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Adolescent Mother's Experiences in Mental Health: Bringing Forth Awareness

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Abstract

The Youth Homeless Response Team (YHRT) is a program that serves unaccompanied youth, who are currently at risk of being homeless or fleeing a domestic violence situation. By providing case management. Within the program's population of focus, a large portion of unhoused youth are adolescent mothers. This project addresses the high prevalence of poor mental health among young mothers. Acknowledging financial insecurity as a contributor the project entailed, hosting a diaper donation event called “Dance For Diapers.” so that diapers may be delivered to low-income young mothers at YHRT. The event was able to raise a total of \$105 and collect 22 diaper packets. Through mental health surveys completed by young mothers who received diapers, results indicated a decrease in stress. Recommendations include the continuation of the distribution of diapers. Overall, This project was able to bring relief to young mothers demonstrating the importance of mental health.

Keywords: Adolescent mothers, Mental health, Low-income, Experiences, Diaper need,

Agency And Communities Served

Community Action Board(CAB)Of Santa Cruz County is a non-profit agency that strives to address the issues of poverty and injustices within the community by providing access to a variety of resources stated in its mission statement. “Community action boards mission is to partner with the community to eliminate poverty and create social change through advocacy and essential services” (Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, 2022). The mission statement is actively being implemented as seven departments make up the agency each of them having its programs that address different populations and their needs within poverty.

The Youth Homeless Response Team (YHRT) is a program under the Homelessness Prevention and intervention department, that serves unaccompanied youth 15-24, who are currently at risk of being homeless or fleeing a domestic violence situation. YHRT provides services by supplying housing and job navigation, case management, and connections to educational support services as well as allowing access to food and hygiene pantries (Community Action Board of Santa Cruz,2022). The YHRT Program is focused on serving the unhoused youth of Santa Cruz County. From the start, the Youth Homelessness Response Team has served a variety of youth demographics. 17% of the homeless population state that their first experience being unhoused was between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. Witnessing 14% of the homeless population in Santa Cruz is under 18 and 27% are between the ages of 18 and 24 (Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership,2019). Other demographics include those who are Latinx as they make up 33% of the county's unhoused population (Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership [SCCHHP],2019). Additionally, YHRT works with youth who have been in the foster system or were involved in the justice system. According to SCCHHP, 23% of the people experiencing homelessness in the county in 2019 have been in the foster

system and 28% of the youth experiencing homelessness have spent one or more nights in the juvenile hall (Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership,2019). Overall YHRT's main goal is to provide essential services to teens and youth who are unsheltered. Again SCCHHP reported in their survey that transition-aged youth were 95% of the unsheltered population, 51% were unaccompanied youth and 53% were unsheltered families (Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership).

53% of youth served by YHRT are adolescent mothers (A. Bañuelos, personal communication, October 26, 2022). The prevalence of young mothers in the county can be noted within the program as well throughout the country. In 2018 the teen birth rate in the state of California was 12.3 births per 1,000 females (California Department of Public Health, 2018). A year later in 2019, the state rate decreased to 11.0 births per 1,000 females (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Following the same steady decrease statewide, the teen birth rate in Santa Cruz County, in 2018 was 7.4 births per 1,000 females, seeing a 69% decrease since 2010 (Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency,2018). Despite the significant reduction in the teen birth rate for both state and county the prevalence of adolescent mothers is still very much present, especially in low-income communities. 52% of mothers who were pregnant while a teenager were receiving some sort of welfare (National Conference of State Legislatures,2018). Within homelessness, many social factors are at play impacting different young populations and causing detrimental consequences both physical and mental. This is why Community Action Board with its YHRT program focuses directly on unhoused youth offering a range of services to support a variety of needs.

Problem Description

Adolescent mothers have been found to have a higher likelihood of poor mental health during pregnancy and after compared to mothers who are older as well as nonpregnant peers. “Among adolescent mothers, rates of depression are estimated to be between 16% and 44%. In contrast, the lifetime prevalence of major depression among nonpregnant adolescents and adult women is between 5% and 20%”(Hodgkinson et al. 2014. Para 4). Adolescent mothers taking on maternal responsibilities early in their development stage, especially if they are in an unstable low-income environment facing additional life factors, can quickly escalate as trauma for these young girls. “Almost 50% of the adolescent parents in this study met full criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder” (Hodgkinson et al. 2014. para.7). It is not only higher rates of mental health issues in teen mothers that are a concern but the fact that mothers face more than one at a time. “Almost 40 percent of young moms have more than one mental health issue, including depression, a range of anxiety disorders, and hyperactivity.” (McMaster University, 2020. para.2). Facing more than one mental health struggle can increase the risk for suicide within this population. Of mothers who were between the ages of 15 and 19 years old in a 2014 research study, 19% of them responded to having suicidal thoughts and 9% of them had attempted in the past (Hodgkinson et al. 2014). With concerns that come with mental health, it is important to note that significant barriers exist in receiving access to mental health services directly focused on adolescent mothers, many young moms receive first-time services at a primary care setting but usually, providers at this level do not have the sufficient knowledge to help. 50% of pediatric visits assess the behavioral and emotional concerns of the mothers but less than 25% of teen clients continue mental health treatments, especially those who are low-income (Hodgkinson et al. 2014). The mental health of adolescent mothers is not only a personal problem but a social problem that needs to be promptly addressed. If contributing factors are not

recognized and their outcomes are not addressed continue a generational cycle that has detrimental impacts throughout all personal and social levels.

