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Prevention Programs Growing Strong Colorado Families

"Children do not exist in a separate microcosm, focusing alone on the child ignores an entire support system already in place. Strengthening the ability of families to raise law abiding and productive citizens is a critical public policy issue (Levine, 1997)."

Executive Overview

Colorado State University Extension Growing Strong Families (CSUE-GSCF) Work Team and Colorado Family Education Resource and Training (CFERT) program identify evidence and research-based prevention programs and establish community and institutional partnerships that strengthen family intervention programs in Colorado. Family interventions are effective in improving family relations, parental monitoring and supervision, and parent-child attachment, and offer a potent policy tool for preventing delinquency, teenage pregnancy, academic failure, substance use & arrest (Gordon et al., 1988).

Guiding Principles

- Family Focused Programs are more effective than programs that focus solely on the child or the parent (Levine, 1997).
- Family programs that combine social skills and life skills training with parent skills to improve supervision, bonding and nurturance are most effective (Slaby et al., 1995; Bowlby, 1982).
- Positive and consistent discipline, ongoing parental involvement and parental attitudes are associated with better behavioral and educational outcomes for children (Levenstein et al., 1998).
- Parental education and the quality of the home learning environment in the early years remain powerful predictors of child academic attainment at age 10 (Sammons et al., 2007).
- Prison parent education programs provide inmates with measurable knowledge and parenting skills which can result in positive behavior changes (Gonzalez et al., 2007).
- The most effective approaches are those that change the family, school, and community environment in long lasting positive ways (Eron et al., 1994).
- Research from various disciplines recognize the inseparable and highly interactive influences of genetics and environment on the development of the brain and the unfolding of human behavior. (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Audience

The primary audience for the various programs includes **families** with children of all ages and **professionals** who work with families. The primary caregivers in the families may be parents, grandparents, kin caregivers, teen parents, single parents, foster parents, divorced parents, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning (GLBTQ) parents, migrant parents, incarcerated parents, and parents of children with disabilities.

Programming Partners

The Family Resource Center Association, county health departments, Department of Corrections, Division of Behavioral Health, Head Start, school districts, Catholic Charities, Families First, Family Tree, Goodwill Industries Denver, Boys and Girls Clubs, District Courts, and Colorado Works are in current partnership with CSUE-GSCF and CFERT, across the state of Colorado.

Analysis

In 2007 the budget for CSUE-GSCF and CFERT was \$745,210, allowing for partnerships with 311 different agencies and for 2,555 individuals to attend educational programs, and 18,511 individuals to receive indirect education through on-line access to newsletters and educational materials.

In a report published by The National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA, 1997), one of the programs provided by CSUE-GSCF and CFERT has a net benefit of \$10 for every dollar spent on programming. This suggests that the \$745,210 budget of CFERT and CSUE-GSCF brings a benefit to the State of Colorado in the range of \$7,452,100 per year.

The Yale Child Welfare Research Program cost-benefits analysis found that in the course of one year, the control group of 15 families who received no special services consumed \$40,000 more in public resources than the treatment group of families who participated in programs to help disadvantaged young parents support their children's development and improve the quality of family life (Seitz et al., 1985).

Funding Sources

- CFERT is grant funded by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Division of Behavioral Health (formerly known as ADAD), for \$168,422 and the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) for \$33,898.
- CSUE-GSCF received \$15,000 in venture capital funds from Colorado State University Extension to launch the self-sustaining *Family Development Credential Program* and *Effective Training* professional development opportunities.
- Adams County is the site of a Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, Healthy Marriage Demonstration Grant (90FE0028) *Family Success in Adams County* (\$450,000/ yr. 2006-2011).

Next Steps

Sustain funding for evidence based family intervention programming and provide incentives for implementation of evidence based programs and interdisciplinary collaboration.

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