



**FSU Center for Prevention
& Early Intervention Policy**

Additional Recommended Practices for Early Head Start Programs Serving Teen Parents

Effectively meeting the unique needs of adolescent parents and their children requires additional considerations in a program's approach to delivery of center-based and home-based services. Listed below are recommended practices for Early Head Start programs to address risk and build resilience in their youngest and most vulnerable families.

PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION
Allow Optimum Program Participation	Early Head Start programs have the advantage of allowing teen parents and their children to participate in a comprehensive program from the prenatal period until the child is three years old, with the potential to continue in Head Start for two additional years. To support positive outcomes, young families should be encouraged to remain in programs over time.
Provide Co-Located Child Care	Child care provided at a site adjacent to where teen parents attend school or job training provides opportunities for visitations that can promote breastfeeding, bonding, and the development of trusting relationships between young parents and program staff. This arrangement also allows ongoing observations of parent-infant interactions with time for Early Head Start staff to support responsive caregiving.
Include Staff Child Care	When Early Head Start staff can place their own children in the child care programs that serve teen parents and their children (such as a center located on a high school campus), parenting teens observe independent, working adults managing the child care needs of their own families. This model also creates visibility and support for the program among faculty and staff who develop "ownership" and personal investment in the quality of the child care.
Promote High Expectations	All aspects of Early Head Start services - including policies and interactions between staff, parents, and their children - should reflect high expectations for teen parents and their children. Depending on individual needs, Family Partnership Agreements with parenting teens should include goals for spacing of births and, at a minimum, convey expectations for the completion of high school or GED.
Support Basic Needs	Young families often lack basic household goods such as food, clothes, diapers, and hygiene supplies. Providing these basic items for parenting teens through Early Head Start resources and community partnerships allows them to attend school or job training more regularly as they move toward self-sufficiency.

PRACTICE	DESCRIPTION
<p>Model Basic Skills</p>	<p>The acquisition of basic skills is important for parenting teens and their children, who may not have had the benefit of learning such skills from capable, adaptive, and caring adults. Early Head Start staff serve as role models for a variety of appropriate behaviors including hygiene and grooming, common courtesy, negotiation skills, and anger management.</p>
<p>Capitalize on Teachable Moments</p>	<p>Teachable moments occur in safe, relaxed settings, often during a home visit or casual conversation when the teen parent shows an interest in new or additional information. Skilled Early Head Start staff learn to take advantage of these opportunities when the parenting teen is most receptive.</p>
<p>Promote Family Literacy</p>	<p>In order for young parents and their young children to acquire the reading skills necessary to succeed in school and the workforce, it is critical that Early Head Start programs promote the value of family literacy, which is transferred from one generation to the next. This includes teaching culturally relevant nursery rhymes, music, and finger play, creating homemade books, and other activities that are appealing to both the teen parent and the baby.</p>