Contributing Factors

Support Network

According to a 2014 study, “Teen mothers reported receiving significantly less social support than adult mothers.(Kim, Connally & Tamim, para. 3). Having a positive system surrounding teen mothers, especially their family support is beneficial for their mental well-being as it gives them the confidence and strength to know they and their children will be supported and taken care of, decreasing the stress that can be felt (Lucas, G et al, 2019). Teen mothers that do not have a support system around them have a harder time coping and adjusting to their new role of being a mother (Mangeli, M et al.2017). Although having a support system is shown to be beneficial for mothers in alleviating stress if that system is not a positive one it can cause more harm than good. “Negative relationships with others added to young women’s levels of stress and were reported to be a key factor in women’s experiences of depression”(Lucas, G et al, 2019. Para.31). Having teen’s parents or other family members be emotionally harmful and neglectful can be devastating to a teen mother’s mental health as they are attacked by the people they should be trusting the most. Additionally, for fear of their parents or other members finding out and judging them, many teen mothers refuse or avoid getting mental health treatment (Hodgkinson et al. 2014). This lets mental issues and emotional damage go untreated, harming the mother and their children further. Some mothers do not leave negative relationships for fear of being alone and without the support of child care, food, or shelter. Those who feel socially isolated, rejected by family members, or the separation from friends as motherhood takes the forefront increase the chances of depression (Lucas, G et al, 2019). The lack of a social support

system as well as the quality of it is a crucial aspect of a teen mother's physical and mental journey because it influences how they will manage the responsibilities of motherhood.

Feeling Inadequate

Teen mothers fear and worry that they do not have the skills or knowledge to accurately fulfill the responsibilities that come with motherhood. Leading to feelings of self-doubt impacting their mental health. "Incompetence in performing the maternal role developed a sense of guilt and self-blame. Some teenage mothers experienced depression, particularly in the postpartum period" (Mangeli, M et al.2017 para. 17). Young mothers have an emotional conflict of wanting to be independent because is what others expect of them but at the same time, many want to depend on others to be able to uphold responsibilities in a healthy manner (Mangeli, M et al.2017). Following this, Negative teen mothers' mental well-being is also influenced by perceived judgment and stigmatization from people in society. Being stared at, having opinions being made that they are not fit to take care of their child, ultimately these consent judgments affect a teen's self-perception as mothers, "These judgments added to young women's stress and made them feel defensive or increased feelings of anger and sadness. It also affected their sense of competency and self-esteem as mothers" (Lucas, G et al, 2019. Para 40). This directly impacts their mental state. Unfortunately, a cycle forms because of this, many young moms do not open up about their physiological difficulties to others or professionals, for fear of being judged, Seeing it better to bottle everything up. These expressions come from A 2019 study that directly focused on adolescent mothers' experiences and their own perceptions of their mental health. According to the women in the study, a good mother is one that does not demonstrate mental health problems so that the parenting skills that they already have doubts about would not be

further questioned (Lucas, G et al, 2019). Negative self-perception can impact one's mental well-being significantly if they do not have support connections.

Financial Insecurity

Mainly the socioeconomics of a mother influences the sort of stability of basic needs that they will have for themselves and their children. “Approximately one-third of unmarried mothers in the United States and their children live in poverty”(Radey, M. et al.,2020. para.1). Living in poverty, and facing instability that is present makes it difficult for mothers to achieve a healthy mental state. In a 2019 study that directly asked young mothers about what experiences during and after pregnancy affected their mental health many of the mothers reported that housing instability, worrying about raising their child in a shelter, and not having enough money to provide basic needs for their children; did not allow them to achieve a positive mental state and also felt like a barrier to taking on the maternal role (Lucas et al, 2019). In order for teen mothers to feel positive about themselves and competent they need to be able to provide basic needs for their children. Therefore many teen mothers turn to public support systems in hopes of accessing resources that could help diminish some of the stressors induced by poverty. “63 percent of teen mothers receive public assistance within the first year of a child’s birth” (National Conference of State Legislatures,2018). Social welfare is a great support to hundreds of teen mothers around the country, however, studies have reported increased psychological distress for those who were recipients(Radey, et al.,2020). An explanation for this can be attributed to the welfare reform that happened in the United States changing the management of services; establishing time restraints and work time expectations to receive cash assistance. Leaving many mothers struggling to meet expectations or not be eligible for services (Radey, et al.,2020). In order to overcome this distress many teen mothers try to take matters into their own hands by

