trend in average age of parents when the first child is born
- An increased trend in the percentage of children born into committed relationships
- An increased trend in the number of parents with gainful and sustained employment upon birth of their first child and subsequent children.

The PCW was designed with the following logic model as a basis.

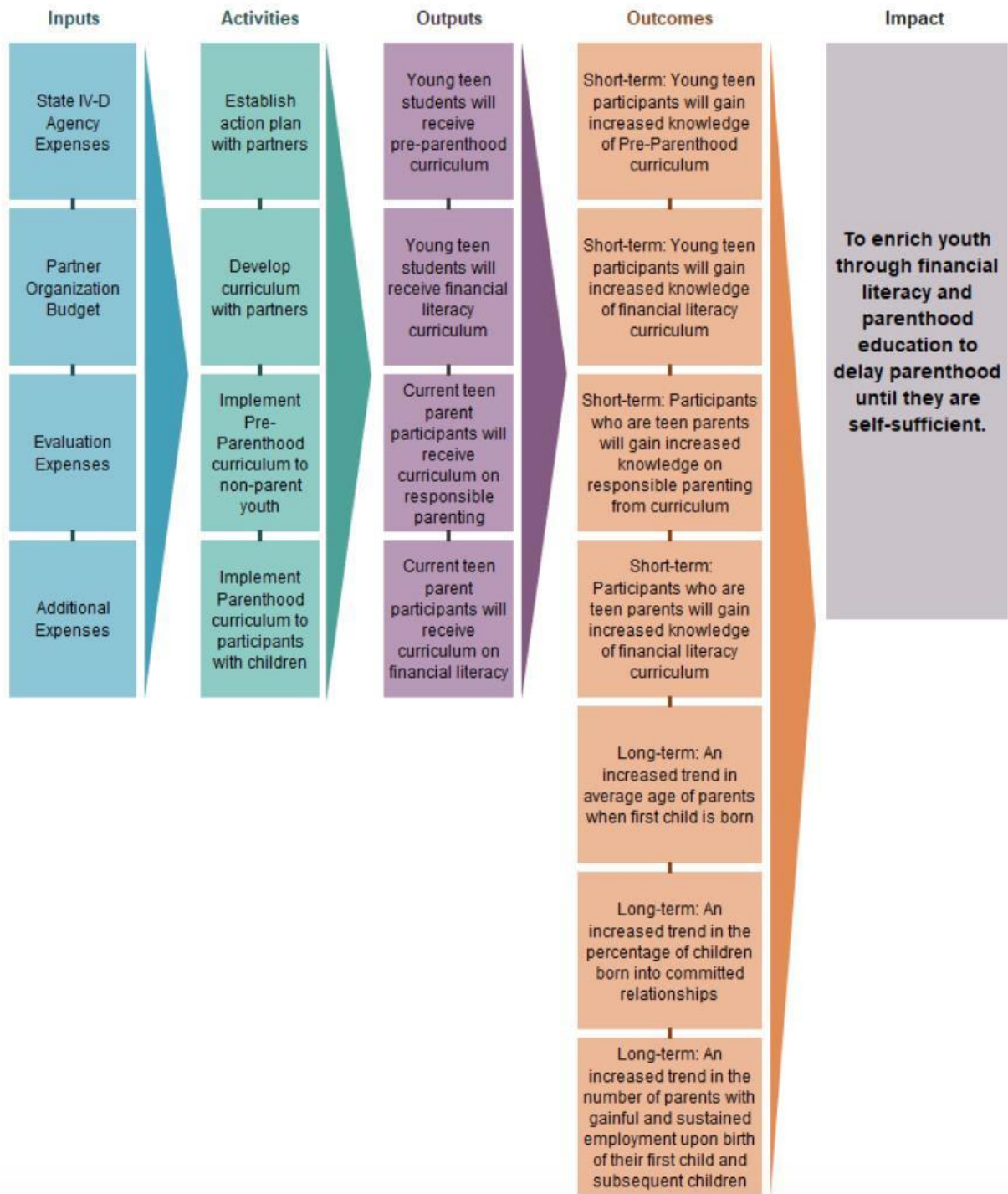


Figure 1- PCW Logic Model

Program Structure

The program is structured using the Missouri Child Support program's knowledge of the financial, legal, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood, along with community partners well-versed in the areas of teenage development, responsible parenthood, and mentoring. The PCW program focuses on 4 primary tracks:

