

Assessing the Impact of the Nurturing Programs in Treating Abusive Parenting Practices

Stephen J. Bavolek, Ph.D.
Family Development Resources, Inc., 1980

The following abstracts detail research in the development and implementation of the Nurturing Programs in treating and preventing child abuse and neglect. The Nurturing Programs are family-based group and home approaches that were developed from the four abusive parenting constructs that form the basis of assessment of the AAPI. As such, the AAPI forms the basis of assessment; the Nurturing Programs form the basis of treatment. The two are interdependent.

Nurturing Program for Parents and Children Birth to Five Years

Families enrolled in Head Start programs in a seven-county area in Wisconsin participated in the validation of the Nurturing Program for Parents and Children Birth to Five Years. Pretest and posttest data were gathered to assess the effectiveness of the program to increase the nurturing capabilities of both parents and children. Parents were administered the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI), the Nurturing Quiz, and a program completion evaluation questionnaire. Data gathered from the parents indicated:

- A total of 260 adults were pretested in home-based and center-based programs. Sixty-six percent (N = 171) participated in the posttest assessment. A number of parents lost their eligibility to continue in Head Start or moved from the area which accounts for the low posttest completion rate.
- Parents demonstrated a significant increase ($p < .05$) in their ability to be empathically aware of their children's needs.
- Parents expressed a significant decrease ($p < .05$) in their beliefs regarding the value of corporal punishment as a means of punishing behavior, and in reversing parent-child role responsibilities.
- Parents showed a significant increase ($p < .05$) regarding appropriate expectations they have toward the capabilities of their children.
- Test results further indicate parents made significant increases ($p < .05$) in their knowledge of appropriate alternatives to corporal punishment.

- On a four-point scale (4 = Strongly Agree), parents expressed favorable (X = 3.3) perceptions about the program's positive impact on their role as parents, and favorable X = 3.1) perceptions about the program's positive impact on their children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth and development.
- An overwhelming number of parents (97%) indicated they would recommend participation in the Nurturing Program to other parents.

Nurturing Program for Parents and Children 4 to 12 Years

The 15-week program was field tested twice at each of six sites: Chicago, IL; Cleveland, OH; St. Paul, MN; Pittsburgh, PA; South Bend, IN; and Eau Claire, WI. Data analyses show that a total of 121 parents and 140 children began the program. Of this total, 101 parents (83%) and 118 children (84%) completed the program. Extensive pre/post data collection occurred with parents and their children. Although parents were allowed to bring their children 2 to 12 years to attend the program, only children 6 to 12 years of age were tested. Parents were administered the 16PF (personality inventory), Family Environment Scale, The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI), Nurturing Quiz, and Family Social History Questionnaire. Children were administered the Children's Personality Questionnaire (CPO) or the Early School Personality Questionnaire (ESPO), Children's Parenting Inventory (CPI), an informal self-concept scale, and Family Environmental Scale.

Pre/Posttest analyses on parent measures show the following results:

- Parents' posttest scores on the AAPI were significantly greater ($p < .05$) in all four constructs: appropriate expectations of children; increase in empathy; decrease in the use of corporal punishment, and a decrease in role reversal. These data indicated a positive and significant shift in attitudes and behaviors in parenting and nurturing children.
- Data generated from the administration of the Family Environment Scale to parents showed significant ($p < .05$) increases in family cohesion, expressiveness and independence, and a decrease in family conflict.
- As measured by the 16PF (personality inventory), parents expressed average intelligence, higher than average aggression, lower than average conservatism, undisciplined self-conflict, and disregard for rules. Pre/posttest data showed a significant decrease in anxiety ($p < .05$) and in tough poise ($p < .05$).

