



Hennepin County

Fiscal Map Steers Leaders to New Paths

Using data to find financial stability for pregnancy prevention initiative



It's a common problem in communities everywhere: Funding for youth services is tightening even as the need for services remains. In Hennepin County, Minn., fiscal cutbacks threatened to undo years of progress in reducing teen pregnancy.

The end was in sight for a federal grant that had contributed to that progress. Better Together Hennepin (BTH), a county initiative that builds supports to help young people delay parenthood, set out to find new ways to fund the work.

BTH members knew there were more county, state and private resources to support healthy youth development and teen pregnancy prevention, but they didn't know where all those resources were, or if they were being used to effectively address the greatest needs.

Today, Better Together Hennepin: Healthy Communities – Healthy Youth is finding answers through a fiscal map: a data tool that tracks where public and private funding comes from and where it goes. Finally, says BTH Manager Katherine Meerse, “We can match our work to the messages that we are giving our young people: Take the long view when working for a better future.”

A Detailed Approach

The goal of a fiscal map is to transform the way leaders make decisions, using data to align resources, steer them toward areas of need and assess their impact. “If you're planning to ask for more funding to address a community concern,”

explains Elizabeth Gaines, vice president of policy solutions at the Forum for Youth Investment, “it's critical to know what a community has at hand and the effectiveness of those resources.”

The Forum has advised and partnered with several states and communities in creating fiscal maps (including Durham, N.C., New Orleans, La., Detroit, Mich., Tennessee and New Mexico). Delaware used its fiscal map to create collaborations that helped to secure competitive grants. Hawaii used its map to better coordinate its myriad public benefit systems, such as fostering coordination between Temporary Aid to Need Families (TANF) and the Child Care and

Development Fund (CCDF) to reduce the number of families on the waiting list for either program.

Hennepin – one of the country's largest counties (pop: 1,170,000) –

saw how it, too, could benefit from a fiscal map. Since BTH began its work in 2006, teen pregnancy rates in Hennepin County have decreased dramatically: dropping 41 percent between 2007 and 2011. This decline has saved Hennepin County taxpayers over \$21 million.

Despite this, teen pregnancy remains a critical issue, and in 2015 Hennepin County will face significant shifts in resources to support these efforts. A five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Adolescent Health (\$3.2 million annually) ends, and local funding might be reduced as well, prompting BTH to plot a new course for funding.

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Starting in the summer of 2014, the Forum worked with an advisory team of 17 leaders from across the county and state to identify funding streams that could be tapped for services and supports for young people. Members of the team, assembled by BTH, came from government agencies (county and state) and private youth-serving organizations, such as the Hennepin County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

The advisory team was tasked with defining what information the fiscal map would track – through a survey sent to the funding sources, such as government agencies and foundations – and providing connections to those sources. The survey identified 168 funding streams totaling approximately \$1.2 billion in annual spending to support healthy youth development, prevent teen pregnancy and support teen parents. (Each funding source reported data from its most recent fiscal year. Not every agency or foundation responded to the survey.)

The data paint a clearer picture of how the area spends its money on young people. Among the key findings: Approximately half of the funding streams are available to support teen pregnancy prevention or services for teen parents. Public grants offer the least flexibility for how money is spent. And while many funding streams support proactive upstream interventions – such as education, training and healthy youth development – the relative monetary size of each of those funding streams is much smaller than those supporting “downstream” services – such as rehabilitation, corrections and treatment.

It was important that this data came to a team composed of leaders from across sectors and with different areas of expertise. “Having multiple perspectives at the table opens up the likelihood that you’re going to see possibilities for action that you weren’t going to see otherwise,” says team member Judith Kahn, executive director of Teenwise Minnesota – the state-wide leader in promoting adolescent sexual health and development.

Recommendations & Next Steps

The Forum analyzed the data and worked with the advisory team to craft a set of recommendations that were spelled out in the [fiscal map report](#) that BTH presented to the community. The recommendations

revolved around three main themes: 1) Better coordinate and align resources through partnerships, 2) Reframe and grow funding for healthy youth development, and 3) Sustain data collection and analysis.

Community input is an important part of the fiscal mapping process. Hennepin County held stakeholder meetings in November and December to gather feedback on the recommendations. Attendees included dozens of staff from state, county and city agencies, local foundations and nonprofit service providers, particularly those that focus on teens.

The advisory team is using that feedback to get started on the recommendations. Meerse is particularly interested in coordinating and aligning partnerships. “The fiscal mapping process revealed that in Hennepin County, the funding for teen pregnancy prevention and healthy youth development is small and short-term,” she says. “Using fiscal mapping data, we as a community can better coordinate funding and identify long-term funding strategies.”

That’s one reason that the county and Youthprise, a Minnesota-based organization that seeks to align efforts across systems that affect youth, is now serving as a fiscal sponsor of BTH. Plans are to convene funders and program providers twice a year to discuss opportunities for aligning their work and resources.

The two organizations will work together to leverage and grant funds to promote adolescent sexual health and healthy youth development and to reduce teen pregnancy. They are working on accessing federal abstinence education dollars that are not being drawn down by the state of Minnesota.

While the dollars are not in hand yet, the county now has a path to follow in funding fiscal stability for its efforts to prevent teen pregnancy and support teen parents.



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