




Pregnant and Parenting Teen Conferencing:

A Tool to Help Parenting Teens in Foster Care Achieve Better Outcomes for Themselves and Their Children



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I. INTRODUCTION



Becoming a parent, particularly as a youth and even more so as a youth in the foster care system, brings significant challenges, many of which are not easily addressed within the traditional child welfare case planning process. At the same time, however, the teens' hopes and desires for their babies can be a tremendous motivator, helping them to focus on their life trajectory and set goals. Support and intervention at this time is crucial, and have the potential to impact the intergenerational cycle of involvement in the foster care system.

Pregnant and Parenting Teen (PPT) Conferencing is a planning strategy that can be used to identify and address the complex and specialized needs of youth in the foster care system who are parents or who are pregnant and planning to give birth. The conference focuses on the goals of the youth in the context of her¹ role as a parent and tries to connect her with the appropriate services, supports and community network to help her achieve these goals. The purpose of the conference is to build on the strengths of young parents and give them the scaffold and supports they need to grow into their role as parents, successfully transition to independence, and achieve better outcomes for themselves and their children. The New York City Administration on Children is one example of a child welfare system promoting the use of team conferencing for young parents in care.² Los Angeles County also has developed a pregnant and parenting teen conference model to assist parenting and soon-to-be-parenting youth in the child welfare system.

While team conferencing is used in many contexts in child welfare, the team conferencing model as modified for pregnant and parenting foster youth differs in important ways from the model used in other child welfare situations. This document provides background on team conferencing for pregnant and parenting youth, and in particular on the model developed and used in Los Angeles County. The document is intended to provide Institute attendees with the information they need to evaluate whether the Los Angeles model, or certain components of that model, may be suitable for use in their counties.

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- 1 While team conferencing is helpful for both teen fathers and mothers, most participants are female and this document will use the female gender.
 - 2 See Fordham Interdisciplinary Parent Representation Project's "*Guide to Working with Young Parents in Out of Home Care*," NYC Administration for Children's Services, for discussion of collaborative planning in New York, Appendix I.

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II. Background and History of the Los Angeles Model



The Los Angeles County Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (ICAN)³ has for many years convened a subcommittee to address the needs of the teen parent population, including young parents living with their families, living in foster care, involved with probation and/or homeless. In 2004, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), together with several members of ICAN, including the Alliance for Children's Rights⁴, Public Counsel⁵ and the Children's Law Center of California (CLC)⁶, established a workgroup to look specifically at how to better address the needs of pregnant and parenting teens in foster care. These advocates felt strongly that they needed to proactively address issues arising as a result of teen pregnancy and parenting before those issues became crises or resulted in the detention of a teen's baby.

The workgroup recognized that working with parenting teens requires specialized expertise in the issues and challenges parenting teens face, the services and supports they may require, and a deep knowledge of the current community resources available to help meet these needs. The group also recognized that many child welfare case workers and social workers do not have the opportunity to develop this expertise because, while teen pregnancy in foster care is not uncommon, most social workers in DCFS, have one, or at most a few, parenting teen cases a year. With such limited exposure, it is difficult for a social worker to gain expertise and knowledge of both the needs of and resources for this unique population, or to stay apprised of new and changing resources.

The workgroup designed the Los Angeles Pregnant and Parenting Teen (PPT) conference model to address this gap. DCFS already had in place a family team decision-making model for decisions regarding removal, placement and reunification which involved a strengths-based approach that put

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- 3 The Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (ICAN) was established in 1977 by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors as the official county agency to coordinate the development of services for the prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The mandate for much of ICAN's work comes from the ICAN Policy Committee, which includes 32 County, City, State and Federal agency heads as well as UCLA, 5 private sector individuals appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the Children's Planning Council.
 - 4 The Alliance for Children's Rights (ACR) was established in 1992 to protect the rights of impoverished, abused and neglected children and youth. ACR provides free legal services and advocacy, to ensure that children have safe, stable homes, healthcare and the education they need to thrive.
 - 5 Public Counsel (PC) was established in 1970. PC is the public interest law firm of the Los Angeles County and Beverly Hills Bar Associations as well as the Southern California affiliate of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.
 - 6 Children's Law Center of California (CLC) was created in 1990 by the Los Angeles Superior Court to serve as appointed counsel for children who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned that come under the protection of the Los Angeles County Juvenile Dependency Court systems. CLC is a non-profit, public interest law firm that provides legal representation for children impacted by abuse and neglect.



family and community at the center of the process. The Los Angeles PPT conference design uses the basic elements from this team decision-making framework, with a few critical differences. Among those key differences:

