

**Process Evaluation  
of the Mat-Su JOBS  
Teen Parent Demonstration Project**

*Prepared for*

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services  
Division of Public Assistance

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## **I. Introduction**

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### **Purpose and Methodology**

This report was prepared by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage, commissioned by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (HSS). It is a process evaluation of the Mat-Su School District Teen Parent Demonstration Project, (JOBS Demonstration Grant 92-5-TP-AK-022).

The evaluation study is organized under two major sections. The first section, which follows, describes the context and design of the Teen Parent Demonstration Project. We investigated and documented the goals and processes involved in the initiation, planning, and design of the project. This first part of the evaluation dealt primarily with the organizational, service, and contextual aspects of the grant during its first months of operation. We examined the stated goals of the program, as found in written documents and program records. We then interviewed key persons involved in the project to learn about their perceptions of the program's goals and processes. This first phase of the project was completed in September 1993 and a preliminary draft was given to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

The second section of the evaluation assesses the operations and implementation of the program. The second phase of the evaluation focused on the procedures and organizational arrangements created by the demonstration project to deliver services to the teen parents. Our main goal was to examine the processes, rather than the impacts of the demonstration project. In other words, this evaluation did not attempt to measure outcomes of the project, rather it monitored program activities in order to document client participation levels. We conducted interviews with service providers, in order to evaluate program delivery, by examining the consistency between the actual program implementation and the original design of the grant. We also surveyed the teen parents in the demonstration project to assess the effectiveness of the grant in meeting the needs of targeted clients.

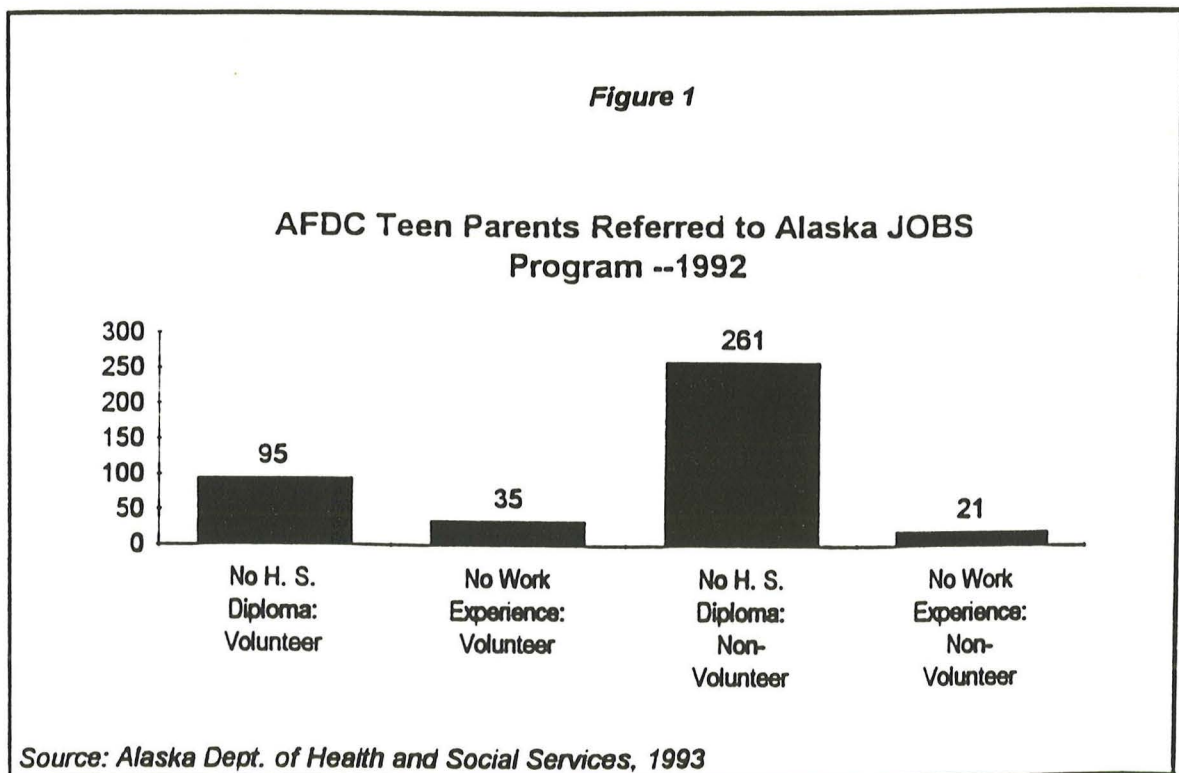
The last section of the report contains a summary of our findings along with recommendations for further study. Program design questions are first addressed, followed by a discussion of program delivery.

## II. Context and Design of the Program

### The JOBS Program in Alaska

Alaska has seen a significant rise in AFDC enrollments since the late 1980's. While most states had some increase in participation, Alaska's 35.6% increase from 1989 to 1991 was eighth largest in the nation. (Sylvester, 1991) In FY 92, the Alaska AFDC Program average caseload was 10,805 clients. The estimated average case load for FY 93 was 11,725 clients. (Armstrong, 1993) According to Department of Health and Social Services statistics, the average Alaska AFDC monthly payment in August 1992 was \$814.00. Between FY 84 and FY 91, approximately 33% of AFDC recipients received aid for 2 years or more. (Klein, 1993)

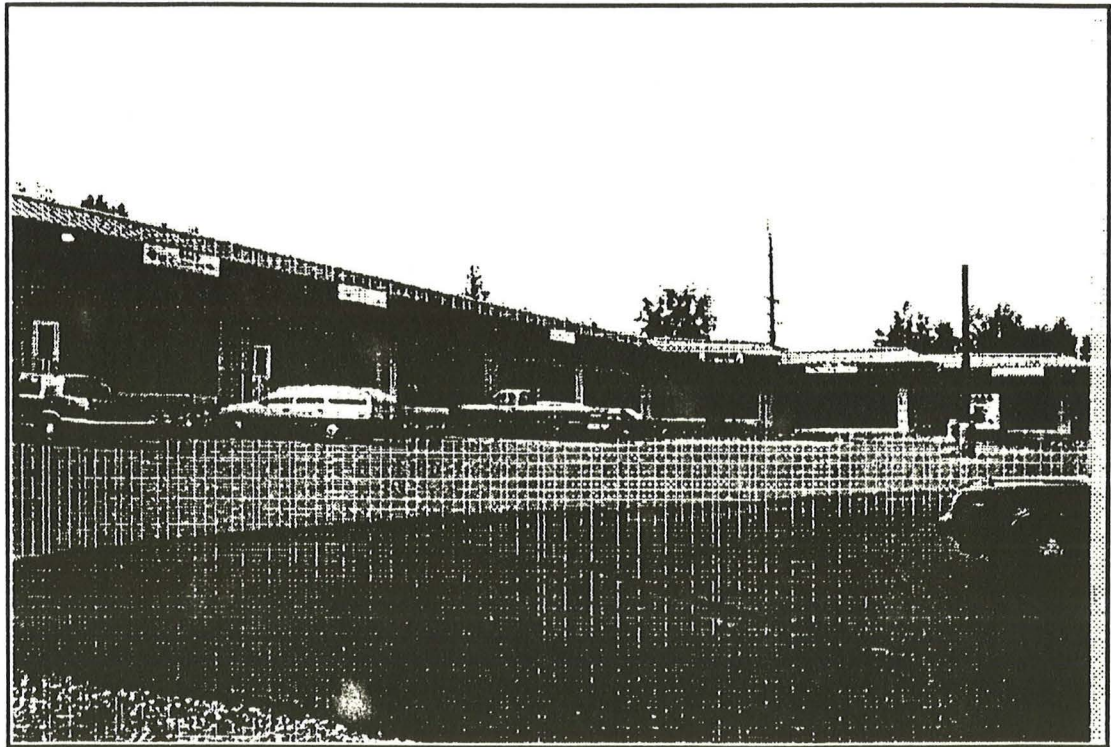
The JOBS Program in Alaska is administered by the Department of Health and Social Services, under the direction of the Welfare Reform Coordinator, Sandy Armstrong. The program served 1,411 clients in FY 92. (Armstrong, 1993) Within this group, 412 clients, or 29%, were AFDC teen parents, either without a high school diploma or without work experience. Most of these teens were mandatory participants (68%), and the rest (32%) volunteered in the program. (See Figure 1)



## **The Mat-Su Alternative School**

The Mat-Su Alternative School (MSAS) opened in 1987 with five students. Its mission was to serve students who were unable to cope successfully in a traditional classroom setting. During the first year, the school operated in one half of a portable classroom, with no telephones, rest rooms, or office equipment. The school has grown, both in enrollment and in facilities. It is now located in a strip mall in central Wasilla, with 4,800 square feet of space. However, with enrollments exceeding 120, overcrowding is still a pressing problem.

*Figure 2*



*The Mat-Su Alternative School is located in a strip mall in downtown Wasilla.*

The current facility consists of one large open room, two smaller classrooms, a kitchenette, and two small offices for the administrative staff and the school nurse. The principal, case manager, and faculty members have their desks located throughout the open room. During busy periods, the noise level can become quite high. There is no facility for physical education on site.

Classes are loosely structured, and students combine class time with correspondence courses, community college courses, individualized study, and work experience to earn academic credits. Students also meet on a weekly basis for a number of support groups held at the school. These include an alcohol and drug abuse group, an anger management group, and a sexual abuse victims' group.

Many of the students who attend MSAS come from difficult backgrounds, which place them at risk for both failure in school and for long term dependency on AFDC. Statistically, teen parents have far more personal problems than others in their age group. Common risk factors include a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, dysfunctional family settings, and family patterns of drug and alcohol dependency. These students need more than academic training. Most of them also need to learn effective skills for coping with everyday life.

Teen parents often fail to see connections between their actions and the things that happen to them. They also focus their attention almost exclusively on the present. Teen parents give very little thought or concern to long-term goals or repercussions from their behavior. One of the dominant tenets of MSAS is that "Things don't just happen." The school philosophy holds that everything the students do represents a of decision on their part. Faculty members try to instill in the students the attitude that consequences, both good and bad, are an unavoidable result of these decisions. MSAS staff encourage the students to develop a sense of control over their lives through awareness of their choices. This philosophy permeates every aspect of the Mat-Su Alternative School experience.

The school has served teen parents for several years, and is noted statewide for its success in serving these students' unique needs. The school operates a day care and child development center in another storefront within the strip mall. The center accepts children from birth through three years of age. Teen parents are able to visit their children conveniently during the school day. This not only aids the parents in bonding with their children, but it also enhances their sense of responsibility as parents.

### **Purpose of the Grant**

The purpose of the MSAS Teen Parent Demonstration Grant is to remove barriers preventing teen parents from success in society. The grant was designed as part of the Alaska Department of Education's Model Program for Teenage Parents. The underlying rationale for this grant is a holistic approach to the problems facing teen parents. The project will be used as a model and guide for future implementation throughout both the State of Alaska and nationwide.

The lack of a high school diploma is one of the most significant factors contributing to long term AFDC dependence. However, because of lack of child care, transportation difficulties, and other problems, 80 to 90% of all teen parents drop out of school. This grant provides the school with the means to remove or reduce many of the barriers to high school completion.

The population targeted by this grant includes any AFDC recipient from 16 to 20 years of age who: (a) has not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent; (b) lives in the Mat-Su School District area; and (c) is not exempt from the JOBS program.

Approximately 40 clients participated in 1993. The grant is unique in that it serves both native and non-natives who are part of the target population. Native JOBS clients usually participate in a JOBS program run by a regional native organization, and are not required to participate in the State JOBS program. The inclusion of native students in the demonstration project has greatly increased the effectiveness of Cook Inlet Tribal Council in serving these clients. CITC's JOBS office is in Anchorage, over 40 miles from the Mat-Su School District. This distance makes it difficult for clients to come into the office to meet with JOBS staff. CITC staff make monthly trips to the Mat-Su area to meet with clients, but clients are not always available on the scheduled day. Emergency problems are also difficult to handle from a distance. The on-site case manager now handles these emergencies as they occur, and has daily contact with clients.

The Department of Health and Social Services chose Mat-Su Alternative School for the grant because of the many community and state services that were already available at or near the school. The school has been a prototype in serving and educating both teen parents and other alternative students (students that do not succeed in traditional schools). It has been selected as a model alternative school for the state, and has been noted in Profiles of Exemplary School-Based Programs for At-Risk Students, published by the Alaska Staff Development Network.

The students who attend Mat-Su Alternative School do so because they do not function successfully in the traditional school setting. Workload and student responsibilities at MSAS in functional areas of responsibilities are flexible to fit each student's circumstances. The school promotes teamwork and unity among students and staff. According to Peter Burchell, the school principal, MSAS strives to provide a multi-dimensional learning environment to meet the needs of the whole student. Education in life skills is as important as academic training at MSAS.

This grant provides the means for improving the teen parents' possibilities for success through improved on-site services, community support, and improved child care. The on-site case worker's job is to help the teens to set long term goals, while holding them accountable for their immediate responsibilities. The computer equipment and the clerical support person provided by the grant are designed to aid the on-site case manager to perform her job well. The on-site case manager serves as the liaison between the teen parents, both Native and Non-Native, and social service agencies. Her purpose is to bring more on-site services to the teen parents.

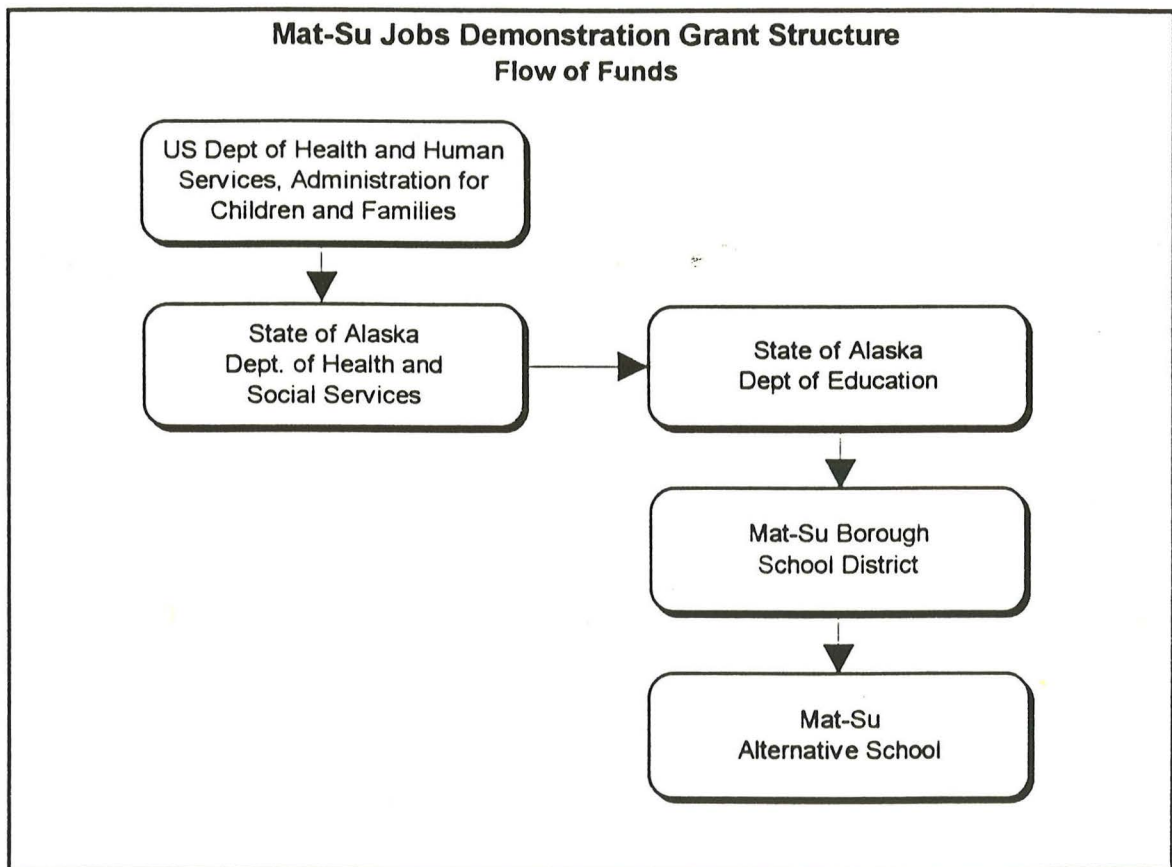
The toy library and the other materials included in the grant for the daycare center are designed to strengthen the daycare facility to be more than a place to 'watch the kids'. The center plans to become a developmental learning center for the children, and it provides a setting to teach parenting skills to the teen parents, as well as a place for them to interact with their children and learn together.



