

Engaging Dads in Programming: Making Males a Part of the Solution

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Pre-Conference Institute

Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention &
Parenting (MOAPPP)
& Minnesota Young Fathers Action Collaborative (MYFAC)

Minneapolis, MN

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Why are we here?

Engaging Fathers-Teen Pregnancy-Teen Sexual Health?

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- **A challenging topic—Why?**
 - Parents, Families, Communities & the Nation Struggle with this topic;
 - A historical template is missing;
 - Concern that too much information generates “ideas”;
 - What do we tell:
 - ✦ Girls
 - ✦ Boys
 - ✦ Parents & Caregivers
 - When do we begin?
 - Who do we decide to serve?

The Real Conocimiento

Conocimiento: Sharing who and what you truly are....

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- What is your core belief about people?
- What is your personal logic model?
- What is your personal theory of change?

- Who do you choose to serve?
- Why did you choose to do the work you do?

Engaging Young Men & Fathers

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1. Father & Male Involvement, what is it?
2. What does engaging fathers mean?
3. Why is this topic important to your organization?
4. Why is this topic important to you?
5. What three things do you want to learn today about working with young men and fathers?

Historical Perspective

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- Traditionally, teen pregnancy prevention and family planning programs concentrated almost exclusively on females & teen mothers.
- Scarcity of educational and clinical services designated for males.
- Limited state and federal funding.
- Limited evaluations of programs implemented in 1970s - lessons lost.
- Clinical services for males that were offered to were very limited.

Current Perspective

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- Need to address and change social norms that has excluded young men from teen pregnancy prevention;
- Focus on values that promote prevention and ideas of family formation;
- Expand messages that men can receive clinical services
- Recognize that teen fathers grow up. If we help them.
- Young men are part of the solution.
- Shift from perpetrators focus to client focus.

Teen pregnancy: a confluence of factors

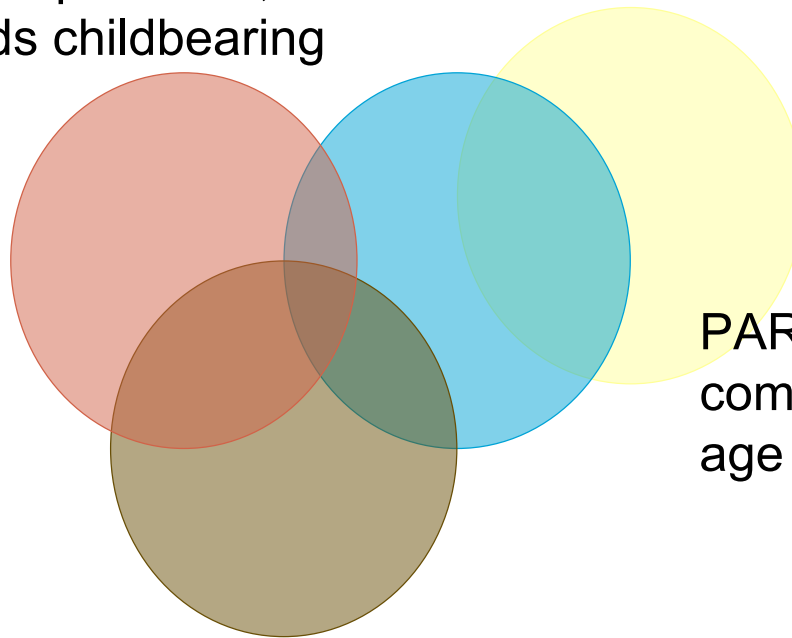
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INDIVIDUAL –
contraceptive use, attitudes
towards childbearing

