

The 'Teen Mothers' project developed by ACER Brasil 10 years ago gains a new chapter in 2023

In 2014, as an initiative of ACER Brasil, which for over 25 years has been working with children, adolescents and their families in vulnerable situations, the Teen Mothers project - breaking intergenerational cycles and raising healthy and safe babies - began. The proposal for this initiative was based on the right to family and community life and on the healthy development of children, acting to prevent diseases, behavioral disorders, and rights violations. The intention was to reinforce the ties between mothers and children, working to ensure that there was a good gestational period and bonding between those involved, which would impact the future development of the child.

At that time, a space was created for the initial care of 10 pregnant teenagers, aged between 15 and 19 years old and living in the vicinity of ACER Brasil, in the municipality of Diadema. All with a history of some type of violence in their lives and with difficulties in their maternal relationship. Some of them were

still in a relationship to the babies' fathers, others not.



The work was done through individual monitoring of the girls and group meetings for two years with the objective of accompanying them from the gestational process, with activities to get in touch with the pregnancy process such as yoga classes to get to know the body, conversations with professionals from other areas, rights, duties and care, as well as to support with the baby's needs and its development up to one year of age. The meeting space was intended to create a support network among the ad-

olescents who were undergoing the same situations and possibly the same difficulties, the relationship among peers, and the expansion of the community experience among them, which could in the near future be expanded to the experiences of each participant in their own community.

Based on the scenario and the experience carried out previously, in 2023 ACER Brasil restores the Teen Mothers project with another twenty teenage girls, residents of the municipality of Diadema, who were pregnant with their first baby. With the continuity of the program, now with two new groups, our main objective is once again to strengthen the family bonds between teen mothers and their newborns, to primarily break cycles of violence, protect the pregnancy period, and reinforce the secure attachment between a mother and her baby.

As in the previous experience, besides group activities, the teenagers count on the work of a social counselor who accompanies them indi-

vidually with home visits, prenatal health monitoring, school development for those who study, life planning, and conflict mediation.

"This program created by ACER Brasil brings empowerment to a group of individuals who are lacking in services and policies, which are the teenagers. For girls who are going through the experience



of teenage pregnancy and who are going to raise their children, the project emerges as a support network; a space of peers and guidance where they are not judged, nor dis-

An Interview with Andressa Silva

criminated against, and where they strengthen their right to be with and take care of their children as a family, which is the place of natural development of the human being, seeing that there are many cases of (institutional) fostering of babies in Diadema,” explains Kelly Lima, technical supervisor of the project. Kelly tells us that internally the organization has a protection policy to protect and preserve these teenage mothers and all the other children from situations of violence. As for the work with the municipality, actions are established such as accompanying the teenagers to prenatal appointments, the process of breastfeeding the babies, and meetings with the schools where these teenagers study so that there is the least possible disruption to their schooling due to the situation in which they are, among other difficulties that the girls end up going through. “The figures that are most sensitive are those in which the adolescents are invisible in service spaces, where they are judged and criticized for being pregnant and seem to be asking for favors, when in fact they should be receiving support, service, and care by right, even guaranteed by the Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (Statute

of the Child and Adolescent),” she concludes.

We are working to contribute not only to strengthening the bonds between teenage mothers and their babies, but also to fully integrate them into the social environment in which they are located, aiming to defend and guarantee their rights. We hope to bring you, dear reader, more information about the progress of this initiative that has significantly impacted us. ACER Brasil’s Teen project is back!

‘With the girls, when working on the issue of hygiene, most of them think about the organization of the house’, ACER Brasil’s Safeguarding Officer, Andressa Silva, outlines an overview of the workshops conducted about our safeguards to discuss issues such as health, sexual abuse and violence with socially vulnerable children from Eldorado.



- Explain what is behind this initiative and those responsible for preparing these workshops for the children of Eldorado.

The initiative came in the midst of the pandemic, when the position of ‘Safeguarding Officer’ was created to help children repair the damage caused by quarantine, recognizing situations of violence and abuse. We even teach them the importance of filing a complaint to the 100 hotline (this is a national ser-

vice to denounce any kind of human rights abuse).

- Who is currently part of the team leading this initiative, proposing activities that discuss sensitive topics such as hygiene and sexual abuse for the children assisted?



The team consists of youth monitors at reception who matriculate the children and teenagers, checking the documentation and including them in the internal system, and also referring cases when a child or teenager is under the care of someone other than the parents. Besides them, we count with Gustavo Hannay, a volunteer who assists in delivering workshops against violations of rights and violence, specifically with the boys in the sports courts and internal activities of ACER

Brasil. Up until the beginning of this May, we had Gabriela who monitored the presence and absence of the children in activities and helped in the activities with the girls.

- From your perspective, what relevance do workshops like these have for children in social vulnerability in Eldorado and the surrounding neighborhoods?

Each activity is unique, and although the methodology applied may be the same, each class presents a peculiarity; I see that the themes are generic and profound. With the girls, when we work on the issue of hygiene, most of them think about the organization of the house. When we start to talk about personal hygiene and its impact, we go into a depth of thinking about what body this is, how I can avoid situations that could negatively af-

fect me and how to prevent these situations. When we explain the differences between pads and panty shields, for example, for most girls it is shocking, because they are shy to talk about these changes in their bodies.



The relevance is in the moment that the girls begin to understand their own bodies, and that no one can touch their bodies without consent. In addition, they also discover the meaning of hygiene products, such as how to differentiate between hair combs, as for each type of hair there is a different comb, the im-

portance of the bath sponge and why it is necessary not to share it with others. That said, the main thing is that the girls end up making a kit to have with them so as to be prepared when they are about to have their first period.

- Which case or cases touched you the most and how were they solved?

I had several cases, but one of the most successful was one of the first in a mixed activity in which a boy reported a situation that in my perception could be a case of sexual abuse, but was a case of maternal/paternal overprotection. We ended up talking to the parents and they were able to understand their behavior with their son, and we are still assisting the family today. The second case was with a girl who was having difficulty in dealing with the

grief caused by the loss of her maternal grandmother and we referred her and her family to a psychologist to work on this issue. The third case is still in progress, with a five year old child that brings family situations and we are working with the health network to better serve this family.

- Describe the importance of ACER Brasil as an organization acting in defense of the rights of children and teenagers, aiming at the health, well-being, and fight against the physical and sexual abuse of this group.

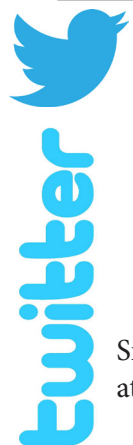
I see how relevant this action is because it is in line with our vision: "To serve our community by creating strategies for social transformation that correspond to their needs, actively sharing them with organizations and public power at national and international levels."

AGENDA July

17 - Sub-!0 Futsal Festival-!0

17- Preparing for International Day

23 - Workshop and Education on Gender and Sexuality for Adolescents



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Siga-nos no Twitter para atualizações regulares

On June 18th, Autistic Pride Day is celebrated with the aim of informing society about the subject and overcoming prejudices. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) encompasses different conditions marked ... 18 Jun

CINEMA SESSION | Next Saturday (24th), the Youth Council will be holding a Film Session at the ACER Brasil Theater starting at 2 pm. If you, your son or daughter are aged between 10 and 14 and would like to participate... 21 Jun



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