## The Structure of the Grant

The structure of the grant is based on interagency cooperation. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families funded the grant as one of ten teen parent demonstration grants throughout the nation. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Assistance applied for the grant and administers the grant funds. HSS transfers the funds to the Alaska Department of Education, which distributes them through a grant to the Matanuska-Susitna School District. The on-site case manager is an employee of the school district and answers directly to the principal of the alternative school. The grant money allotted for the daycare and toy library and the computer and software is administered in the same way. (See Figure 3)

Figure 3



## **Organizational Aspects of the Grant**

### ***The Planning Process***

In our interview, Ms. Armstrong related that the Department of Health and Social Services learned about the grant opportunity through a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Grant Announcement, which is routinely circulated through the federal system to the states. (Announcement No. OPE-92-01) The grant announcement called for pilot models of on-site service delivery to teen parents in one co-located site.

The MSAS grant proposal was designed specifically to serve teenage parents and their children under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program. Its purpose was to enhance the cognitive, physical, and social well-being of the parents and the children. Ms. Armstrong, Mary Collins, HSS research analyst, Joe Knittel, the acting program coordinator, and Pat Nault, the work program specialist, prepared the application as a team. A teleconference was held with the MSAS, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, and other community agencies to plan the grant proposal and elicit support for the project. (A transcript of the teleconference is included in the grant application, found in Appendix 1.) HSS then drafted the grant application, based on the outcome of the teleconference, and submitted it on August 21, 1992. HSS received notice of the grant award on September 30, 1992. (See Planning and Implementation Timetable in Figure 4.)

MSAS was chosen as the site for the demonstration because the school already had many support services available on-site. HSS was already providing MSAS with a \$50,000 grant to support teen parent services, so a link with the department was already in place. Ms. Armstrong stated, "We pre-selected that site for the application, because some 16 agencies had already been coordinated with for on site or convenient coordination off site, of services for teen parents at the school. There were identified in the application, three or four other services which we have been working to bring on-site and/or improve the coordination for these kids as a result of getting the grant. But we already had an impressive array of coordinated and/or on-site services for these kids in that demonstration site. In other words, we chose it to build on a good foundation."

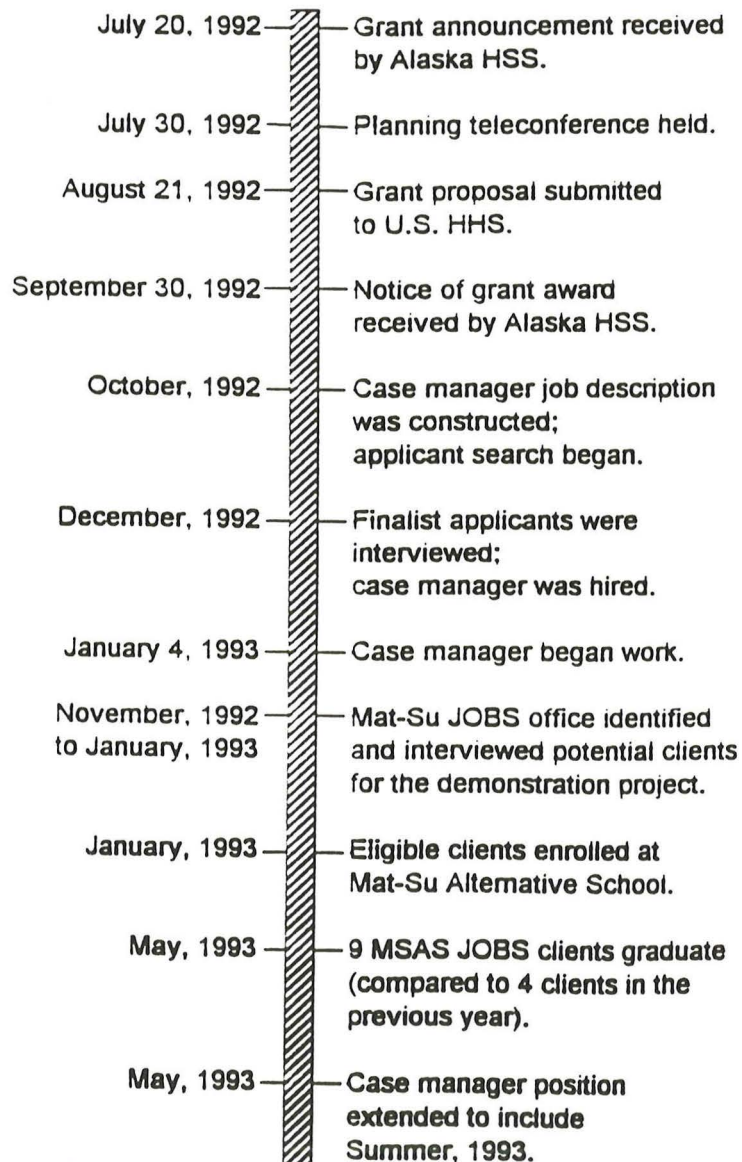
On July 15, 1992, Ted Mala (Director of Department of Health and Human Services) toured the MSAS facility with his staff. Peter Burchell explained the MSAS program to Mr. Mala, and Mr. Mala and his staff observed and met participating students. Mr. Burchell related that Mr. Mala went back to Juneau, met with Sandy and asked her to write the grant.

Ms Armstrong explained that "The Department [HSS], in the immediate preceding budget session, had most reluctantly identified the \$125,000 as part of its offering to the legislature to eliminate general fund only programs as a budget cutting exercise. Mr. Burchell had been a leading advocate of alternative high schools in Alaska and came to Juneau to argue against that funding cut. As a result of his contact, he invited the commissioner to visit the Mat-Su

Alternative School." HSS received the grant announcement shortly after Mr. Mala's visit to MSAS.

Figure 4

### Planning and Implementation Timetable



### ***Inclusion of Alaska Natives***

One unique aspect of the grant application was that it incorporated service to both native and non-native students. According to Ms. Armstrong and other participants, this grant is the first JOBS program integrating both native and non-native services. The FSA established separate JOBS programs for American Natives administered by Native organizations. We asked Ms. Armstrong about any potential legal barriers to combining service among natives and non-natives. She replied,

"I think if it involves expenditure on the part of the State of its JOBS allocation to serve Native JOBS clients specifically, or the expenditure of Native JOBS funding to serve non-native State JOBS clients specifically, that we would have had a legal barrier. Because these are neutral federal demonstration funds, the opportunity existed to offer services to teen parents regardless of whether they were native or non-native, and in doing so, virtually extended the case management capability of Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Wasilla. Their native JOBS allocation did not allow for a valley-based case manager for their JOBS program, because they only had 7 clients out there. They'd been trying to serve them long distance, and had little success. One client had enrolled in MSAS successfully. You cannot serve teen parents long distance."

### **Service Aspects of the Grant -- The Implementation Process**

#### ***Procedures for Getting Teen Parents into the Process***

The Mat-Su JOBS coordinator, Patsy Turner, conducted a computer search for potential participants, using the Eligibility Information System (EIS) and the JOBS Automated System (JAS). This search yielded a list of all Mat-Su AFDC recipients in the target age group. These clients were each interviewed, even if they were currently exempt from JOBS. The clients were then asked to submit proof of graduation from high school or a GED certificate. There were 85 clients on the special list of parents under 20 years of age. About 30 of these were non-native clients without high school diplomas. Those clients who had not graduated from high school were given the options of attending the alternative school, obtaining a diploma by correspondence school, or earning a GED. By March of 1993, 26 JOBS teen parents were enrolled in MSAS.

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council also searched their JOBS client records for persons in the target age group. The CITC identified clients in the Mat-Su area who did not have a diploma or equivalency. Three Native teen parents enrolled at MSAS in Spring, 1993. One client's eligibility for the program was pending at the time of our interviews.

Some of the eligible clients, both native and non-native, were already enrolled at the MSAS. Others were given top priority for enrollment. MSAS has

a waiting list for new students, but eligible JOBS teen parent participants were placed at the top of the list.

### ***Selection and Training of the Case Manager***

The Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Assistance prepared a Social Worker II job description. Using this description, the Mat-Su School District created and approved a case manager job position for MSAS. Peter Burchell considered thirty people for the case manager position, and selected four finalists. The finalists were then interviewed by a selection panel including Mr. Burchell, Diane Demoski, the school nurse, Betty Bartels, the CITC JOBS coordinator, and Patsy Turner, Mat-Su JOBS supervisor.

The panel selected Katie Hall, citing her background in education (she has a teaching certificate and has taught classes), her approachability, and her willingness to work as a team player. (Ms. Hall's resume, along with the school district job description and the grant job description, are found in Appendix 2.)

Ms. Hall's initial training was informal. She used the job description submitted in the grant as a guide to her duties. Since the position was newly created, the on-site case manager's duties and procedures evolved through direct interaction with Mr. Burchell, Ms. Demoski, the teen parents, and the local supporting agencies. Ms. Hall developed a series of forms and procedures to organize her work through discussions with the school staff, the Mat-Su JOBS supervisor, the CITC JOBS case manager, and the Mat-Su Public Assistance office. (Samples of forms and paperwork are in Appendix 4.)

Ms. Hall received one week of formal case management training in May 1993 in Anchorage at the HSS state-wide case manager training session.

### ***The Assessment and Referral Process***

Ms. Hall met with each client to find out the kinds of services they or their children needed or were using. Ms. Hall built a profiles for the clients, outlining their status in the Public Assistance system. Ms. Hall also completed confidential client profiles for the Mat-Su Valley Children's Services Task Force. The Children's Task Force database was designed to track clients' use of a number of community services in the Mat-Su area. Its purpose is to prevent duplication of services and to promote efficient and effective use of community resources. The database was not yet fully operational in Spring 1993.

These profiles included basic information about each client, and also noted client risk factors present, such as interpersonal violence, criminal offenses, developmental disabilities, alcohol and drug use, child abuse, mental health problems, teen pregnancy and multi-generational problems. Ms. Hall feels that 50% of these teen parents' behavior is a learned pattern resulting from their home experiences. She told us that there have been 28 student deaths

among MSAS students since 1987. These deaths included accidents, homicide, and suicide, and attest to a group seriously at risk.

Ms. Hall works with teen parents individually to determine their needs. If the needs cannot be met on-site, Ms. Hall coordinates with local agencies to provide for them. She also encourages self-reliance in the students, and teaches them problem-solving skills as they work together to fix problems and fulfill needs.

**Figure 5**



***MSAS is an open-classroom school.***

Ms. Hall has established accountability standards for the teen parents, especially regarding use of the daycare center. She visits the day care center daily, and monitors students' use of the center. Students may only use the center for day care during authorized school or work activities. Ms. Hall also requires written doctors' notes when students are absent due to illness. This is unpopular with the students, but Ms. Hall feels that it trains the students for responsibility in work situations. Since the students receive Medicaid, there is no out-of-pocket expense involved in the doctor visits.

Ms. Hall checks each client's attendance each day. If a student is absent, Ms. Hall contacts her(him) by telephone the same day to find out why the client failed to attend. After three unexcused days absent, the client is referred to JOBS office for sanctions. She monitors AFDC paperwork compliance for her clients, making sure they complete monthly reports on time. If reports are late, AFDC funding is suspended, causing financial crisis. She also makes referrals

to area agencies according to client needs. Some of the types of referral are alcohol and drug treatment, personal and psychological counseling, medical care, and food supplements. If necessary, Ms. Hall takes the client to the referral appointments. Ms. Hall also meets with Public Assistance, JOBS, and CITC JOBS personnel on a regular basis to inform them about client progress. (See Appendix 3 for a description of Alaska JOBS services, participation requirements, sanctions, and exemptions.)

By the end of March 1993, a service gap was identified concerning rule changes for AFDC compliance. Reporting rules change fairly regularly but the clients often didn't learn about them until after the monthly reporting deadline. Ms. Hall was working on getting support from the Public Assistance office to minimize this problem when we spoke with her in March. She thought a monthly visit to the school by an AFDC eligibility technician would help clients prepare their paperwork correctly.

### ***Services Available to Teen Parents and Their Children***

Under the conditions of the grant, the agencies below have committed to providing the following services:

Child Care Connection will provide on-site consumer education, and training for child care staff.

Chugiak Children's Services will train the on-site case manager in Headstart assessment methods, coordinate Headstart services for MSAS teen parents, and advise in the development of an early childhood education curriculum for teen parents.

Human Resources Company will coordinate JTPA and GED testing services.

Life Quest will coordinate psychological services, on-site therapy groups and crisis intervention counseling.

Mat-Su Children's Services Task Force will use their data sharing system to track client participation in community services, and will coordinate service among community agencies. The task force will also serve as the common point of contact for coordination of teen parent services among cooperating community agencies and the demonstration project team.

Mat-Su Council on Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse will provide counseling and rehabilitation services.

Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults will advise MSAS on developmentally appropriate equipment for the on-site child care center, on-site infant learning services, and in home visitation to teen parents.

State of Alaska Division of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse will train the MSAS staff in substance abuse issues.

State of Alaska Division of Family and Youth Services will coordinate child protection services and home visitation, provide technical assistance on the use of its data sharing system, and provide technical assistance on expanding the age range of the on-site child care center.

State of Alaska Division of Public Health will coordinate on-site well baby and inoculation clinics, participate in on-site parenting skills classes and in home visits to teen parents.

State of Alaska Employment Security Division will cooperate in JOBS client assessments.

University of Alaska Anchorage will provide career counseling.

Valley Women's Resource Center will provide counseling and shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. VWRC also administers the WIC program in the Mat-Su area.

(For a complete listing of agencies involved in the grant, refer to the grant proposal in Appendix 1.)