FAMILY – history of
childbearing,
parents income
& educational attainment

PARTNER -
communication,
age

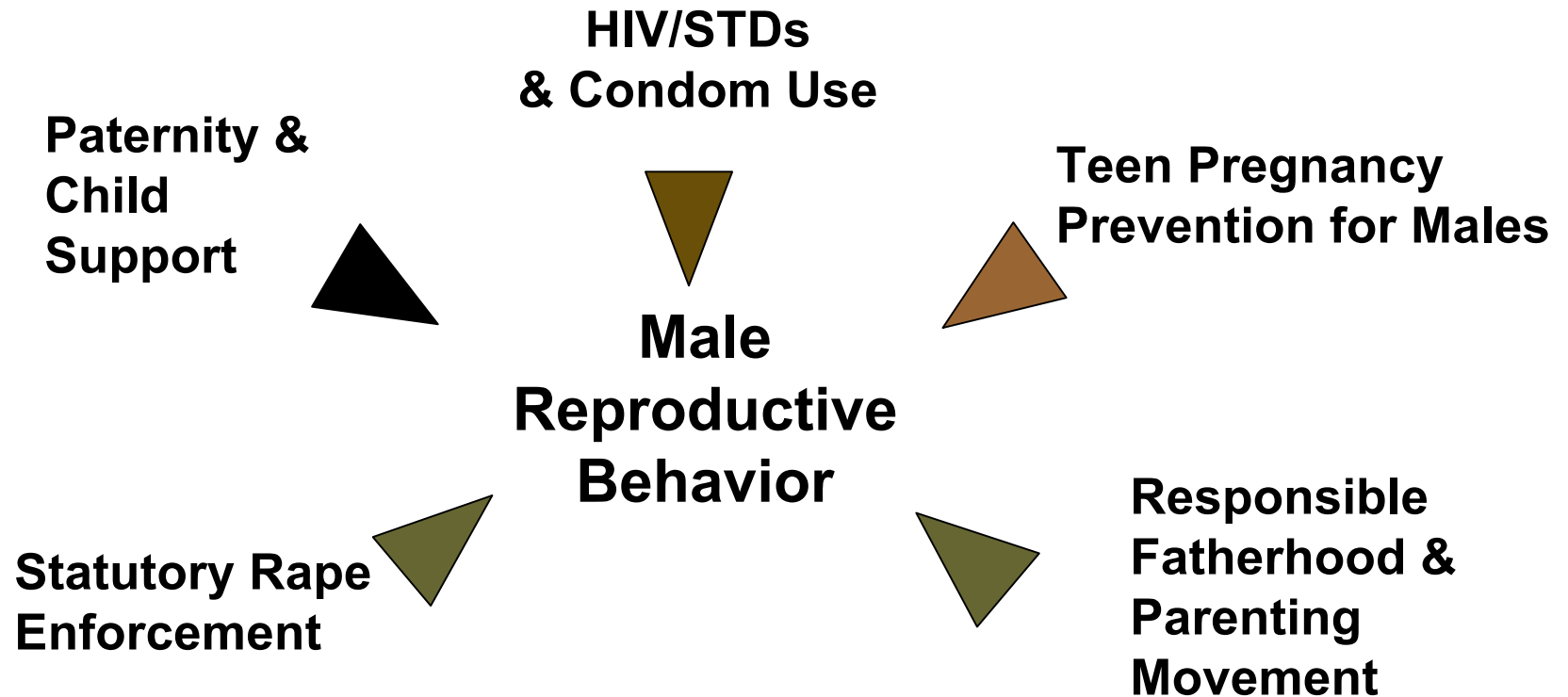
SOCIETAL/S
STRUCTURAL
– access to
health care



New Attention to the Male Role

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Converging policy streams around male reproductive behavior.



Why Focus on Young Men?

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- For teens, human reproduction involves a man and woman.
- Promoting the sexual and reproductive health of young men is key to enhancing their health overall and reduces some of the major health risks.
- Establishes habits that will protect throughout young men's lives.
- Leads to new inroads in promoting healthier lifestyles.
- Prevents disease transmission.
- Reduces unplanned pregnancies and births.
- Males have sex earlier, more frequently, and with more partners of comparable ages.
- Children need the support and guidance of more than one parent.

A Model: Male Involvement Program (MIP)

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- Initiated by California's Office of Family Planning in 1996. Ended in 2008.
- Represented a statewide effort to mobilize adolescent and young adult males in the prevention of teenage pregnancy.
- Program reached beyond the confines of traditional sex education.
- Provided a variety of educational and awareness services to enable males to navigate a healthy passage into adulthood.

Young Men & Fathers

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Programs learned that many young men were already fathers and they needed:

- Parenting Services;
- Support in to stay in school;
- Development of employment skills
- Job placement
- Child custody and support assistance

Few social service partners existed to serve these young men. Why?

The Needs of Young Fathers

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In your community....

- Who advocates for young fathers?
- What are the needs that young fathers have?
- Do young fathers have a positive and realistic image of what a father is?
- Are there social service providers that are working to address those needs?
- Is the juvenile justice system involved in the the lives of young men and young fathers?

The Content that the MIP Covered

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Apart from teen pregnancy prevention (causes and consequences), male reproductive anatomy, male responsibility and fatherhood, other frequent topics include:

- STDs/HIV/AIDS Prevention
- Abstinence
- Relationship Violence, Physical and Sexual Abuse, Dating/Acquaintance Rape
- Community Violence & Prevention
- Culture and Values
- Fatherhood and Staying Involved
- Legal Issues
- Communication
- Anger Management
- Spirituality

Creating Viable Positive Community Role Models

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- Additional “outside the educational program” contact was frequent—on-site, churches, schools, health fairs, sports events, other community events, and during field trips.
- They provided additional positive reinforcement of the program’s messages.
- MIP staff are often young men, and in a number of cases, former participants, they represent important role models.
- Provided opportunities to create stronger bonds, beyond the “guest speaker” mentality.

