

RealCare Baby Success Story

Children's Home + Aid, Healthy Families Bloomington, Illinois

Teresa Kelly is the program and clinical director for Family Support Services at Children's Home + Aid, Mid-Central Region, a non-profit community organization. She oversees programs for children from birth to age five, including Healthy Start, a Healthy Families Illinois program, home visitation, prenatal groups, and early intervention programs for pregnant women, young mothers, first time mothers and pregnant teens.



Amy Hudder, a Children's Home and Aid program participant, interacts with a RealCare infant simulator at Children's Home + Aid.

Kelly and her staff heard about RealCare Baby infant simulators from their local media and were aware that they were being used in their school district.

"We started talking about how these would be a great idea to use with our moms, to give them a real understanding of what they will be experiencing," Kelly said. "They are much more realistic than a Cabbage Patch Doll. A doll does not bring the situation to life. It doesn't demand attention or cry."

Gaining new perspective on helping parents and families

Kelly wrote a grant and was able to purchase five infant simulators for their programs. Before using them with their clientele, she assigned them to her staff, some who had experience as parents and some who didn't. Universally, they reported feeling more empathetic toward parents and parents-to-be, and were concerned about how teen parents especially do not have the resources that they as adults have. They immediately asked how they could better help people parent given what they'd experienced with the simulators.

This staff "buy-in" and shared experience has made Kelly's programs more effective, and while she admits it's not easy to measure the impact of the program long term, she and her staff can see by the way their clients react that they are reaching them with important information.

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- Teresa Kelly, Children's Home + Aid, Mid-Central Region

Feedback and computerized data reveals potential issues

“We can also help them with the areas they need help with, such as getting the baby to stop crying and feeding. We use our direct observations and the wonderful data from the computer to see what we should concentrate on with our teaching ... properly holding the baby, head support, for example.”

“We truly believe the Babies are a wonderful addition to our program and enable us to be proactive with the teen moms regarding understanding the needs of newborns and how vulnerable they are,” Kelly said.



Teresa Kelly, Director of Family Support Services at Children's Home + Aid, Mid-Central Region

When the infant simulators are taken out in public, clients get a whole new experience with people reacting to them as if they are already parents, or having to leave a store or activity in order to care for their baby.

“They learn the amount of time it takes; that the baby requires all this attention. They don't think about the constant day-in and day-out work until they have this experience.

According to Kelly, the physical attributes of RealCare Baby are important, too, such as the durability and realistic weight and “feel” of the Baby.

“They do a great job imitating life,” she said. “The babies are a wonderful addition to any program dealing with teenage parents who are unaware of the day-to-day demands of an infant.”



Jerrica Terry, a Children's Home + Aid program participant, practices feeding Baby.

Kelly and her staff appreciate how RealCare Baby gives people an understanding of what lies ahead for them as parents.

“Fathers see what the mothers will deal with and that they need to help with all of this. They need to understand sleep deprivation,” said Kelly.