### **Results of the Interviews**

We interviewed the following MSAS Teen Demonstration Project team members individually about the program during Phase I of the evaluation:

Peter Burchell, Principal, MSAS, 3/31/93

Katie Hall, On-Site Case Manager, MSAS, 3/26/93

Diane Demoski, School Nurse, MSAS, 3/31/93

Larry Healy, Director of Grants, Mat-Su School District, 3/26/93

Betty Bartels, JOBS Case Manager, CITC, 4/8/93

Sandy Armstrong, Welfare Reform Coordinator, HSS, Division of Public Assistance, 6/18/93

Patsy Turner, Mat-Su JOBS Supervisor, HSS, 3/31/93

Barbara Howard, Mat-Su Public Assistance Supervisor, HSS, 3/31/93

We asked the team members a series of questions relating to their perceptions of the intention of the grant, the role of the on-site case manager, and the impact of the grant on their particular jobs and on interagency relations. We also asked questions relating to particular processes of implementation and procedures developed.

### **Overview of Individual Interviews**

#### ***Peter Burchell, Principal of Mat-Su Alternative School***

Peter Burchell talked about the importance of the on-site case manager in removing one more barrier blocking success of the teen parent. He explained some of the background of the grant application process, the hiring process, the



evaluation criteria of the position, and goal of the project of different agencies working together for the teen parent student. He stressed holding the participating agencies accountable for what they are supposed to do as an important link in the success of the project. He also emphasized the importance of teaching the teen parents the importance of choices and decision-making skills. Mr. Burchell also said that because of the presence of the on-site case manager for the teen parents, he has more time for the other students at the school. He talked about the progress and implementation of the toy library aspect of the grant (not yet implemented in early April 1993).

We asked Mr. Burchell what he perceived as the goal of the project. He replied,

"Life is a series of choices. The project raises consciousness about choices. The project is removing barriers to success, and gives [the students] professional help they need to be successful. Efficacy leads to self-esteem, the ability to control your own life. Katie is one more piece of the equation. She removes more barriers, offers more services, of higher quality.

MSAS offers a totality of services for the teen parent: clothes, a food bank, commodities, donations from the community. We are meeting the basic needs: food, shelter, security. The school has attempted to meet needs to the point where the student has to make a conscious choice not to succeed."

Mr Burchell noted several criteria for judging the on-site case manager's performance. These were student test scores, success of students in transition after graduation, feedback from the community, and success of students in the program.

We inquired about changes at MSAS since Ms. Hall began work. Mr. Burchell said that Ms. Hall has taken responsibility for the teen parents so he has more time for other students. Her presence has allowed him to do other things for other kids. Ms. Hall has more time to deal with issues, and frees Ms. Demoski [the school nurse] to do her own job. Ms. Hall handles problems about housing, food, abusive relationships, and makes referrals to Lifequest, and Mental Health. "Katie is increasing the net to help kids, with increased numbers and intensity of agency services. She teaches higher quality skills and self-esteem. The whole goal -- make choices, take responsibility." Mr. Burchell also said that interagency communication had been strengthened under the grant, especially with Cook Inlet Tribal Council.

We asked Mr. Burchell about funding for the day care center. MSAS receives one federal grant and one state grant, totalling \$115,000. MSAS charges day care costs to Day Care Assistance for JOBS clients, and to CITC for theirs.

We asked Mr. Burchell if the project could be replicated in other schools. He answered, "The project is replicable, absolutely. The goal is to have a JOBS counselor co-located on site; also AFDC office on site. The community of bureaucratic agencies are responsible, no one agency can do it all. [Students] need to know what services are available. Community support is already available. Five new schools have started around Alaska, so the program is replicable. Leadership may vary, but the Alternative School is replicable."

Mr. Burchell felt it was too soon to tell what would happen to the position when the grant ended. He felt funding might be available to maintain the position. Mr. Burchell said he hoped to gain from our evaluation tools to measure efficacy, skills, graduating, and transitioning. He wanted us to give him instruments to measure the difference between persons coming in and exiting. He hoped we could conduct attitude surveys.

### ***Katie Hall, On-Site Case Manager***

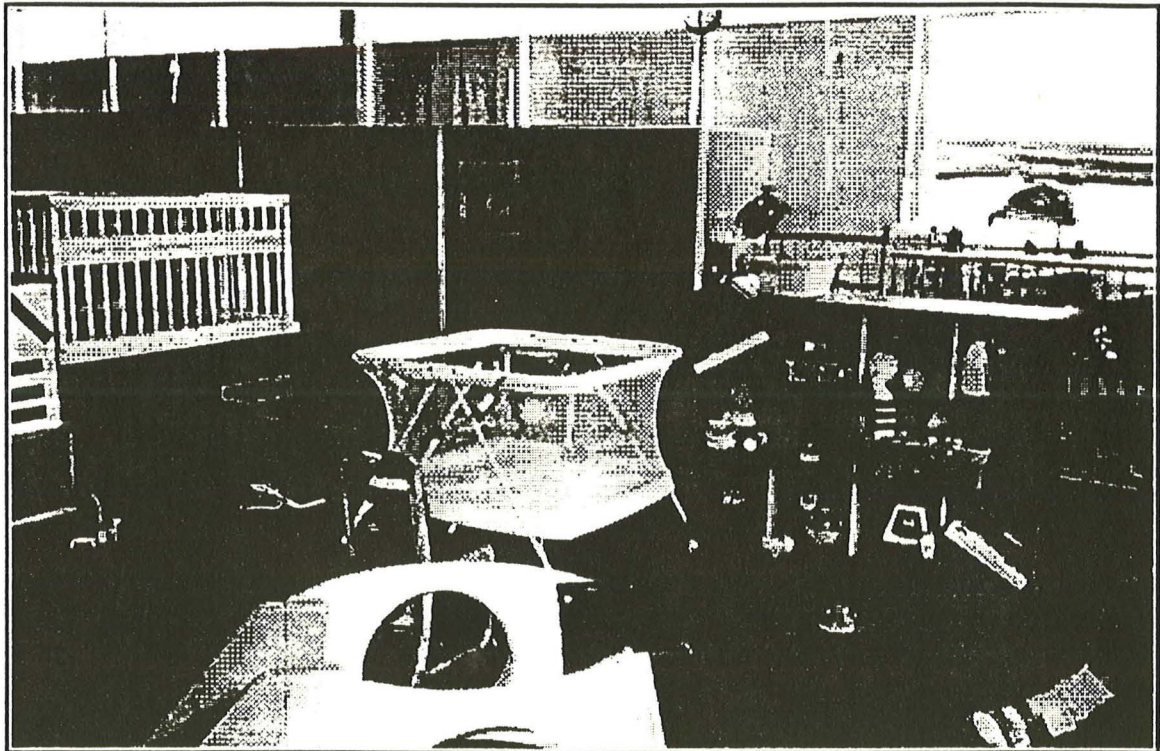
In our interview with Katie Hall, we learned about what she does on the job, the forms and referral process that she uses, the procedures and schedules she has worked out with the state and native JOBS case managers. Ms. Hall spends most of her time answering phone calls, answering questions, documenting, solving problems, and teaching reasoning skills and higher level thinking. She is also working on a manual to develop skills for working.

She gave us copies of the forms that she has developed and her resume. (See Appendices 4 and 2.) She talked about her role at the school and the challenges involved, particularly the challenge of long-range development strategies given the crisis management needed by the teen parent. She explained some of the service gaps that she has identified.

We asked Ms. Hall about the provisions in the grant for enhancing the day care center. She explained that the day care has subscribed to Child Care Connection for information, videos, books, and a curriculum. MSAS will evaluate toys until June before buying them for the toy library. The toy library is designed to aid in the child developmental program. The day care center will use a parent reaction/response card for evaluating toys. MSAS will use the Infant Learning Program assessment tools and the Asper Fulton Development Program, (which is better for assessing native children's development) to choose the toys which best help develop skills.

The day care center accepts children from infancy to 3 years old. There are three curriculums, infant, toddler and 2-3 year old. In Spring 1993, there were 14 children enrolled in the day care center, and the toys are worn out. The toy library will be available to all MSAS parents, not just JOBS clients. Parents bond and interact with their children through play. The day care center also

Figure 6



*The MSAS day care center needs more developmental toys.*

serves a protection function for children. Teens learn how to react appropriately to their children. Teen parents receive instruction in anger management under the Kids Are People Too Program. Children are assessed for developmental difficulties, and a public health nurse visits the center twice a month. There are no facilities at this time for sick-child care on-site.

Ms. Hall noted that the paperwork requirements for native JOBS clients were much greater than that of State JOBS clients. For day care assistance, the clients have to complete a genealogical report to determine their percentage of native lineage. The clients must also complete other forms. The State JOBS program completes all paperwork for its clients, but this is not the case with the Native JOBS program. However, the Native JOBS program has a higher gasoline allowance for its clients than State JOBS. CITC allows \$100.00 per month to each client for gas; State JOBS only allows \$25.00 per month.

We asked Ms. Hall about problems she had encountered in her position. She said the hardest part of her job was keeping focused on development, and developing strategies to achieve that. She plans to use her paperwork to see progress and growth, evaluate and reassess.

She also found loopholes in the JOBS legislation frustrating. For example, there are teen parents exempt from JOBS due to pregnancy, because they are 21 years or older, or who have been dropped from JOBS due to sanction. The age class 21-24 is particularly at risk, but is not required under

the law to participate in the program. Ms. Hall feels that the state needs tighter enforcement and parameters for this age group. Those sanctioned may be dropped from JOBS, but don't lose AFDC funding, so there is little incentive for them to participate in the program.

Ms. Hall told us her perception of the program's goals, "At the end of this program, higher success leading to graduation, more success for future training, and giving the students skills to be more independent, make better decisions." She felt the school district would be unable to fund her position beyond the grant period. Ms. Hall hopes our evaluation will offer "a clear, concise description that would provide a person new to the MSAS program the ability to pick up and apply the program to their own situation."

***Diane Demoski, MSAS School Nurse***

Diane Demoski talked about the role of the on-site case manager, and changes in her own workload. She also discussed needs that are still unmet in the community.

Ms. Demoski noted that the case manager is able to identify more students that need special services. The addition of the on-site case manager has freed Ms. Demoski to function better in her role as school nurse. She also said that she now has more time for case management of the other students at the school. These students have many of the same needs as teen parents, but Ms. Demoski had previously not had the time to explore their needs. She and Ms. Hall work closely to identify potential services to involve them at the school.

Ms. Demoski said that her interagency contacts had decreased since Ms. Hall's arrival. Ms. Hall has taken over the duties of outreach person to community agencies. Ms. Demoski still coordinates health care services for students and their children, both on-site and in the community.

Ms. Demoski identified several unmet needs. The lack of a case manager during break times (Christmas, Spring and Summer) leads to problems for the students. She feels the community needs more activities for young families, both parents and children. The community also lacks a homeless shelter. There are an estimated 300 to 400 homeless teens living in the Mat-Su area. There are also no crisis intervention or emergency relief child care facilities in the community.

***Larry Healy, Director of Grants, Mat-Su School District***

Larry Healy discussed the funding aspects of the grant. He mentioned the initial problems with the flow of funds between governmental units resulting from the unique funding path discussed above, but said that the system was working smoothly at that time. He anticipated no problems in the administration of the grant. There were some different reports generated by his department, but they were not burdensome.

***Betty Bartels, JOBS Case Manager, Cook Inlet Tribal Council***

Betty Bartels explained how the Cook Inlet Tribal Council became involved in the teen parent demonstration project. She also discussed the hiring process for the on-site case manager, the procedures she has developed with Ms. Hall, and some indications of the progress and success of the position regarding the native teen parents in Mat-Su.

CITC was contacted by Sandy Armstrong about participation in the project. CITC then drafted a letter of support. Ms. Bartels was a member of the panel which selected Ms. Hall. The CITC also provided a list of potential clients for the project.

Ms. Bartels said that communication was excellent between Ms. Hall and herself. They by phone weekly, and meet in person at least once a month. Betty receives counseling notes, a monthly report, attendance reports, and work evaluations for each client. Ms. Bartels sees a difference in the coping skills of her clients at MSAS. She feels there is less chance of students dropping out, and more opportunity to head off negative learned behavior.

Ms. Bartels said that the presence of on-site case manager has reduced her own work load. She now spends eight hours per month on her Mat-Su clients. She would have to double or possibly triple that time to provide the level of service that Ms. Hall has given CITC clients. Ms. Bartels said she would foresee a higher drop-out rate and crisis rate if the on-site case manager position did not exist.

Ms Bartels sees the on-site case manager filling a security function. She is someone clients can go to for new options and perspectives. Ms. Bartels said, "To enhance the problem management and coping skills of these girls is to enhance their lives." She mentioned a concern that clients might get too dependent on the case manager, and have trouble when she wasn't available.

***Sandy Armstrong, Welfare Reform Coordinator, HSS, Division of Public Assistance***

Sandy Armstrong talked about the background of the grant application and events leading up to the grant application process. She explained the implementation process after the grant was awarded and discussed the hiring process of the case manager and the inter-departmental transfer of funds. Much of this information is incorporated into Sections I and II above.

Ms. Armstrong talked about service improvements since the on-site case manager has been at MSAS. These include the opening of a WIC program office near the school, the establishment of an on-site sexual abuse counseling group, and the shifting of duties from Ms. Demoski, freeing her for her nursing duties.

Ms. Armstrong explained, "Within the first month and a half after the on-site case manager was hired, 19 parents self-identified as sexual abuse victims

to the on-site case manager. A specific sex abuse counseling group was established at the school as a direct result of the demonstration project and the presence of the on-site case manager.

"A specific important teen parent barrier to functional self-sufficiency -- being a sex abuse victim -- needing to be remediated through professional services, is happening as a direct result of this demonstration. The on-site case manager's developing the confidante relationship on a daily basis with these kids that made self-identification safe. Then Burchell's coordination with Lifequest and the new medicaid coverage for mental health counseling services funded the on-site program.

"This all would not have happened if we didn't have an on-site case manager. And that, coupled with research from the state of Washington, that's recently been released, a three year long research study showing that 66% of pregnant and parenting teens have been sexual abuse victims. In my estimation that is one of the bottom line issues for teen parents that has to be remediated for success in life."

We asked Ms. Armstrong to explain the rationale behind making the on-site case manager a school district employee, rather than a HSS employee. She said, "The MSAS program is a school district program in the valley. For her to function as a state employee in that setting would have set up and/or created a kind of awkward, difficult to operate employee relationship with the principal, Peter Burchell, and all the other staff. The whole project team felt that the on-site case manager should be like all the other staff, a school district employee, for the maximum smooth integration of this position into the alternative school system."

Ms. Armstrong said that the biggest problem her office experienced with the demonstration grant was a lack of administrative dollars for the Division of Public Assistance in Juneau. The grant had no funds budgeted for central administration. Ms. Armstrong said that she would overcome that in the future by including enough funds to pay for one half-time to full-time position to administer the program.

We asked Ms. Armstrong what she thought would happen to the case manager position after the demonstration grant. She said, "I genuinely believe that we can justify the effectiveness of this position, and that the demonstration itself will have proven so successful, that either permanent federal funding, or school district application for funding through the legislative process through the school district budget, or special state legislative funding will be approved."

