



## Success Story: Government of the District of Columbia

### *School-based Coordinator Provides Critical Support and Encouragement to Expectant and Parenting Students*

The New Heights program is a school-based model serving expectant and parenting high school students. The goals of the program are to improve attendance, increase graduation rates, and decrease the number of repeat pregnancies. Since full program implementation, the program has served nearly 600 expectant (14% of those students are student fathers) and parenting students in 13 District of Columbia Public Schools and two charter schools.

New Heights uses a youth development framework and places a dedicated coordinator in participating schools. Coordinators serve as supportive case managers; advocate for students; provide resources for other school staff members about how to best serve expectant and parenting students; and act as role models and mentors. There is also a Special Populations Coordinator who serves students in the foster care system.

Specifically, New Heights offers the following to expectant and parenting students:

- Supportive case management and assistance with accessing community resources such as a childcare voucher, the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC), housing, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), employment, job training opportunities, college/university admissions and more.
- Educational workshops through a network of community partnerships including such topics as pre-natal care, parenting, life skills, financial literacy, career planning, healthy relationships and other issues concerning today's youth.
- Incentive program that allows participants to earn free items for their children such as diapers, clothing, toys, equipment, and accessories.
- Transportation assistance for eligible program participants for transportation tokens to/from school and/or a daily stipend (if eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

#### **Young Mother and Student Beats the Odds**

An eighteen year old mother of twins, sought assistance from the New Heights program. Feeling isolated and unsupported since her pregnancy, this young mother believed completing high school and attending college was impossible. Through New Heights the student received assistance with the college application process, supportive case management, mentoring, workshops (parenting, reproductive, nutrition, child development etc.), and linkages to various government and local non-profit resources. While enrolled in the program, the student maintained a 3.0 grade point average, and learned to balance school assignments and being a good mother for her twin girls. She was accepted to four colleges and universities and received financial assistance.



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In the summer of 2012, the program conducted two focus groups among New Heights participants, one male and one female. Participating students were asked eight questions to measure their overall satisfaction with the program, optimum ways of promoting the program, most effective services, components that should be added, and impact of the program on participants' lives. Student participants indicated that the "focal point" for their success with the program was their school's coordinator. Students also indicated that the program helped them to increase their self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. Additionally, the New Heights program helped students to address their stresses and fears associated with being expectant and/or parenting.