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Characteristics of Evidence-Based Parent-Training Programs

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Practicum placement: Southern Minnesota Counseling Services

Introduction

Purpose: To identify key characteristics in evidence-based parent-training programs that ensure effectiveness and efficiency for agencies serving families with children aged 5-9 with emotional and behavioral disorders. My research strategy will be to do a literature review of evidence-based parent-training programs that strengthen parent competencies, foster parent's involvement in school, decrease children's behavioral problems and strengthen children's social and academic competencies.

Problem to be addressed: When children receive inconsistent or ineffective discipline from parents, they are at risk of developing childhood behavioral disorders. By adolescence, these problems can develop into Conduct Disorders such as aggression, substance abuse and delinquency. Parents must have consistent and effective discipline to help their child avoid emotional and behavioral problems. Aggressive and inappropriate behavior in children is primarily due to their parents. Effective programs promote effective behaviors from children and decrease behavioral problems in children. Programs that are effective will promote change in the child and also provide support to navigate change, but they are also the most expensive to implement.

Research Question: What are the key characteristics in evidence-based parent-training programs that demonstrate effectiveness and cost efficiency?

Findings: Evidence-based parent-training programs are strong and tailored to meet the needs of individual families being served. Effective training is didactic and experiential and offers information in multiple settings and modes. Evidence-based parent-training programs work within the families culture, socio-economic status and cognitive functioning. Parent competencies are trained specifically to help guide parents in learning new parenting skills. Goals established are a collaborative effort by the child, parent and staff. Group-based programs are effective for many parents and are the most cost-effective.

Literature Review

Research indicates that seven to twenty percent of children meet the diagnostic criteria for Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Conduct Disorder as outlined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders IV-TR(9). An estimated thirty-five percent of children in low-income families have high satisfaction among parents and offer skills through discussion, modeling, role playing and written materials. The individual cost is low. This format offers member support and kinship, encourages greater parental engagement and maintains a low dropout rate especially when parents are grouped together based on common need (1, 8). This format is especially effective for parents that are socially isolated and have less social support. Group formats, although not a benefit to all, are able to meet the increasing demands for parent-training (8, 15).

| Leadingsourcesthestudyassessedtounderstandtheeffectivenessandcostefficiencyofparent-trainingprograms. | Methods

This study involved a systematic review of the literature on evidence-based parent-training programs. The parent-training programs researched are ones used by agencies serving families with children, aged 5-9, that are diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders. Computer searches of journal articles listed between 1984 and 2007 in the following databases were conducted: ERIC, PsychInfo, Sage, and Social Work Abstracts. The following broad search terms were used: child emotional and behavioral disorders, parent education, parent-training, evidence-based, and diverse populations. This strategy identified 15 articles that allowed me to analyze the key characteristics of evidence-based programs.

| Findings: Evidence-based parent-training programs are strong and tailored to meet the needs of individual families being served. Effective training is didactic and experiential and offers information in multiple settings and modes. Evidence-based parent-training programs work within the families culture, socio-economic status and cognitive functioning. Parent competencies are trained specifically to help guide parents in learning new parenting skills. Goals established are a collaborative effort by the child, parent and staff. Group-based programs are effective for many parents and are the most cost-effective. | Literature Review

There were three parent-training programs that received regular mention in the literature as effective for families with children who were emotional and behavioral disorders: Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Parent Management Training and The Incredible Years program. The key characteristics of each program are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Parent-Child Interaction Therapy</th>
<th>Parent Management Training</th>
<th>The Incredible Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 3–9</td>
<td>Age 3–18</td>
<td>Age 2–12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with behavior problems</td>
<td>Children with conduct problems</td>
<td>Young children at risk of behavior problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data/ Results

There were three parent-training programs that received regular mention in the literature as effective for families with children who were emotional and behavioral disorders: Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Parent Management Training and The Incredible Years program. The key characteristics of each program are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Clinic</th>
<th>In-home services</th>
<th>Clinic/Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Goals of Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural and Other Considerations</th>
<th>No differences across ethnic groups</th>
<th>Effective with co-morbid conditions</th>
<th>Effective with multilingual families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>$3,638 per family</th>
<th>$318 cost per family plus supervision and assessment costs</th>
<th>$840 per child for parent training and videos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Training Resources

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1:1 support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Group-based parent education

Self administered parent education materials

Conclusion

Highly effective parent-training programs have common characteristics. For example, they maintain a relationship where they are at the core of change. Effective parent-training programs take into consideration parent variables, such as social adversity, maternal depression, available social support, marital status and problems, socio-economic status and stressors (14). When programs are sensitive to environmental factors that are out of a parent’s control and consider additional interventions to promote parents’ emotional well-being, parents are more willing and able to focus on learning and applying new parenting skills. Programs that are successful also consider co-morbid conditions, such as mental health and substance abuse, as well as the participant’s cognitive level (5). Parents with substance abuse or mental health issues need additional support to take steps to remain physically and emotionally healthy (15).

Individualized programs are the most effective with children with severe emotional and behavioral disorders; therefore, an individualized component should be a portion of the parent-training program for this population (8). Programs that offer interventions through a mixture of home visitation and clinic settings are more effective than those that offer parent training in one setting only (15). Home visits help to support parents emotionally and provide information within a natural setting. The home setting also offers an opportunity for parents to practice and apply skills in their natural setting (7). Effective programs have flexible scheduling to accommodate varying work, child care and school schedules. Evidence-based parent-training programs focus on enhancing interactions between the parent and child (2). Parenting programs that engage parents in the change process will be most effective in reducing child behavior problems (6). Children make greater progress when parents are actively involved and help plan and implement academic and behavior interventions (1). When change goals are relationship-centered they encourage warm parental responses which is effective in changing a child’s behavior (2).

Evidence-based parenting programs work with a family’s strengths. The program curriculum and staff implementing the program are culturally competent and understand cultural and ethnic factors (11). Programs that are effective are satisfying the parent involved thereby increasing the likelihood that parents will attend and complete the program (5). The best program approaches have clear goals and skilled trainers facilitating parent training (1). Evidence-based programs are didactic, as well as experiential, and include a written manual and homework assignments (1). Elements of both behavioral and nonbehavioral programming should be included in parent-training programs. Programs that include a behavioral principle have better outcomes on changing a child’s behavior than those that did not; however, nonbehavioral programs have better outcomes on parental attitudes (6). Effective programs work with parents to help them generate their own action plan (7).

A three-tier model, as shown with the triangle below, can be used to help guide practitioners in deciding what parent-training format to use with families. This model progresses from the least intensive program to most intensive. Programs that are self-administered are accessible and serve the greatest number of families with the lowest cost. They are likely to be effective with families that need minimal support. Programs that offer a group format can serve multiple families at one time, are effective with most families and are cost-effective. Programs that use an individual format are effective for helping families that are most supportive to navigate change, but they are also the most expensive to implement. Programs that have a combined individual and group format are the most effective and efficient (14).