***Patsy Turner, Mat-Su JOBS Supervisor, Alaska Work Programs***

Patsy Turner explained how the teen parents were brought into the program, some of the sanctions and workings of the JOBS program, her contacts with the on-site case manager, her perceptions of the goals of the grant, and how her job has changed.

Ms. Turner sees the on-site case manager position fulfilling three functions:

(1) Identifying and catching problems. As the person on site, the case manager is the person who sees the problem before it gets out of hand, before it becomes an unsuccessful outcome.

(2) Reinforcement. The case manager gives them [the clients] some validity and support for what they are doing, and reinforces their desire to finish school.

(3) Sanction. If the clients don't submit their MMR by the 5th of the month, their checks may be three weeks late. Teenagers' minds don't work toward this. The case manager prompts them to meet paperwork requirements. Ms. Turner related that prior to the case manager project, JOBS would find out three weeks later that clients hadn't been in school. Ms. Hall prevents this by calling clients with each absence and maintaining weekly contact with the JOBS office.

Ms. Turner felt that the on-site case manager's position as a school district employee probably made it harder for Ms. Hall. Ms. Turner noted, "She has two groups telling her what to do, and expectations from both groups that may come into conflict."

Ms. Turner said that the MSAS mini-bus is essential to the program's success. Students who had been exempt due to lack of transportation were included because of the bus. There was only one student who could not be served by the bus because of a lack of time. The bus is inadequate, however. The driver often works extra hours to transport students and their children.

Ms. Turner hopes that the on-site case manager position will stay in place after the grant expires. She thinks the school district should fund the position because the school district has a responsibility to provide education for all, even those with special needs. She sees the case manager position as an education function, not a public assistance function.

### ***Barbara Howard, Mat-Su Public Assistance Supervisor, HSS***

Barbara Howard explained her perspective on the program, the contact her office has had with the on-site case manager, and changes in her job. Ms. Howard felt the goal of the grant is to break the welfare cycle; to get clients the skills they need to get a job. "Katie is removing barriers and giving success to clients. She is tearing down layers of bureaucracy so they can succeed."

Ms. Howard felt inter-agency communication was excellent. Ms. Hall was "available, accessible, and accommodating." She noted very little change to the Public Assistance office procedures as a result of the grant. Intake officers added one question about high school graduation.

Ms. Howard felt that the need for the position had been created through the grant and would continue. She said that HSS had no funds to support the position. If the position was eliminated, its functions would have to be absorbed

into the existing network, either through JOBS or an Public Assistance eligibility technician.

Ms. Howard said, "One point of view that had been mentioned was that the kids should be responsible for their own situation, and that Katie's position enables them to not be responsible. Another view is that Katie is teaching them responsibility."



### III. The Operations and Implementation of the Program

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#### Mat-Su Alternative School Operations and Projections

Since the Mat-Su Alternative School opened with a five-student enrollment in 1987, the school has been housed in five different locations. As of June, 1994, 115 students were enrolled, 26 of whom were listed as teen parents on the school's Spring roster. The school's present location in downtown Wasilla occupies 4,800 square feet: consisting of a large, open room; two smaller classrooms at one end; and two small offices at the other end for the school nurse and administrative staff, respectively. A small kitchenette is also utilized by staff and students for light meals, snacks, and coffee breaks. A bank of computers is also available for student use.

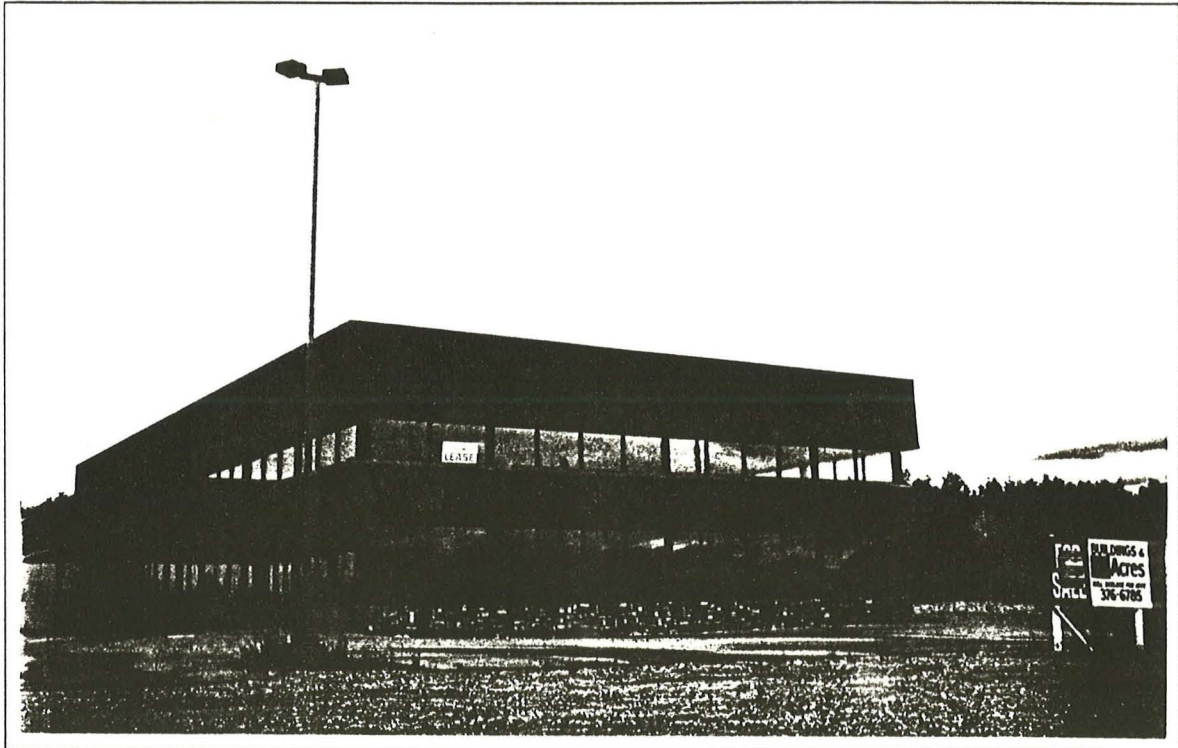
The loosely-structured atmosphere of the school is evidence of principal Peter Burchell's commitment to open learning concepts. Staff roam frequently between the tables, at which sit four to five students engaged in a variety of tasks. Although the noise level is quite high, the students appear engrossed in their work. During the administration of the student surveys (see the section on Survey of Program Participants below), a few students took the time to finish their current project or find a suitable stopping place before joining the interviewer. The students were polite and forthcoming in their responses.

Also in June 1994, the Mat-Su Borough Assembly approved the purchase of a 13,000 square foot building for a new site for the school. Located off the Parks Highway outside Wasilla, the \$900,000 purchase of the McClure-Keyes building, along with seven additional acres, will provide the school with the room to expand, including the possibility of a middle school and perhaps an elementary school. According to a June 15th article in **The Frontiersman** newspaper, enrollment capacity forecasted to be 167 students by the year 2,000.

Projecting the level of teen-parent involvement at the new site is difficult, but it is reasonable to predict that increased space and resources could provide more on-site, direct-services staff to assist with a traditionally high-risk population in one of the most high-risk areas of the state. Included in the \$2.3 million budget are plans to enhance clinical services as well.

The Mat-Su Valley encompasses an area approximately the size of West Virginia, over which is scattered a transient population of approximately 48,000 persons (see Figure 8 on pp. 26). The area traditionally claims one of the highest unemployment rates in Alaska, as well as a consistently high number of reports of child abuse. Both situations contribute to the high number of teenage pregnancies.

**Figure 7**



*Future school site is the McClure-Keyes Building off the Parks Highway. The 13,000 sq. ft. building and seven adjoining acres were approved for purchase by the Mat-Su Borough Assembly in June, 1994.*

### **Interviews with Service Providers**

Betty Barthels -- Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Anchorage  
(November 16, 1993 and February 22, 1994)

Peter Burchell -- Mat-Su Alternative School  
(February 18 and 23, 1994)

Jana Minor-Collins -- Charter North Counseling Services, Palmer  
(October 17, 1994)

Cheryl Gagelin -- Women, Infants and Children Program, Wasilla  
(December 21, 1993)

Debbie Haynes -- Lifequest  
(February 14, 1994)

Pam Lutgen-Sandvik -- Valley Women's Resource Center (VWRC)  
(November 9, 1993)

Patsy Turner -- Alaska JOBS Program, Wasilla  
(January 14, 1994, February 23, 1994 and March 17, 1994)

Greg Van Kirk -- Division of Family and Youth Services, Palmer  
(November 16, and December 20, 1993)

Map of Mat-Su Valley, including current location of MSAS sites and geographical parameters of service area.

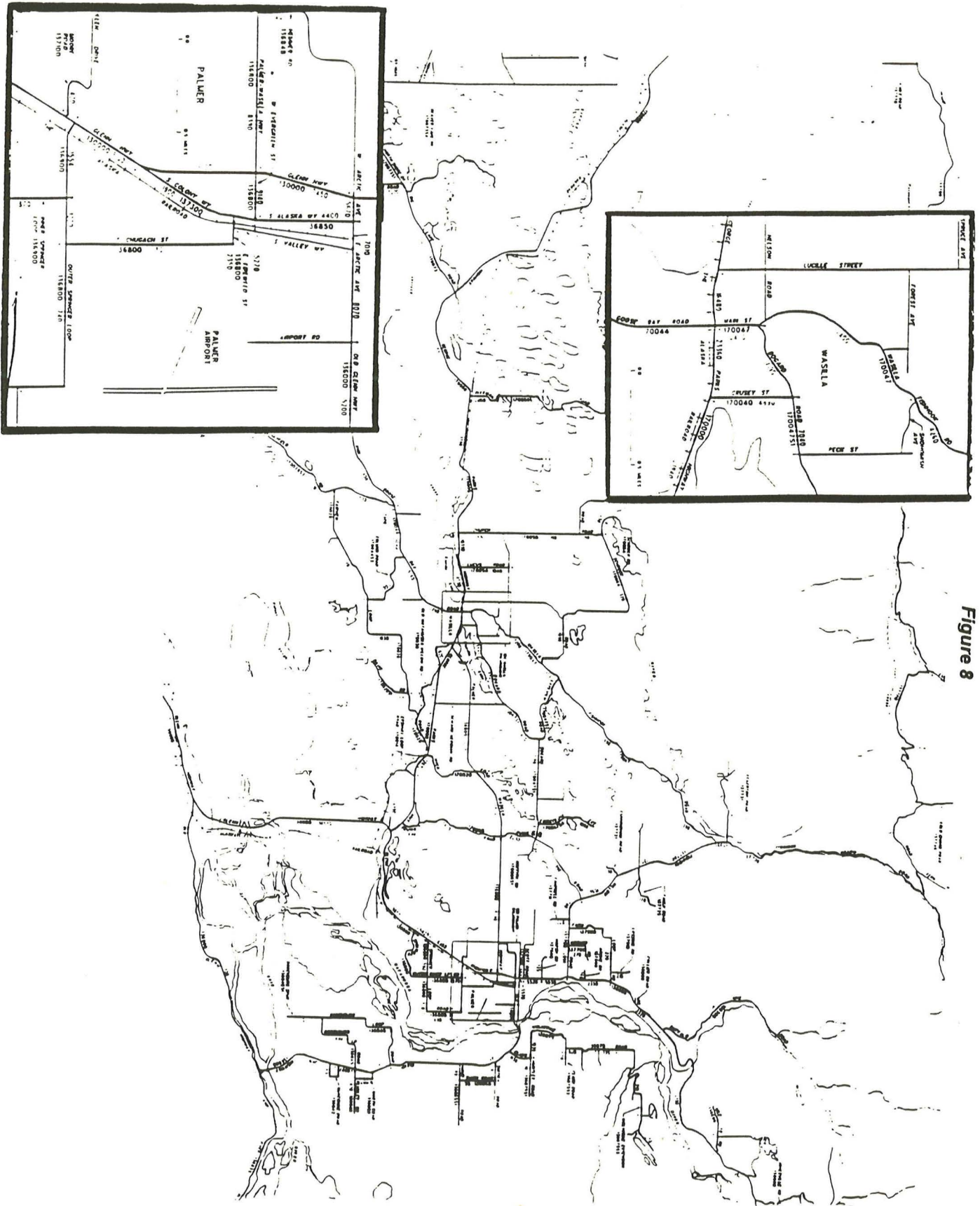


Figure 8

## **Overview of Individual Interviews**

### **Betty Barthels**

#### **Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Anchorage**

One of the most strikingly unique characteristics of the Mat-Su JOBS Demonstration Grant is the inclusion of specific and direct involvement with clients of an Alaska tribal organization.

According to its mission statement, the Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is the incorporated and designated tribal organization for the Cook Inlet Region of Southcentral Alaska. The corporation identifies its roots in cultural traditions and promotes cultural sensitivity, in its provision of services. The mission of CITC is to create and maintain a comprehensive program to promote self-esteem, upward mobility, sobriety, education, training, and employment for Alaska Natives and Native Americans within the Cook Inlet region.

The Cook Inlet Tribal Corporation established a direct telephone line to MSAS from its office, in Anchorage, in order to more closely assist and monitor Native students enrolled in the Teen Parent Program.

Betty Barthels, the CITC Case manager who works directly with the MSAS case manager coordinated services for six Native teen parents since interagency participation was established. Her caseload included one male and five females, one of whom was married.

Among the supportive services provided were clothing, funds for vehicle repair, and gas vouchers. Barthels also maintained active and comprehensive files for each student, monitoring parenting skills; pertinent legal issues (including domestic violence issues for one student); integration of on-site services; and appropriate networking of community resources. Financial assistance also enabled one student to participate in the Washington, D.C. Close-Up program along with other MSAS students and staff.

One student was listed as a graduate as of June. Along with other students in the Alternative School curriculum, the students may complete required coursework throughout the year, but will be listed as graduating the following June.

Three students were slated for graduation in June, 1994 and one in June, 1995.

### **Peter Burchell, Principal, Mat-Su Alternative School (MSAS)**

Mr. Burchell provided a current budget summary for the Teen Parent Program component of the Alternative School as well as information regarding program participant numbers and program graduates. He stated that approximately 50% of the MSAS graduates, to date, have been teen parents. Within the past five years, the program had served 80 pregnant or parenting teens. Indeed the first MSAS class begun in the Spring of 1988 had enrolled a

teen mother, and the program continues to be one of the most significant and innovative parts of the entire MSAS services.

Although approximately 30 to 40% of students at the school leave the program, Burchell estimated the actual drop-out rate to be approximately 10%, because many of the students "drop out, then come back at a later date."

Burchell spoke at length about the MSAS program's recent award. REDBOOK magazine recognized the school as one of "America's Best Schools" in the category of classroom innovation in a national competition. At the time the REDBOOK grant application was submitted, there were 43 students enrolled in the Teen Parent Program.

"The specific program for pregnant and parenting teens includes close work relationships with several agencies and individuals," said Burchell. "These include JOBS and Job Service; Life Skills and Parenting Instructors; the school's case manager; the school nurse; and the on-site licensed daycare center."

