



2021 Positive Alternatives Grant Program

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN CARRYING THEIR PREGNANCIES TO TERM AND CARING FOR THEIR BABIES AFTER BIRTH.

Overview

The Positive Alternatives Grant Program was established in 2005 ([Minnesota Statute 145.4235](#)) and now provides \$6,714,000 per biennium to non-profit organizations promoting healthy pregnancy outcomes and assisting pregnant and parenting women in developing and maintaining family stability and self-sufficiency.

Background

In response to identified community needs the Positive Alternatives Grant (PA) Program, funds services and activities that support healthy pregnancies and healthy babies. Grantees provide a range of services and supports, and work in collaboration with other community resources. PA grants support healthy pregnancy and parenting outcomes through the provision of activities such as prenatal care services, nutrition education and parenting classes. The PA program funds activities and supports services that reduce the financial pressures a pregnancy may cause such as lack of medical care, food, or housing. The PA program assists women to improve their health by focusing on long-term solutions to self-sufficiency including help in achieving education and employment goals.

Positive Alternatives grantees are required to provide clients/women with information

on, referral to, and assistance with securing necessary services to promote healthy pregnancies and caring for their babies after birth, or in making an adoption plan. Necessary services include, but are not limited to:

- Medical care
- Nutrition services
- Housing assistance
- Adoption services
- Education and employment assistance, including services that support the continuation and completion of high school
- Childcare assistance
- Parenting education and related support services

Grant Programming

The January 2021 – December 2025 Positive Alternatives grant cycle has twenty-seven non-profit organizations providing grant funded services from 31 sites throughout Minnesota. One grantee (through a network of over 180 partnering organizations) serves the entire state providing safe sleep information and cribs to families who do not have a safe place for their infants to sleep. In addition, with Positive Alternatives funding five grantees provide rental assistance, and three grantees provide residential housing.

Positive Alternatives activities include educating participants on pregnancy and parenting topics

that benefit themselves and their children and strengthen families. Medical services range from providing pregnancy verification to prenatal care. Eighty-two percent of grantees provide comprehensive pregnancy education along with material support such as maternity clothes and diapers. Parenting education, recognized as facilitating maternal bonding and optimal infant development, which supports positive parenting behaviors and childhood outcomes is provided by 85% of the PA grantees.

Grant Services and Activities

In the most recent completed grant cycle from July 2016 through December 2020, 32,171 women/clients received 400,626 separate grant funded services. In 2021, the first year of the current grant cycle amid the growing Covid -19 pandemic, PA grantees served 5,208 women/clients who received 72,737 individual funded services.

A portion of the services incorporate the Maternal Child Health Advisory Task Force strategies to promote healthy moms and babies. The services and the number of women receiving them include:

- 1,739 women attended car seat safety education and/or were provided a car seat
- 2,620 women received infant sleep safety education
- 1,747 women who did not have a crib were provided a safe crib for their infants
- 1,624 women received shaken baby prevention education
- 1,527 women received child abuse prevention information

Grantee Evaluation

In year 1 grantees submitted and initiated a multi-year Evaluation Plan to provide assessment on one or more specific PA funded program/activities. Grantees are required to evaluate their program

activity outcomes by tracking indicators and reporting the findings. The PA evaluation studies support quality improvement for funded services.

Highlights of Grantees' Evaluation Projects

- A team of four rural PA grantees have joined efforts to collectively assess client barriers to making and keeping prenatal appointments. Goals for the group evaluation project include providing awareness, education, and fostering commitment and positive behavior actions to improve prenatal appointment attendance. Through the team effort the grantees hope to improve baby and mother health through regular prenatal appointments and to help assist with follow-up recommendations.
- "Shaken Baby Syndrome" (SBS) is a component of most grantees' educational programming. Several grantees are evaluating their SBS program using a pre- and post-education survey. The sessions will include using a model life-sized doll specifically created to visually exhibit and reinforce the adverse effects of SBS. In addition, informative videos and materials on positive parenting will be presented. Through the evaluation, the grantees hope to identify specific needs and barriers of clients such as language barriers, low literacy, and education levels. In addition, curriculum content will be assessed.

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