Program Development and Evaluation - Families / Youth
EVALUATION OF A STATEWIDE PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR DIVORCING PARENTS

Denise J. Brandon Ph.D.*

ABSTRACT:
A system was needed to collect impact data for the Tennessee parent education program for divorcing parents called "Parenting Apart: Effective Co-Parenting." Because county Extension faculty often do not have the time or the necessary statistical training and computer software to evaluate programs effectively, a system for collecting data at the local level and aggregating it at the state level was devised and implemented. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations (KASA), and behavior in class participants. Evaluations were conducted at the end of each class and through a follow-up survey up to six months after class completion. The exhibit will showcase examples of evaluation tools and results of analyses that yielded impact data for both the county and state levels.

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BRIGHT BEGINNINGS: A PARENT EDUCATION CURRICULUM ON PARENTING YOUNG CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT:
A child’s beginning represents the foundation upon which a happy life is established. Good beginnings beget good journeys, and for young children, it is parents, grandparents, and other adults who play the most critical role in the type of beginning they experience. Parent education is a core programming area of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Services in the United States. Parents and other adults need to understand their role in providing the stable foundation that is necessary for young children to have a healthy developmental beginning. Bright Beginnings: Understanding and Enhancing Your Young Child’s Growth and Development is a new parenting curriculum from the NDSU Extension Service that facilitates this goal. This parent education curriculum focuses on parenting young children from the prenatal period through the age of eight, and includes such topics as brain development, attachment, prenatal health, social development, children and play, and other critical topics. The Bright Beginnings curriculum was designed to meet the needs of educators and others who need flexibility in content and approaches to working with parents and others who care for young children. This session will highlight the need for parent education in this area, document use of the Bright Beginnings curriculum in various contexts, and share preliminary results from evaluation efforts.

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EVALUATION: USING MULTIPLE METHODS TO DEMONSTRATE IMPACTS

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ABSTRACT:
The Youth and Families with Promise program is an early intervention, two-level mentoring program designed to reduce delinquency, enhance social and academic skills, and improve family relations in at-risk youth ages 10-14 and their families. Parents and youth completed a standard pre-test survey when they enrolled in the program. Each youth, parent, and mentor completed a post-then-pre survey eight months later. Parents and mentors participated in focus group interviews and youth participated in individual interviews. Retrospective post-then-pre-testing is a quantitative measure used to eliminate response-shift-bias present in standard pre/post testing. Response-shift-bias occurs when individuals experience a paradigm shift over time as they gain a new level of understanding about their behavior. The evaluations focused on thriving and problem behaviors, family relationships, and the mentor-youth relationship. The respondents reported statistically significant improvements on nearly all variables related to the youth's behavior, with the post-then-pre-test detecting the greatest changes. The focus group interviews identified problems the youth experience, areas of improvement, and good mentoring practices which facilitated these changes. In individual interviews the youth identified how their mentor helped them and the changes they saw resulting from their involvement. Using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection provides a triangulation of outcome measurements, which allows programs to compensate for the problems of single respondent self-report data to present a more accurate report of program impacts. Qualitative and quantitative data have different advantages and weaknesses for measuring program success and outcomes. When combined, the strengths of each method can be utilized.

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BRIDGING THE DISTANCE AMONG LONG DISTANCE FAMILIES

Leslie Crandall* and Janet E. Fox

ABSTRACT:
Today’s families are on a fast track. One of the realities of our mobile society is that entire families from grandparents to brothers and sisters--sometimes, even, husbands and wives--don’t live in close proximity to each other. While living apart can cause family stress, families can strengthen ties across the miles with just a little extra effort and thoughtful planning. Using real-life scenarios faced by families, participants will identify and discuss strategies to solve real-life problems families face in trying to stay in touch at a distance. After discussing the challenges facing long distance families highlighted in the scenarios, family strengths research will provide a research base to discuss the four C’s: Commitment, Compatibility, Communication, and Connectedness. With suggested family activities provided, each group shares their ideas to promote one of the four C’s. Participants evaluate their personal family ties through a questionnaire and apply their results to create a plan to strengthen family ties. Communication, connectedness, compatibility, and commitment are all keys to any community-based programming supporting children, youth and families. These four characteristics are particularly important when addressing the issues that families tackle. As components of quality family programming, these characteristics promote community sustainability through engaging families in ways that build strong relationships.

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FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS THAT THRIVE!

