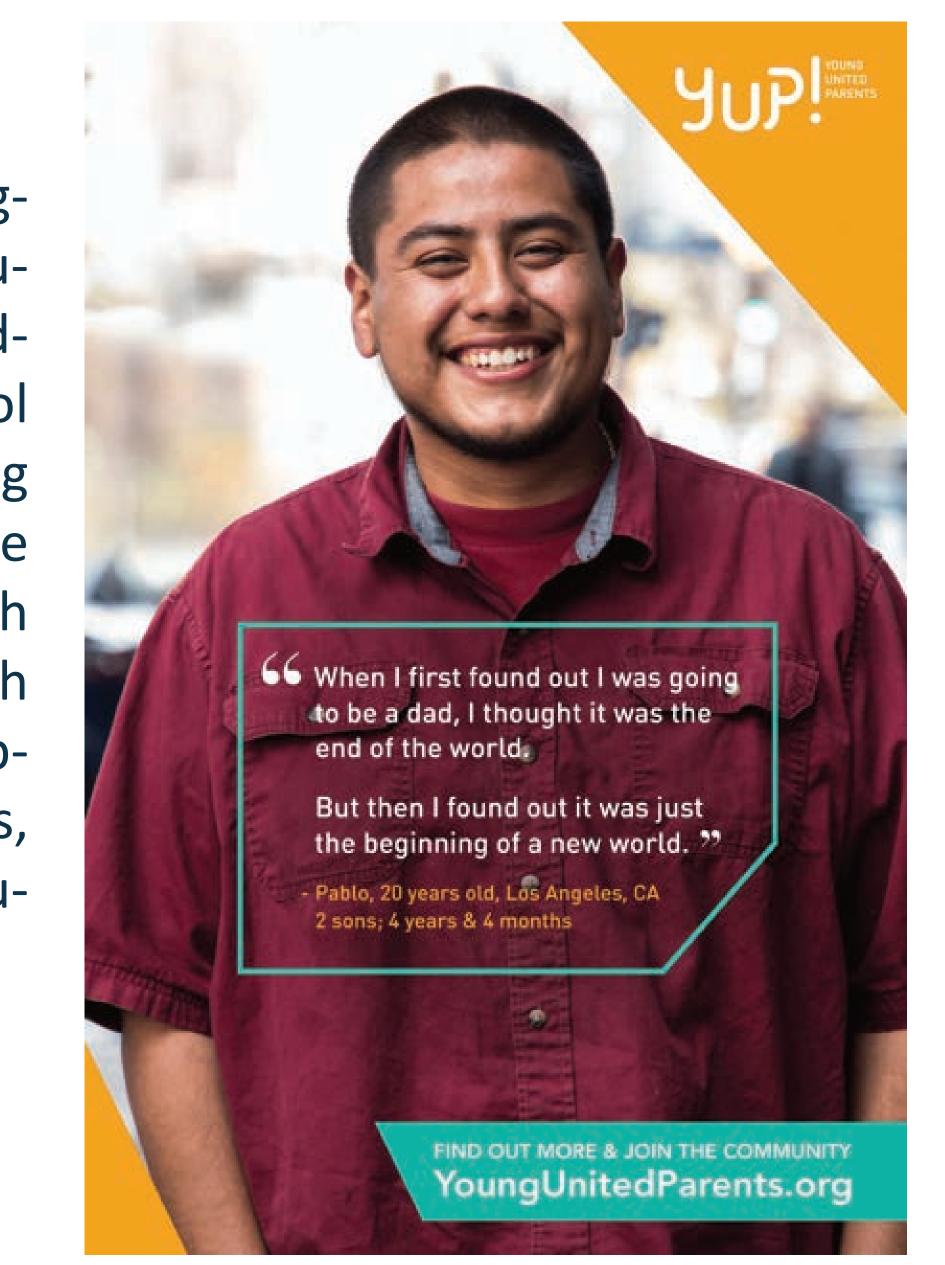


# Using Human-Centered Design to Build a Mobile Health Intervention for Young Parents

Megan Kumar, MPH; Aaron Plant, MPH; Maile Chand, BA; Divine Hilliard, BS; and Deja Williams

# Background

Young parents are at high risk for rapid repeat pregnancy. A range of risk and protective factors influence adolescent rapid repeat pregnancies, including contraceptive use, partner dynamics, school continuation, and mental health. Further, young parents are often marginalized and experience stigma and social isolation, factors associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes for both parents and their children. While programs to support young parents are available in some areas, they are often resource-intensive and limited in duration, and many leave out fathers.

