



Parent Education

Parent education is designed to strengthen and support families and communities to prevent child abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, as reauthorized by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, identifies parent education as a core prevention service. A significant number of Community-Based Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention (CBCAP) grants are funding parent education programs as stand-alone efforts or as part of more comprehensive strategies.

Successful parent education programs help parents acquire and internalize parenting and problem-solving skills necessary to build a healthy family. Research has shown that effective parent training and family interventions promote protective factors and lead to positive outcomes for both parents and children (Lundahl & Harris, 2006). Protective factors include nurturing and attachment, knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development, parental resilience, social connections, and concrete supports for parents (Child Welfare Information Gateway, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau, & FRIENDS National Resource Center For Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2008).

This bulletin provides an overview of research regarding some key characteristics and training strategies of successful parent education programs. Information about selected evidence-based and evidence-informed parent education programs, including a list of organizations where the program is mentioned, is also provided.

What the Research Shows

Program characteristics and specific training strategies are both key considerations when selecting a parent education program. Program characteristics refer to broader aspects of a program, such as theoretical grounding or how the program is structured, staffed, and evaluated. Training strategies refer to specific

teaching methods that have been found to be effective in working directly with parents.

Key Program Characteristics

The following characteristics have been found to be strong predictors of program effectiveness:

- *Strength-Based Focus.* A large body of research supports the emphasis on family interventions and education programs that focus on family strengths and resilience instead of family weaknesses. This approach reinforces existing protective factors to prevent the occurrence or reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2003).
- *Family-Centered Practice.* Family-centered parent training programs include family skills training and family activities to help children and parents communicate effectively and take advantage of concrete social supports. Family-centered programs also seek to develop training strategies that are culturally appropriate and consistent with the beliefs and principles of families and their communities (Colosi & Dunifon, 2003).
- *Individual and Group Approaches.* Evidence suggests that a combination of individual and group parent training is the most effective approach when building skills that emphasize social connections and parents' ability to access social supports. However, the individual approach was found to be more effective

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tive when serving families in need of specific or tailored services (Lundahl, Nimer, & Parsons, 2006).

- **Qualified Staff.** Program success is in large part dependent on qualified staff. Program staff should have a sound theoretical grounding as well as hands-on experience in the classroom or working with families and groups in different settings. Staff should also be able to provide culturally competent services consistent with the values of the family and the community.
- **Targeted Service Groups.** Learning is enhanced when the participants of each program include a clearly defined group of people with common needs or identifying characteristics (Colosi & Dunifon, 2003). Group characteristics, such as high risk families or working versus nonworking parents, can also help determine the appropriate program duration and intensity (Brown, 2005).
- **Clear Program Goals and Continuous Evaluation.** Successful programs maintain individualized and group plans developed in partnership with participants. Progress toward program goals is routinely and effectively evaluated by aggregate analyses using both quantitative and qualitative research methods consistent with the services offered. In addition, these programs have an effective process for gathering consumer feedback and use this information, along with outcome-based evaluation efforts, for continuous quality improvement.
- **Involve fathers.** Research indicates that father involvement in parent training leads to better outcomes and promotes family cooperation and cohesion. Excluding fathers from parent training programs decreases the likelihood of success (Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2007).
- **Promote positive family interaction.** Promoting family relationships is a key component of parent education programs and involves strategies to improve family interaction, communication, and parental supervision. Increasing positive parent-child interactions has been found to be associated with larger effects on measures of enhanced parenting behaviors (Kaminski, Valle, Filene, & Boyle, 2007). Strengthening marriages also plays a part in achieving positive family interaction (Brown, 2005).
- **Use interactive training techniques.** Interactive methods, as opposed to didactic lecturing, are a key aspect of successful education programs and include activities such as group discussion, role playing, active modeling, homework exercises, and reviewing videos of effective parenting approaches (Brown, 2005).
- **Provide opportunities to practice new skills.** Requiring parents to practice new skills with their children during parent training sessions is consistently associated with greater effectiveness of parent education programs. Specific skills associated with larger effects on parent and child behavior include emotional communication skills, the use of time-out, and parenting consistency. These were found to be more effective than other common strategies, such as teaching parents problem-solving skills or ways to promote children's cognitive, academic, or social skills (Kaminski et al., 2007; Lundahl & Harris, 2006).