- 1. The PPT conference is completely independent of other child welfare decision-making and conferencing.*
- 2. It is voluntary and puts the youth at the center and in the driver's seat throughout the process.*
- 3. It requires involvement of an expert in the issues and challenges of teen parenting, with a deep knowledge of current available community resources.*

The developers of the conference model believe their process results in life plans with clear and attainable short- and long-term life goals, better quality resources and more effective referrals, more invested participants, and better implementation and follow-up. The Children's Law Center of California analyzed the PPT conferences by reviewing conference reports and case files, and interviewing the teens involved in the conferences. The analysis concluded that the conferences were effective at meeting the stated goals, including relationship development, progress toward independent living, and referrals for supportive services.⁷

⁷ Children's Law Center, "CLC Analysis of Pregnant and Parenting Teen (PPT) Conferences and Outcomes," Appendix 2.

III. The Los Angeles Parenting Teen Conference Model and Process

The Los Angeles Pregnant and Parenting Teen (PPT) conference process includes five stages:

1. *Referral and Youth's Acceptance*
2. *Preparation*
3. *Conference and Development of an Action Plan*
4. *Implementation*
5. *Follow up*

These stages are described in detail below. A graphic description of the process is also included on page 12.

I. Referral and Youth's Acceptance

PPT conferences are offered to parenting youth and youth who are pregnant and have decided to continue their pregnancies. For newly pregnant youth, DCFS policy requires social workers to counsel teens about all their options as soon as the teens disclose their pregnancy. This requires social workers to support the teens' choices, whichever path they choose, including helping them obtain an abortion when that is their choice.⁸ Pregnant youth are not informed about or referred for a PPT conference until they have made the decision to continue a pregnancy.

Pregnant youth may self refer for a PPT conference. They also may be referred by their attorneys, case-carrying social workers, other DCFS workers, court services personnel, family and non-profit advocates, and others. DCFS policy states that any teen continuing a pregnancy as well as all parenting teens under Department supervision should be offered a conference even if there are no identifiable problems in the youth's life. Key participants in the PPT conference process note that once a youth has decided to continue her pregnancy,

DCFS Referral Form

DCFS 174

[Click title](#) or see Appendix 3.

⁸ Los Angeles County DCFS Policy 0600-507.10 Revision Date: 12/23/14, found on January 9, 2015 at http://policy.dcsf.lacounty.gov/Content/Youth_Development_Reprod.htm#PolicyHeader1_1

it is important to refer her for a conference as early in pregnancy as possible. They suggest that the better the relationship between the teen and the professionals responsible for her case, such as her social worker and legal counsel, the more likely the teen is to disclose her pregnancy to these individuals early and the more likely they will be able to refer her early.

In Los Angeles, the vast majority of participants are young women, even though the process is also available to young men.

If referred, the referring party discusses the conference model with the youth and gauges the youth's interest. If the youth expresses interest, the referring party or the case-carrying social worker completes a referral form (DCFS 174)⁹ and submits that form to the PPT Facilitator at DCFS.

When the **PPT Facilitator** receives a referral, he or she reaches out to the youth to discuss the PPT conference model in more detail and to confirm that the youth wishes to proceed. A core principle of the conference model is that it is voluntary, ensuring the youth's investment in the process, including follow through on action steps. If a referred youth is not interested in a conference, the Facilitator notes this in the youth's case file, advises the referring party and does not proceed further.

If the youth wishes to proceed, the PPT Facilitator then contacts the ICAN¹⁰ Pregnant and Parenting Teen Task Force to have a **Teen Parent Resource Specialist** (TPRS) assigned to the conference.

Currently in Los Angeles, social workers from two private advocacy organizations—the Alliance for Children's Rights and Public Counsel—serve as the TPRS. Additional information about these social workers is available in Appendix 21.

What is a PPT Facilitator?

A Pregnant and Parenting Teen (PPT) Facilitator has expertise in parenting youth issues. The Facilitator manages the conference process, is responsible for documentation, and coordinates between the youth, DCFS, the Teen Parent Resource Specialist and outside agencies. Click here or see Appendix 10 for a Facilitator "Job Description."

What is a Teen Parent Resource Specialist?

A Teen Parent Resource Specialist (TPRS) has a deep knowledge of the special needs and issues that parenting youth face, as well as the community resources available for them. The TPRS also may have connections with these community agencies that help when coordinating referrals. The TPRS understands how trauma, culture and context may impact parenting and life choices. In Los Angeles, a TPRS is a trained social worker, but that is not a prerequisite. Click here or see Appendix 9 for a TPRS "Job Description."

⁹ See Appendix 3

¹⁰ See Footnote 3, *infra*, for description of ICAN.