- The Pre-parenthood track for students receiving education through an alternative high school
- The Parenthood track for youth in alternative high schools who are already parents
- The Pre-parenthood track for youth in DYS custody who are not yet a parent
- The Parenthood track for youth in DYS custody who are already parents

The PCW curriculum was adapted and developed from two existing sources: The Oregon Department of Education and The Texas Office of the Attorney General. Parenthood curricula used in these states was merged and adapted to create the curriculum for this grant proposal.

Created in 1990 and revised in 2006, Oregon's Parenthood Education Curriculum is used in the Oregon Teen Parent Success Program. The overall goal is to teach teen parents how to nurture their children or children they care for. The curriculum incorporates the following topics:

- Exploring the realities of being a parent: multiple realities of parenting
- How culture and society shape parenting behavior
- Aspects of development: physical, cognitive, affective
- Interactive relations between parent & children
- Basic human needs and safety
- Communication across the lifespan
- Promoting healthy parent-child relations: guidance and discipline
- Promoting healthy parent-child relations: play

The Texas Parenting and Paternity Awareness (P.A.P.A.) curriculum was created in 2007. P.A.P.A. provides child support-based curriculum. Specific topics adapted from the P.A.P.A. curriculum were used to facilitate the following child support components such as paternity establishment, benefits of legal fatherhood, and cost of parenting.

These combined resources are used to empower teens to build a foundation of healthy behaviors, life skills, and a sense of purpose. This approach allows the PCW program to broaden its audience and places all participants in a program that is engaging and educational, regardless of gender.

Dr. Victor R. Wilburn, Professor of Child and Family Studies at Southeast Missouri State University, further developed the pre-parenting educational courses. The curriculum consists of various topics related to pre-parenthood, which include:

- So You Think You Are Ready to be a Parent
- Basic Human Needs and Safety
- Personal/Social Responsibility/Social Empowerment/Self Esteem/ Respect
- Healthy Relationship Skills
- Goal Setting/Achievement/Sense of Purpose
- Exploring the Realities of Being a Parent

Additional topics were developed and added based on input from the alternative high schools and DYS facilities.

The Junior Achievement Curriculum for Pre-parenthood

The specific Junior Achievement (JA) program used for the **pre-parenthood** curriculum is the JA Personal Finance 2.0 curriculum. This curriculum provides practical information about personal finance and the importance of identifying education and career goals based on a student's skills, interests, and values. The following key topics are presented in the curriculum:

- Career options
- Choices
- Education
- Budgeting
- Using credit
- Credit score
- Financial risk
- Decision making

The Junior Achievement Curriculum for Parenthood

The specific JA program used in the **parenthood** curriculum is the JA Personal Finance 2.0 curriculum. This curriculum provides practical information about today's financial decisions and future financial freedom. Since participants of this coursework are parents, the curriculum is taught in a small group learning environment to assess each family's immediate and long-term needs. Students are able to identify ways their

personal finances affect their quality of life, understand how their financial choices affect the family and learn the difference between wants and needs. The following key topics are presented in the curriculum:

- Earning, employment and income
- Budgeting and priorities
- Savings
- Credit and debt
- Consumer protection
- Smart shopping
- Money management strategies
- Investing

Results

We extracted data for Personal Development modules from the web based Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas which allows us to collect, store and export data to a statistical analysis software package for further analysis. We merged some data elements, such as facilitator name, day and time of class, and other similar elements, into the data manually. We calculated data fields such as student/facilitator ratio at the individual module level via the statistical analysis. Data completion increased over the first year of the project, particularly after the new environment was created in Canvas, but remains sparse. Data seems internally consistent.

Post-tests for Personal Development modules show significant knowledge gain. Students, after participation in the learning modules were able, on average, to answer post-test questions correctly 74% of the time as compared to about 34.5% correct on the pre-test. There is no significant variation across data sample from metropolitan, micropolitan, or rural student cohorts, possibly because of the mostly metropolitan geographic locations of the DYS facilities.

