

At risk plan for teen parents

Program could be suspended for one year; benefiting 3,200 young people

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For the approximately 3,200 teenage parents in the County of Los Angeles, now receiving support through Cal-Learn, they could be its last weeks as beneficiaries of the program.

Cuts from the State budget provided for the suspension for at least a year, with this assistance which began in 1994, in order to give a second educational opportunity to pregnant teenagers and young parents who receive assistance through CalWORKS. Since then 54 thousand youngsters have received the support of these services.

"The idea is to get to complete their education and that have been parents at an early age did not interrupt their lives," explains Carla Hill, head of the project NATEEN in Children Hospital of Los Angeles (CHLA). CHLA is one of the four suppliers in the County - for the Hollywood area and South of Los Angeles - of the Cal-Learn program.

Hill explained that the majority of beneficiaries are girls, but there are also some male looking for an education as well as they face their responsibility as teenage parents. 84% Of the customers of Cal-Learn are Hispanic and 9% black or African American.

Elizabeth Herrera, Executive Director of the nest, one of the organizations through which manages Cal-Learn - in the Valley of San Fernando, explains that although the goal is not to "provide parents" to these adolescents, among them abound which lack support and supervision of adults.

"In many cases already had failed in the school system before the event of pregnancy", says Herrera, explaining that, with Cal-Learn, young people receive the assistance of a coordinator that seeks the best options according to the circumstances of the child. Boys need to regularly attend school and get a return of at least 2 (4) in his scoring average (GPA).

In some cases the education continues in a secondary regular school districts in the region. In others, young people remain independent studies with a tutor through the Office of education of the County (LACOE), or are referred to special schools.

They also have access to childcare, and school workshops that enable them to reconcile their obligations as parents with their studies.

Hill pointed out that all these measures of support translates into results: between September 2010 and February 2011, 62% of participants have graduated from high school or obtained an equivalent degree, something which in many cases would have been impossible without the help.

However, for the next fiscal year (which begins in July) the Department of public social services (DPSS) does not have funds for the program. For the County of Los Angeles (where a third of the beneficiaries of statewide focus) this means the disappearance of the eight million dollars needed to provide it.

In a desperate bid to get the funds, the Board of supervisors of the County yesterday passed a motion of Gloria Molina, for 2.9 million dollars to First 5 Los Angeles. The Organization, until recently also under threat of losing funding for pre-school education which receives First 5 California through proposition 10, received with relief the forecast of the budgetary review of last Monday, for the moment left intact their income. However, this does not mean that they pantry funds to support other programs.

"The Commission [First 5 the] will have to decide on the matter at its next meeting in June", said Sharon Woodson-Bryant, spokesman for First 5.

Even if approved, the 2.9 million dollars reaching only 40% of the current beneficiaries of the programme. Herrera explained that in that case, they will have to give priority to adolescents at increased risk, leaving out others. Meanwhile, the youth of Cal-Learn, are proceeding with their classes.

"Officially nobody reported them nothing", said Hill, noting that many are unaware that the program that provides education, might discontinue next year.