2. Preparation

The preparation stage includes three components: Identifying participants, scheduling and setting the agenda and selecting topics:

i. Identifying Participants to Invite

Once a Teen Parent Resource Specialist is assigned, the Facilitator, DCFS case-carrying social worker and TPRS work with the youth to determine which potential participants to invite to attend the conference. The invitees should include both family and resource supports.

Potential Participant List

For a list of individuals and agencies that Facilitators, youth and Teen Parent Resource Specialists consider inviting to conference, [click here](#) or see Appendix 4.

First, the team asks the youth to identify family members and community support people who could bring information to the meeting about the youth and community resources, as well as provide support to her during the conference and later as she strives to accomplish the action steps agreed to in the meeting. Allowing the youth to invite family and participate in deciding who to invite reinforces the idea that the conference is for the youth and about her personal goals, rather than about the youth and her child welfare case.

With the youth's permission, the team also invites outside agencies currently working with the youth or those who may be able to help the youth work on her identified goals and needs.

ii. Scheduling

The DCFS administrative coordinator who works with the PPT Facilitator then communicates with the team to set a date for the conference. The meeting date is scheduled at least two weeks out so that it is more likely the invitees can attend and so that there is sufficient time for the youth to prepare for the conference. The team attempts to schedule the conference at times convenient for the youth and her support people, such as outside school hours.

The location is chosen to accommodate the youth and her support team. It generally is at a DCFS office or a community-based location, and occasionally at the youth's placement. The Facilitator is responsible for ensuring that identified participants receive invitations to join the conference. The conference is not combined with other team conferencing, which helps reinforce the idea that the conference is about the youth and her goals. It allows the conference to remain youth-centered and youth-driven. It is also more practical because the PPT conference involves different participants and addresses different issues than would other conferences.

iii. Setting the Agenda and Deciding Topics to Address

The Facilitator and Teen Parent Resource Specialist then work with the youth to prepare for the conference. The specialist phones the teen to determine major areas of concern, which may

include educational and employment status; physical, social and emotional well-being; and level of self-sufficiency. The youth is involved in deciding which of these, or other topics, the conference will address. Appendix 5 includes a list of common areas of concern for a pregnant and parenting teen. It can be reviewed with a youth to identify priority issues for discussion. Based on this, the Facilitator, TPRS and youth set an agenda, including purpose and goals for the conference.

3. Conference and Development of Goals and Action Plan

The conference typically involves a 1 to 2 hour meeting, managed by the Facilitator. The Facilitator has been specially trained to use a strengths-based team decision-making process.

The meeting begins by reviewing its **purpose**, a summary of the issues previously identified and agreed upon by the youth, the TPRS and Facilitator. Sample topics may include educational planning, birth plans, child care, family law issues, parenting classes or placement stability. Prevention of second pregnancies is always addressed, and specific resources given.

Next, the group discusses the **youth's strengths**. Strengths may include specific areas such as the youth's participation in parenting classes or attendance record at school, as well as more subjective observations such as the cooperative and highly motivated nature of the youth.

The **challenges and needs** of the youth are then discussed. These may be concrete needs, such as a crib and stroller; placement or funding issues, or more long-term challenges, such as finishing high school.

Then the team brainstorms **ideas to address the challenges**. These should be very specific suggestions such as considering child care options, consulting a family law attorney, or contacting specific agencies to plan for the birth.

At this point, the **Teen Parent Resource Specialist** plays a particularly crucial role. The TPRS has knowledge and expertise regarding issues that parenting teens frequently face and knows what questions to ask and issues to explore. The specialist also knows current community resources available to address the youth's needs. Many of these resources speak to needs outside of the usual expertise of a DCFS social worker, such as how to handle tickets for

Possible Topics

For a list of common areas of concern for pregnant and parenting youth that can be reviewed with the youth and used to decide possible topics for conference, click [here](#) or see Appendix 5.

Strengths-Based Decision-Making and Facilitator's Role

DCFS Policy 0070-548.03 describes the process the Facilitator is expected to employ in managing the PPT conference. Click [title](#) or see Appendix 6.

TPRS Resource and Referral List

For a list of materials developed by the Teen Parent Resource Specialists in Los Angeles that are brought to each conference, click [here](#) or see Appendix 7.

curfew violations, family law issues, resources for immigration advocacy, how to obtain a computer, or how to talk to your baby. The specialist makes sure that referrals are current. In Los Angeles, the TPRS brings a file box of pamphlets and flyers to each conference, to be prepared to provide valuable information and contacts for a range of different issues that may arise.

Then the team develops a **list of goals and a plan for action steps** the youth and others will take to meet these goals and address the challenges.

The Facilitator writes up the meeting in a **report**, which provides a summary of the discussion at the conference, an overview of the youth's situation and a description of the goals and action plan. Action steps are listed with a specific completion date, person responsible for accomplishing the action and contact information as needed. For example, an action step might be for the youth to consult with a family law attorney by a specific date, listed with the legal organization's name and contact information. Each participant is asked to sign the report and is given a copy.