Facilitators documented student participation for 71% of modules presented. Student participation is measured across 4 parameters (engagement, deportment, teamwork, and leadership) and is measured on a score of 1-16 points (4 each). On average, across all modules, students scored 14.88, suggesting a high level of participation with the learning materials.

Results of the analysis of student participation indicate there may be some variation in student participation depending on the site (DYS facility or alternative school). Because the data sample is still rather small, this may be a sign of small sample bias. Also, student participation is assigned per student by the facilitator for each module. Assignment of the value or score for participation is heavily supported in LMS by rubrics, but it's still possible that some bias is introduced into the data because different

facilitators are evaluating different students. Still, these small differences in values obtained from the different sites may provide insight as more data is collected and analyzed.

We held focus groups as part of the planned multi-method evaluation strategy and to obtain early feedback regarding the content of the planned educational modules and on the content delivery strategy. These focus groups comprised a representative group of students of a similar age and background to those expected to take part in the program when it rolled out.

Participants indicated that opportunities to talk about issues and themselves in a comfortable environment was the best thing about the modules. The situation least liked across the modules were those times when such conversations were not possible or needed extensive involvement by the facilitator to stimulate interaction. The activities that are part of the modules received more mixed reviews and should be evaluated going forward. Focus group participants said they had exposure to the subjects covered educational materials in the program as part of their in-school courses (80-100% across the modules).

Focus group members said they could easily identify similarities in their own lives to the situations in the modules, but they were more likely to relate them to situations they faced in school or sports or with friends and less likely to relate the materials to their overall life situation, especially their future life. This finding opens an opportunity for this program to evaluate participants over time to see if they relate materials from the program more to their life situation in the future.

The module on bullying seemed to be most easily relatable. Several focus group participants suggested that increased coping and prevention strategies for bullying, especially cyberbullying, would be a useful addition. Seventy-five percent of focus group members reported they had been in a similar bullying situation as that described in the videos.

Overall, focus group participants rated the presentations as a 4 or 5 (on a scale of 1-5) 99% of the time. Focus group participants said they would be less likely to speak with their parents about the topics, although one participant said it might be useful if a parent attended some of the module.

Effect on Students

Ultimately, the goal of the PCW program is to provide education and support for youth living in Division of Youth Services facilities and those receiving education and support from alternative schools. Several students provided, post course, feedback about the Parenthood Can Wait program and their experience with it. These students answered four queries:

1. The three most important things I learned from the Parenthood Can Wait program are...
2. How or why would you encourage someone else to take the Parenthood Can Wait program?
3. What would you like to tell us about the Parenthood Can Wait program? Any takeaways or things you will remember? Be honest!
4. Scariest things about entering adulthood

Here's a sampling of what they had to say:

The three most important things I learned from the Parenthood Can Wait program are...

- "Financial, importance, responsibility"
- "That I need to start an account, how to prevent children, how important life is"
- "My worth, how to build credit, how to be a good parent"

How or why would you encourage someone else to take the Parenthood Can Wait program?

- "Tell them the benefits."
- "I would tell them to come because it will teach them how to help parent."
- "I would do it because I know my teachers don't come for the paycheck. They really care about us kids and they come to teach good!"

What would you like to tell us about the Parenthood Can Wait program? Any takeaways or things you will remember? Be honest!

- "I will try not to have a kid until I'm financially stable."
- "About how to invest my money"
- "I will remember the teacher telling us that no one really knows our worth except for us, but you can tell how good a person is by the way that person acts."
- "The scariest thing about entering parenthood is having to pay bills and living on my own."
- "That it takes a lot of money to have enough"
- "The scariest thing about entering parenthood is knowing that you are on your own with some help (not much), but there is a lot of resources out there to help people who are struggling."

Additionally, most focus group members thought they would discuss the topics in the modules with their peers. They would tell their friends, "Be careful with what you do because it could change your whole life, and tell them they might like the program."

In conclusion, the information gathered for this project brief is based on information gathered throughout the first half of the program. We have gathered this information to lead us in the direction to take to enhance financial curriculum topics and activities to gain and keep the interest of the students.