



A Community Service-Educational Announcement:

HOPE is here for healthy adolescent relationships!

Community Students Learning Center (CSLC) of Lexington, Mississippi, is proud to share HOPE: Health Optimization & Prevention Education. HOPE is a community-based / in-school setting program funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Population Affairs (OPA).



According to OPA's Project Summary: The Community Students Learning Center, in partnership with the Holmes County Consolidated School District and community allies, will implement HOPE (Health Optimization & Prevention Educations), a program for underserved, rural, disadvantaged youth. Based on the *Love Notes* Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) [EBP] curriculum developed for teens at risk for unstable relationships and unplanned pregnancies, HOPE provides adolescents in grades 6-12 with education on pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, intimate partner violence prevention, and healthy relationship knowledge and skills. HOPE also uses a positive youth development approach, building adolescents' assets, strengthening their protective factors, and appealing to their aspirations. (*HHS.gov*).

Mississippi is at or near the top of the list for births to single teens, low-birth-weight babies, and infant mortality nationwide. Furthermore, the Mississippi Department of Health (MSDH) reports, "Teenage motherhood in Holmes County occurs in a higher percentage than is seen statewide." Mississippi leads the nation in teen births. However, according to published U.S. Census/American Fact Finder (2017) data, Holmes County surpassed the already alarming state rate every single year for the past decade with a rate of 78.6, creating one of the most severe regions for teen pregnancy nationwide.

Intervention must take place! For this reason, CSLC's HOPE and its partners are taking action through a comprehensive, community partnership for underserved and at-risk youth in Holmes County. In core collaboration with the **Holmes County Consolidated School District (HCCSD)** and other key partners, CSLC's HOPE helps youth gain knowledge and foster a better understanding of the importance of healthy relationships and the positive impact such relationships will have on their futures. Other key partners include: **The Goodman, Miss. Mayoral Health Council, P.E.A.R.L.S., Mentoring for Girls, Mallory Community Health Center, Holmes County Sheriff Department, Powerhouse Church of Deliverance, Local Government, The Mississippi Link, and Bryant Clark Law Office.**

Implementation of the HOPE program began in HCCSD October 22, 2019, serving sixth-graders at S.V. Marshall Middle School and William-Sullivan Middle School. It began serving the seventh- and eight-graders at both middle schools and the seniors at Holmes County Central High School this Spring 2020 semester. With the school closures due to COVID19, HOPE is now continuing to serve these students virtually.

For more information about the great adolescent program, and if you want your child to participate during 2020-2021 school year, please contact the Community Students Learning Center immediately at (662) 834-0905 -- Beulah Greer, Administrative Officer & Gail M. Brown, Project Director.

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