Example of Plan and Report from Los Angeles

For a sample conference plan and meeting notes from Los Angeles, click here or see Appendix 8.

4. Implementation

The action plan includes steps the youth must accomplish and actions steps for others. Action steps for the youth may involve contacting new referrals she has received from the Teen Parent Resource Specialist or engaging in discussions with existing contacts such as parents or doctors. The TPRS seeks to assure that the youth receives “warm referrals” to agencies—that is, that the youth is not just given a list of phone numbers or a stack of brochures, but instead is helped to make real connections through a personal introduction, or is assisted in the self-advocacy process.

Other action steps may obligate other conference participants. For example, they may require the TPRS to look for additional resources or the social worker to update files. The case-carrying social worker may be assigned certain follow-ups, but these are typically actions that the worker would be expected to do as part of the child welfare case plan in any case.

5. Follow-Up

After the Teen Parent Resource Specialist completes assigned tasks, he or she checks back with the youth and other participants to determine the status of implementation and provide further assistance if needed. If the teen needs longer-term advocacy support and the TPRS has capacity, an ongoing relationship may be established. The DCFS Facilitator also follows up on implementation and progress. In some cases, the Facilitator will recommend and arrange for a follow-up conference approximately three months after the first. In many cases, however, the teen will only participate in one conference.

IV. The Los Angeles County PPT Conference Process

REFERRAL AND ACCEPTANCE

- Offered to every male or female, parenting or expecting a child, who is under Department supervision, even if there are no identifiable problems
- Referrals can be made by youth, attorneys, social workers, family advocates, court personnel etc.
- Referring party discusses conference with youth to see if youth is interested in learning more
- Referring party refers youth to **PPT Facilitator** using form DCFS 174

- PPT facilitator contacts youth to explain conference in more detail and confirm youth's interest
- If youth is not interested, facilitator informs referring party and does not proceed
- If youth is interested, **Teen Parent Resource Specialist (TPRS)** is assigned

PREPARATION

- Conference scheduled at least two weeks out to give time for preparation
- Conference is independent of other child welfare conferences or decision making
- Youth identifies potential participants to invite, with support of facilitator and TPRS
- Facilitator ensures participants are invited
- Youth sets agenda and goals, with support of TPRS

CONFERENCE AND PLAN

- Facilitator runs meeting and takes notes
- Using strengths based family group decision making model, team reviews strengths and needs and then brainstorms ideas
- TPRS brings expertise on local resources and referrals to address needs outside DCFS purview
- Group decides on concrete attainable short and longterm goals and action steps

IMPLEMENTATION

- The TPRS completes assigned tasks and checks back with the youth to assist in follow up
- The TPRS assists with warm hand-offs to ensure referrals are effective

FOLLOW-UP

- The Facilitator follows up with youth to check on progress toward goals and arranges for second conference where necessary

V. Critical Components of the PPT Conference Model with Tools and Questions to Assess and Facilitate Replicability

The PPT conference model borrows many elements from child welfare team decision making, but includes three critical and unique factors:

- It is voluntary, youth-centered and youth-driven,
- It is independent from other child welfare decision making, and
- It includes a teen parent expert.

Key participants¹¹ in the Los Angeles PPT conference and in its development believe these three factors, in conjunction with several components borrowed from the team decision-making model, come together to make the Los Angeles PPT conference model successful. The combined components they identify as important are listed below in no particular hierarchy of importance, and described more fully later in this section:

CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF LOS ANGELES CONFERENCE MODEL

Critical Participants

- Youth
- Teen Parent Resource Specialist
- Trained Facilitator

Process

- Youth-centered and youth-driven decisions at all stages
- Independent from other child welfare decision making and conferencing
 - Strengths-based conference management process
 - Pre-conference preparation time built in
 - Concrete, attainable goals and action steps developed
 - Follow up on implementation built in
 - Trauma-informed practice

Important Resources

- Person with deep and comprehensive knowledge of current community resources and referrals

11 Interviews with PPT Facilitator; Hipolito Mendez, DCFS, and Teen Parent Resource Specialists Barbara Facher, Alliance for Children's Rights and Mara Ziegler, Public Counsel. More information about these individuals is available in Appendix 20.



Key participants in the Los Angeles model also believe that a PPT conference model that does not include all of the above elements still could improve outcomes for youth. Indeed, they postulate that where conferencing is not yet possible, outcomes for teen parents in care could be improved by simply having a person who has both experience working with teen parents and expertise in the special needs of parenting youths, meet with pregnant and parenting youths, help them identify their needs, and help them access resources and services.