Burchell's dedication and enthusiasm about the Alternative School is apparent in all of his dealings with students, staff, and other agencies. He, himself, has testified in at least one criminal proceeding on behalf of a teen-parent student and has involved graduates from the program in the Teen Parent School Advisory.

Burchell had hoped the entire Alternative School would be moving into its new facility by winter, 1994, but present plans point to May, 1995, as more likely. Participants of the Teen Parent Program will benefit from the additional resources to be provided in the new facility via the REDBOOK grant -- including expanded clinic space, laundry facilities, showers, kitchen, gymnasium, and enhanced on-site daycare services. Even now Burchell is working with his staff and agency representatives on the specifics of how to improve on-site service delivery.

### **Jana Minor-Collins Charter North Counseling Services**

Support group services are available, with the coordination of the case manager, to students enrolled at the Alternative School. Jana Minor-Collins, a therapist with Charter North, has facilitated the Anger Management group at the Alternative School for three years.

Approximately 10 students attend the weekly, one-hour group. Records furnished by the on-site case manager at the school indicate 12 referrals to this particular group from November 1, 1993 through January 21, 1994.

### **Cheryl Gagelin Women, Infants and Children Program**

The federally subsidized Women, Infants and Children program is housed at Wasilla's VWRC branch and directed by Cheryl Gagelin.

The Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) is a federally funded program to assist low-income women with basic nutrition information and food supplements for mothers and children. The goal of the program is to promote dietary and nutritional well-being pre-natally and during the first months following birth. Clients in the program receive nutritional information in classes provided by WIC personnel.

Gagelin said WIC classes began in December, 1993 and continue to be provided to students in 90-minute increments twice-monthly. The WIC program operates on two-month cycles. Students receive their program certifications at the WIC office and the MSAS school nurse, Diane Demoski, consistently makes referrals to the WIC program.

Gagelin and her staff presently are investigating the benefits of incorporating more structure into the classes her program offers on-site at the school.

**Debbie Haynes  
Lifequest, Inc.**

Debbie Haynes is a therapist in direct services with Lifequest, Inc., the Mat-Su Valley's primary mental health services provider. Five teen parents were referred to Lifequest for off-site services from November 1, 1993 through January 21, 1994. However, 12 teen parents received their services during Lifequest's routine visits to the school.

Lifequest also provides professional facilitation of weekly counseling groups for survivors of childhood sexual abuse -- a population at high risk for teen pregnancy. School records indicate that 17 referrals had been made to the group from November 1, 1993 through January 21, 1994.

**Pam Lutgen-Sandvik, Executive Director  
Valley Women's Resource Center**

Pam Lutgen-Sandvik is Executive Director of the Valley Women's Resource Center (VWRC) in Palmer.

The teen parent profile almost always includes AFDC enrollment, an incidence of substance abuse, and at least one episode of domestic violence. VWRC is likely to be involved in a cooperative effort with the Alternative School teen parent through three internal programs.

The Single Young Pregnant Women (SYPW) program is housed at the VWRC extension office in Wasilla. Kelli Mahoney, Program Coordinator, has referred clients to the MSAS Teen Parent Program and has an ongoing caseload of 15 teen mothers for services, which may include a combination of one-to-one-counseling, support group activities and assistance with transportation, and food and diapers.

Because VWRC's anchor program deals with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, teen mothers also are likely to access those services.

Lutgen-Sandvik said VWRC interactions with MSAS Teen Parent program staff have been "extremely positive" and that school staff appear "committed to the health aspects of as well as the academic focus."

**Patsy Turner, Program Supervisor  
Wasilla Jobs Program**

Since the Fall of 1993, fifty-three AFDC recipients had been referred into the JOBS program (see Phase I for program description). In February, 1994, there were 22 current cases served by the Wasilla JOBS and CITC's Native JOBS programs (17 and five respectively) according to Patsy Turner, the Program Supervisor.

Of the original 53 referrals, 31 had left during the course of the project, but seven had graduated since the spring and summer of 1992. Turner's office handles the cases of those students who live within a 50-mile radius of Wasilla. For students who live in the outer reaches of the Mat-Su Valley, Turner frequently contacts counselors in those areas (in Glenallen, for example) for referrals. The Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) is sometimes an alternative for remote AFDC recipients who reside outside the 50 mile radius.

Turner and her staff hold weekly case management sessions with MSAS case manager Katie Hall, and describe ongoing positive interactions between the Wasilla JOBS program and the school's personnel.

Fifty-four teen parents have been enrolled in the JOBS program since the project began. Of those 54, six participated in the Native JOBS program through CITC. As of March 1, 1994, 22 teen parents remained on Turner's rolls -- 17 in the JOBS program and five in the Native JOBS program.

Of the 32 students who left the program:

- Nine received their high school diplomas
- Six obtained their General Education Development diploma (G.E.D.)
- Five were attending other schools

Twelve students did not complete the program for unspecified reasons.

According to Turner, transportation to and from classes appears to be a continuing major obstacle for the students. Although a school bus routinely provides transport, students who live outside the fairly centralized Wasilla area find getting to school difficult.

Turner said the Alternative School's student transportation needs are served by a single schoolbus, which follows a long and circuitous route around the service area. The length of the bus ride adds greatly to the time the student must set aside for work and school. Turner said her tracking indicates that "half the battle is getting the students to class."

**Greg Van Kirk****Division of Family and Youth Services, Palmer**

The Mat-Su Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) is supervised by Greg Van Kirk. Van Kirk works closely with MSAS and serves on the Mat-Su Children's Services Task Force, a loosely-organized group of social service representatives focused on the needs of Valley children.

A 1993 million-dollar state cut to fostercare programs and a 27.9% increase in AFDC households from 1990 to 1991 have seriously affected the ability of the Mat-Su DFYS to address child abuse reports in the sprawling Mat-Su Borough according to Van Kirk. The Mat-Su Division has not had a fulltime caseworker position added to its staff since 1979, despite Alaska's ranking highest in the number of reported child sexual assaults in the United States and consistently ranking in the top three for physical abuse and neglect cases.

"Almost 80% of our longterm, chronic, open-ended cases involve a head of household with a history of one or more teen pregnancies," said Van Kirk. "We also have been working with five junior-high aged mothers in the past year."

Van Kirk estimates that 50% of teen parents enrolled in the program at the Alternative School have had some involvement with DFYS. Without the assistance provided by the school's case management system for teen parents, he estimates that at least 12 cases would have been referred to state's custody.

"Children of teen parents are always at high risk for abuse," he said. "The on-site daycare facility also provides the opportunity for automatic physical review and observation of the students' children if the need arises."

**Survey of Program Participants*****Methodology***

Twenty-two teen-parent students responded to a comprehensive user survey, which was conducted on-site at the Mat-Su Alternative School. The students were surveyed over a two-month period. The case manager arranged for an on-site meeting space for the interviewer and informed all parties about confidentiality regarding their answers. Due to the lack of private space at the school, most interviews were conducted in a closed classroom, in semi-private corners, on an average of one quarter hour per student.

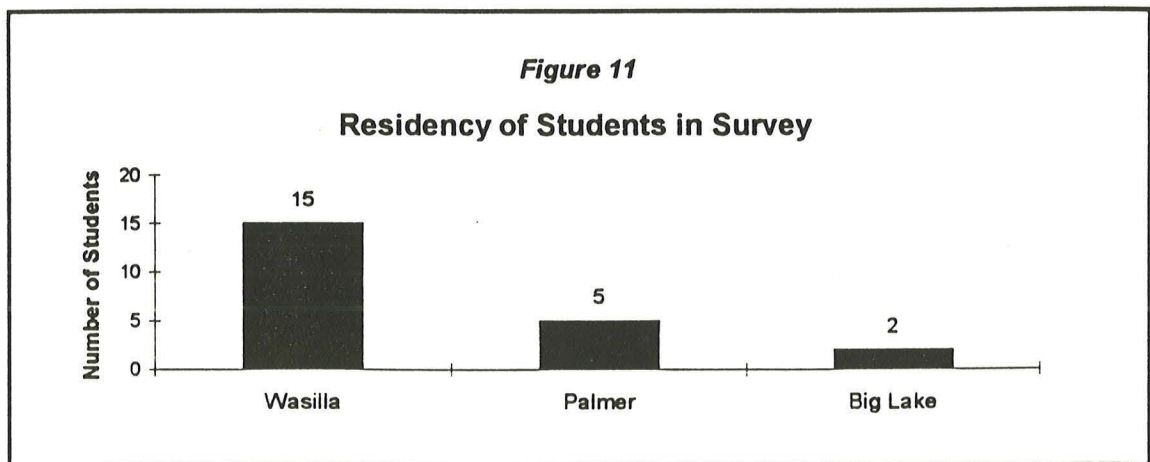
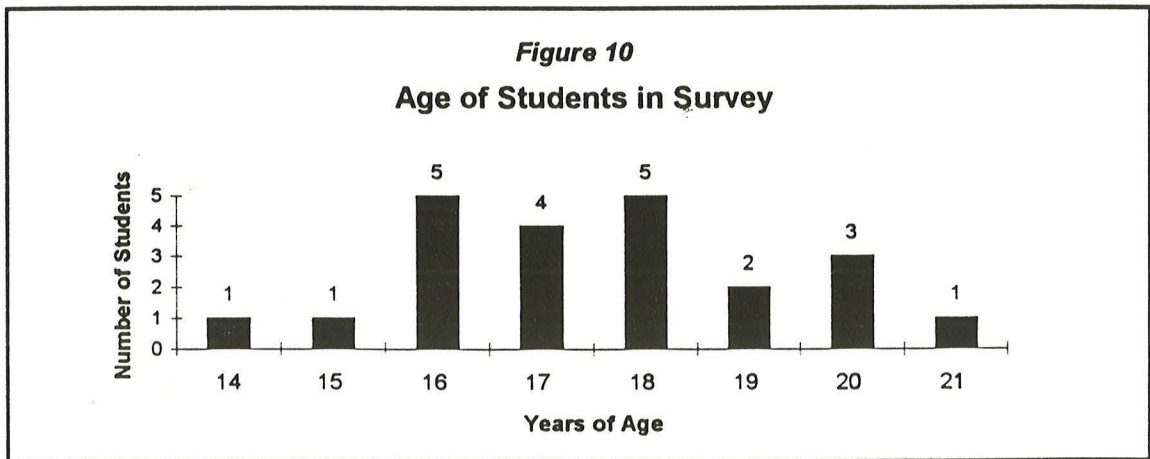
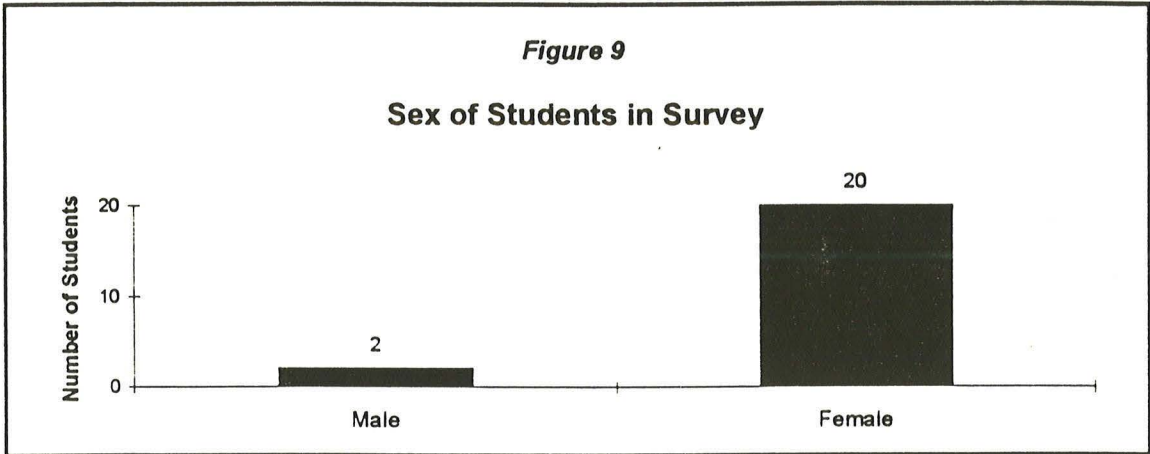
The surveys were conducted on January 14th, and February 4th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 23rd and 24th, 1994. All respondents were teen parents, actively enrolled in the MSAS program at the time of the interviews.

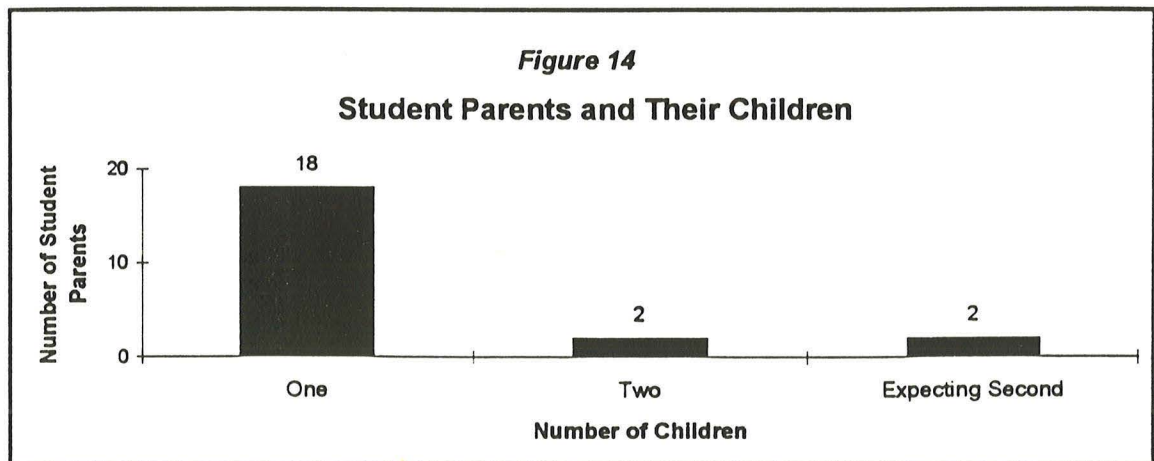
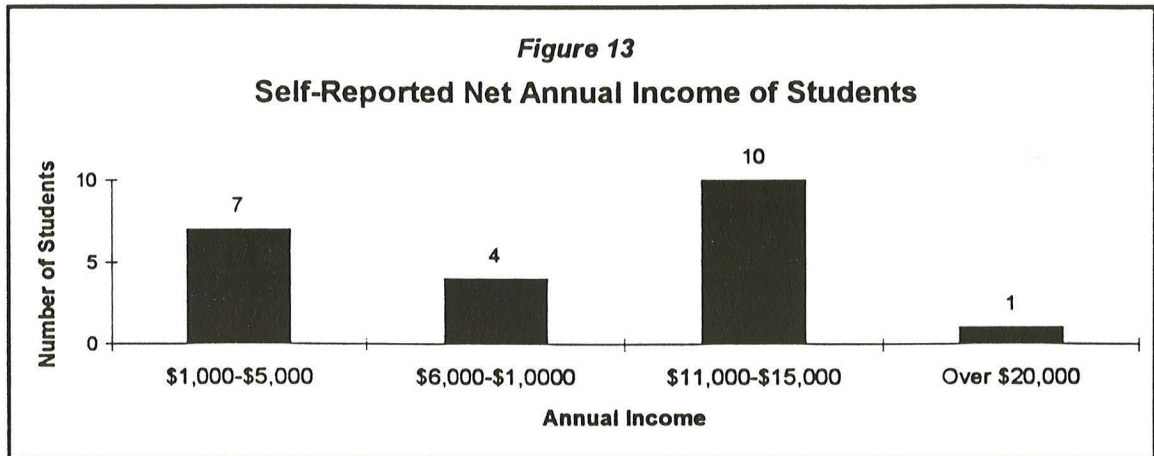
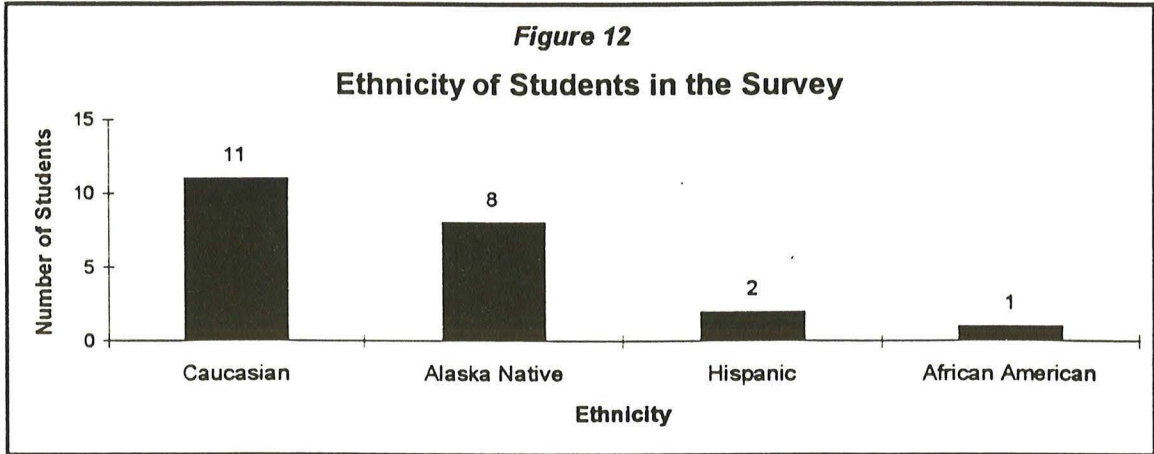
***Profile of Students in the Survey***