working multiple jobs to be able to get enough income to use on hygiene products and food for their children. Even with 16% of mothers having more than one job working more hours than their competing peers, the jobs worked are largely low-wage. Teen mothers striving to provide a healthy lifestyle for their kids do not make enough to be self-sufficient (Bruns & Pilkauskas, 2019). On top of working multiple jobs, mothers also have the task of caretaker. A 2019 study that directly looked at the mental effects of working more than one job at a time in mothers found that “working multiple jobs was significantly associated with maternal depression in nearly all models” (Bruns & Pilkauskas, 2019. Para. 25). Economics is unfortunately seen as the root foundation for a stable life in today's society and it is its importance to the quality of life that causes severe physiological distress to low-income mothers. “Young women also perceived socioeconomic stressors including unemployment, limited resources, and poverty-related stress as the significant problem impacting their mental well-being” (Lucas et al, 2019. Para. 34). With the constant stressors, anxiety, and negative emotions that come from facing these experiences and challenges, teen mothers become overwhelmed leading to actions and behaviors that have consequences on different aspects of their lives.

Consequences of The Problem

Negative Well-being of the Child

A mother's negative mental health is associated with the negative mental and physical well-being of their children (Wolick et al. 2021). This raises concerns because “Nationally, 7.2% of children had at least one caregiver with poor mental health...5.1% had any female caregiver with poor mental health” (Wolick et al. 2021 para. 1). The manner that a mother copes with their mental health influences the environment of their children through the mother's behavior and actions. In a 2021 study, it was found that children who had one or two parents that struggled

with mental health were 4.0 times as likely to have lower overall health outcomes and 2.0 times higher to have more than one Childhood mental, behavioral or developmental disorders, for example, anxiety, ADHD, conduct problems or intellectual disability, Compared to their counterparts who had parents with positive mental wellbeing(Wolick et al.2021). Additionally in the same study, children who live with one or two parents that have mental health issues have a higher chance of 2.9 more likely to face more than one adverse childhood experience (Wolick et al.2021). The mother's mental health has consequences on more than a child's environmental experiences, and mental, behavioral outcomes.

Mental well-being is also seen to affect a child's physical health. A study done in 2019 found that there could be a correlation between exposure to maternal anxiety and depression with higher risks of childhood injuries, obesity, and asthma. Their results exhibited “a 19% increase in the odds of childhood asthma for children exposed to parental mental illness”(Pierce et al, 2020. Para. 19). Likewise found “a 15% increase in the likelihood of a child having an accident or injury”(Pierce et al,2020. para 15). Most likely caused by affected parenting skills, and limited attention of the mother while dealing with negative symptoms of their mental health. Additionally, adversities experienced from poverty, trauma, parental mental health, and the high amount of stress that is felt due to various areas of instability can change a child's immune response increasing their exposure to illnesses (Pierce et al,2020). With the well-being of the child being affected and compromised in a physical, mental, and emotional manner, a child's quality of life is significantly impacted. A mother and child's life are influenced by each other, the latter will grow up in environments and social contexts that can lead them to repeat the actions of their parents.

Academic Achievement

According to the CDC, “Only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by 22 years of age, whereas approximately 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence graduate from high school”(2021 pg. 1). Dropping out of high school can impact an individual’s quality of life as chances of finishing high school and achieving higher education decrease, limiting employment options and resulting in the amount of income they will have to provide for their family. Attributing to this, adolescent mothers face severe absenteeism for many reasons such as low physical health; feeling nauseous or tired to attend class, doctor appointments, and even fear of judgment from peers (Humberstone,2018). Furthermore, mental health is another reason that can affect school performance and influence dropping out. “Mental health and well-being are related and contribute to the decrease of students' academic performance”(Dekker et al. 2020 para.2). Depression, high levels of stress, and anxiety can cause significant impacts on an adolescent’s work ethic, comprehension, and retention of subjects resulting in teen mothers completing between less than 0.7 and 2 years than other students (Humberstone, 2018). Negative mental health caused by the stress of becoming pregnant early on can significantly increase when it is combined with trying to manage the stress of school, feelings of low self-esteem, and anxiety arising when adolescents underperform in school(Dekker et al. 2020). This cumulation of negative emotions leads many to decide it is better to leave altogether.

Substance Abuse

Teens that use prior to pregnancy are likely to use during the beginning of their pregnancy and after “Estimates of drug use among pregnant adolescents range from 11% to 52%”(Hodgkinson et al. 2014. para 6). A reason for the large range in the results can come from mother’s not accurately reporting their usage for fear of getting in trouble or being judged. Not

only does using substances affect teen mothers such as impacting their adolescent development in executive functioning, reasoning, and problem-solving (Chapman, & Wu, 2013). Substances used during pregnancy can directly affect the fetus's development resulting in physical, behavioral, and mental disabilities such as fetal alcohol syndrome, attention deficit disorder, or ADHD (Chapman, & Wu, 2013).

