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Support for Expectant and Parenting Teens, Women, Fathers, and Their Families: Federal Partner Meeting, August 7, 2017

Office of Adolescent Health Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Program
Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP)

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Executive Summary

On August 7, 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) and the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP) convened a panel of federal partners in Washington, DC. Panel participants discussed recommendations for building strong cross-sectoral collaborations to better support expectant and parenting young families, including teens. The purpose of this meeting of federal partners was to support OAH's responsibility to **coordinate adolescent health initiatives across HHS and communicate adolescent health information** as well as help further OAH's priority to promote multisector partnerships.

The overarching **goals** for the meeting were to:

1. Increase understanding of federal programs that support expectant and parenting young families,
2. Explore opportunities for collaboration across programs, and
3. Develop preliminary recommendations to build and strengthen long-term, sustainable collaborations and partnerships that support expectant and parenting young families at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels.

Topics of discussion included:

1. Immediate opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration,
2. Leveraging resources more effectively, and
3. Steps needed at the federal level to establish and sustain high-quality integrated services for this priority population.

Group discussion focused on the **core domains** of:

1. Personal health;
2. Child health;
3. Education, employment, and self-sufficiency;
4. Concrete supports; and
5. Parental supports.

This summary presents **findings** from the meeting of federal partners, including:

1. Areas of interest for *federal cross-sectoral collaboration*,
2. Issues and concerns around *grantee awareness of resources, programming, and eligibility criteria,* and
3. Recommendations for *next steps to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration*.

The panel of federal partners included representation from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (*including Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Office of Adolescent Health*), Justice (*including Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*), Education (*including Office of Elementary and Secondary Education*), Labor (*including Employment and Training Administration, Division of Youth Services*), Agriculture (*including Food and Nutrition Service, Supplemental Food Programs Division*), and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. A full list of participating federal partners and their associated offices is provided in this report's Appendix.

Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

The large group discussion on cross-sectoral collaboration began by highlighting what each participant's agency or program was doing to support expectant and parenting young families. It then focused on the importance of clearly understanding the current efforts, resources, and services available at the federal, regional, state, and local levels that would benefit this priority population; immediate opportunities for collaboration; and the steps needed to establish and sustain high-quality integrated services.

The large group discussion participants also expressed interest in how to share the identified resources and trainings across federal offices and agencies to ensure that everyone was informed and able to collaborate to leverage each other's efforts to support expectant and parenting young families. This includes having a solid understanding of connections among the different federal departments and agencies and having an in-depth understanding of regulations and eligibility criteria that would impact the work of grantees. Clarity about available resources and services would require knowing what the current regulations and eligibility criteria are and what can be realistically addressed via different grant programs, which is vital to overcoming misunderstandings about the reach of the regulations. There were several points of interest in "mapping" these resources so that offices and programs at all levels can be fully aware of the opportunities that exist as well as any gaps or challenges. Participants expressed interest in the use of conferences to spread awareness and promote education on these resources and services.

The following summary describes in greater detail the main points addressed during the large group discussion on cross-sectoral collaboration.

Main Questions in Large Group Discussion:

- What are your current efforts to support expectant and parenting young families?
- What are some immediate opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration to support expectant and parenting young families, young women, young men, and their families?
- How do we more effectively leverage resources?
- What steps are needed (at the federal level) to establish and sustain high-quality integrated services for the priority population?

Current Efforts to Support Expectant and Parenting Young Families

Federal partners who were present at the meeting briefly discussed their offices' current efforts to support expectant and parenting young families. Some participants' offices held expectant and parenting young families as a primary priority population in their work, while a few participants' offices had primary priorities that overlapped with work with this priority population.

- Direct services to support expectant and parenting young families [*associated office/agency in brackets*]:
    - Providing transportation, food services, and referrals to supportive one-stop centers [*Department of Labor, Division of Youth Services*];

- Providing nutrition education and breastfeeding support to mothers and fathers [*Department of Agriculture, Supplemental Food Programs Division*]; and
- Providing referrals to community resources and Home Visiting programs, embracing fathers in the family and single pregnant women, participating in evidence-based interventions, and ensuring that children are thriving [*Health Resources and Services Administration, Home Visiting*].

- Other efforts to support expectant and parenting young families [*associated office/agency in brackets*]:
  - Providing legal guidance for programs that need legal aid for their expectant and parenting young family participants [*Department of Justice, Office for Access to Justice*];
  - Providing intimate partner violence training, developing resources on teen dating violence prevention to educate and raise public awareness (e.g., Futures Without Violence, That's Not Cool), and funding the Domestic Violence Hotline [*Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau*];
  - Programming that provides funding to states to disperse the funds to the expectant and parenting young family population (e.g., Race to the Top) [*Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education*];
  - Coordinating programs and services to benefit LGBT populations across HHS, including expectant and parenting LGBT youth [*Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health*];
  - Improving the child support program to encourage users to make child support payments [*Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Program Innovation*]; and
  - Administering Perkins Program (career and technical education) and acting as the lead agency for P3 (Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth), where some of the programs have a focus on pregnant and parenting youth [*Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education*].

