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September 22, 2014

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Legislative Education Study Committee  
**FR:** Christina McCorquodale  
**RE: STAFF REPORT: TEEN PREGNANCY**

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**INTRODUCTION**

According to the Congressional Research Service, the state with the highest reported rate for teen-births was New Mexico, 47.5 births per 1,000 women (ages 15-19) in 2012. Research by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy indicates that teenagers who give birth are:

- less likely to complete high school and go on to college;
- children of teens are more likely to experience academic and social problems in school and more likely to drop out;
- children of teens are more likely to repeat the cycle of teenage pregnancy and poverty;
- high cost in child welfare and public sector healthcare;
- incarceration (for sons of women who had children as adolescents); and
- loss of tax revenue because of lower earnings of children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes.

The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) states that since 2000, teen birth rate in New Mexico (ages 15-17) has declined by 43 percent, compared to the national decline of 48 percent. Birth rates for Hispanic and American Indian teens in New Mexico are higher than other demographic groups. Factors that influence New Mexico's high teen birth rate are:

- diverse population;
- poverty rates;
- rural population;
- high school dropout rates; and
- access to services.

During this meeting the committee will receive a report from:

- Paula Methola, Director, GRADS CCC, Boys and Girls Club of Hobbs;
- Sally Kosnick, Executive Director, GRADS;
- Jeanne Johnston, Co-Director, GRADS;
- Elaine Sena, Executive Director, MyPower, Inc.;
- Phoebe Spencer, Board President, MyPower, Inc.; and
- Mickie Holland, Chief Clinical Director, Residential Services, Guidance Center of Lea County.

This staff report includes a summary of:

- the Graduation, Reality, and Dual-role Skills (GRADS) program;
- MyPower, Inc;
- Humphrey House; and
- Related Background.

Attachments

- **Attachment 1**, *Quick Facts about NM GRADS*; and
- **Attachment 2**, *Summary of Legislative Appropriations for GRADS*.

## **GRADS PROGRAM**

According to the Public Education Department (PED), GRADS is a school-based program for teen parents in multiple high school settings, including traditional, charter, and alternative schools with a mission of:

- facilitating parenting teens' graduation and economic independence;
- promoting healthy multi-generational families; and
- reducing risk-taking behaviors.

Statewide, New Mexico GRADS works to:

- reduce repeat pregnancies;
- retain students through graduation;
- develop positive parenting skills;
- provide early childhood development education;
- develop skills for healthy relationships;

- foster a balance of work and family roles;
- prepare students for work and careers;
- reduce low birth weight babies; and
- demonstrate positive healthcare practices.

During the 2012 interim, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) heard testimony from the executive director of GRADS instructional program. To provide the committee with some related background, GRADS staff referred to a 2010 Child Trends report, *Diploma Attainment Among Teen Mothers*, which found that among those surveyed:

- young women who had been teen mothers were 38 percent less likely than other young women to earn a high school diploma by age 22;
- teens who gave birth before the age of 18 were 22 percent less likely to receive a high school diploma than teens who gave birth after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- teens who gave birth before the age of 18 were 16 percent less likely to earn either a high school diploma or a general educational development (GED) certificate than teens who gave birth after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- Hispanic teen parents were less likely to receive a high school diploma or GED than Caucasian and African-American teen parents; and
- only one-half of women in the study sample who had been teen mothers had earned a high school diploma by the age of 22, compared with 89 percent of young women in the study sample who had not given birth as a teen.

GRADS staff reported that for school year 2011-2012 the program reached 613 teen parents, among whom had:

- a 79 percent graduation rate compared to a 40 percent graduation rate for teen parents nationwide;
- a repeat pregnancy rate of 3.5 percent compared to 19 percent and 20 percent repeat pregnancy rates nationally and statewide, respectively; and
- an occurrence of low birth weight babies for 2.4 percent of GRADS students compared to 8.2 percent and 8.3 percent of teen parents having low birth weight babies nationally and statewide, respectively.

Also for school year 2011-2012, GRADS staff reported that 140 dropouts were recruited back to school, which generated \$503,841 for school districts, and the program had worked with over 14,500 teens since it began in 1989. A more recent update for school year 2012-2013 is outlined in **Attachment 1**.

### **Legislative Funding**

Since FY 96, the Legislature appropriated a total of \$12.3 million (see **Attachment 2**) to support the teen pregnancy prevention program, including:

- over \$7.1 million from the General Fund; and
- nearly \$5.2 million from federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

## **MYPOWER, INC.**

MyPower, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that empowers young women to successfully navigate the teen years through three programs that are of no cost to teens and their families. They include:

- MyPower Mentoring Circles: works with fifth grade girls in a 12 week structured, research-based course that builds self-esteem to help girls avoid issues like teen pregnancy and academic failure;
- MyPower Middle School Edition: empowers sixth through eighth grade girls to avoid teen pregnancy by developing personal confidence and academic excellence, as well as healthy life skills; and
- MyPower Quantum Leadership Camps: a day camp for girls which promotes academic and social skills. It is provided by the internationally recognized Quantum Learning Network of California.

## **HUMPHREY HOUSE**

Humphrey House offers a residential treatment program, emergency based shelter, and a semi independent living program for pregnant teens. These programs offer life skills training and are based by age group:

- age 12-14;
- age 15-17; and
- age 18-21.