Mothers who have used before are more likely to start reusing substances within six months of giving birth (Chapman, & Wu, 2013). Another substance use study among teen mothers done in 2013 saw that 24% of adolescent mothers used alcohol on a weekly basis after birth, 27% smoked increasing from 11% from the start of pregnancy, and 22% were found positive for other drug types after a few months after birth (Chapman, & Wu, 2013). Although re-engaging in using is not very beneficial as it continually impacts the health of both mother and child; affecting infant development through breastmilk, exposing a child to secondhand smoke causes respiratory infections, and affecting overall maternal care (Chapman, & Wu, 2013). There is a large concern with mothers who have poor mental health as they are seen to start reusing sooner “The odds of any substance use at four months postpartum were 3.3 times higher for those who were depressed” (Chapman, & Wu, 2013 para.16). Adolescent mothers face a large number of challenges that come with taking on the role and responsibilities of caregiver at such a young age manifesting into physiological distress. Pushing many young mothers to use substances in order to cope with these emotions increases their usage (Chapman, & Wu, 2013). Substance use within the context of Adolescent mothers is a large aspect of the topic that needs to be made aware of. Detrimental impacts can be seen in various aspects of both the young mothers' and child's life and well-being.

Project

One of the main contributors to the poor mental well-being of an adolescent mother is financial insecurity. Low-income mothers struggle to afford basic needs for themselves and their children even when they are getting welfare assistance and working multiple jobs leading to many mothers taking time off school which affects their quality of life further. Not being able to accurately provide and take care of their child's needs, takes a toll on a young mother's mental health having them doubt their competence and have low self-esteem which then directly affects their parenting skills creating a negative cycle.

Conducting an event that helps young mothers focus on one less necessary item that they need to provide for their children is a way to address this problem. A diaper fundraising event is going to be advertised to the county served. Community members can monetarily donate or physically donate a pack of diapers. Distributing the diaper donations from the event will lead to mothers feeling supported, and grateful but most importantly less stressed about not having enough to buy expensive necessary supplies. Letting mothers focus on the care and health of their baby as well address other life factors.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Support Network● Feeling Inadequate● Financial Insecurity	Adolescent mothers are seen to have higher rates of poor mental health during and after pregnancy compared to mothers who are older.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Negative Well-being of the Child● Low Academic Achievement● Increase in Substance Use

Project Implementation

The capstone project that is going to be implemented is going to be a diaper donation event consisting of hosting an hour-and-a-half-long dance class. Where community members are

able to participate in the class if they do a monetary donation or if they do a physical donation of a packet/or box of diapers. The event will be hosted either in the Community Action Board's gym or in one of the other available community facilities. Monetary donations will be able to be made online or in person, and all proceeds will go towards purchasing diaper packets. Which along with the physically donated diapers will all be distributed to the young mothers within the Youth Homeless Response Team Program. However, before connections are made to find available instructors or flyer announcements made to promote this event in the community are made, a proposal has to be presented and accepted by the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz (CAB) in order to start preparing the implementation.

This capstone will be a fundraising event that will involve an activity. With a few participants that are going to be active. First off, the student that is setting up the capstone project, makes the necessary actions and connections to organize the event. Second is YHRT's program coordinator who will supervise the actions of the student and provide support and guidance throughout the process. Next are the community members who are going to be making monetary or physical diaper donations in the event and participate in the Dance class. Other major participants who have a large role will be the two or three dance instructors that will lead two songs each. Last but most important the young moms of the YHRT program will also be participants in this capstone as they will be the ones to whom the diapers collected will be distributed towards. Overall the main resources needed to implement the project will be contacting willing dance instructors that donate their time to lead small sessions within the event. As well as CAB's online donation system where people outside the community or those unable to participate in the event can still donate. Another resource will be the in-person and online advertisement through notifying different agency departments, making flyers, and online social

media announcements on CAB's social sites. Lastly the resource of having a location to host the fundraising event, set with tables and bins to organize donations as well provide refreshments and snacks to donors.