Immediate and Longer Term Opportunities for Collaboration

- Collaborate to Develop Resources. Federal partners could collaborate to develop resources (e.g., fact sheets, briefs, podcasts, and webinars) that would benefit those who work directly with this priority population (e.g., case workers, educators, guidance counselors). Representatives from the Division of Youth Services at the U.S. Department of Labor discussed an example of cross collaboration in developing resources. Currently, this office is working on improving their One Stop Centers by making them more youth-friendly with resources and teen advocates (i.e., case workers). A part of this effort is a virtual series planned for November 2017 that will include elements such as podcasts, one-pagers, and webinars. The virtual series was suggested as a good place for future federal partner collaboration.

Participants also recommended that federal partners who have expertise in the subject matter be able to provide feedback to other federal partners during the development stage of a new resource. This could help ensure that information is accurate and audience appropriate. To better explore this idea, federal partners could identify current mechanisms to seek input while developing resources.

- Cross Share Resources and Training. Federal partners could cross share their federal resources and do cross training to help state and local grantees in working across agency boundaries, especially programs that work directly with young people (e.g., in-home services, in-school services).

How to Effectively Leverage Resources

- Partner with Local Philanthropies. State, regional, and local grantees could partner with local philanthropies to fundraise as a way to support program sustainability. An example of this type of local partnership is the GEEARS program (Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students), a U.S. Department of Education grantee that received subsidies from local philanthropies for services such as child care and screenings and to sustain services after grant funding ended.

- Develop and Share a Matrix of Available Resources. Federal partners could use a unified approach to leverage technical assistance resources and trainings across federal offices to more effectively share and access resources for grantees. A matrix could help federal partners more efficiently and accurately crosswalk available resources and services. This could also help to pinpoint local resources and promote programs that people may be eligible to receive but are not aware of their eligibility. A similar suggestion included mapping resources and services at the regional level to help people working on the ground feel more connected to the work being done by their federal counterparts.

- Develop Consistent Messaging. Federal partners can collaborate to develop consistent and accurate messaging (including consistency in terminology used and definitions) in resources across agencies and offices. This could help counteract misinformation about the programs and services available for expectant and parenting young families.

Steps Needed to Establish and Sustain High-Quality Integrated Services

- Facilitate Access to Federal Partner Resources. Participants discussed having access to resources from federal offices and agencies at several points throughout the meeting. They emphasized establishing a central federal-level process or system that would make it easier to access partner resources and trainings.

- Promote Across Agencies. Participants in the small group discussion raised an interest in expanding cross-agency promotion. An example of cross-agency promotion is the Father's Day parenting in public housing campaign by the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Other federal offices collaborate with HUD to help promote this event, and it is also promoted via youth.gov.

- Share Data. Participants raised some questions about the ability to share data on expectant and parenting young families across federal offices and agencies. Currently, there are no mechanisms or plans in place for data sharing, although data sharing is of significant interest to members of the IWGYP. Sharing data could help support departments' budgetary requests by more clearly highlighting the issues in this priority population and the need for developing and improving programming. Some ideas for cross-agency data sharing included:
    - Identify existing data and databases,
    - Identify missing data,
    - Determine if there are examples of successful data sharing,
    - Determine stakeholders' beliefs about important issues, and
    - Identify how young families and expectant fathers are defined, if at all.

- Educate Grantees. Participants raised two issues related to grantee awareness, including confusion from organizations about what they can ask for (e.g., eligibility criteria) and how funds can be used (e.g., to serve fathers). There was some discussion about how often criteria confusion issues arise with P3 grantees and how to apply the pillars of P3 to help close the gap on grantee awareness and education without fully replicating the program.

  Participants suggested having educational events that include different federal agencies to help grantees understand available services and resources. A meeting or conference would create opportunities for grantees to gain awareness about available resources and to ask questions that clarify misconceptions. An example mentioned was the recent PAF conference meant to broaden awareness on statutory restrictions, among other topics.

Preliminary Recommendations for Federal Partners and Grantees

Federal partners met in small groups to discuss recommendations for how to build strong cross-sectoral partnerships to support expectant and parenting young families with the goal of reducing repeat pregnancies, supporting families, and providing pathways to productive adulthood. Summary findings from the small group discussions included recommendations for short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term solutions to help strengthen these partnerships.

Short-Term Recommendations

- Disseminate Follow-Up Email for Meeting Participants. A lead federal partner, or small group of partners, should disseminate a follow-up email to meeting participants to share resources that are relevant to expectant and parenting young

families. This would require a point person to collect the resources from meeting participants to send out in a comprehensive email.