Using the information and materials that follow, counties considering adopting Pregnant and Parenting Teen conferencing can assess which of the above components may be replicable in their community. In the following pages, each component is described more fully. Each description section also includes tools, examples, and in some cases, questions to prompt discussion about how such components could be adopted, adapted or developed in other counties. Ultimately, each county must make the process work for their county and, most importantly, for their youth.

Component I: Teen Parent Resource Specialist/Expert

Description:

The workgroup in Los Angeles recognized that working with parenting youth requires (1) individuals with specialized knowledge of the issues and needs parents and soon-to-be parents face, (2) a deep knowledge of community resources to address these needs, and (3) skills in culturally competent, trauma-informed practice.¹²

This individual acts as the Teen Parent Resource Specialist (TPRS). With deep and broad knowledge of the special needs and challenges of parenting youth, she can help the teen identify needs and goals. She can assist the youth in identifying potential participants to invite to a conference, including resource agencies, and during the conference can play a key role in brainstorming solutions and finding resources. This person also can help facilitate referrals and warm handoffs to referral agencies. With expertise in trauma-informed care and cultural competence, a TPRS can help the youth feel safe being honest about her needs, challenges and hopes.

In Los Angeles, this role is played by senior social workers from private non-profit agencies who work regularly with pregnant and parenting teens. While in Los Angeles the experts come from outside the child welfare system, that is not a prerequisite. This expertise may be found in child welfare staff, minors' counsel, or other community agency staff, and also can be fostered and developed. For example, the child welfare agency could assign all pregnant and parenting foster youth to one social worker, and support her with additional training so she can develop expertise.

Do You Have an Expert Available?

TOOLS and RESOURCES

(See Appendices or click titles for tools)

- TPRS "Job Description" (App. 9)
- Cultural Competence (App. 11)
- Trauma & Resilience Toolkit (App. 12)

QUESTIONS for COUNTIES:

1. Is there currently someone within child welfare who meets the TPRS description?
2. Is there an individual or agency with this expertise in the community?
3. If so, would that entity be willing to partner with the child welfare agency? How could that relationship be established?
4. If expertise needs to be developed, is there a social worker, other child welfare staffer, or a staffer at a community based organization, who is willing and interested in developing this expertise and participating in PPT conferences?
5. How can the expertise be developed? Could all teen parent cases be assigned to one person? Are there opportunities for training and support?
6. Are there funding opportunities to support the development of this expertise?

¹² See Appendices 11, 12 and 13 for resources that define cultural competence and trauma informed care.

Component 2: Deep Knowledge of Resources and Referrals for Teen Parents

Description:

In addition to an individual having expertise, it is very important for her to have comprehensive and current knowledge of relevant resources and referrals and, ideally, a relationship with these agencies. This resource “database” or “list” must include referrals that address as many of the common issues that arise for parenting youths as possible, including referrals for free legal services, infant care or parenting classes, educational advocacy, mental health counseling, and health care, as well as resources for housing, childcare and even free or low cost baby equipment. (See Worksheet that identifies common areas of need.) Because the conference is an opportunity to bring together the teen’s important support persons, it also should include resources that can help prepare the youth for a successful transition to self-sufficiency.

The list of resources must remain current. Many agencies change phone numbers or move locations. Others may change client eligibility criteria or put holds on accepting new clients. A resource list is only as valuable as it is current and accurate.

Ideally, your TPRS will develop a relationship with these organizations so that they can provide warm handoffs and even sometimes arrange for priority referrals.

Developing this knowledge also helps identify where there may be gaps in the resources available. Where there are gaps, it may be possible to encourage their development. For example, in counties without home based support, it may be possible to encourage development of a chapter of a national organization such as the Nurse-Family Partnership and other home visitation programs.

Developing Knowledge of Resources Available

TOOLS and RESOURCES:

(See Appendices or click titles for tools)

- Examples of Referral Lists
 - NYC Referral List (App. 1)
 - LA Box Cart List (App. 7)
- List of Common Issues and Resource Needs (App. 5)
- Worksheet to assist in “Developing Your Local Teen Parent Resource and Referral List” (App. 14)

QUESTIONS for COUNTIES:

1. Is there currently a teen parent resource and referral database or list? When was it last updated?
2. If child welfare does not have such a resource, are there community agencies that may have such lists?
3. If the agency needs to develop its own database or list, whose responsibility will it be to develop, maintain, and update it?
4. Once developed, you may identify unmet referral needs. Are there ways to encourage or foster new resources?

Component 3: Youth Centered and Youth Driven

Description:

The Los Angeles conference process is youth driven at every stage of the process.