The activities that will be carried out to implement the project will be first writing out and sending a proposal to CAB to get official approval for the event. The proposal needs to be sent by December 22 of this year. Coming back from winter break the direct next step will be contacting available dance instructors who are willing to donate their time to lead two songs within the dance session. Confirmation of two or three instructors should be set by February 6, 2023. For the Dance session portion of this project to be set, confirmation of the location to host the fundraiser needs to be set by February 10, either at YHRT's gym or book a room at another facility in the community. Moving forward, information flyers about the fundraising and donation event need to be created and presented to the agency for approval. This will include actual flyers to be posted up and flyers in the form of social media postings in order to promote the event in person and online. This action needs to be done by February 26 in order to start the week-long promotion of the event within the community, February 27- March 3rd so residents may know about the event and what it entails so that they may plan with time. Promotion starts by emailing the information about the event to different departments within the agency as well as other partner agencies in the community so they may help spread the word as well as let flyers be hung in offices and facilities. Online promotion will also be an action done by using CAB's social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Within that same week, materials are going to be bought for the event such as refreshments for the participants, decorations to make the event more appealing, bins or boxes to store, and present donations acquired, making the event look organized. Materials need to be purchased by March 13th as the event is going to be

hosted on March 18. During this day is when the hour-and-a-half Zumba class will be hosted and diaper donations received for the youth of YHRT.

After the fundraising event, March 20th to the 24th. This will be the week where we collect the donations and see how much was raised. Additionally going out and buying more packets of diapers in needed sizes with the money raised. This helps to determine how many packets an eligible youth will be able to receive. However, before the diapers can be distributed to the young families in the program. A Google survey needs to be completed by March 19th. This will be a short post-survey for young mothers who received donations to fill out in order to help assess the overall project. Asking questions about their mental state before and after receiving the diaper donations. The survey will be worked on throughout the process of implementation, in order to be ready on the set date. Aswell the week of March 20th to the 24th is when it is expected for the first round of calling eligible youth to start, letting them know that diapers are available for them to pick up or have the program deliver to them. Returning from spring break the second round of notifying eligible youth will be on April 3rd giving them that week to receive their donated diaper packets. When the youth receives a diaper donation a link to the Google survey will be sent to them via text or email which will be requested to be filled out and sent back to YHRT within two days. Having dates when the program contacts the youth is in order to distribute the donations in an organized manner and make sure that every youth that needs diapers is able to receive some. This is simply an overview of the activities that need to be done in order to implement the project. Additional tasks may arise and the sequence of activities may change depending on external factors.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project is to help young low-income mothers who are facing financial insecurity and whose mental well-being is impacted by it. In a 2019 study, young mothers reported, that not being able to provide basic needs for their children affected their mental state and self-confidence as mothers (Lucas et al, 2019). Many have to decide what necessities they are able to afford and which ones they need to leave behind week after week. Even if a young mother finds herself working more than one job at a time; as 16% of single mothers do within the U.S (Bruns & Pilkauskas,2019), They still are not able to make enough money to cover all of their necessary costs to provide for all their and their child's basic needs, which in turn largely affects a mother's mental well-being. The capstone project will specifically be implemented to help low-income mothers have one less necessary item that they need to worry about such as diapers. Diaper prices continue to rise, costing a mother \$70 to \$80 a month to keep a single baby clean and healthy (National Diaper Bank Network, n.d). With this project providing one of those necessary items, young mothers can use their limited income on other necessities such as clothes, housing, or groceries; reducing stress. Supporting mothers in decreasing their stress levels about financial instability, and helping them to focus on their child, school, and work in order to strive for self-sufficiency is a large part of this project.

Project Justification

When it comes to poverty there are many challenges that individuals must face, leading to outcomes that impact their overall well-being. One of the major challenges faced by young low-income mothers is material hardships. Specifically in this case facing the hardship of diaper need, which is defined by the National Diaper Bank Network as “the lack of a sufficient supply of diapers to keep an infant or child clean, dry, and healthy”(n.d para.1). Which is faced by 1 in 3 families across the country (National Diaper Bank Network, n.d). Many young mothers who are

not able to afford a good amount of diapers usually don't change their babies' diapers as frequently, in order to make one pair last as long as it can, increasing the risk for babies to develop rashes and infections (Smith et. all, 2013). Diaper need does not only affect the health of the child but the lack of clean diapers makes them less likely to go to daycares which affect young mothers, being unable to attend school or go to work (Help a Mother Out, 2021). Consequently repeating the cycle of material hardships and affecting a mother's mental well-being. "Parents experiencing poverty in the form of income and material hardship, for example in the form of diaper need, are subject to increased parenting stress" (Smith et. all, 2013 para 4).

Fortunately, nonprofit organizations such as the National Diaper Bank Network and Help A Mother Out are striving to help mothers and families facing these material hardships by distributing diapers. According to the Help a Mother Out's 2021 Efforts Evaluation survey, this nonprofit had 29% of their participants state that accessing diapers allowed them to go to school or work because their child was able to enter daycare. Additionally, because of receiving diapers, participants were able to use the extra money for other basic needs. 93% had more money to buy groceries and 91% stated it was easier to pay their rent and utilities (Help a Mother Out, 2021). Because of their efforts in providing a supply of diapers, data also showed positive results in parents' mental well-being, with 97% of participants stating that they felt less stress and were able to focus on their child, bettering their confidence in parenting (Help a Mother out, 2021). Organizations that are helping mothers in this manner show positive feedback in aiding them to achieve basic necessities and mental well-being.