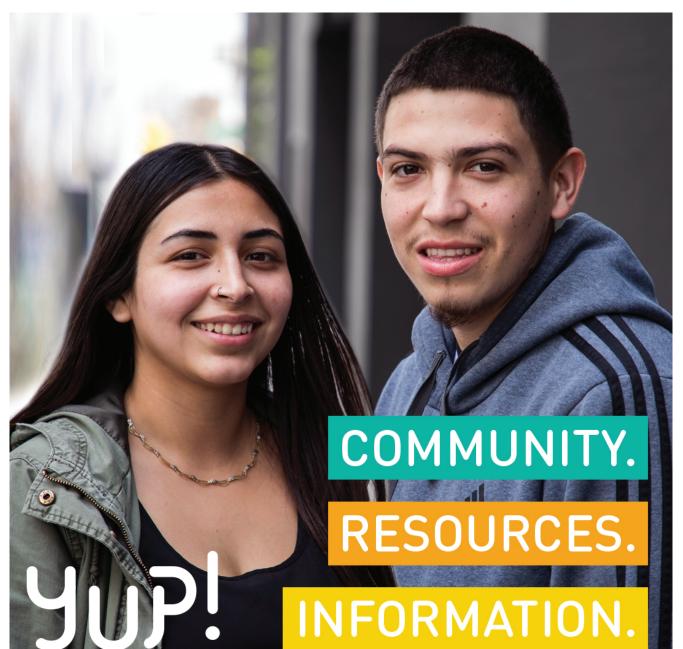


### Methods

We collaborated with over 200 young mothers and

fathers using human-centered design to develop a technology-based program that holistically addresses the health and well-being of young parents. With initial funding from OPA's Innovation Next, we conducted several rounds of interviews with young parents and providers to understand the issues young parents face broadly in their lives, including preventing unintended pregnancies. We then used a range of iterative activities (e.g., workshops, rapid-prototyping, user-testing, and a nationwide survey) to co-design a solution that would resonate with and engage both young mothers and fathers.







# Results

Young United Parents! (YUP!) is a holistic health and wellness mobile website for young parents aged 15-24, created to support and honor their experiences and help them thrive in all areas of life. Based on our conversations with young parents, YUP! takes into consideration young parents' competing concerns and uses an upstream approach to preventing unintended pregnancies that focuses on addressing their competing needs (e.g., social support, parenting information, healthy relationships, stress management, and help reaching education and career goals). YUP! enables young parents to interact with a community of peers to reduce stigma and social isolation, provides a range of medically accurate information through inspiring videos and articles, promotes goal achievement through an easy-to-use tool, and facilitates access to resources. YUP! also employs a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) of young parents to inform the program, create content, and promote the platform to other young parents.

#### **Engaging Young Parents**

YUP! staff and the YAC work continually to recruit and retain young parent users, identify new YAC members, and encourage YUP! registration and engagement with the program.

#### Strategies for promoting YUP! to young parents

- Outreach to local and national organizations
- Social media (organic and paid)
- Word of mouth

#### Strategies for YAC engagement

- Having a young parent lead the YAC
- Offering ways for young parents to contribute if they cannot attend meetings
- Ongoing recruitment to compensate for YAC participant turnover
- Meaningful opportunities for contribution, including video content creation, personal writing, community building and promo-
- Private chat group exclusively for YAC members (Whats App)

#### Recruitment and Retention Challenges

- Lack of time/competing needs among parents complicates reten-
- Difficulty in finding young parents (especially fathers and parents aged 15-16)
- Coordinating virtual meetings across four time zones
- Online meeting engagement (Zoom exhaustion)

#### **YUP! Features**

- Hundreds of videos of diverse young parents talking about overcoming life challenges + videos of various parenting experts
- Articles, tips, and affirmations
- Holistic content covers 7 main topics (Parenting, Pregnancy & Birth, Self-care, Sexual Health & Birth Control, Healthy Relationships, Goals, and Accessing Resources) and 35 subtopics
- Text notifications
- Community (interactive discussion threads and ability to create a profile and connect with other young parents across the country)
- Goal tool with steps, tips, and reminders

#### **Sustainability Strategies**

- Developing partnerships with local and national organizations
- Creating custom local or organization versions of YUP!
- Funding from a 5-year PREIS evaluation
- Seeking diverse funding sources

#### **Next Steps**

- Create an app version in addition to the mobile website
- Create a Spanish-language version
- Continually add new content and tools
- Continue to promote YUP! nationwide

# YOUNG PARENTS Yup! Visit YoungUnitedParents.org today to learn more & join the community

# Conclusions

Using human-centered design was vital to creating a useful and impactful program for young mothers and fathers. Engagement, particularly with young fathers, remains a challenge due to parents' competing needs. Finding, engaging, and retaining young parents is a major effort for the Youth Advisory Council and YUP! staff.

#### **YUP! Intended Outcomes**

#### Short-term

- Increased knowledge, self-efficacy, and skills related to: parenting, self-care, family planning/reproductive health, healthy relationships, goals, and accessing resources
- Improved stress management, emotional self-regulation, and resilience
- Reduced social isolation and effects of young parent stigma

#### Long-term

- Improved physical and mental health for both parents and children
- Improved goal attainment regarding education, career, and financial stability
- Reduced unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections

#### Intergenerational

- Improved physical and mental health for future generations
- Improved education, career, and financial attainment for future generations

#### **Quotes from Young Parents About YUP!**

"YUP! is perfect because the only person that's going to understand a teen parent would be another teen parent. This program would be a good place to go ask for help or whatever they need, without being judged or criticized. Being involved in designing YUP! makes me feel, honestly, good—part of something big that's going to help teen parents." - Pablo, Los Angeles, CA

"Young parents need our own program because we have different needs compared to older parents. We're still in the middle of growing up. As a young parent and birth worker of color, working on YUP! made me feel like my voice mattered." - Maile, San Francisco, CA

"YUP! is definitely something that will help young parents step into their new lifestyle, help them succeed, and be the best version of themselves." - Joel, La Verne, CA

"YUP! is being developed through our experiences and that's how we're creating the content. Sharing our stories, I feel like that's beautiful. Historically, we've learned in the village, and I feel like this is a tool where we can learn from each other." - Alondra, San Francisco, CA

#### **Contact:**

Megan Kumar, MPH Senior Program Manager, Sentient Research Phone: 510-501-8025





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