

NOW IS THE TIME TO ADVOCATE FOR PROGRAMS THAT SERVE EXPECTANT AND PARENTING TEENS

Governor's Budget Proposal

In January 2003, Governor Davis released his plan for State-Local Program realignment. For programs that serve expectant and parenting teens, this plan is ill-conceived and poor public policy. Should Governor Davis' proposal go forward, programs that provide direct services to expectant and parenting teens will be split apart by funding streams. The California School Age Families Education Program (Cal-SAFE), operated by the California Department of Education (CDE) will stay in the Prop 98 funding stream and be in a new categorical block grant that goes to local education agencies (LEAs). California Department of Social Services (CDSS) programs (Cal-Learn), and California Department of Health Services (CDHS) programs in Maternal Child Health (Adolescent Family Life Program) will become part of the block grant that goes directly to County government. The CDHS Office of Family Planning Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (Male Involvement Program, Teen SMART Outreach, Information and Education, Community Challenge Grants and It's Up To Me Statewide Media Campaign) will either be eliminated entirely or substantially cut.

Davis' Plan Would Destroy Existing Collaborations/Services

The governor's radical proposal would essentially destroy the collaborative working relationships programs have effectively developed. When the CDE Cal-SAFE program became operative in 2000 (replacing School Age Parenting and Infant Development Program (SAPID), Pregnant Minor Program (PMP) and Pregnant and Lactating Students (PALS) program), strong alignments were developed between Cal-SAFE and programs operated by the CDSS and CDHS through mandates. These collaborations have given students support services they would not have received otherwise. The CDHS' Office of Family Planning Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs require collaboration with CDHS Maternal Child Health Adolescent Family Life Program as well as Family PACT clinical services. These programs all work together to create communities that support teens and their families leading to positive outcomes.

Data Supports These Programs Work

In the past, data on program success supporting expectant and parenting teens was sparse. Cal-SAFE legislation changed that with the inclusion of an extensive evaluation requirement. Proposed budget cuts would virtually eliminate the data collection and evaluation of the Cal-SAFE program. Preliminary data from the 2001-02 fund year gives a good snap shot of how collaborative services can spell success for teen parents and resultant savings in societal costs.

- ✓ During the 2001-02 school year, the Cal-SAFE Program served 9,163 expectant and/or parenting teens and 6,272 of their children.
- ✓ Of the 1,973 students who left the program, 77.2% successfully completed their high school education. (The national average is 25%)
- ✓ Of the 1,258 exiting students providing information about future plans, 89% indicated that they would pursue further education or employment.

ACT RIGHT NOW!

Programs providing essential prevention and intervention services for expectant and parenting teens cannot "wait and see" what happens next year. **The time to act is now!** It is well known that when tough funding decisions must be made, traditional education/prevention programs will outweigh programs requiring extensive support elements that are required for expectant and parenting teens.

Cal-SAFE providers have voiced their concerns that if these programs are placed in a block grant with other categorical programs, local school districts and county offices of education will redirect this funding within one year in order to balance other budget needs.

Traditionally, categorical programs are not protected because they are not popular – and, expectant and parenting teens/programs are the least favorite population/programs in schools. Elimination of Cal-SAFE would result in more drop-outs, lower API scores, increased violence and reduced graduation numbers of expectant and parenting teens. It would also eliminate CDE funding for those infant/child care centers provided by the Cal-SAFE Programs, thereby increasing the number of teen parent dropouts. Providers were unanimous in their recommendation that the only way Cal-SAFE programs can survive is to have the funding removed from the block grant and remain at the CDE, Youth Education Partnerships Office.

Programs in the CDHS and CDSS that address all teens as well as expectant/parenting teens face the same issues raised by Cal-SAFE providers.

What Can You Do?

- ✓ Take action NOW!!!
- ✓ Teach advocacy techniques to teens (one program is having students draw their hand and then drawing their child's hand inside their hand).
- ✓ Have students (current and graduated) write their story including information about how your program has helped make a difference in their lives. Send pictures showing positive program interventions and impacts.
- ✓ Call your local legislators and explain the need to keep programs serving teens out of block grants going to local county government or to LEAs. Get district staff out to see the real impact on young people and their families.
- ✓ Explain that you understand everyone has to take budget cuts – what you're asking for is an understanding of a particularly high-risk population that needs to be protected by leaving designated funds in the Department of Education, Department of Health Services and Department of Social Services.
- ✓ Invite local elected officials to your program and explain your concerns about funding. Tell them the questions for which you need answers. Encourage them to tell state legislators to keep this funding in existing state departments.
- ✓ Tell success stories – talk about the high-risk babies and teens that are served in your programs and how they have achieved real goals of self-sufficiency because of the programs offered as they are.
- ✓ Find out who in your county is sponsoring legislative breakfasts/informational events and go speak about the needs of expectant/parenting teens.
- ✓ Write letters to the editor of your paper to generate community concern or invite a reporter to your program to do a story.
- ✓ Talk to as many people as you can to raise awareness about the positive impacts of these essential programs.
- ✓ Thank your elected officials for what they have done to support programs for youth and families who have the greatest need.