Expected Outcomes

The criteria that this capstone will use to determine what a successful fundraiser event looks like will be by setting goals for donations received during the event, the amount of youth served because of the donation event, and those who completed the survey.

- Having a goal of raising \$200 together with in-person or online donations
- Having a goal of receiving 20 diaper packages
- Providing 20 eligible youth within the Youth Homeless Response Team one diaper package
- 40% of the eligible youth within the Youth Homeless Response Team program that received diapers completed the mental health survey and stated there was a positive change in financial stress

The Outcome that is expected, in order to determine the benefits of the overall project is a positive change in the mental well-being in the adolescent mothers served. Witnessing a decrease in financial stress about costs pertaining to materials needs.

Assessment Plan

To measure if the capstone project meets the expected outcomes of the set goals, after the event an inventory count will be conducted where the program counts the total of monetary donations received likewise counting the number of diaper packages that were donated. The counted amount then is compared to the goals that were set at the beginning to determine if the event helped raise the amount goal for monetary and physical donations. After more diapers have been bought in other sizes that are needed with the donated money, there will be another count to establish the overall final amount of diapers raised. From this, the number of youth who will receive a packet will be determined which in turn will demonstrate if the set goal for how many served was met or not.

In order to measure the expected outcomes for mothers' mental state when it comes to financial stress and purchasing basic necessities such as diapers. A Post event-google survey will be sent out to youth and families that received a diaper donation and will be asked to fill it out within three days. The survey will include questions about their mental state when it comes to financial stress and purchasing basic necessities such as diapers. Asking how they feel and the impact of receiving their diaper donations on their financial costs. The survey will be made by using short answers and Likert scales to measure the answers, therefore helping collect results that demonstrate if the project meets the identified outcomes and is beneficial to the YHRT program.

Project Activities

The implementation process as it was first thought out was affected by unpredicted circumstances. The original date for the fundraising event was set for March 18 however due to heavy rainfall in the area causing severe flooding and road closure, it was agreed by the student and program coordinator to ensure everyone's safety as well as provide the best outcome, to move the event to April 1st. Other than the new date, fortunately, most of the initial project activities stated above were conducted throughout the implementation. to start, The project proposal was sent to the department coordinator at CAB by December 22, 2022, providing approval to start working on hosting the fundraiser. The first physical actions within the project were the creation of the first draft of event flyers on February 13. Actions of securing a location, which was seen at first to come easy at YHRT's new location, the gym needed approval from the landlord and a \$50 fee to be paid. However, contact kept getting pushed back. similarly, securing 2 to 3 dance instructors was becoming difficult. On March 13, flyers were updated and

approved by CABS's marketing office allowing them to be ready to use when promotion for the event started.

A location still needed to be secured, therefore on March 20th, calling local locations such as gyms, the YMCA, and even Watsonville's city park was done. Nonetheless, there was no approval from YHRT's coordinator and CAB's program coordinator for either of the two available options presented by the student. The following week, the week with the Saturday the event would be hosted was a week where the implementation process was done in quick succession. Monday, March 27, the student made contact with a possible dance instructor but unfortunately did not a confirmation. On Tuesday, March 28, online donations were open; posting on YHRT's and Student Instagram story, an informational flyer, with a link to the site, was posted every day leading up to the event. On Wednesday, a location was secured by the YHRT's program coordinator at Luna Y Sol a fellow community organization as well as signed and approved liability forms. The next day on Thursday, flyers were posted on YHRT's and students' Instagram accounts, officially announcing the diaper donation event. The posts were shared the next day and the morning of the event, this happened online as in-person promotion was not possible. On Friday, it was confirmed that YHRT's program coordinator would volunteer as the only dance instructor at the event. Additionally, event supplies were purchased. Finally, on Saturday at 10 am the event was hosted without complications and surrounded by positive energy all the way through.

After the event, on Monday, April 3rd the physical diaper donations were counted as well as the post-event mental health survey for served youth was created and sent to YHRT's coordinator for approval. Creation of a list of all of YHRT's youth that are parents was created to keep track of who to contact. The next Monday, April 10 the number of physical and online

monetary donations was counted. With this, youth started to be contacted Via text messages asking if they were interested in picking up a packet of available diapers. April 12, is when the donated money was used to purchase additional needed diaper sizes. Although there have been four youths who have received a diaper packet before the allotted time ended for the project, contacting youth in the program and delivering diaper packets will continue to achieve the project outcomes.