The respondents were comprised of two males and twenty females (see Figure 9), all between the ages of 14 and 21 (see Figure 10) who lived in the Wassilla-Palmer-Big Lake area (see Figure 11). One-third of those surveyed were Alaska Native and one-half were Caucasian (see Figure 12). About half



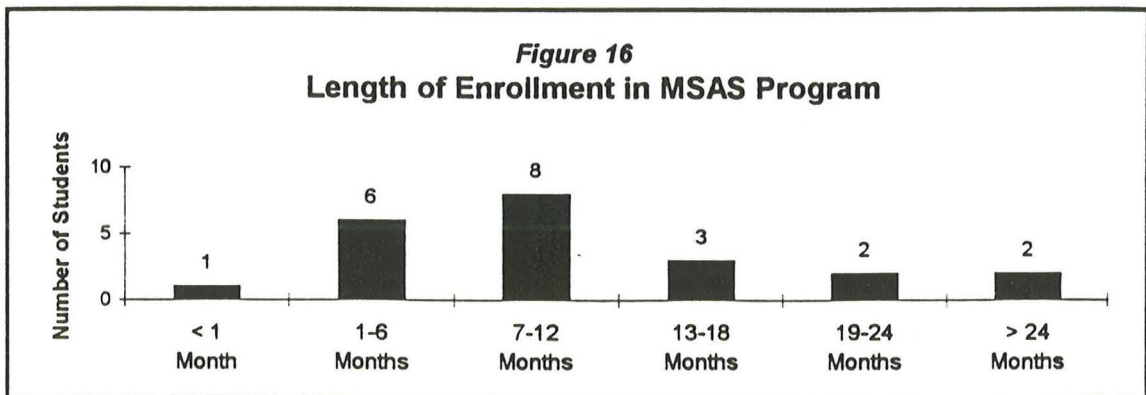
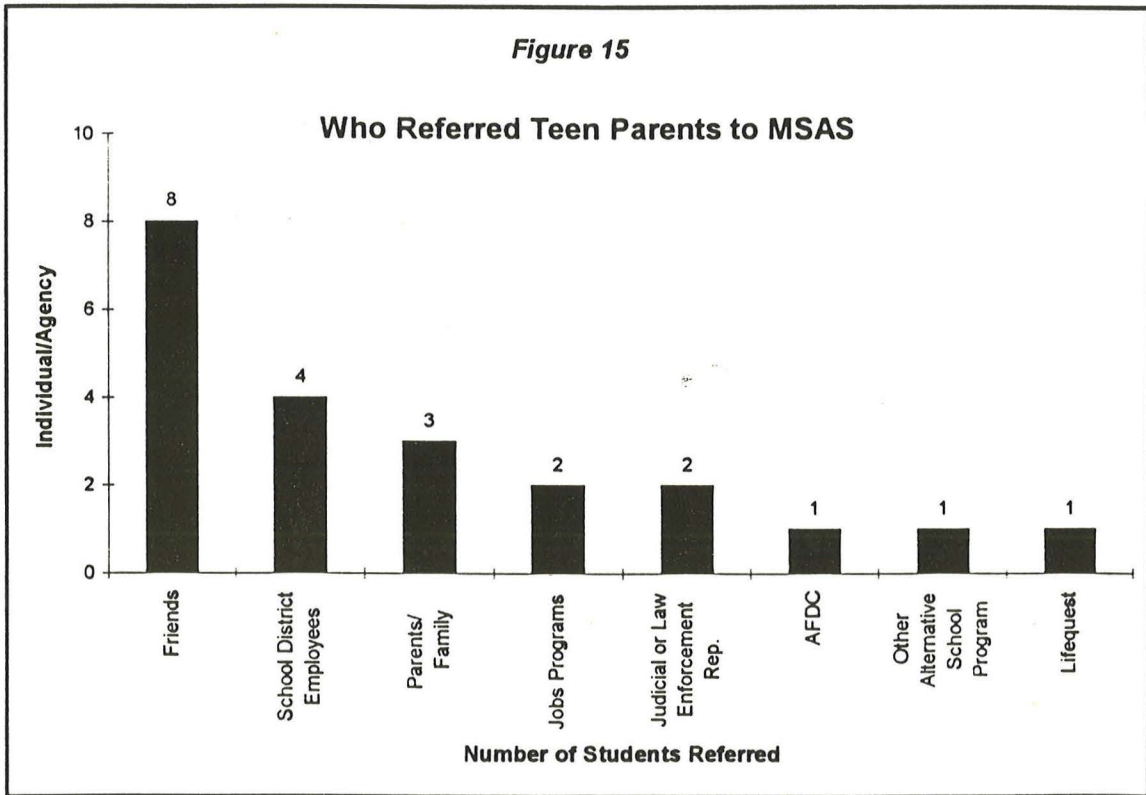
the students reported their net annual income as ranging between \$11,000 - \$15,000 (see Figure 13). Although most of the teen parents had only one child, two students did have two children. Two others had one child but were pregnant (see Figure 14).





**Program Operations and Delivery of Services**

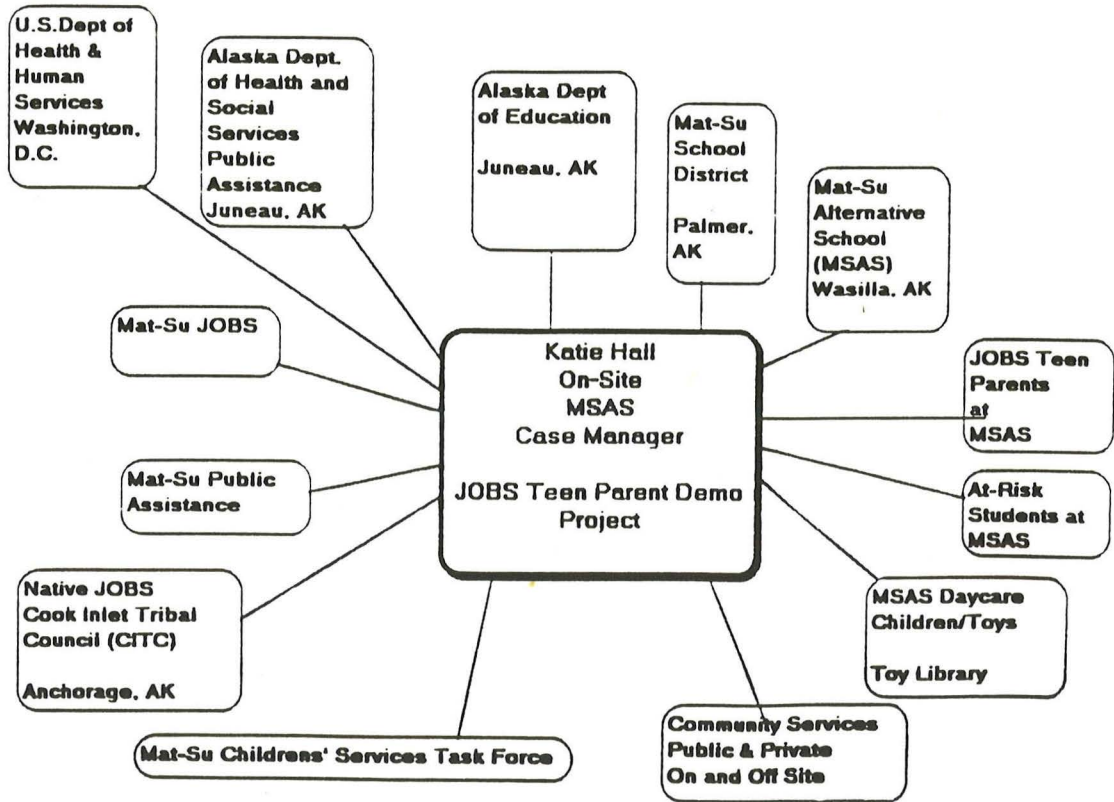
Half of the students were referred to the teen parent program at Mat-Su Alternative School by family and friends. The other half found out about the program through contacts with school district employees and other social service providers (see Figure 15). Two-thirds of the students were in their first year of the program (see Figure 16), an indication of the newness of the teen parent program. In contrast, keeping the doors open for students is central to the Mat-Su Alternative Schools mission, with sixty percent of currently enrolled students carryovers from previous years.



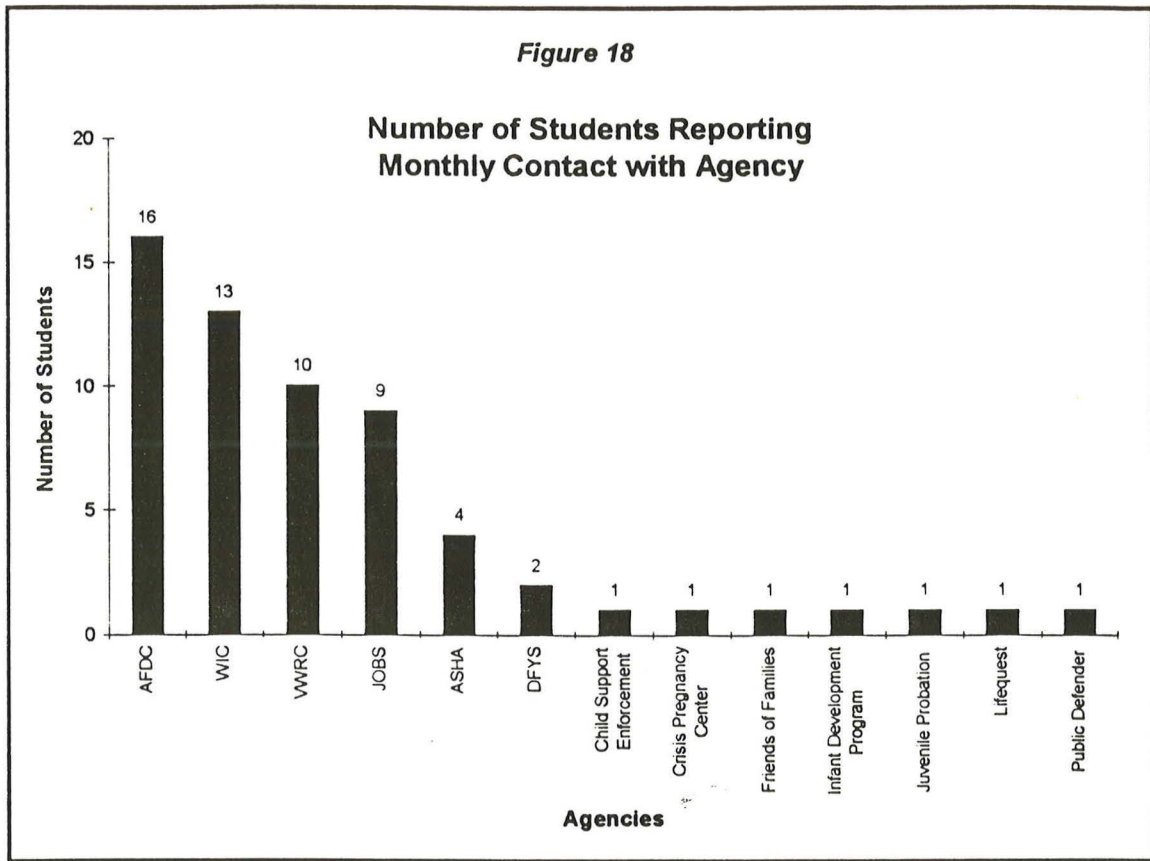
The Teen Parent Program at the Mat-Su Alternative School does not operate in isolation. Services to the teen parents enrolled in the program are delivered through a network of supporting social service agencies (see Figure 17). Students had the most contact with a set of core agencies: AFDC; Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC); Valley Women's Resource Center VWRC; and the JOBS program. Less widespread but regular monthly contact was reported with a more (in the eyes of the students surveyed) peripheral set of support social service agencies: the Alaska State Housing Association (ASHA); DFYS; Child Support Enforcement Association; Crisis Pregnancy Center; Friend of Families Infant Development Program; Juvenile Probation Office; Lifequest; and Public Defender Agency (see Figure 18).