- Identify Mechanisms of Communication. A lead federal partner, or small group of partners, should identify and document different agencies' preferred means of communication for sharing resources (e.g., listservs). This includes understanding the target audience of communication channels. This can also include looking at policies on resource sharing (e.g., linking only to other federal websites) and understanding how groups vet information included in their communication.

- Identify Relevant Resources. Federal partners should identify their resources related to expectant and parenting young families and briefly state why the resource could be useful. This could be a preparation step for the matrix suggested under the long-term recommendations.

Intermediate-Term Recommendations

- Show by Example. Federal partners should share real examples with their grantees, such as highlighting a grantee that has successfully done cross-sector collaboration work. This could be developed as a Collaboration Profile on youth.gov that focuses on expectant and parenting young families. Another way to show by example is through pushing evaluations and/or successes of earlier OAH cohorts that included an emphasis on collaboration.

- Engage Youth. Federal partners and their grantees should ask young people for their feedback on what they need through youth councils, including youth in working groups. This includes following best practices when engaging young people.

- Modify Language in Grants. Federal partners can modify their grants in three ways:
    1. Add legal aid as an allowable cost to grants.
    2. Add language to funding announcements to make the expectant and parenting young family population a priority group (such as calling out specific areas/gaps an agency wants grantees to focus on). Circulate examples of funding announcement language.
    3. Make "engaging youth" a core requirement in funding announcements. This could include placing youth in programmatic decisions to avoid token representation and promote genuine participation, including youth in community advisory groups, providing training and technical assistance to build provider capacity through best practices (e.g., what makes an ideal youth advisory council?) and encouraging the use of consultants to build competency in youth engagement.

- Broaden Representation of Partners. Federal partners should consider representation of different partners in internal meetings and for external partnerships. An example of this is including workforce and employment specialists in the context of adolescent health meetings.

- Update Federal Partners. Participants from this meeting should reconvene in a few months to check on progress with these recommendations.

Long-Term Recommendations

- Develop a Matrix of Available Screening Services. A team of federal partners should work together to develop a matrix of contacts at the federal and state levels. A matrix of available services could:
    - Help make it easier to screen for available programs and referrals for people providing services on the ground, including what they should know in order to refer services.
    - Help to identify potential gaps by looking at funding levels and eligibility criteria for different services and programs.
    - Assist in looking at how many different touch points and opportunities for support are available for expectant and parenting young families.
    - Eventually trickle down to the local level regarding which service is best to contact.

- Disseminate Listservs to Different Agency Grantees. Federal partners should share appropriate agency listservs with grantees after the listservs have been identified.

- Develop a Cross-Sector Webinar Series. Federal partners should collaborate to develop a webinar series on cross-sectoral work for the expectant and parenting young family population to showcase different sectors and their roles in providing support. This would be available to all grantees that work with the expectant and parenting young family population.

- Support Cross-Training Opportunities, Particularly at the Grantee Level. Federal partners should work to provide support for cross-training opportunities to help their state and local grantees, especially for sites operating over capacity.

- Identify Collaboration Opportunities for Grantees and the Federal Government. Federal partners should identify and/or develop opportunities for grantees and federal partners to cross collaborate on resource development, presentations, conferences, federal locator services (1-800 numbers), resource pages, and so on.

- Develop Youth-Friendly Resources. Federal partners should create developmentally appropriate services and resources and do so by looking to developmental science (e.g., brain science) on how to best serve youth.

Additional Questions to Consider

- What percentage of child welfare cases is represented in this expectant and parenting young family population?
- What are some common short-term goals of partners relevant to expectant and parenting young families?

- What are some mutual long-term goals we should strive toward achieving?
- What terminology related to expectant and parenting young families is shared across offices? What is different?
- When vetting information during resource development, who should be the lead agency on specific issues?

Conclusion

By the end of the meeting, participants recognized the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of expectant and parenting young families, including teens, by coordinating and collaborating across sectors at the federal, regional, state, tribal, and local levels. To accomplish these cross-sectoral partnerships, participants developed short-term recommendations focused on determining the best methods for establishing a streamlined resource- and information-sharing process across federal agencies. Long-term recommendations focused on identifying and addressing (e.g., using resources and technical assistance) the challenges at the regional and community levels that obstruct the connection of grantees to appropriate resources, support, and programming.

The overarching theme for cross-sectoral collaboration focused on how to more effectively leverage resources at the federal, regional, and local levels. Participants recommended establishing a full understanding of the breadth and accessibility of available *federal* opportunities for this priority population and the many touch points expectant and parenting young families have with systems to best provide this population with appropriate support and resources. For the *regional* and *local* levels, participants recommended developing consistent messaging in resources across offices and agencies and clarifying for grantees the available resources and services, eligibility criteria, and regulations.

Appendix

Federal Partner Meeting on Supporting Expectant and Parenting Teens
August 7, 2017 | 1:00–5:00 PM ET
Participant Contact List

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