Project Outcomes

The overall project outcome that was set from the start was to see a positive change in the mental well-being of mothers in the YHRT program that was served. The expected outcomes that were determined from the start of the implementation for the Diaper Donation Event were as follows

- Raising \$200 together with in-person and online donations
- Receiving 20 diaper packages both from the Diaper event and purchased with Donated money
- Providing 20 eligible youth within the Youth Homeless Response Team one diaper package
- 40% of the eligible youth within the Youth Homeless Response Team program who received diapers completed the mental health survey and stated there was a positive change in financial stress

Results

The Diaper Donation Event hosted on March 18th had 7 donors participate in the fitness dance class and raised a total of 22 diaper packages ranging of different sizes. The money raised from both the physical event and online donations made through CAB's donation site was \$105,

and the money was counted and dealt with by CAB staff. Compared to the expected outcome it did not achieve raising \$200 by the end of the event. Despite this, the money donated was able to purchase 8 additional diaper packages in needed sizes making the total of 30 diaper packages raised. Compared to the expected outcome of receiving 20 diaper packages, the overall event achieved and surpassed the outcome by 10 packages. In the end, the project raised over 800 individual diapers for eligible young parents in the YHRT program.

From creating a list of all eligible YHRT youth 30 out of the 45 were contacted via text message notifying them of available diapers and their sizes to be picked up if interested. Of the 30 contacted, 5 youth have received a packet of diapers, by confirming via text message that they are interested in diapers of a certain size and picked them up at the office. One youth had packets delivered directly to her. Compared to the expected outcomes of providing 20 eligible youth with a diaper packet the outcome was not achieved within the allotted time frame after the event. The availability of YHRT staff in the office made it difficult for interested youth to pick up diapers when they wanted, limited resources for diapers to be directly delivered to youth, as well a limited time frame for youth to receive diapers before data was to be measured are some of the reasons why the set goal was not met. Nonetheless, it did deliver packets to a number of youth, but mainly with the number of diapers raised there is confidence the expected goal will be reached and surpassed with the continuation of distributing diapers to contacted youth. 4 mental health surveys were sent out to eligible youth. In the end, 2 were completed via google forms, finding a positive change in mental health and a decrease in financial stress due to receiving a packet of diapers. Compared to the expected outcome the project did achieve 40% of eligible youth completing the survey and demonstrating a positive result. Overall, The project managed

to raise and provide diapers to young parents within the community as well as provide YHRT the ability to continue delivering diapers after the current project ended.

Conclusion

Based on the presented results the project was successful; Receiving donations, providing diapers to young mothers, and most importantly positively impacting their mental health. From its visible achievements, this project should be continued and encouraged to be implemented once a year through the agency. The research within this project, not only presents that having a diaper donation event is a secure way to raise diapers for YHRT; it displays that providing diapers to low income adolescent mothers can decrease financial stress. This confirms and is representative of past studies. Therefore, with the actions and results that came from “Dance For Diapers”. The project should be adamantly continued and expanded on. Recommendations would include making this a yearly event, hosted within the same month each time so community members can look forward to participating, garnering larger traction. Promotion should be done in person by sending out flyers to partnering agencies and posted on community boards, likewise, online promotion should be done on different social media sites and community websites. Another recommendation would be having the option for diapers to be directly delivered to interested mothers, as many were unable to pick them up at the office due to conflicting schedules or a lack of transportation. To improve the project additional baby items such as formula and wipes should be donated and made accessible. Furthermore, a connection to mental health services specifically for mothers should be provided. The overall purpose of this project is to support the well-being of mothers and their children. With added actions, it becomes a recurring asset to the program and the community.

Personal Reflection

I am very grateful I was able to research and implement a project that addressed the mental health of adolescent mothers; making me knowledgeable about this prominent issue. Becoming a mother is already stressful for many women as it alters their life significantly. When a teenager or a young adult becomes a mother, there are additional challenges this population faces. Adding to housing and economic instability, a young mother's quality of life is severely impacted. Stigmatization of the population and generational poverty within the country will continue if adolescent mothers' mental health is not prioritized and its prominent factors are not addressed with adequate services. Planning this project made me learn that I have the capabilities to implement an engaging donation event. Taught me the importance of collaboration and communication both with my mentor who guided me in figuring out what my capstone should be and with the rest of the YHRT staff who were involved in the execution of the event. Adaptability was another skill that I practiced during my project, my mentor very much taught me how to be resourceful and keep pushing, striving towards my vision even though we faced situations that seemed like barriers. Fortunately in the end the project contributed to enhancing YHRTs services. Supplying their basic need item closet with diapers and reconnecting old youth to engage with the program again.

