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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TEEN MOM GETS SECOND CHANCE

East Orange, New Jersey—A 15 year- old girl is scheduled to give birth to a baby in a few days. She is in a home for pregnant teens because she has no one who is willing to let her and her yet-to-be-born baby have a place to stay so that she can take care of her baby and have a place to stay while she finishes high school. She knows that once she enters the hospital without an address, DYFS will show up to take her baby. It appears to be a no-win situation, but there is a solution to this problem through the Division of Family Development's (DFD) Second Chance Program.

The Second Chance Program has a two-fold immediate purpose: (1) prevent homelessness of the teen mom and baby and (2) keep the teen mom and baby together. Tri-City Peoples Corporation, a non-profit community development corporation that has been helping families since 1966, is DFD's contract agency for the 13 Central and Northern New Jersey counties. Tri-City finds, develops and trains individuals to be host parents for these teen moms. This independent living, transitional housing program allows teen moms to finish high school or obtain a GED, reinforces functional independent living skills, such as learning to cook, opening a bank account, budgeting, understanding the use of credit, etc. Although the program is opened to teen mothers who have physical custody of her baby and who are 18 or under, special waivers are frequently extended for teen mothers who will complete their high school education or earn a GED prior to their 19th birthday.

The Second Chance Program provides a safe and nurturing home environment for the teen mother and her baby. With teen pregnancies on the rise again throughout the United States, research indicates that more than 80% of teen pregnancies are unintentional and very few obtain prenatal care. In addition to increased health risks to the unborn child, teen mothers are more likely to suffer health, social and emotional challenges than their peers. Through the Second Chance Program, the mother-child bonding can occur, a reduction of prevention of child abuse and/or child neglect has been documented as a result of mother-child bonding and removal of social stressors such as homelessness, teen mothers' self-esteem and confidence increases, teen mom practices better health management for herself and baby, and teen mom learns to navigate the social and economic systems to achieve self-sufficiency. The Program also assists the teen mother in identifying a licensed infant care center for the baby while teen mom attends school or other education/vocational program.

Host parents are needed in all 13 counties—Ocean, Monmouth, Middlesex, Union, Somerset, Warren, Hunterdon, Sussex, Morris, Passaic, Bergen, Hudson, and Essex. Individuals who would like to be a bridge to a teenage mom's success need only have an extra bedroom in their home or apartment to

be eligible as a host parent. Host parents provide a room and board as well as life-skill guidance to the teen mother. For more information, call Ms. Cole at (973) 675-4484 ext.2183 today. It's never too late to help someone. A generous stipend is available. For more information about other Tri-City programs, visit www.tri-citypeoples.org.