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PARENTS AS TEACHERS AWARDED $400,000 GRANT FROM MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH TO REDUCE INFANT MORTALITY

ST. LOUIS (January 18, 2018) Parents as Teachers® National Center has received a $400,000 grant from Missouri Foundation for Health to reduce infant mortality by creating safe sleep environments for infants. Parents as Teachers will partner with temporary housing and behavioral health agencies to reach approximately 400 young, at-risk parents in St. Louis City over a two-year period.

Parents as Teachers received funding for this work because of its alignment with FLOURISH St. Louis, the region’s infant mortality reduction initiative. While FLOURISH is working to develop strategies for systemic solutions to addressing root causes of infant mortality, organizations like Parents as Teachers, along with other like-minded agencies, are needed to provide direct support services to address families’ immediate needs. Specifically, this project will focus on younger, at-risk parents, educating them on mental wellness and safe sleep practices for infants.

“We deeply appreciate Missouri Foundation for Health’s support to address the multiple stressors faced by young parents,” said Constance Gully, president and CEO of Parents as Teachers National Center. “With this grant, we will bring together diverse partner organizations to identify gaps and reduce the fragmentation of services available to these young parents, which can affect infant mortality rates.”

Parents as Teachers is well positioned to lead this project. The non-profit already serves more than 680 families in the St. Louis region through home visits by parent educators who not only assess child development, but connect those families with various community resources to improve the health and well-being of families.

This effort will be done in partnership with three temporary housing organizations for women and their children – Good Shepherd, Haven of Grace and Women’s Safe House – along with Teen Pregnancy and Prevention Partnership and Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri.

“Our goal with this grant is to improve the parents’ ability to cope with and better handle the daily challenges that come along with parenthood,” said Jennifer V. Howard, vice president of Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri. “In short, we look forward to working with Parents as Teachers and others to increase adult capabilities to improve child outcomes and the overall well-being of the family.”

Numerous research studies show that the Parents as Teachers evidence-based home visiting model improves multiple aspects of parent and infant life, such as housing, employment, medical care and educational support services. With this program, the additional support of partners will help ensure families receive the best services for their situation and receive appropriate follow-up to make a lasting impact on their habits around infant sleep.
“I’m excited about this opportunity because I realize that we’re no longer just talking about a person who is homeless,” said Kimberly Brown, executive director of Haven of Grace. “This collaboration better equips us to treat the whole person by looking at substance abuse, mental health and other illnesses that impact infant vitality.”

“The added resources, resulting from this collaboration with Parents as Teachers, will enable us to strengthen the ways we promote safety with our clients by equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful independently,” said Colleen Dille, educational coordinator at Good Shepherd Children & Family Services.

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**About Parents as Teachers**

Parents as Teachers, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, builds strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to learn by matching families with trained parent educators during a child’s earliest years in life. Parent educators conduct home visits, host parent meetings, and screen children for health and developmental delays. Its internationally recognized evidence-based home visiting model is backed by 35 years of scientifically proven outcomes for children and families and is replicated by local organizations in all 50 U.S. states, 115 Tribal organizations, five other countries and one U.S. territory to serve more than 125,000 families. Parents as Teachers affiliates operate in various settings, including schools, health departments, faith-based and non-profit organizations. For more information, visit parentsasteachers.org.

**About FLOURISH St. Louis**

FLOURISH St. Louis is a community-driven initiative focused on reducing St. Louis’ devastatingly high infant mortality rates, so that every baby can celebrate a happy and healthy first birthday. FLOURISH St. Louis brings together families and leaders from education, faith, business and health care to create long-lasting and substantial change by changing the conditions that prevent families from having a healthy pregnancy and baby. This collective impact approach brings the entire community together to reduce infant mortality by focusing on highly impactful areas, including prenatal care, transportation, behavioral health, safe sleep, and health communication and navigation, and by reducing racial disparities. The initiative is funded and supported by Missouri Foundation for Health, working in coordination with Generate Health. For more information, visit www.flourishstlouis.org.

**Partner Organizations**

Good Shepherd Children & Family Services – goodshepherdstl.org
The Haven of Grace – havenofgracestl.org
The Women’s Safe House – twsh.org
Teen Pregnancy & Prevention Partnership – teenpregnancy-mo.org
Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri – mha-em.org