I was able to meet the expected outcomes because of identified strengths within my project. The first one would be opening up donations both online and in person. This allowed individuals throughout the county and outside of it to be able to participate in the cause. Having both forms of donation methods allowed for more diapers to be received during the event. Another strength of my project is the established relationship that I had with my mentor. Before my capstone, my mentor and I had formed a very good relationship where I felt seen, heard, and relied on. This was very much a core strength within my capstone because my mentor guided me

throughout my project. I was comfortable enough to ask for advice and express my concerns. Without her knowledge and support, my capstone and its outcomes would have been very different. That is why my biggest success with my capstone was being able to host it how I originally envisioned it from the start. I faced challenges that made me believe I would have to transition solely to an online event. Although my capstone was successful in receiving donations, limitations to the project design were identified when diapers were ready to be provided to eligible youth. Because of conflict scheduling to come into the office, many youth could not receive diaper packets when they wanted resulting in a low amount of youth receiving packets in the allotted time. A way that I tried to address this was by keeping in contact with interested youth, trying to work out a time that worked best for them as well as communicating with mentors and staff about delivering diapers to youth which was the main physical aspect of this project.

However, overall my capstone addresses a broader health problem as many social issues are found within homelessness and teen pregnancy. Everything is connected; if a teenager becomes pregnant they may drop out of school, limiting job options, which affects economic stability, might be rejected by loved ones, and face stigmatization from the public leading to an impact on mental health and risk of substance abuse, which affects the wellbeing of the child. Or because of mental health issues, teens are at a higher risk of substance use and teen pregnancy, leading them on a similar path mentioned previously. Therefore my capstone addresses teen pregnancy by bringing awareness to one of its critical factors, mental health. And has made efforts to alleviate stress and feelings of inadequacy by providing essential items that will also benefit the health of their children. My capstone only focused on one contributing factor but there is more that should be done to address teen pregnancy and mental health. There should be

more programs and services focusing on young mothers as they face additional and different types of challenges than older mothers. Implementing support groups, parenting skill workshops, educational connections, and low-cost daycares for young mothers are some actions that can address this social issue. No mother should feel judged, stigmatized, or outcasted especially because of their age. Teen mothers and their children are the new generations there should be adamant actions toward addressing present issues that they face.

In the same manner, advice that I would provide future capstone students who are working at my agency in hopes of encouraging successful and impactful capstones would first get to know the population of unhoused youth. When I first joined YHRT I had little knowledge of who unhoused youth were, my only knowledge was from the media which presented only one side of the story. Interacting with you and learning about who they are, their needs, and what they strive for in life helped me become a better service provider and create an impactful project. alongside this I advise students to have an open mind when interning at this agency, being open to learning about others' stories but also being open to learning and new experiences. This work will require them to take initiative; having an open mind and heart. Likewise, I remind them that they will not be alone, forming connections with mentors and staff is crucial to get the most out of their internship but also to have support and additional knowledge when implementing their capstone. Ultimately, students should strive to grow professionally and personally through this experience as I have. Being able to implement a capstone for a population that I have grown to be passionate about and knowing my actions no matter how small impacted lives, is an experience that encourages me to further expand my knowledge and continue my development as a human service worker in my community.

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Appendices

Scope Of Work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines
Create and send project proposal to Community Action Bored	Community Action Board's official approval for the project.	Dec. 22
Reach out and connect with dance Instructors	2 or 3 instructors to commit to instructing at the event	Feb. 6
Confirm YHRT Gym or contact possible locations to host the event	an adequate location to host the Zumba class and donations	Feb. 10
Create paper flyers and online posts	Able to promote the fundraising event within the community	Feb. 26
Start promoting the event in person and online	The community gets informed of the event	Feb. 27
Buy drinks, snacks, and decorations	Refreshments for the participants and make the event more appealing	Mar. 13
Publish and open link to the public for online donations	Raise money for diapers for those not able to attend the event	Mar.13
Host Event	Raise money and diapers and have people participate in the Zumba class	Mar. 18
Count the donations and funds received	Determine how much was raised and donated. To see how many packets can be donated to youth.	Mar. 20-24
Create a Google pre and post-google survey for youth to fill out	Assess the impacts of the project in the areas of resource knowledge and mental well-being.	Mar. 19
Contact youth to let them know diapers are available for them	Youth receive diapers	Mar. 20- April 3

Event Flyers



Mental Health Survey

Dance For Diapers post Survey

This survey will consist of a couple of questions to see the connection between an individuals mental health (stress, anxiousness, worry etc.) when it comes to Financial stress and the purchasing of basic necessities such as diapers.

njaramillo@csumb.edu [Switch account](#)

Not shared

* Indicates required question

on a scale from 1 to 5 how much does financial stress of not being able to purchase basic necessities (food, clothes, hygiene items) impact your mental health? *

Does not affect my Mental health

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

4 ☐

5 ☐

very much affect my Mental health

On a scale from 1 to 5 how much does financial stress of not being able to purchase diapers impacts your mental health? *

Does not affect my mental health

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

4 ☐

5 ☐

very much affects my mental health

On a scale from 1 to 5 how much did receiving a packet of diapers impact your mental health? *

Did not impact my mental health

1 ☐

2 ☐

3 ☐

4 ☐

5 ☐

made me stress less

Any other comments or insights you would like to share?

Your answer