

Young Moms Report

Develop:

To provide opportunities for youth and young moms to reach their full potential.

Assist:

To be a resource, supporting youth and young moms as they make better choices.

Mentor:

To be a consistent, relational presence in the lives of youth and young moms.



100% indicate that they have experienced rejection and financial hardship since becoming young moms

Who is "The Dam"?

The Dam is a Meadowvale based community non-profit that utilizes a unique approach in coming alongside youth-at-risk. Three key programs meet needs faced on a daily basis:

1. **Young Moms** - for pregnant teens, young moms and their children
2. **Outreach** - reaching thousands of teens in their schools & in the community
3. **Drop-in** - which targets youth-at-risk and sees over 11,000 youth visits per year

Young Moms Program Summary

The Dam Young Moms Program, also known as Affinity, is a community of young moms, volunteers and staff that seek to be positive and supportive of each other, growing into healthy individuals and families.

- The Dam offers **informal mentoring/counseling** for young moms
- Outreach with teen girls focuses on prevention and healthy sexuality
- The Dam provides the **"necessities of life"** for the moms and children as made possible through donations from the community
- **Weekly support groups** run for moms between the ages of 15 and 25.
- **Childcare** is provided in most programs to give the moms a break while allowing their children an opportunity to engage in structured educational and recreational activities.

Who Does The Dam Serve?

50%

Were with the father when the baby was born

17-21

Ages of first-time moms

80%

Saw the end of a positive supportive relationship with the father within the first year

10%

Graduate high school before the birth of their first child

4

Number of social service agencies contacted or visited per week

75%

Were not living with family when their baby was born



"Affinity was always right behind me no matter what I was going through and became the family I felt I'd never had."
 Amber, mom of Maddison (2) and Isaac (4 months)

Before

- **Pregnant at 18**
- **No parent support**
- **In school while pregnant**
- **Timid, unsure—spoke very quietly**
- **No knowledge of cooking at all**
- **A 19 year old who was overwhelmed with the responsibility of a child**

After

- Has graduated hairdressing school
- Is taking a 6 month business course
- Has confidence—she is a young woman with a plan
- Cooked a full meal for 20 people for her daughter's first birthday
- Is a young mom who loves and cares for her daughter



80% of moms move during the first year of their baby's life.

The Weekly Groups

- **Baby 'n' Me** - Pregnant and new moms with children up to one year old participate in a group together, learning on various topics such as breast feeding, feeding solids, nutrition, relationships, child care subsidy, court processes, parenting an infant.
- **Food For Life** - Is a 1 year training program for moms who want to learn to cook nutritious food on a budget.
- **Food For Life Leadership** – For graduates of Food For Life or those who have been assessed with strong cooking skills, and offers leadership training through specific programming and serving and preparing meals at a seniors' residence.
- **Dinner Group** - Is a discussion style group for moms with children older than 1 year. Dinner is shared together as a large family, and then children participate in specific programming, while the moms learn life skills such as parenting, self esteem, relationships, and goal setting.

Food For Life Outcomes

Young moms who indicate that they have experienced rejection and financial hardship since becoming teen parents

100%

80% report that they have increased their knowledge of budgeting skills

80%

100% report increased competency in their own kitchen with their cooking skills

100%

40% are currently attending school

40%

100% of the young moms reported relationship development with staff/volunteers

100%



Young moms at Baby 'N' Me connecting with staff and with one another.

Challenges we face

It is a challenge for young moms to come to program on a regular basis. There are lots of factors that make it difficult for a mom to get out the door: getting a child ready and packing the diaper bag; lack of accessible transportation; a sick child; or a personal relationship crisis.

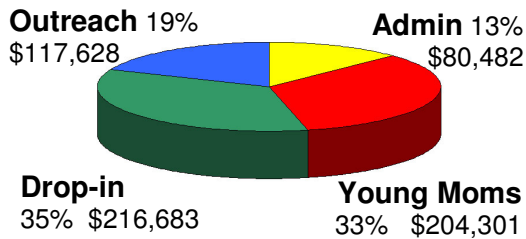
Lessons Learned

We need to use the motivating factors to help get young moms to program. A phone call in advance gives an opportunity to check in and mediate through the stressors that are prohibiting them from coming to program. We often need to provide rides or bus tickets to help navigate the suburban transportation ordeal.

As moms develop relationships with staff and volunteers, attendance rises. The difficulty is building the initial relationship. Moms need support yet continue to do it on their own. It is a struggle to trust someone enough to build a deep relationship and accept help.

Once the mom lets us in relationally, we need to assist beyond the basic programming. Staff are trained and ready to attend court, translate the Ontario Works system, or deal with CAS.

The Dam Expenses 2007 - 2008



These much-needed youth services are funded by donations from foundations, churches, corporations, government and hundreds of individuals and families.



Volunteers and speakers teach moms about parenting.

Future Vision

At The Dam, we are continuing to grow as an organization. Recently our board and leadership have gone through a strategic planning and evaluation process. One of our conclusions was that if we seek to become more effective, we must be willing to measure our efforts and impact. As we move into the 2009 season, all programs will be measured and studied to ensure that The Dam is effective in impacting youth.

The 4 young moms programs at The Dam continue to be held in 3 different locations. Many of the young moms need help with the basic necessities of life for their children – diapers, clothing, car seats, toys, etc. Currently, The Dam is not able to store the many donated goods or provide an accessible location for moms to get what they need

Within the next three years, we would like to establish a permanent location near bus transportation at Meadowvale Town Centre, and have the capacity to double our current programs.

A community assessment will be completed to determine the need for The Dam to run other young mom programs in Mississauga.

This is one of three reports on activities at The Dam. If you would like one on drop-in or outreach, call us today.



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