Pre/posttest analyses on children measured showed the following results:

- Personality changes measured by the ESPQ and CPQ showed significant increases ($p < .05$) in assertiveness, enthusiasm, and tough poise.
- Data generated from the Family Environment Scale showed gains in family cohesion, expressiveness, and organization, and decreases in family conflict and independence. However, none of the changes were significant.
- Children's scores on the Children's Parenting Inventory (CPI) indicated a significant ($p < .05$) increase in age-inappropriate behaviors, gains in empathy, and a belief of alternative methods of punishment rather than corporal punishment. Children's scores did indicate a significant shift ($p < .05$) in attitudes toward pleasing and meeting the needs of mom and dad.

Nurturing Program for Parents and Adolescents

A total of 156 parents and 155 teenagers from 15 sites throughout the country participated in the field testing of the Nurturing Program for Parents and Adolescents. Seventy percent (70%) of the adults were female; 30% were male. Forty-nine percent (49%) of the adolescents were female while 51% were male. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the adults were married; 48% indicated they were single, separated, or were living with a mate. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the parents were Caucasian; 11% Black; 1% Native American; 2% Asian; and 3% Hispanic. Religious affiliations represented the full spectrum with no single preference predominant. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the parents indicated they completed high school; 29% completed four years of college; 6% indicated they completed post-college degrees. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the adults indicated they were unemployed. Sixty-one percent (61%) indicated their family income was \$20,000 or below.

- Parents and adolescents were required to complete a series of pretests and posttests and attend every weekly session. The results of the extensive evaluation of the program yielded the following results:
- Parents had significantly ($p < .001$) decreased their belief in corporal punishment and family role reversal, while they significantly increased their empathic awareness of adolescents' needs and appropriate expectations as measured by the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI).
- Parents had significantly ($p < .001$) increased their knowledge of appropriate strategies in behavior management.

- Parents expressed a significant ($p < .05$) increase in their family cohesion, autonomy, and communication and expressed a significant decrease ($p < .05$) in family conflict and anxiety as measured by the Family Environment Scale.
- Parents overwhelmingly (98%) indicated the program had made a positive impact in their relationships with their teens.
- Adolescents also expressed significant increases ($p < .001$) in empathy and appropriate expectations while expressing significant ($p < .001$) decreases in their belief in corporal punishment and reversing family roles as measured by the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI).
- Adolescents significantly ($p < .001$) increased their knowledge of non-abusive forms of behavior management and also expressed overwhelming support (97%) of the positive impact the program had in increasing the quality of their relationships with their parents.
- Adolescents expressed a significant decrease in family conflict ($p < .002$) and significant increase ($p < .002$) in the intellectual/cultural activities of their family as measured by the Family Environment Scale (FES).

Nurturing Program for Teenage Parents and Their Families

The Nurturing Program for Teenage Parents and Their Families was validated by twelve agencies providing parent education to teenage parents throughout the country. A total of 178 teen parents (94% moms; 6% dads) participated in home-based and group-based programs. Eighty percent (80%) of the teen parents were single. Seventy-five percent (75%) indicated they were Caucasian, 18% indicated they were Black, the remaining teens indicated they were Hispanic (4%) and American Indian (3%). No single religious preference was dominant among the teens. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the teen parents indicated they were unemployed while 33% indicated their family income was below \$8,000.

Twenty-one percent (21%) of the teens indicated they were abused or neglected by their mother and 22% indicated they were abused or neglected by their father. Of this group, 4% indicated they were sexually abused. Additionally, 47% of the teens indicated they had been abused by their boyfriends and/or girlfriends.

The results of pre and post testing indicate:

- Data generated from the administration of the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory indicated significant ($p < .001$) overall increases in empathic awareness of children's needs and age-appropriate expectations, while showing a significant decrease ($p < .001$) in beliefs in corporal punishment and reversing family roles.
- Data also indicated significant posttest increases ($p < .001$) in knowledge of appropriate behavior management strategies.
- Ninety-seven percent (97%) of the teen parents overwhelmingly indicated a positive impact of the program on increasing their overall parenting and nurturing skills.