



MyPower, Inc. Presentation
Legislative Health & Human Services Committee
October 25, 2016

Good morning, Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee. I am so grateful to be here.

My name is Elaine Sena and I am the Executive Director of MyPower, Incorporated. Phoebe Latimer Spencer is also present today to answer any questions after the presentation. She is a Founder, Board Member and is immediate past President. She chaired the Lea County Roadmap.

Today:

I would like to share with you 2 unique ways Lea County is addressing the alarming STD and teen pregnancy rates in our county: We have supplied handouts that provide more details.

1) MyPower, Inc., which is a non-profit organization that works with 5th-9th grade girls in group mentoring programs and a summer life skills camp

2) The Roadmap to Reduce Teen Pregnancy in Lea County, is a plan developed by a diverse group of Lea County citizens who are concerned about the high teen pregnancy rates, particularly with 15-17-year-old girls. We want our teens to graduate from high school and have a bright future.

Who We Are and What We Do:

MyPower is a non-profit organization that empowers young women to successfully navigate the teen years by making good choices, setting goals, succeeding academically and avoiding teen pregnancy.

MyPower began in 2010 at one school with 24 girls. To date, we are actively working in 12 schools and have worked with more than 4,500 girls! We are now, by far, the largest youth development program in Lea County.

When we begin our programs, we ALWAYS start off with Affirmations...

Yo soy alguien muy importante. Fui importante antes de venir aquí. Y voy a ser alguien mejor cuando me vaya.

I am somebody. I was somebody before I came in here today. And I will be a better somebody when I leave.

MyPower inspires hope, instills value, and teaches our youth to live their best life. Not just to live their best life, but they DESERVE to live it. I love seeing when that paradigm shift takes place in their little heart. I own my decisions and actions. I DESERVE TO LIVE MY BEST LIFE.

Why did MyPower begin and why are the citizens of Lea County so concerned?

MyPower was founded by a diverse group of community leaders in 2009. At that time, Lea County had the highest teen pregnancy rates in New Mexico. New Mexico had the highest rates in the United States. This group researched successful programs in St. Louis and Los Angeles that have worked to reduce STD and teen pregnancy rates.

MyPower was tailor made to address the issues in Lea County with the shocking STD and teen pregnancy rates. Our concern is for the 15-17-year-old category, but the 13-14-year-old mothers aren't uncommon either. When we began, Lea County was triple the rates of the state in the 15-17-year-old category. For years, the state of New Mexico ranked between #1 and #3 for teen birth rates. As of 2016, New Mexico now ranks #4. Research to find solutions showed mentoring programs, the implementation of evidenced-based sex education, and easy access to teen friendly reproductive care made a difference in lowering teen STD and teen pregnancy rates

MyPower provides a strong mentoring program for girls, and we have advocated for evidence-based sex-ed. The Hobbs Schools changed from abstinence only to evidence-based programs in 2012.

As you can see in the graph that we have provided:

In 2009- the 15-17-year old category for Lea County was at 62.5 per 1,000 cases, New Mexico was at 29.7, and the United States was at 19.6

As of 2014, Lea County is at 42.4, New Mexico is at 17.2 and the United States is at 10.9.

Teen pregnancy has dropped by 33% in Lea County and has even dropped significantly for New Mexico and the US. We have made progress, but we still have a long way to go. MyPower is committed to the process.

MyPower offers 3 programs at NO COST to girls from 5th-9th grade:

- 1) Our first program-is my personal favorite-MyPower Mentoring Circles for 5th grade girls. We have 90% participation in 8 elementary schools. I brought a copy of our curriculum with me today.
- 2) Our second program is the MyPower Middle School Edition that takes place in Advisory Period during school hours for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Currently, we have more than 800 girls in this program in 4 middle schools. (3 in Hobbs and 1 in Eunice)
- 3) Our third program is the MyPower Quantum Leadership Camps that take place during the summer before school starts for 6th-9th graders all throughout Lea County. These popular camps focus on academic and life skills, and teach our students to make the most out of school and life. 350 girls attended the 2016 summer camps. Quantum Learning Network of California teaches their curriculum and MyPower recruits and provides all logistics.

Parent have been the Key to MyPower's success!

We meet with more than 1,000 parents each year and educate them on the issues regarding STDs and Teen Pregnancy Rates. We provide brochures in English and Spanish to help parents discuss these issues and have the tough conversations with their child.

The Roadmap

For 6 months, a diverse group of community leaders-school administrators, church pastors, businessmen and women and health professionals met to review data on our STD & teen pregnancy rates. We then looked at solutions to lowering these rates. We were told that all communities consider themselves to be “conservative.”

2 working sessions provided brainstorming to develop our strategies and goals. This is Lea County’s plan:

Specifically, let me read the following strategies:

1. Make evidenced-based, comprehensive sex education accessible to all young women and men in Lea County.
2. Identify and promote multiple places (including the establishment of school-based clinics) where teens can go to access information and resources about sexual health and contraceptive care.
3. Encourage and assist adults to have safe and open conversations with youth about sexual health and healthy relationships.
4. Develop programs that expand teens’ educational and career goals.
5. Create a countywide coalition that will manage this comprehensive plan and track progress in achieving the goal. **(Done!)** The coalition started monthly meetings in October 2016.

The goal of the Roadmap Committee is to reduce the Lea County 15-17-year-old teen birth rate by 30%, to a rate of 29 births per 1,000 by 2018-2019.

How will we track progress?

- Every school district in Lea County will have evidenced-based, comprehensive sex education curricula in place that meets New Mexico health education standards.
- Local health providers will report more teens accessing contraceptive care at their clinics; and, among these teens, more will report using reliable and effective methods of birth control.
- Provide information to teens and parents about building healthy relationships.
- Provide more mentoring programs and unique opportunities for teens to explore career and college possibilities.

How YOU can help our efforts in Lea County:

1. Provide the Department of Health offices in Hobbs and Lovington with adequate funding to hire a full time provider who focuses on reproductive health. Over the last several years, the offices have gone from having a full-time provider to only two days a month in Hobbs and one day a month in Lovington.
2. Reinstate funding for comprehensive school-based clinics.