This means a number of things:

- First, **participation is voluntary**. The youth's voluntary participation in the meeting is crucial to the effectiveness of the conference.
- Second, **youth drive the development of the conference agenda** including decisions about the purpose of the meeting, priorities and the issues to be discussed.
- Third, the **youth identifies participants** they wish to invite, including family and non-related support persons. The Facilitator and TPRS seek the youth's permission when they wish to invite others.
- Fourth, the **youth actively participates in the conference** in brainstorming and making decisions about the goals and action steps.
- Fifth, the **youth signs off on her plan** and is expected to take on many of the action steps and advocate for herself.
- Finally, key participants in the conference process, such as the Facilitator and TPRS, manage the process in a **culturally competent**¹³ and **trauma-informed**¹⁴ way.

New York's child welfare agency also identifies cultural competence as a critical component to team conferencing with young parents in out-of-home care.¹⁵

Creating a Youth Centered Process

TOOLS and RESOURCES:

(See Appendices or click titles for tools)

- Tips for Creating a Youth-Centered Conferencing Process adapted from NYC ACS (App. 15)
- Trauma & Resilience Toolkit (App. 13)
- Cultural Competence (App. 11)
- Complex Trauma Tools and Resources (App. 12)

QUESTIONS for COUNTIES:

1. Does your agency have agency-wide training and resources that address cultural competence and trauma-informed care?
2. Does your agency have staff members who are trained in these areas?
3. Could your agency adapt or include any of the above tools or resources?

13 An individual's life decisions, including her parenting choices, are influenced by culture, race, and her experiences in the community in which she grew up. The individuals assisting the youth with her life planning must check their own biases and strive to understand each youth's context. See Appendix 11.

14 Early experiences of trauma can have long-term impacts on demeanor, decisions, and decision making. Individuals assisting youth must learn how to practice in trauma-informed ways. See Appendices 12 and 13.

15 See "Guide to Working with Young Parents in Out of Home Care," Appendix 1.

Component 4: Independence from Other Child Welfare Decision Making or Conferences

Description:

The Pregnant and Parenting Teen conferences must be independent of other decision making for several reasons. First, the conferences will have very different goals and focus than other child welfare conferences. They are intended to give young parents the scaffold and supports they need to grow into their role as parents and achieve better outcomes for themselves and their children. While some of the issues and goals discussed may overlap with issues and goals in other child welfare case planning, the focus of the PPT conference is the youth and her role as a parent, rather than the youth in the context of her own child welfare case.

Second, by removing child welfare questions from the process, the conferences are less likely to feel adversarial. This means that participants—the youth and her family members—feel safer being honest and open about challenges and concerns.

Third, participants invited to a PPT conference are likely to be different than those invited to other child welfare conferencing, and it is easier to guarantee a youth-driven and focused process when the conference is separated from other types of decision making.

In Los Angeles, this difference is emphasized by not combining the conference with other meetings, such as transition planning or placement conferences. Indeed, even if detention of the youth's child is under consideration by child welfare, the focus of the PPT conference remains on the youth's goals and strengths rather than detention.

Creating an Independent Process

QUESTIONS for COUNTIES:

1. Does the county have the capacity to establish stand-alone conferences that focus just on pregnant and parenting teens?
2. If the county cannot hold stand-alone meetings, can the conference be added to an already existing system or conference program?
3. If combined with other meetings, how will the facilitator, specialist and/or case worker ensure that participants keep the PPT conference independent of the other process, and as well, keep it youth centered and focused on the youth's goals?



Component 5: Facilitator Trained in Strengths-Based Conference Management

Description:

The PPT Facilitator manages the conference process from referral to conference facilitation to follow up. The Facilitator is trained in strengths-based conference management and has expertise in parenting youth issues. Training and expertise in strengths-based conference management helps ensure that the conferences stay on track, remain youth-focused, and result in concrete attainable goals in which the youths and other participants feel invested.

The Facilitator also documents the conference and coordinates between DCFS, the youth, the TPRS and other participants.

In a large county like Los Angeles, DCFS has been able to create dedicated PPT Facilitator positions and assign trained social workers to the role. One of the current Facilitators served as a supervisor prior to his facilitator role and spent many years as a services worker before that. His managers support his current position. In 2013, one Facilitator managed 150 teen parent conferences for youth under child welfare supervision. Other counties may elect to design their program a bit differently, for example, training one or a few experienced social workers to take on this role as part of a larger scope of duties.

