

The Young Parents Project of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida

In 2004, the Florida Legislature passed a requirement for “gender specific services” in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) due to the concern of the growing number of females in the system. It was noted that the majority of girls identified as delinquents have experienced a multitude of problems such as *poverty, school failure, sexual abuse, and/or mental health problems* such as *depression and anxiety*. (OPPAGA, 2005).

Judge Lester Langer of the 11th Judicial Circuit began the development of the *Young Parents Project* (YPP) due to his concern about the generational impact of delinquency, poverty, and early childbearing of teen girls in the system. He wanted to create a project that would promote positive outcomes for both the young parent and the child based on his experiences and relationships as a Zero to Three Fellow. The Florida State University Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy (FSU Center) worked with Judge Langer and other community partners to focus attention on training and program development for professionals working with this unique population. Efforts have included a statewide training for probation officers (2005-2006) and a demonstration project that began in Miami-Dade County.

The *first phase* of the YPP provided support to *44* teen mothers and their children. The complex needs of these vulnerable families were recognized along with the need for ongoing intervention services. The *second phase* of the YPP began in November 2007 through funding from The Children’s Trust and the Agency for Healthcare Administration. The funders continue to acknowledge the impact of the YPP in serving this at risk population and have extended the project for a third year beginning in October 2009. YPP is modeled after the Yale University program called *Minding the Baby* that integrates *mental health, nursing, and social work* support through home visitation to delinquent mothers and their children.

The project is currently funded to serve up to 25 juvenile girls who are either pregnant and/or parenting and who are identified through the Juvenile Assessment Center, the Girl’s Advocacy Project, the Juvenile Court, Public Defender, or Juvenile Probation Officers. The teens must meet the following criteria:

- *Have entered the Juvenile Justice system*
- *Be a pregnant or parenting teenage girl*
- *Have custody or be allowed visitation with her child*

All teens and their babies receive social work services that include routine intake, care coordination, referrals to community services, and liaison with the court. The young families receive weekly home visits alternating between the nurse to assess family health and assist in coordinating a medical home for the family, and the Infant Mental Health Specialist to focus on parenting, the parent-child relationship, and mother-child development. This home visiting model is utilized to help young mothers to “hold their baby in mind” as a way to promote change in an effort to prevent intergenerational cycles of abuse, delinquency and teen parenting.

This customized probation project is designed to:

- *improve the teen’s understanding of the needs of their child,*
- *improve health outcomes for both the teen and child, and*
- *reduce delinquency involvement.*



The Young Parents Project of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida

The *Young Parents Project* is located at:

**Juvenile Justice Center
Room 1140
3300 NW 27th Avenue
Miami, Florida, 33142**

To make a referral to the *Young Parent's Project* please contact:

Jill Little, Social Worker JSLittle@fsu.edu
305-638-6774 X 259 (office) 305-479-3233 (cell)

The information needed for the referral includes:

- ✓ *Teen's name*
- ✓ *Teen's Date of Birth*
- ✓ *Baby's Date of Birth or age*
- ✓ *Address / current home number*
- ✓ *DJJ ID #*

Young mothers enrolled in the project receive assistance with:

- School enrollment
- Child care placement for the baby
- Obtaining documents such as:
 - Birth Certificate
 - Social Security Card
- Applying for:
 - Medicaid
 - WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)
 - Child Support
- Referrals and monitoring of:
 - Prenatal care
 - Adolescent health care
 - Well baby check-ups
 - Childhood immunizations
- Support for the parent/child relationship through:
 - Parenting education materials
 - Dyadic therapy with parent and child
 - Referrals as needed to Early Steps (early intervention services)

Multi-disciplinary team meetings will take place on a monthly basis to include community partners and connected persons.

Young Parents Project staff includes:

Jill Little, Social Worker
Nicole Mike, Nurse
Isabel Semidey, Infant Mental Health Specialist



Center for Prevention &
Early Intervention Policy



Dedicated to improving the lives of children and families in Brevard County