



Mental and Physical Health in the Context of a Pregnancy and Parenting Support Program for Incarcerated Mothers

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Background

- Compared to the general population, incarcerated women experience higher rates of mental (e.g., depression) and physical (e.g., HIV) health problems.¹
- Since 1991, the number of incarcerated mothers in the US has more than doubled.²
- Approximately 6-10% of women are pregnant when they enter prison.²
- In 2007, an estimated 1.7 million children had a parent incarcerated in a state or federal prison.²
- Approximately 25% of children with parents in state prison are under the age of 4 years.²

Isis Rising

Isis Rising is a pregnancy and parenting support program offered at the women's prison in Shakopee, Minnesota.

- Pregnant women and women with children under the age of five are referred by their case manager when they enter the prison
- Participation is voluntary
- Sessions are facilitated by doulas, who are trained as non-medical labor attendants



New Mother's Education & Support Group

Women can participate in the program if they are pregnant or are parenting a child under the age of five years.



Group Format

- Weekly, two-hour meetings
- 12-week group sessions
- Taught year-round

Curriculum Goals

- Increase women's knowledge about reproductive health and the physiology of pregnancy and birth
- Increase women's tangible parenting skills and life skills
- Increase women's support from peers and professional staff associated with Isis Rising

Group Curriculum

Week 1 – Your Pregnancy, Your Physical Self

- Female anatomy
- Prenatal health

Week 2 – Your Pregnancy, Your Emotional Self

- Effects of stress on pregnancy
- Strategies for stress management

Week 3 – Informed Birth

- Understanding the birth process
- Common interventions

Week 4 – Empowered Birth

- Development of birth plans

Week 5 – Bonding with your Baby

- Attachment and breastfeeding

Week 6 – Reconnecting for Life

- Discussing incarceration with your child
- Relationship inheritance and futures

Doula Support

Pregnant women are matched with a doula, who provides physical, emotional, and informational support to the mother before, during and after birth.

Prenatal Support

- Meets with the mother once per month
- Meetings include prenatal education, emotional support, and assistance with preparing a birth plan

Labor and Delivery

- Meets the woman at the hospital after she is transferred from the prison
- Provides emotional support, physical comfort, and assists mother with making informed decisions

Post-Birth and Post-Partum Support

- Present to support the mother when she is separated from her baby at the hospital.
- Meets with the mother twice after she returns to the correctional facility

Data Collection & Research Activities

In collaboration with researchers at the University of Minnesota, Isis Rising is collecting data about the women in the program and their participation.

The research is guided by the following aims:

- Describe the physical and mental health status and concerns reported by pregnant and parenting women incarcerated in state prison
- Evaluate the effects of participation in a prison-based pregnancy and parenting program on women's physical and mental health outcomes
- Evaluate the effects of participation in a doula-assisted birth program on women's birth and post-partum outcomes

Project Sample

- New Mother's Group: *N* ~ 100
- Doula Support: *N* ~ 15



Maternal Report:

Initial Survey

- Assesses mental (e.g., stress, emotional well-being, social support) and physical health (e.g., nutrition, exercise, health conditions, medical services)

Final Survey

- Assesses mental and physical health, and women's experience with the program (e.g., satisfaction with staff, support from staff)

Post-Birth Survey

- Assesses prenatal care, labor, birth, and post-partum experiences

Doula Report:

Case Notes

- Information about birth plan, pregnancies, labor and delivery

Birth Report

- Assesses length of labor, interventions used, birth statistics

References

¹ Fazeli, S., & Baillargeon, J. (2011). The health of prisoners. *The Lancet*, 377 (9769), 956-965.

² Maruschak, L. M., Glaze, L. E., & Mumola, C. J. (2011). Incarcerated parents and their children: Findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics. In M. Eddy & J. Poehlmann (Eds.), *Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

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