Fostering a Facilitator

TOOLS and RESOURCES:

(See Appendices or click titles for tools)

- What is a strengths-based approach? (App. 15)
- Facilitator "Job Description" (App. 10)
- Sample Case Report and Plan from Los Angeles (App. 8)
- Template for Case Plan (App. 20)

QUESTIONS for COUNTIES:

1. Does your agency currently use strengths-based case management or conferencing?
2. Is there an individual in the agency with expertise in strengths-based management?
3. If expertise needs to be developed, is there a staffer who is willing and interested in developing this expertise?
4. Does your county have the capacity to create a dedicated Facilitator position?
5. If the county cannot create a dedicated Facilitator position, can the county support training for case workers or other staff to take on this role?
6. In what other ways can the county provide support and training opportunities to develop Facilitator expertise?



Component 6: Pre-Conference Preparation

Description:

Conferences are successful when there is adequate preparation. This includes making sure the appropriate and necessary participants are identified and invited to attend, that the purpose and goals of the meeting are clear before the meeting starts, and that there is time to gather necessary background information and seek out resources.

In Los Angeles, conferences include the following preparation:

- The youth works with the Facilitator, the Teen Parent Resource Specialist and the case worker to identify the appropriate participants to invite.
- The meeting is scheduled at least two weeks out to give invitees adequate time to schedule.
- The Facilitator and Teen Parent Resource Specialist then work with the youth to identify what the youth wants to discuss at the meeting and clarify a clear articulative goal and purpose.

These two weeks are also an opportunity to gather background information and identify resources in the youth's community. This lead time is particularly important if the team members need to research resources to address particular or unusual needs of the client or resources in geographic areas with which they are less familiar.

What goes into Pre-Conference Preparation?

TOOLS and RESOURCES:

(See Appendices or click titles for tools)

- Possible Invitee List for review with youth (App. 4)
- Developing an agenda – List of issues to consider with youth when creating agenda (App. 17)



Component 7: Actionable Attainable Goals

Description:

The WorkPlan developed in conference should include goals with clearly articulated action items connected to each goal. The action steps should include sufficient information to act on them.

The WorkPlan should include:

- Completion dates
- Clear identification of person(s) responsible for accomplishing each goal or helping the youth to accomplish the goal
- Specific and up-to-date contact information where appropriate

How to Develop Goals and Action Steps for a PPT Workplan

TOOLS and RESOURCES:

(See Appendices or click titles for tools)

- Tool to help create goals and actions steps, Healthy Teen Network, “A BDI Logic Model for Working with Young Families Resource Kit” (App. 18)
- List of topics for possible review in conference and possible action steps (App. 17)

Component 8: Follow-Up on Implementation

Description:

Even with clearly articulated goals and action steps in the WorkPlan, it is important to have a follow-up mechanism to ensure action items are accomplished on a timely basis. In some cases, the youth may attempt to follow through but run into roadblocks and need assistance connecting with a referral. Others may need reminders. In Los Angeles, the Teen Parent Resource Specialist and the Facilitator both follow up on implementation to ensure the plan is moving forward.

Ensuring Follow-Up Happens

QUESTIONS for COUNTIES:

1. If there is no TPRS connected to the conference, who else can take on the responsibility to ensure participants are following through with action steps? Does this person have the capacity to help connect youths to alternate resources or make warm hand-offs to referral agencies?
2. What follow-up responsibilities will this entail?

VI. Recommendations Regarding Policy and Materials Development

Once a child welfare agency has decided to implement PPT conferencing and has determined the components of PPT conferencing it wishes to employ, the agency must consider what policy and protocols to implement, and must consider what forms, if any, need to be created. Below are some recommendations on documentation and materials the agency may wish to develop. Examples of policy and materials from Los Angeles are also mentioned at the end and included in the Appendix.

I. Mission Statement

The child welfare agency may wish to consider a mission statement for its PPT conferencing program. A mission statement provides a one or two sentence summary of the purpose and methods of a program. A mission statement can help in a few ways. In the first place, the process of developing a mission statement is a valuable way to clarify intentions. The mission statement is also very important when the agency seeks funding or collaborators to assist in efforts to support teen parents. Finally, it helps the program stay true to its goals as it moves forward.

The process of developing the mission statement will require considering many of the same questions that were addressed by the agency in deciding whether to implement the program. Briefly, a mission statement should address the following questions:

- ***The purpose***
- ***The population served***
- ***What service is provided, and***
- ***How the service is provided.***

Idealist.org has posted an article about writing a mission statement on its website:

[http://www.idealists.org/info/Nonprofits/Gov I](http://www.idealists.org/info/Nonprofits/Gov)

2. Policy and Procedure Guidelines and Infrastructure

In order to ensure that the agency's intentions in developing a PPT conference are carried out effectively, the agency policies and procedures should explain the PPT conference process with sufficient detail. Specifically, the policies and procedures should note the individuals responsible for various tasks and describe the tasks with enough detail that the responsible individuals can carry them out effectively.

