

# Mom Power: A Therapeutic Intervention for High-Risk Mothers and Their Children

- Mom Power is a 10 week, 13 session theory-driven treatment engagement program and therapeutic intervention, specifically designed to target trauma-induced, psychological barriers to engagement and facilitate linkage to mental health treatment. Mom Power embraces evidence-based theory and practice including attachment theory, behavioral modification, as well as cognitive-behavioral and dialectic behavioral strategies.
- Mom Power provides a nurturing, safe and trusting environment for families to heal and grow.



Mom Power uses **The Tree as metaphor** to discuss the child's needs for growing and branching out and for connecting and building roots as prerequisite for healthy and safe child development.

When asked about how the conceptual model of **The Tree** relates to her experience as mom, one participant said: *"I didn't have any roots growing up in foster care and now I see how important they are and that I want connection moments and to build roots with my baby".*

**Mom Power** directly addresses structural barriers for participation

- Transportation
- Childcare issues
- Poor social support
- Financial problems
- History of past or ongoing trauma
  - Fear of stigmatization or involvement with Child Protection Services
  - Mistrust in providers

## The Mom Power Pillars:

**Social support** is enhanced by creating shared group experience, with opportunities for information relationship building during shared meal time as well as by inviting mothers to bring a guest.

The **Parenting Education** curriculum emphasizes responsiveness and sensitivity to young children's experiences. Participants are introduced to key topics in parenting and child development, observe video interactions and apply concepts learned, engage in activities designed to develop and practice skills and reflect on interaction with their own children.

**Self-Care/Stress-Reduction** addresses the mothers' needs for hands-on strategies for reducing their own levels of stress and to help manage symptoms of mental illness in order to provide balanced parenting and support their children's needs.

**Parent-Child Interactions** are supported by a curriculum that emphasizes creating safe, predictable routines; acknowledging "goodbyes" when mothers leave for their class, and observation of and support for reunions when mothers return. Mothers are encouraged to "try something new" and anticipate, observe and reflect upon these separations and reunions.

**Connecting Families to Care** provides a safe and warm transfer of services including individualized referrals to relevant additional community resources, such as mental health treatment and developmental referrals for children.

## **Outcomes**

Mothers show reductions in depression and PTSD symptoms, and improved parenting competence after the intervention period.

Two thirds of Mom Power graduates are connected with ongoing care within the community.

# Mom Power:

## A Therapeutic Intervention for High-Risk Mothers and Their Children

Mom Power has been implemented across several communities across Michigan, serving many families in need.



### Community Locations

- Starfish Family Services, Inkster
- Washtenaw County CMH, Ypsilanti
- The Corner Health Center, Ypsilanti
- Taubman Group at First Presbyterian Church, Ypsilanti
- Pinerest, Traverse City
- Parenting Families, Leland
- Monroe County CMH, Monroe
- Lenawee County CMH, Adrian
- Livingston County CMH, Howell
- Isabella County CMH, Mt. Pleasant
- Guidance Center, Southgate
- Muskegon County CMH, Muskegon

**From a teen mother enrolled in Starfish's Mom Power group.** *"I learned tools to be a better parent and am better able to set limits with my child, I look back on handouts to help me continue mom power ideas in the future..."*

**23 year old mother of 5 year-old and newborn before group:** *"...he cries and cries, and I have fed him and changed him and I don't know what he wants. So I get frustrated and usually just leave him in his swing to cry because I don't know what else to do."*

**Mom After Week 7:** *"It is the most difficult when I leave him with my mom for a little bit to go do something, like yesterday I had an interview for a job that only lasted like an hour, and when I come back he is so fussy because when he is with my mom, she just leaves him when he cries. If he is fed and changed, she just lets him cry because she has stuff to do. And when I'm home with him and he is crying, I pick him up and hold him when he cries because I know he needs me to be there for him".*