Parent Training Strategies

The following parent training strategies may be employed in a variety of service settings and with multiple target populations. These strategies reinforce protective factors and can be adapted as appropriate to fit program and participant needs.

- **Encourage peer support.** Programs that offer opportunities for parental peer support have a positive impact on children's cognitive outcomes. Peer support also strengthens family bonds and gives parents an opportunity to share their experiences in constructive settings (Layzer, Goodson, Bemstein, & Price, 2001).

Evidence-Based and Evidence-Informed Programs

This section lists selected parent education curricula that have been included on various registries of evidence-based and

evidence-informed programs. Each focuses on specific risk and protective factors. Curriculum availability will vary, and some programs require specific training for group facilitators.

The following list is by no means all-inclusive. It does not constitute an endorsement of any particular program and is provided only as a descriptive tool. For more information about these programs and the criteria used to evaluate them, visit the program website or the registries listed in the Additional Resources section of this paper.

Guiding Good Choices®

Program objectives: Give parents the skills they need to help reduce their children's risk for using alcohol and other drugs by enhancing family management and communication skills.

Target population: Parents of children ages 9-14.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted at convenient locations once per week; take-home self-study program or family workshops available.

Duration: Five 2-hour workshops.

Training Resources: Workshop guide, video, family guide, and visual aids.

Phone: 800.477.4776

Website: www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/guiding-good-choices/

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare
- Helping America's Youth
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Promising Practices Network

The Incredible Years®

Program objectives: Strengthen parenting competencies (monitoring, positive discipline, confidence) and foster parents' involvement in children's school experiences in order to promote children's academic, social, and emotional competencies and reduce conduct problems.

Target population: Parents, teachers, and children ages 3-12 (individual curricula may be used separately or in combination).

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in a community agency, outpatient clinic, or school in groups of 12-16 parents or groups of 6 children.

Duration: The Basic Parent Training program is 12-14 weeks. The Child Training Program is 18-22 weeks. The Advanced Parent Program is a supplemental program. Basic training plus Advanced training takes 18-22 weeks.

Training Resources: Program manual and staff training available.

Phone: 888.506.3562

Website: www.incredibleyears.com

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare
- Child Trends
- Helping America's Youth
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Promising Practices Network
- Strengthening America's Families

Nurturing Parenting Programs®

Program objectives: Build nurturing parenting skills as an alternative to abusive and neglectful parenting and child-rearing practices, in order to prevent recidivism in families receiving social services, lower the rate of teenage pregnancies, reduce the rate of juvenile delinquency and alcohol abuse, and stop the intergenerational cycle of child abuse.

Target population: Parents with children birth to 5 years old, 5-11 years old, and 12-18 years old. Programs for school-age children 5-11 years old and teens 12-18 years old are also offered.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in birth family homes, community agencies, departments of mental health, departments of social services, parent education programs,

prisons, residential care facilities, and schools, in groups of 8-12 adults. Children meet in a separate group.

Duration: 12-48 weeks.

Training Resources: Training manual available.

Phone: 828.698.7609

Website: www.nurturingparenting.com

Registries that cite this program:

California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

- Center for the Improvement of Child Caring
- Helping America's Youth
- Strengthening America's Families

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

Program objectives: Strengthen the parent-child bond, decrease harsh and ineffective discipline-control tactics, improve child social skills and cooperation, and reduce child negative or maladaptive behaviors.

Target population: Children ages 3-6 with parent-child relationship and behavior problems. May be conducted with parents, foster parents, or other caretakers. Program adaptation available for physically abusive parents with children ages 4-12.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in a community agency or outpatient clinic in groups of 3 or 4 families during a 90-minute session. Allows time for individual coaching of each parent-child group while the other groups observe and provide feedback.

Duration: Average number of sessions is 14, but varies from 10-20 sessions.

Training Resources: 40 hours of direct training, with ongoing supervision and consultation for approximately 4-6 months; a manual is used during sessions with families.

Phone: 352.273.5239

Website: www.pcit.org

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

- Child Trends
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

SafeCare

Program objectives: Provide direct skill training to parents in child behavior management, activity planning, home safety, and child health care to prevent child maltreatment.

Target population: Parents with a history or risk of child neglect or abuse.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in family homes, once per week for approximately 1.5 hours per session.

Duration: 18-20 weeks.

Training Resources: Training manual available.

