Researching the Impact of Strengthening Families Programs (SFP) Across Ethnicities, Language and Culture

Renee Overath

CONTEXT

Strengthening Families is an internationally recognized, evidence-based program that promotes communication, family harmony and prevention of teen substance abuse. Strengthening Families for Parents/Caregivers and Youth Ages 10-14 is an internationally recognized, evidence-based program that promotes communication, family harmony and prevention of teen substance abuse.

1980’s - developed by Karol Kumpfer at the University of Utah
- Researchers and Extension faculty at Iowa State University adapted SFP for families with early adolescents (Parents and Youth ages 10-14)
- 1999 - WSU Extension faculty adopted SFP for Parents and Youth 10-14
- 2000 - Iowa State University Extension faculty and the Pan American Health Organization developed Spanish language “Fuertas Familias” from English version of Strengthening Families
- 2004 - WSU incorporated Spanish language Strengthening Families into statewide dissemination efforts
- 2006 – WSU issued Spanish language “Fortaleciendo Familias” curriculum manual to use with Spanish language Strengthening Families videos

GOALS

Parents – Build on their strengths in showing love and setting limits
Youth – Develop skills in handling peer pressure and building a positive future
Families – Grow together

WSU EVALUATION METHODS

Parent Outcomes (Intervention Targeted Parenting Behavior)

Rules About Substance Use
Positive Involvement
Family Harmony
Communication

WSU Youth Evaluation includes scales* from the Healthy Youth survey administered in Washington state schools:
Involvement
Rewards
Attachment
Family Harmony
Family Management
Peer Resistance Skills

*All scales and items are used by permission or are in the public domain

In 2003 WSU faculty and staff formed an interagency team. Current membership includes representatives from:
- Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA)
- Family Policy Council (FPC)
- Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Educational Service Districts (ESD)
- Department of Corrections (DOC)
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

In 2007 CTED’s “Family Tension” scale was added to the WSU pre- and post-program surveys for evaluation, effectively streamlining reporting procedures while meeting funding requirements.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of results derived from participants 2001-2006 by ethnicity, language and culture demonstrates that change on all scales was significant overall. Average change scores did not differ across ethnicity, language, or culture for adults or youth. It appears that the Strengthening Families program is meeting program goals across Caucasian, Latino and American Indian populations in Washington State.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Examine effectiveness of Spanish-language program in large-scale longitudinal study, including high school graduation rates of participating youth
Examine economic impacts of Strengthening Families programs in Washington state

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Laura Griner Hill, Primary Investigator, Washington State University
Dr. Linda Becker, Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse
Drew Betz, Washington State University
Chris Koehler, Washington State University
Ann Diede, Washington State University
Lee and Virginia Molgaard, Iowa State University
In 2007 CTED’s “Family Tension” scale was added to the WSU pre- and post-program surveys for evaluation, effectively streamlining reporting procedures while meeting funding requirements.

More information about Strengthening Families Programs is available at Washington State University Extension http://sfp.wsu.edu or Iowa State University Extension http://www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp/.
This work was supported by National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) grant R21 DA 19758-01