Figure 17

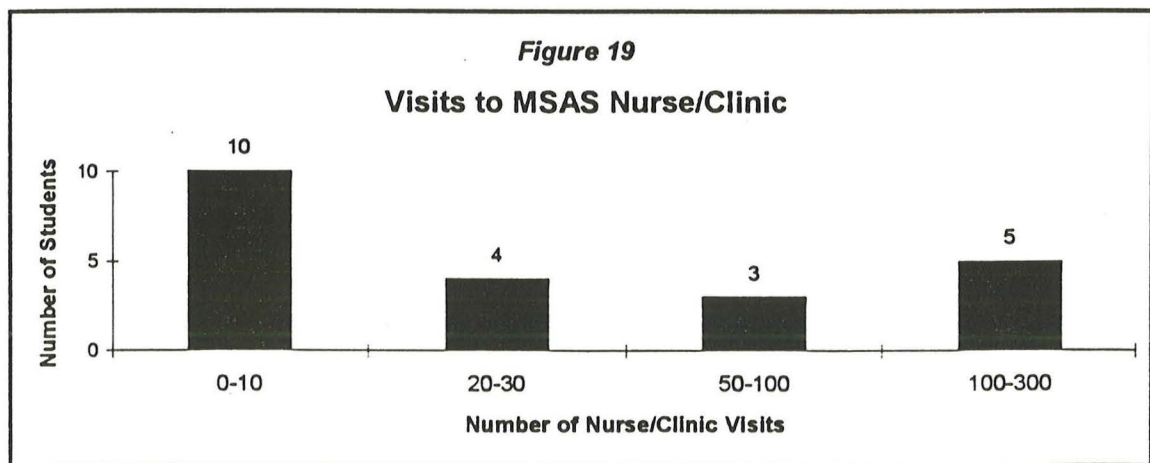
**Key Stakeholders  
Mat-Su Teen Parent Demonstration Project**

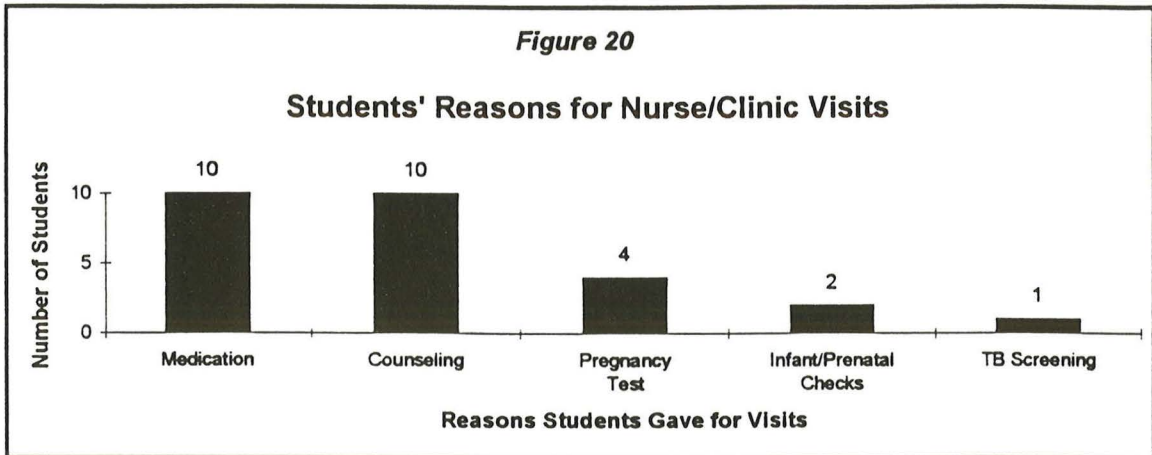


The position of the on-site case manager provided by the grant is surrounded by agencies and persons involved with the success of the both the grant and the teen parent demonstration project goals and objectives. The on-site case manager position and the toy library within the MSAS daycare are direct results of the grant. Financial, service delivery, and outcome results of the JOBS teen parent participant are the connecting threads between the various stakeholders and this grant. The centrality of the on-site case manager is clear.



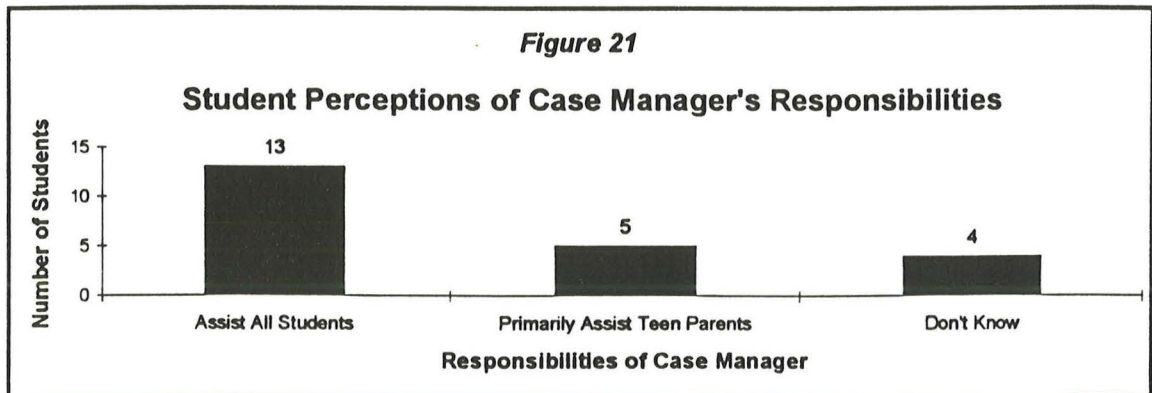
The clinic at the Mat-Su Alternative School was a frequent stop for almost all teen parents, providing not only health needs but crisis intervention as well. Some students, in fact, reported visiting the nurse almost daily (see Figure 19). Specific reasons for visits to the nurse, of course, varied from student to student. Consultations with the nurse for medication and for crisis intervention counseling were the most frequently reported uses of the clinic (see Figure 20).

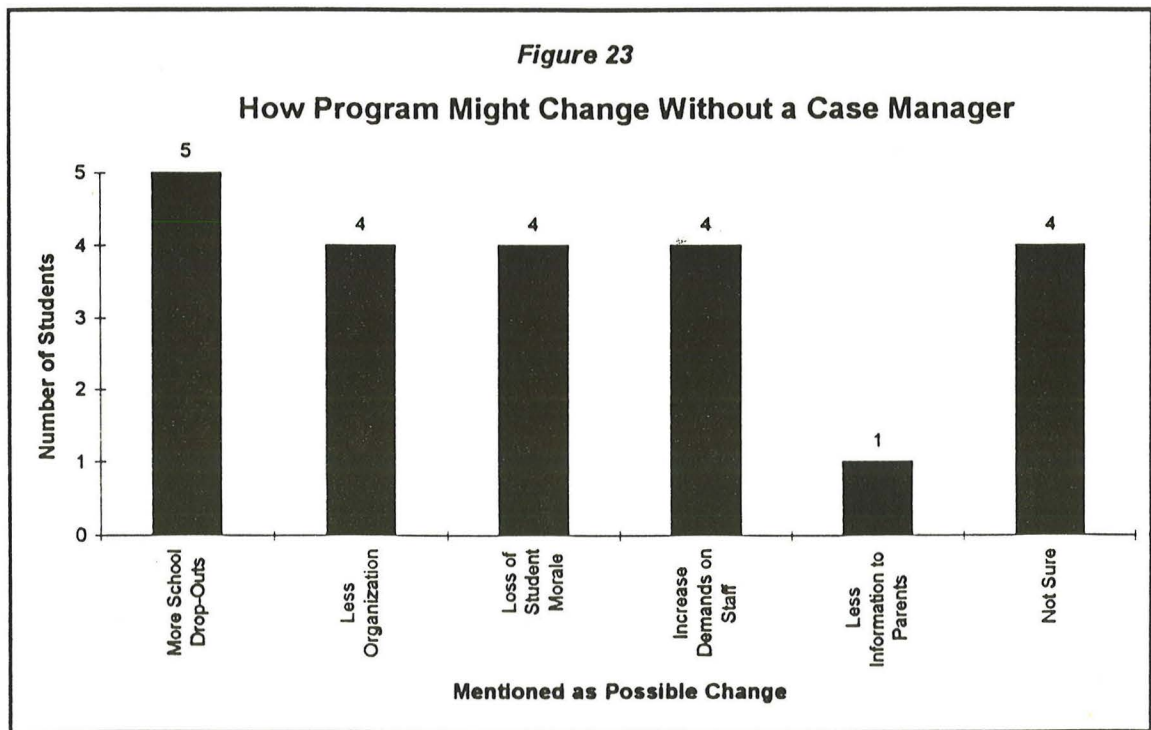
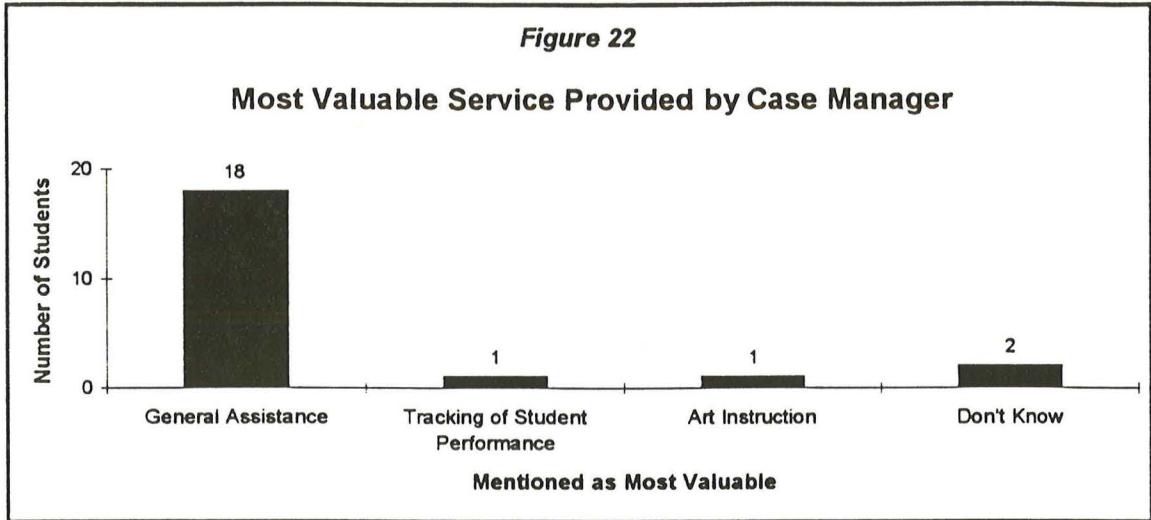




Only eight students said they had utilized the Mat-Su Alternative Schools Toy Library, a system in which school-purchased toys are loaned to parents for use by their children. Of the eight toy library users, five said that they had used it only one time.

Each student was asked to describe the responsibilities of the Case Manager. Over half of the students indicated that they thought the Case Manager was there to assist any individual student who needed help. In contrast, only about one-fourth of the students saw the position as primarily designed to assist the teen parents (see Figure 21). The most valuable service that the Case Manager provided was identified by the teen parent students as giving general assistance (see Figure 22). Finally, when the students were asked to think about how the Teen Parent Program might be expected to change if the Case Manager position were ever eliminated, eighty percent thought that the impact on the program would be negative. Speculations included: more students dropping out of school; a less organized program; loss of student morale; increased demands on other staff members at the school; and less information provided to teen parents (see Figure 23).

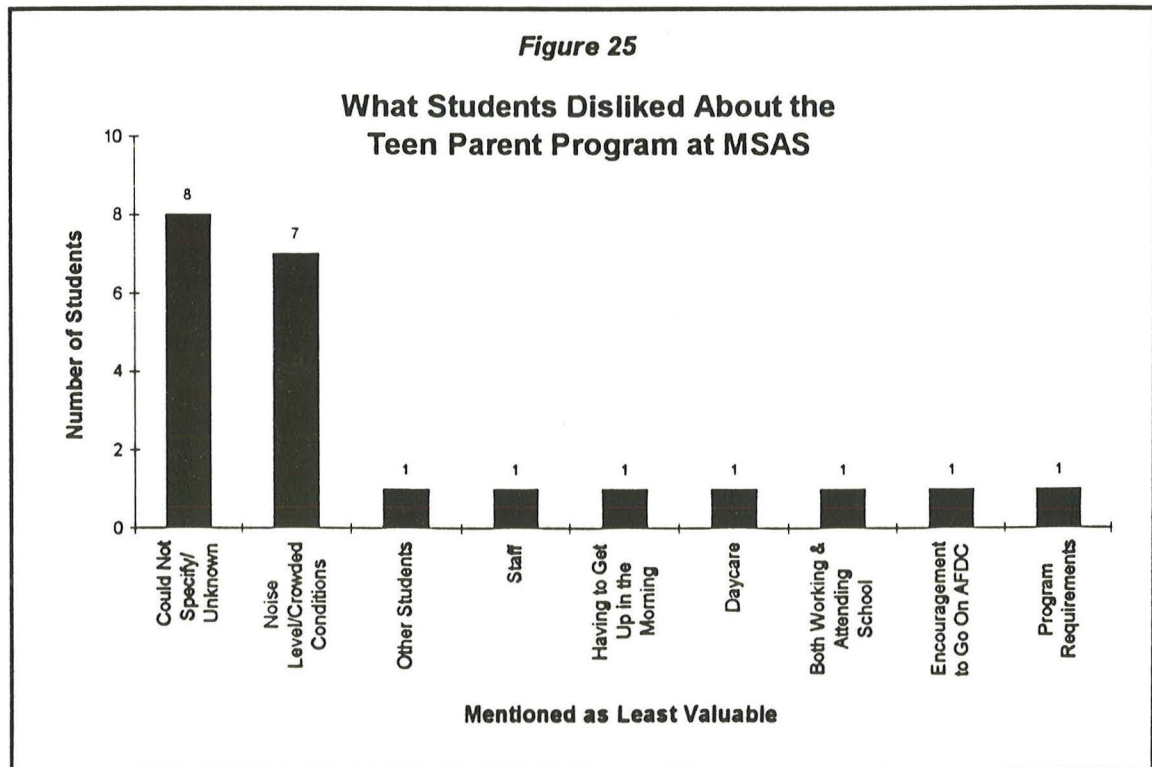
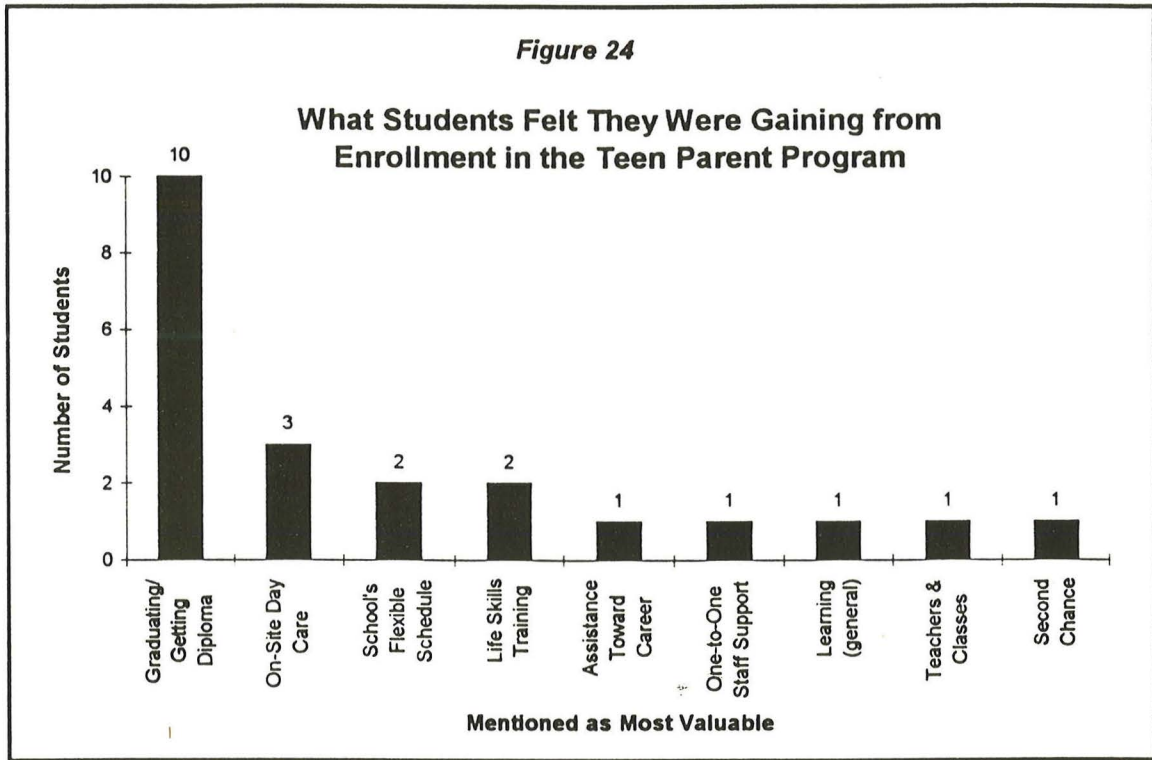