Young fathers were specifically engaged in the enhanced services.

Community Awareness

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- Recognized that societal perceptions and norms regarding male youth need to shift in order for these programs to gain acceptance and support.
- Introduce concept to the community to inspire community members to value young men as assets, instead of detriments, local projects designed and implemented social marketing campaigns.
- Build on-going relationships with providers and maintain the partnership.

Community Awareness

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- Messages highlight the important role of males in teen pregnancy prevention and encourage responsible fatherhood.
- Crafted by program staff and male participants.
- Assures cultural relevance.
- Reflects styles and preferences of local young men.

Youth Development

A Key to working with marginalized youth in MIP

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Issues associated with youth development

- responsibility and leadership, violence prevention, effective communication, and conflict resolution

MIP identifies and builds on the strengths of the adolescent males and young adult men it serves such as:

- self-esteem, communication skills, anger management, male responsibility, and spirituality

Accomplished during one-on-one “meeting,” group activities, and outreach conducted in homes and/or on the street

Young Men's Summit (YMS)

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Purpose:

- To provide a nurturing environment in which local project participants and staff have the opportunity to increase their understanding of the goals of MIP
- To provide participants and staff with an opportunity to interact with one another
- To provide local MIP participants with an opportunity to further develop their positive leadership skills in order to enhance their teen pregnancy prevention efforts
- To introduce MIP participants to a college or university campus to reinforce or spur the idea that education beyond high school is desirable and within their reach

Young Men's Summit (cont'd)

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Activities

- Motivational speakers
- Skills workshops
- Dialogue
- Fun and games

Lessons learned

- “Being a man is not having a child, it is being responsible”
- “Expressing emotion is accepted”
- “I learned how to respect myself”
- “I can be a good father even though I don't have a lot of money”

Young Men's Summit

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Example: INYO County Health and Human Services

Pete's story

- Greater personal awareness
- Brought family closer together
- Catalyst for health change

Young Men's Summit

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- *“The Summit gave the young men a broader view of the MIP program, and they began to understand that they are part of something bigger--a statewide movement. They learned that others share their issues and the importance of being connected.”*

- - MIP Staff Member

Linkages with Clinical Services

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- Young men were often overlooked by clinical providers.
- Young men influence birth control decision-making.
- Programs developed strong rapport and trust with young men and clinical providers in the community.
- Programs linked young men and fathers to clinical services in a way that makes it desirable and non-threatening.

Barriers to Effective Clinical Linkages

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- Clinics lacked awareness of changes that were needed in the clinic environment;
 - Waiting room
 - Readiness of medical staff
- When programs or services providers don not recognize that clinical services are a priority.
- Resistance from organizations or communities to refer youth for clinical services
- Confidentiality is difficult to keep in small towns and communities where everyone knows everyone else

Cultural Issues and Opportunities

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- Communities that are unable to make the necessary investments in social and organizational/infrastructures, are often economically poor, but ethnically and culturally rich
- Community-led prevention and engagement ensure a greater likelihood of culturally competent staff, language appropriate services and interventions that are in concert with a community's values
- Health education and prevention efforts are placed in the context of culture to enhance its relevance to the young men that reside in the selected communities

Cultural Issues and Opportunities

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- Programs emphasize that to be a positive man requires participants to learn who they are as an individual, a member of their family, a community member and a member of society
- Staff provide culturally relevant guest speakers, field trips, ceremonies, and retreats
- Staff create support networks so participants can support one another in meeting the goals that they need to accomplish

MIP Cultural Issues and Opportunities

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- Rites of Passage programs
- Cultural re-orientation to remind young men of the rich, positive traditions that reinforce positive self-regard
- Projects expose young men to the rich spiritual traditions of their culture, thus reinforcing relationship ties with one another through family and/or culture

Barriers and Challenges

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- Society has been slow to recognize the need to actively engage males in contraceptive decision-making and efforts to promote responsible sexual behavior.
- Parenting priorities for teens remain focused on the development of skills among young mothers and not marginalized fathers.
- Changing social and community norms regarding the positive role males can play in teen pregnancy prevention.
- Gaining entry for the MIP efforts in settings such as mainstream schools and detention centers.
- Assuring quality educational programs, while meeting the needs of an extremely diverse target population in terms of age, culture, and ethnicity.

24/7 Commitment

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“I have to not only talk the talk, but walk the walk, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It keeps me straight and good, because I don’t want to let any of these guys down.”

- - MIP Health Educator

Contact Information

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