Matthew Devereaux*

ABSTRACT:
Proposal Description: Come learn how three proven parenting/child care resource center sites have not only sustained their programs but who have been actually growing and thriving three years after federal support has ended. Strategies, obstacles and success stories will be shared to help your program have a better chance for success. Outcomes: Participants will be taught the importance of planning, "getting the word out", and the benefit of strong coalitions. They will also learn the importance of needs assessment and making sure your program content is in line with community needs. Participants will also learn how to gain additional funding, especially funding in their own community, to help their programs not only be sustained but to grow. Participants also will take part in hands-on activities that will help evaluate their current strategies (i.e., kind of a like a report card), and activities that will begin the process for helping them create a plan toward sustainability. Participants will view "tidbits" of three successful parenting/child-care resource center sites and hear from community staff who have created these successful sustained programs. Also, evaluation/impact data will be shared concerning the at-risk audiences these programs have influenced such as parents, children, child care providers and the community as a whole. At three points during the workshop "ice-breaking" type activities will be used to relax the group and to deliver a point related to sustainability and enthusiasm. If there is one thing we have learned is enthusiasm amongst the community staff about your program goes a long way toward "convincing" your community that what you are doing is important.

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PARTNERING WITH PARENTS: WALKING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER

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ABSTRACT:
Partnering with Parents: Walking the Journey Together (PWP) is an innovative series of training modules designed for professionals and volunteers who work with parents and their families in one-to-one and group settings. It promote a strengths-based approach using principles of family centered practices to facilitate learning and support parents. The ten modules consist of 50 hours of learning in face-to-face group settings and additional learning through online activities and assigned readings. You will learn about the objectives, content, format, and delivery of PWP, engage in activities used in PWP, and explore possibilities for implementing PWP in your state. You will see how the National Extension Parent Education Model and the National Extension Parenting Educators' Framework have been integrated into PWP. Evaluation data reveal that learners (n=37) strengthened their knowledge, understanding, and skills related to parenting education. There was a significant difference between learners' rating of their competencies related to parenting education at the beginning of PWP, as compared with after they completed PWP. Comments from learners: "I learned more about parenting education in PWP than I have learned in my 20 years as a parent educator." "There is a lot of great information provided and it gives learners a lot of opportunities to learn form the experiences of other parent educators. I found the information very interesting and it was presented in a very effective manner. Class activities were productive and I have used them with families." Extension field staff provide leadership for PWP locally with support from campus specialists. Local resource people serve as co-facilitators, and families are invited to serve on panels to share their experiences and perspectives.

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LOCKED UP, BUT NOT LOCKED OUT

Lynna J. Lawson* and Tammy Gillespie

ABSTRACT:
An estimated 1.5 million children in the US have at least one parent in prison. These children face unique challenges such as discrimination, financial hardship and embarrassment in addition to the pain of losing a parent. Studies show these children are six times more likely to go to prison themselves. A family strengthening project with Missouri 4-H and the Missouri Department of Corrections helps young learn ways to bond with their incarcerated parent and develop skills in coping with the limited contact with this parent. The 4-H Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) program at the maximum security Potosi Correctional Center involves the incarcerated fathers, children and caregivers of the youth. The fathers organize within the institution and serve as leaders when their children meet with them monthly in the visiting room of the facility. The LIFE participants worked with staff and an evaluator to develop an evaluation plan for the program. All online evaluation tools and reports will be shared at Galaxy II. The program parallels the outside 4-H structure and demonstrates that the club will be able to sustain itself at the close of grant funding. In addition to agency resources, the inmates raise money within the prison to support 4-H projects and recognition provided to their youth and family. Public opinion often opposes benefits provided to offenders and the LIFE program has been no exception. The development of the program illustrated the necessity of communicating future societal benefits to the community by improving the lives of offenders’ children.

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YOUTH AND FAMILIES WITH PROMISE
Tom R. Lee Ph.D*, Craig Dart and Amy Hackworth