Policies and procedures should be reviewed frequently. They can be updated to adjust to changing circumstances. For example, if a county decides to concentrate on having one social worker develop expertise in the issues of teen parenting, over time this staff person may take on more roles related to the conference. These changes should be accurately reflected by revisions to the agency's policies and procedures.

The following questions are for child welfare agencies to consider as they develop policies and procedures to document the PPT conference they have chosen to implement. Again, many of these questions will have been addressed in the process of deciding whether to implement a PPT conference.

Policies and Procedures should address agency and agency staff responsibilities:

- ***Who is responsible for publicizing the PPT conference?***
- ***Who is the target population? Which youth should be referred?***
- ***When should referral occur? How does this policy intersect with policies regarding reproductive choice? (see below)***
- ***Who is responsible for referral of youth to the PPT conference?***
- ***Who is responsible for explaining the conference to a youth and obtaining their consent?***
- ***Who is responsible for identifying participants to invite to a conference?***
- ***Who is responsible for inviting participants?***
- ***Who is responsible for preparing the youth?***
- ***How much preparation time should be given before the conference occurs and what does preparation entail?***
- ***Who is responsible for facilitating the conference? What conference management style should be used?***
- ***How will teen parent expertise be brought to the table?***
- ***How will the youth's voice be integrated into the process? How will the youth's voice be heard?***
- ***Who is responsible for developing and for keeping the resources list up to date?***
- ***Who is responsible for writing up the meeting notes and conference plan? In what time frame?***
- ***Who is responsible for follow up and when should it occur?***
- ***When are second conferences appropriate?***
- ***What are your confidentiality and information sharing practices? (see below)***
- ***What outcomes will you track and measure? Who is responsible for this documentation? (see below)***

3. Special Issues to Address in Policy and Procedure

i. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Some of the challenges faced by pregnant and parenting teens involve sensitive matters such as reproductive and mental health issues. These issues can be discussed and addressed more freely with appropriate procedures in place to protect confidentiality. County child welfare agencies implementing a PPT conference model should consult with county counsel regarding their obligations to protect this information and ensure their policy and procedure guarantee sensitive information is appropriately handled. Here are some questions for counties to consider in developing policies and procedures addressing confidentiality and information sharing:

- ***What confidentiality and privacy protections are you obligated to provide? What confidentiality and privacy protections can you provide?***
- ***Where will the conference plan and meeting notes be housed? Who will receive copies?***
- ***Who will have access to evaluation data?***
- ***Who is responsible for explaining these provisions to the youth and other conference participants?***

ii. Data Collection and Evaluation

Tracking of goals for the PPT conference program as a whole, as well as following up on individual conferences, requires collecting data and information that will allow the agency to measure progress towards these goals. Outcome measures for the program will be needed to make adjustments and improvements to the program as implementation is carried out. Outcome measures will also be important to the agency when seeking funding and collaborators. Funders and collaborators will want to see that the program is effective and achieving its stated goals.

Here are some questions for counties to consider in developing policies and procedures addressing data collection and evaluation:

- ***What are the goals the agency seeks to measure?***
- ***How will the agency measure program-wide outcomes?***
- ***Who is responsible for developing evaluation tools?***
- ***Where will this data be tracked and who is responsible for doing so?***

iii. Intersection of PPT Conference and Reproductive Health/Pregnant Youth Policies

PPT conferences are designed to address the needs of youth who are parenting or pregnant and planning to give birth. While it is important to refer youths for a PPT conference as early in pregnancy as possible, it also is important to make sure newly pregnant youth are presented with all

their options and feel safe and free to make their own choices. Child welfare should have a policy in place that addresses how to counsel newly pregnant youths about all their options as soon as the teens disclose they are pregnant and that supports their choices. This policy may address referral for a PPT conference once a youth has made the decision to continue a pregnancy.

4. Materials Development

The PPT conference model adopted by a child welfare agency will require development or adaptation of forms to capture information at various stages of the conference process. A procedure for keeping these forms up to date when the process is modified over time is also necessary. Examples of materials from Los Angeles, all available in the appendix, include a referral form and a sample case plan and notes.

5. Supporting Materials

The child welfare agency may wish to develop written and online resources for youth attending the conferences. The list of written materials the Teen Parent Resource Specialists in Los Angeles bring to PPT conferences provides an example of the wide range of topics and materials that may be helpful. (Click here or see Appendix 7.)

Resources included in the Appendix:

- *Los Angeles DCFS PPT Conference policy, excerpted from Los Angeles County policy 0070-548.03 on Family Centered Conferences/Team Decision Making Meetings (App. 6)*
- *Los Angeles DCFS “FYI” regarding PPT Conferencing (App. 19)*
- *DCFS Referral Form (App. 3)*
- *Template for Case Plan and Notes (App. 20)*