## **RELATED BACKGROUND**

In November 2012, LESC staff presented a report on SJM 23, *Educational Barriers for Pregnant Teens*, which requested that PED create a task force to study the obstacles faced by teen parents in completing their education. At the request of an LESC member, the report was included in the LESC 2012 interim workplan as an opportunity for the committee to review, and discuss the concerns and recommendations raised by the joint memorial.

Although SJM 23 did not pass, several organizations examined the problem of these issues and conducted research in the interim to explore possible solutions for eliminating obstacles teen parents face in completing their education. One obstacle facing teen parents trying to finish school is unexcused absences. A policy analyst for Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) informed the committee during the November 2012 interim meeting that APS policy allowed for 10 days of maternity leave plus nine absences in nine weeks for students attending New Futures School. A committee member recognized that was too short of a period for maternity leave and that didn't give teen parents the flexibility to complete coursework. The committee member recommended that the LESC work with PED to define "attendance" and "excused absence" to primarily address the maximum amount of time a student can be absent.

In 2013, legislation was enacted to require school districts and charter schools to establish policies that provide at least 10 days of excused absences for:

- pregnant and parenting students for documented pregnancies;
- documented birth of the student's child;
- absences for parenting student to care for their child under the age of 13;
- require students to be granted time for make-up work; and
- require distribution of policies to all secondary education students.



## Quick Facts about NM GRADS



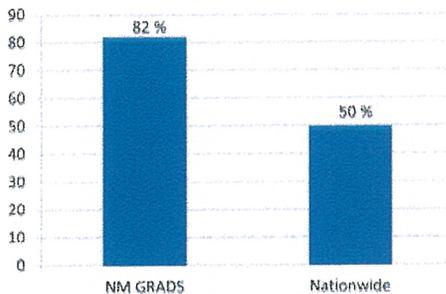
Since its inception in 1989, New Mexico Graduation, Reality, And Dual-role Skills (GRADS) instructional program has impacted the educational and financial success and family health of pregnant and parenting teens of New Mexico. The primary focus of NM GRADS is to provide in-school programs that address the needs of teenage families (which helps schools comply with Title IX Educational Amendment Act of 1972). NM GRADS is vital in keeping teen parents in school, promoting the neonatal and teen parent health, preparing teens to be financially independent, and preventing repeat pregnancies.

NM GRADS is funded by the NM Legislature and overseen by the NM Public Education Department. Even though NM GRADS has experienced significant funding reductions over the last five years, we continue to reach hundreds of teens and their families, having significant impact on the teens' graduation rate, repeat pregnancies and neonatal health.

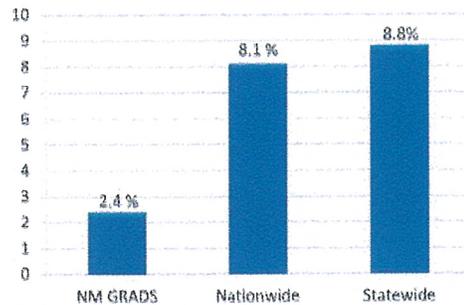
### Positive Impacts of NM GRADS in the 2012-13 School Year

(impacting 518 teen parents, both male and female)

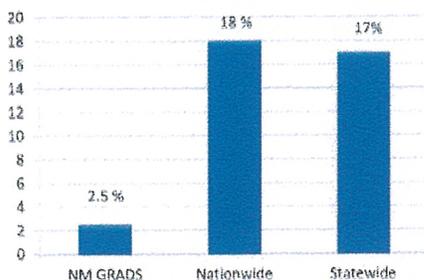
#### Graduation Rate for Teen Mothers<sup>1</sup>



#### Repeat Births for Teen Parents<sup>2</sup>



#### Low Birth Weight Babies<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>.Diploma Attainment Among Teen Mothers 2010; Child Trends, <sup>2</sup> Kids Count 2013

(Please turn over for additional facts)

- NM GRADS is a teen parenting program for elective credit in public, charter and alternative school settings which utilizes certified teaching professionals to present the curriculum.
- NM GRADS helps its students learn how to balance work and family roles.
- NM GRADS helps prepare its students for work and careers to gain economic independence.
- NM GRADS focuses on recruiting and retaining school age dropouts.
- NM GRADS provides partial funding for on-site child development centers. This removes a *huge* barrier for the teen parents that facilitates teen school attendance, thus increasing graduation rates, and allows the teens to be near their child for supervised parenting instruction.
- NM GRADS focuses on healthy choices for teens and their children which include:
  1. delaying second pregnancies (GRADS curriculum includes approved comprehensive sex education information),
  2. encouraging prenatal/maternal care to avoid low birth weight babies,
  3. promoting safe and healthy family relationships.
- NM GRADS teachers worked with 518 teen parents in 27 GRADS sites across NM during the 2012-13 school year.
- NM GRADS had over 13,000 contacts with the GRADS students outside of the GRADS class (case management).
- NM GRADS recruited 100 dropouts back to school (generating approximately \$367,354 for school districts). Since 1989, **3,539** teen parents have been recruited back to school.

Since 1989, over 15,000 teen parents have been impacted by the GRADS program.

NM GRADS would like to thank you for all your past support! We invite you to visit any of our GRADS sites across the state. We have enclosed a listing of all NM GRADS sites with contact information.

To obtain additional information regarding NM GRADS, visit:

- Our website, [www.nmgrads.org](http://www.nmgrads.org)
- Our blog, [nmgrads.wordpress.org](http://nmgrads.wordpress.org)
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)!

Contact us at NM GRADS, 575-835-1785, [nmgrads@nmgrads.org](mailto:nmgrads@nmgrads.org)