ABSTRACT:
Youth and Families with Promise (YFP) is a two-level mentoring program designed and implemented through Utah State University Extension. YFP is an early intervention/prevention program for youth ages 10-14, and their families. After 9 years of growth and expansion, the program operates in most of Utah’s 29 counties. It is administered by the local Extension Agent and a YFP Site Coordinator in collaboration with an advisory board of community members. YFP is designed to reduce and prevent delinquency and other problem behaviors through three goals: (1) improving academic performance; (2) increasing interpersonal competence; (3) strengthening family bonds. Specifically, the program matches referred youth to a young adult mentor and an older adult or grandmentor couple. The match then participates in regular formal and informal activities. These include a monthly Family Night Out (structured experiential learning activities) for all youth, mentors, and families, local 4-H programs, service projects, other community events, and individual mentor-youth activities. All of these activities are supported by focusing on the 40 Developmental Assets identified by the Search Institute. Materials developed by the YFP program for implementation consist of Youth Handbook, Parent Guide, Family Activities, Mentor Training materials, Mentor-Youth Curriculum, Family Night Out Activity handbook and materials kit, Program Guide. Consistent and in depth testing using a post-then-pre instrument continue to show significant decreases in delinquency reduction, and increase in academic success, increased ability for problem-solving in social and personal relationships, improvement in self-confidence, and strengthened family relationships.

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ABSTRACT:
This workshop engages professionals interested in focusing on strengthening families, with particular attention to at-risk families. The workshop embraces the theoretical foundation and research base for adventure programming. Participants will be introduced to the use of metaphors for teaching complex concepts, experience adventure activities, and understand the adapted recreation service model, which identifies the varying appropriate roles of the CES professional when working toward outcomes with participants, including those with limited resources. Adventure resources are available for participants who wish to replicate for their local families. Participants will appreciate how to make learning meaningful and memorable for families whether they are at-risk or not! Participants will understand the family systems theory and gain knowledge of the use of adventure initiatives when conducting enriching family programs. The adventure activities experienced during the workshop were used with at-risk families to strengthen communication skills, trust, and cooperation. Participants will then learn to create powerful metaphors, the importance of sequencing initiatives, facilitating and processing skills, and how to engross families in fun and learning. The workshop will also discuss and create a Full-Value Contract used in adventure programming to keep clients "present" and decrease disruptive behavior. The workshop will include a discussion of the qualitative evaluation results from the practical application of adventure programming during a family camp weekend. No previous skill/knowledge required of participants. This workshop is 50% lecture and 50% hands-on.

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RURAL AND URBAN YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF SUBSTANCE USE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EXTENSION PROGRAMMING

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ABSTRACT:
An analysis of differential perceptions of alcohol and drug use media depictions was conducted based on a southwestern U.S. statewide survey of nearly 4,200 7th grade students. The analysis considers the relationship of students' perceptions of the media to their actual use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs and examines them for possible rural-urban differences. Students were asked about TV depictions of alcohol and other substance use in three ways: (1) TV ads about alcohol use; (2) TV programs about alcohol use; (3) TV programs about drug use. Primary socialization theory was utilized as a framework to guide this study. The theory posits that both conforming and deviant behaviors are directly modeled within the context of three "primary" groups: close friends, family and schools. However, secondary sources, including the media, play important roles in the learning process as well. The findings indicate that students were widely divergent in their perceptions of TV depictions regardless of location. Students were about as likely to indicate that TV ads were "good" and "healthy" as they were to say that TV ads were "bad" and "unhealthy." Their responses to questions about drug use indicated that they mostly believed that TV programs depict usage as negative. The results have implications for Extension programming, in that adolescent media perception should be considered when developing and working with substance use prevention programs in the 21st century, including 4-H curricula such as TRAP (Tobacco Risk Awareness Program) and CARES (Chemical Abuse Resistance Education Series).

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LINKING EVALUATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN RURAL YOUTH PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT:
Youth programs in rural areas are generally well-attended and well-received but difficult to sustain financially. This seminar will focus on lessons learned by presenters after running a youth program in rural Idaho. The seminar has two objectives: (1) teach participants about basic evaluation processes that staff can carry out to collect evidence of program impact and (2) show participants how evaluation data can be used to increase the sustainability of the program. The value of evaluation will be discussed briefly and basic evaluation concepts such as summative evaluation and formative evaluation explained. Too often, project staff perceive evaluation as something that is being done to them rather than a process they should participate in and encourage. Participants will be shown how evaluation can be carried out in a way that doesn't intimidate staff and doesn't necessarily require professional expertise. The participants will also have an opportunity to ask an experienced evaluator questions specific to their programs. While issues of sustainability vary from program to program, many youth programs in rural areas require creative funding solutions. This part of the seminar will focus on how evaluation data collected can be leveraged for different sustainability activities such as grant writing, public relations activities, and fund-raising. In addition, participants will be shown how to involve hesitant staff members in these processes. Different avenues of funding will be briefly explored and participants given an opportunity to ask questions.

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