### The Value of Program Participation

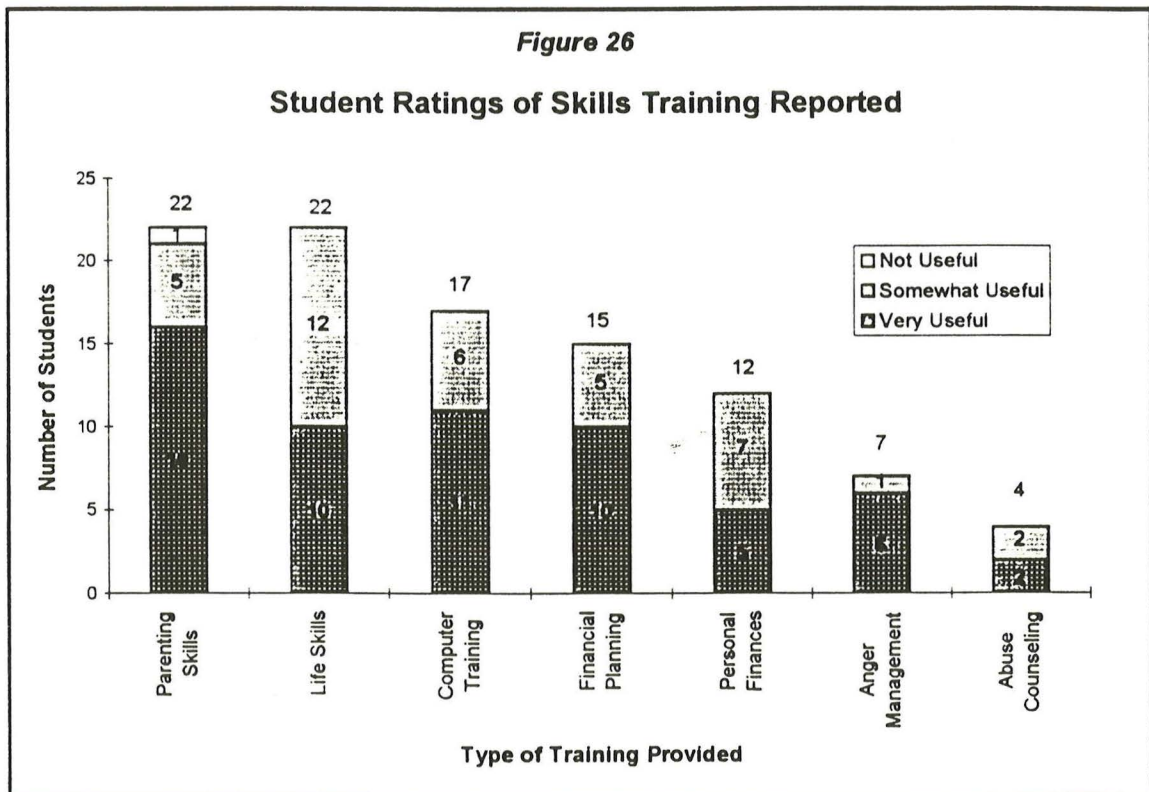
The students were asked what they found most valuable in participating in the Teen Parent Program at Mat-Su Alternative School. About half of them specified graduating, or opportunities to receive their high school diplomas as the most valuable. The other half mentioned a variety of services provided by the program as most valuable, such as: on-site daycare; flexible individualized school schedule; one-on-one staff support; life skills training (see Figure 24). Students were, in general, so positive about the Teen Parent Program that many had a hard time identifying anything they regarded as least valuable about the

program. The high noise level and crowded conditions of the classroom were singled out by some as the worst part of the program (see Figure 25).



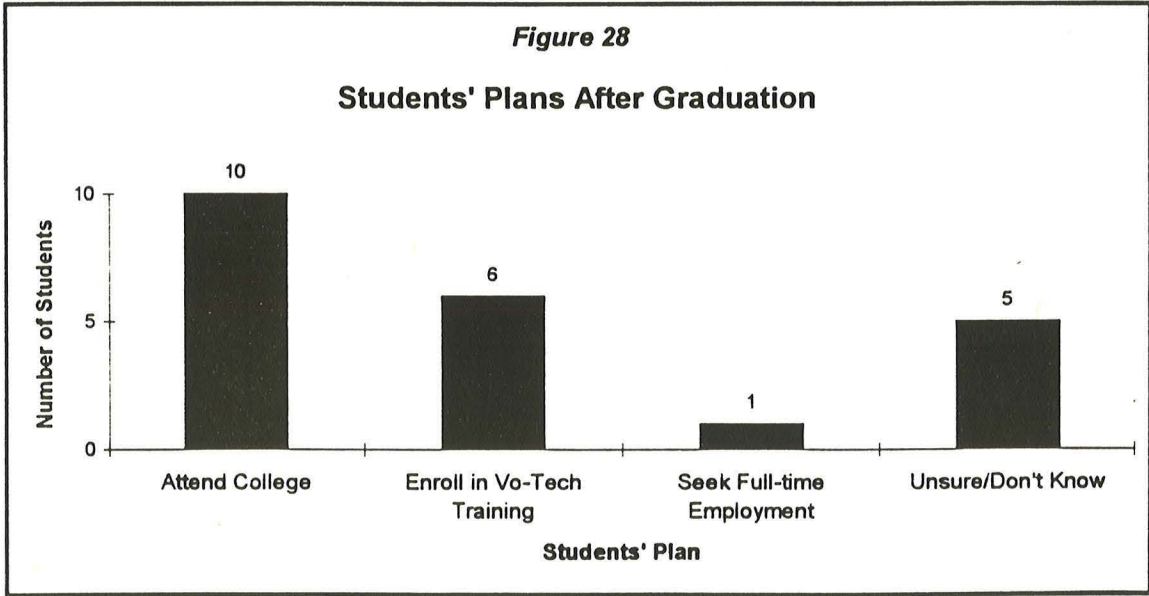
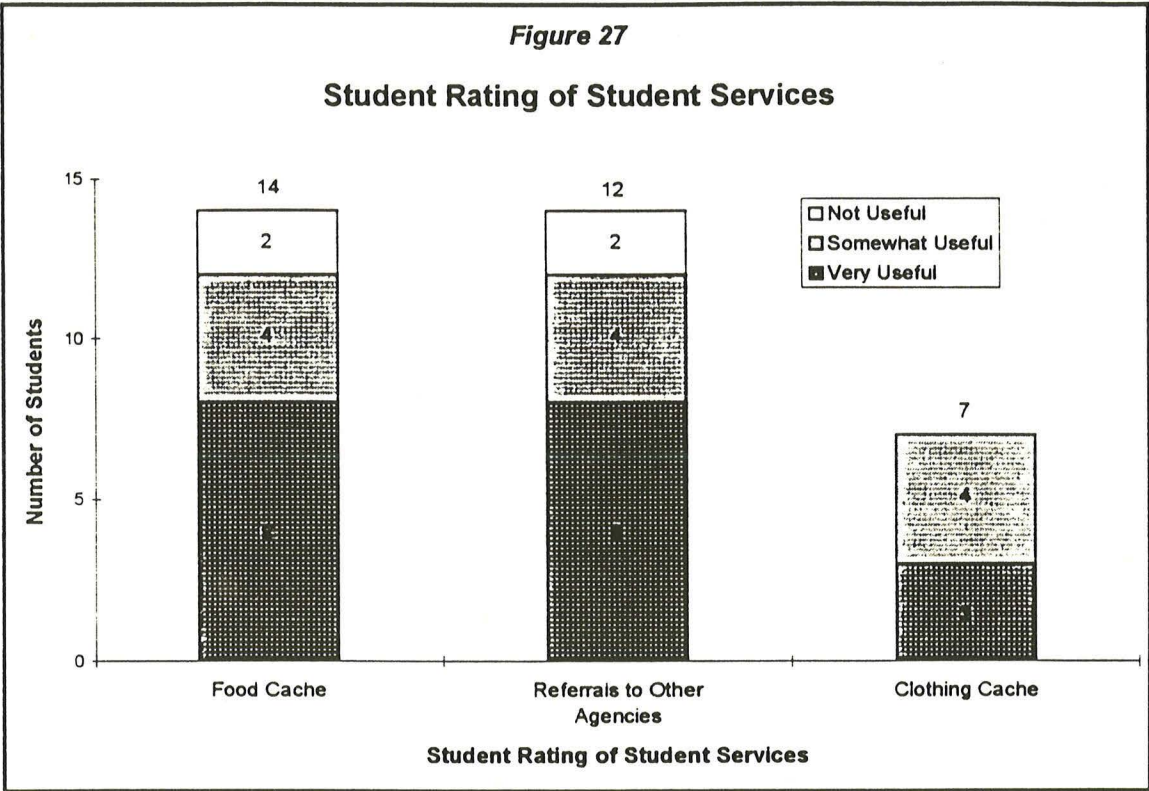


The teen parents were questioned regarding a variety of skills-building instruction and services that they could expect to receive from the Teen Parent Program. All the students reported that they had received training in developing parenting skills and life skills. Furthermore, three-fourths of the students reported receiving computer training and two-thirds reported receiving training in financial planning. Less widespread training was reported received by students regarding anger management and abuse counseling. Virtually all of the students rated the skills training that they received as very useful or somewhat useful (see Figure 26).



The students also reported receiving certain services as a result of participating in the Teen Parent Program. About two-thirds of the students reported taking advantage of the Food Cache while only one-third used the Clothing Cache. Over half the students reported being referred by the Teen Parent Program to other social service agencies. Again, most of the students who received these student services rated them as very useful or somewhat useful (see Figure 27).

Finally, the teen parents were asked about their plans for the future and what they hoped to do after graduating. Almost half of the students said that they planned to attend college after graduating. Over one-fourth of the students indicated they wanted to enroll in vocational or technical training. Only one student planned to seek full-time employment (see Figure 28).



## **IV. Summary and Recommendations**

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### **Program Design**

There was a great deal of agreement among those we interviewed. Perceptions of the intention of the grant and the role of the on-site case manager were similar in all interviews. The interviewees agreed that purpose of the grant was to provide dedicated on-site support, accountability, and assistance to the JOBS teen parents. The case manager's role was to teach decision-making skills, and to remove barriers to success. Holding students accountable was also mentioned frequently as a valid role for the case manager.

On the question of the importance of the case manager being a school district employee, it was felt by everyone interviewed that the position was working. Being a school district employee rather than a social service employee enabled the on-site case manager to do more and different functions than if the position was not part of the school district. The position has an educational role in the teaching of life skills as well as assisting in compliance and JOBS functions.

Every person interviewed believed that the importance of the position and function of the on-site case manager was being positively demonstrated. Each person interviewed had seen improvements in their particular area of concern. Each hoped that the position would continue after the grant period expired. There was no agreement over who should pay for continued funding of the position. Suggestions included the position being a function of the school district, shared funding between state JOBS and Public Assistance, continued permanent federal funding, and special state legislative funding. All those interviewed expressed optimism that the position would somehow be continued.

### **Program Delivery**

The interviews with the service providers indicated that the Mat-Su Teen Parent Demonstration Project was operating as designed. A network of community resources was mobilized and close working relationships established among several social service agencies to provide services to the teen parents enrolled at the Mat-Su Alternative School. Besides the regular classes, services such as medical care, child day care, counseling and support groups were delivered to the teen parents on site. In addition, the direct involvement of clients from the Cook Inlet Tribal Council's JOBS program assured widespread program coverage.

An atmosphere demonstrating the relationship of consequences to choices enveloped the school's operation -- from posters on the walls to observed interactions between staff and students. The case manager exemplified this principle when acting as a liaison between the teen parents and social service agencies, with an aim toward bringing more on-site services to the teen parents based on their individual needs. This was facilitated by the

demonstration grant which also provided clerical support and computer equipment to aid the case manager.

The student survey indicated that the teen parents, as a result of their enrollment in the Mat-Su Alternative School, maintained contact with a variety of social service agencies. Furthermore, the program participants viewed the on-site case manager as a valuable resource for getting assistance. In general, the students believed that they were receiving valuable services and skills training from the teen parent program. However, the single thing they felt most valuable about the program was that it would allow them to graduate from high school. The interviews with the students indicated that as a group they were motivated to improve themselves still further after graduation. Almost three-fourths of the teen parents indicated they planned to pursue either a college education or vocational technical training.

The Mat-Su Alternative School was selected for this grant by the Department of Health and Social Services because of the school's accessibility to existing agencies of support and the school's recognition as a model for serving teen parents and other students for whom traditional high school is not an option. The Teen Parent Program certainly operates as one of the most significant components of the Mat-Su Alternative School which attests to the School's innovative program design and delivery system. Other programs in Alaska and in the Lower 48 are familiar with the school's model, and have emulated and implemented many of the school's progressive concepts. Indeed, the MSAS has received national recognition in this regard (see, REDBOOK magazine award for "America's Best Schools").

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Although graduates of the Teen Parent Program were observed casually "dropping by" the School to visit with staff or friends still enrolled in the program, AFDC rolls provide the only contact with graduates or those who have participated in the program. Also, several teen parents did not receive AFDC. Tracking teen parent graduates and participants in the long term is therefore difficult, but could be helpful in providing information about the students' progress after they exit the program, whether they graduate or do not complete the program.

Recording additional pregnancies after the student enrolls in the teen parent program might provide the means to identify high-risk individuals, or whether specific direct services could be improved. At least two teen mothers said they had become pregnant again after enrolling in the program.

Because the entire Mat-Su Alternative School will be changing quarters in 1995, the effects of the change on the teen parent program should also be measured in terms of additional on-site services which could be provided as well as the utilization of the facility in serving the specific needs of the Mat-Su Valley's teen parent student population.

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