Phone: 404.419.4457

Website: <http://www.marcus.org/treatment/safecare.html>

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

Staying Connected With Your Teen®

Program objectives: Encourage parents and teens to work together to enhance communication and family management practices and decrease conflict.

Target population: For parents of teens ages 12-16.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted at convenient locations once per week; take-home self-study program or family workshops available.

Duration: 5 weeks.

Training Resources: Workshop guide, video, family guide, PowerPoint presentation, and CD; telephone advisor if necessary.

Phone: 800.477.4776

Website: www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/staying-connected-w-your-teen/

Registries that cite this program:

- Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies

STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting)

Program objectives: Help parents learn effective ways to relate to their children, how to encourage cooperative behavior in their children, and how not to reinforce unacceptable behaviors. *STEP* also helps parents change dysfunctional and destructive relationships with their children by offering concrete alternatives to abusive and ineffective methods of discipline and control.

Target population: Parents of children ages 0-6 and parents of teenagers.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in adoptive homes, birth family homes, community agencies, foster homes, hospitals, outpatient clinics, residential care facilities, and schools in small discussion groups to promote better interaction.

Duration: 7 weeks.

Training Resources: Training and program manuals available.

Phone: 800.328.2560

Website: www.parentingeducation.com

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare
- Center for the Improvement of Child Caring

Triple P-Positive Parenting Program

Program objectives: Prevent severe behavioral, emotional, and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents.

Target population: Parents and caregivers of children from birth through age 16.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in adoptive homes, birth family homes, community agencies, foster homes, hospitals, outpatient clinics, residential care facilities, and schools in groups of 10-12 parents of children and adolescents from birth to age 16.

Duration: Varies depending on the type of intervention required.

Training Resources: Training manual available.

Phone: 803.787.9944

Website: www.TripleP-America.com

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare
- Child Trends

1-2-3 Magic

Program objectives: Help parents learn effective methods of controlling negative behavior, encouraging good behavior, and strengthening the child-parent relationship. The program seeks to encourage gentle but firm discipline without arguing, yelling, or spanking.

Target population: Parents, grandparents, teachers, babysitters, and caretakers working with children.

Delivery setting and format: Conducted in adoptive homes, birth family homes, community agencies, foster homes, hospitals, outpatient clinics, residential care facilities, and schools in groups of 6-25 parents of children approximately 2-12 years of age.

Duration: 1.5 hours per session for 4-8 weeks.

Training Resources: Training manual available.

Phone: 630.790.9600

Website: www.parentmagic.com

Registries that cite this program:

- California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

Additional Resources

The following resources include additional research and information on model parent education programs and curricula.

The California Evidence-Based Practice Clearinghouse for Child Welfare is designed to serve as an online

connection for child welfare professionals, staff of public and private organizations, academic institutions, and others. It provides up-to-date information on evidence-informed child welfare practices, including parent training programs. www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/search/topical-area/1

The Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies works to improve substance abuse prevention and treatment services by helping States, organizations, agencies, and individuals apply evidence-based practices. www.casat.unr.edu/

The Center for the Improvement of Child Caring is a national organization that provides information on parenting, parent education resources, skills-building seminars, training for professionals, and more. www.ciccparenting.org/

Child Trends is an independent, nonpartisan research center focused exclusively on children that provides information on ground-breaking research, policy insights, program guidance, and emerging trends and issues. www.childtrends.org

Helping America's Youth is a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the challenges facing our youth, particularly at-risk boys, and to motivate caring adults to connect with youth in three key areas: Family, school, and community. www.helpingamericasyouth.gov/index.cfm

The Marcus Institute is a nationally recognized center for the provision of comprehensive services for children and adolescents with developmental disabilities. www.marcus.org/index.html

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network works to raise the standards of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families, and communities throughout the United States. www.nctsn.net/org/nctsn/nav.do?pid=hom_main

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Model Programs Guide is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-informed and evidence-based prevention and intervention

programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities. www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg_index.htm

Promising Practices Network features descriptions of evaluated programs that improve outcomes for children. www.promisingpractices.net/programs_alpha.asp

Strengthening America's Families provides the results of a 1999 search for "best practice" family strengthening programs. www.strengtheningfamilies.org/html/model_programs.html

The USDA Parent Education and Support Literature Review is made possible through funding by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Services. The most recent review was conducted in 2005.

<http://ag.udel.edu/extension/fam/professionalresources/parentEd/2005litreview.htm>

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