

Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Parenting Education Programs

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- The phone rings- it is the school principal and wants you to speak at the PTA meeting next month on some aspect of parenting.
- During a coalition meeting, the group determines that parenting education is critical for the school success of children in the XYZ neighborhood. They want you to be the facilitator of the initiative.
- As you are packing your brief case to leave the office, the phone rings. With urgency, the caller begs you to fill in for their speaker who has fallen ill at the last minute. You are due to present in 1 hour.

No matter how the parenting program came to be, if you are considering planning a parenting education program, there are many aspects to consider. Here is a simple checklist to help you in planning:

1. Is the program a one time guest speaker engagement?
2. Does someone simply want you to fill an hour, or are they really interested in educating parents?

If the answer to these two questions is yes, then having information ready to go is the answer. Sometimes it just is good public relations to meet these sorts of needs. Some of the units in this series will be useful to you.

3. Is there a group of concerned community educators who value the place good parenting plays in the lives of children?
4. Are there parents who really want to learn about how to be effective with their children?
5. Is there a mandate to deliver parenting education to a particular audience? If the answer to these questions is yes, then a more detailed planning process is necessary. You will need to think through the following aspects:

Planning a Parenting Education Program Considerations

- Understand the presenting issue and who the stakeholders are
- Conduct a needs assessment with a sample of the potential audience
- Outline general goals and specific learning objectives

- Carefully select a way or ways to deliver the parenting information and knowing your audience
- Consider ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative and select and evaluation method
- Report outcomes to the stakeholders

Issue Identification
Writing Goals
Needs Assessment

Issue Statement

What is the presenting problem? Write an issue statement:

- Check your Issue Statement.

Is it:

- A matter of wide public concern?
- A matter that arises out of complex human problems?
- Are the complex human problems social, economic, political or technological in nature?
- Does it have broad meaning for an entire society?
- Is the issue characterized by divergent viewpoints and shifting public perceptions?
- Does this issue frequently involve conflict, controversy or mediation of disputes and contending interests?

Source: Dalgaard, K. A., Brazzel, M., Liles, R., Sanderson, D., Taylor-Powell, E. (1988). Issues Programming in Extension, USDA and University of Minnesota publication.

Stakeholders

To sustain broad support, it is important to consider the stakeholders in your program. Stakeholders consist of a variety of people who have a concern and interest in the work you do and the outcomes you and your team produce.

Think about:

who will need to be informed about your work with parents?

who does your work include and concern?

who will be helpful in planning educational programs for parents?

Listed below are some possible stakeholders. You may need to revisit this list throughout your planning process. List Stakeholders:

Stakeholder examples

People who parent children

Community youth workers (coaches, club leaders, child care providers)

Extension personnel (county, district or region, state) County and state agency representatives (courts, social services, mental health)

City/county officials

County commissions and boards

Public and private school representatives

Family life professionals

State legislators

National legislators

Other advocates for your program

HOW TO USE STAKEHOLDERS:

Consider your most important stakeholders. Informally or formally ask them some broad questions such as:

-- What results would you like to see over the next year for parenting education?

-- What results would you like to see in two years?

Some stakeholders will not have a clue as to the needs of parents and how educators approach these needs. Use this opportunity to educate them about the field of possibilities. For example, tell stakeholders about the ways we approach child abuse and neglect, how we work towards an increased understanding of what is appropriate to expect from children at various ages of development, or how to discipline appropriately at different ages, or how we work on helping parents manage anger and stress. These are prevention programs and can lead to decreases in domestic and child abuse at the macro level.

Writing a Goal Statement

A goal statement can be your guide. It is general. While objectives are more specific.

a. By: _____ (date)

_____ (Fill in your county, program name)

b. will _____ (Select a term to identify the action your program will take such as learn, gain, develop, expand, increase, improve, strengthen, organize, practice)

c. _____ List particular topic to define term selected above:

d. _____ Identify your target audience: (Examples: parents with young children, single mothers, parents in XYZ Apt. Complex, incarcerated parents, etc.)

Your issue statement reminds you why you have established this as a goal, refer to your issue statement as you complete your goal statement.

Recopy your entire goal statement here:

Writing Objectives

Write two practice objectives.

Use the ABCD Method of writing objectives -

audience

behavior

conditions

degree

*(List your Audience)*_____

*(Behavior change - use an action verb)*_____

*(under what Conditions will this happen)*_____

*(what outcome - to what Degree)*_____

Sample objectives

a. Teen parents in the Lopemont high school (audience) in will daily use at least two of the five new discipline strategies taught (behavior) to discipline their preschool children (conditions) after the learning session as self-reported in their journals for two weeks after learning.

b. Eighty percent (degree) of grandparents of preschool children in the local grandparents as parents support group (audience) will report use of at least one new community resource (behavior) to support their search for child care for their grand children in their primary care (conditions) for a three month period (degree).

a. By February, 19xx, each member of the Family Support Group will meet their assigned teen parent to support them through one at least one hour of contact per week in parenting the first year.

b. Eighty-five percent of teens from the support group will increase their self-esteem as a result of relationships with assigned mentors as measured by the Harter Scale one year later.

Objective 1:

Evaluation

Evaluating effective parenting education programs can take various forms. This section provides you with some food for thought.

What is Evaluation? An evaluation is a summary of the effectiveness of teaching efforts and learning that occurred. Progress can be measured in terms of

- knowledge gain
- attitude change
- behavioral change
- skills developed
- awareness created
- action taken
- as well as other measures.

Why evaluate?

There may be several reasons to evaluate a program.

- A stakeholder or decision maker will invariably ask you to produce results to justify funding or your time devoted to the effort
- You may want to ask yourself or others if the time spent in the program was "worth it." What has happened? Do the participants care, are they changing in a positive way or are you just there to entertain them?
- Is the program going just "okay?" If this is the case, maybe some changes need to be made. Then what will you change? How will you

know what to change in order to increase participation or effectiveness?
This is called formative evaluation.

- You may need to show results to justify further educational programs or to apply for outside funding
- Your boss may require it
- You are just curious

Before planning an evaluation process, determine WHAT you are evaluating. Don't feel as if you have to measure and analyze every move. This will drive you crazy! But to answer this question, you may need to *first determine if you are evaluating a total PROGRAM initiative or a small one-time workshop*. If it is a total program initiative, your evaluation plan will be far more detailed. If it is just the evaluation of a workshop or a seminar, then the evaluation will be far less detailed. I call this BIG 'P' programming versus little 'p' programming. The big 'P' is for longer, more in depth and extensive initiatives involving several ways to approach a central topic. Examples of little 'p' programming is a one-time workshop, a quarterly newsletter, a one-day conference with multiple learning sessions, or a guest lecture.

Some ways to evaluate	Program initiative	Short term program
Pre and post test of knowledge, attitude, skill	An appropriate measure with the pretest representing a baseline	An appropriate measure to assess awareness or attitude
Focus group interview	Appropriate as a pre/post or post only measure	Not appropriate
Telephone survey	Appropriate as a pre/post or post only measure	Appropriate as a follow-up asking if they used information
Satisfaction rating scale - did you like the session	Not appropriate	Appropriate to give instructor feedback on style and usefulness of material
Client stories	Appropriate indication of individual need, need being met or involvement	Not appropriate
Testimonials	Appropriate	Appropriate as

		indication of the value participant sees in what was presented.
Pre and post -- at post	On the same sheet of paper, have participants reflect (pre) by rating what they knew before and now. Sometimes people don't know what they didn't know until they saw the vastness of the topic's potential-- which required additional learning.	Appropriate
Tracking actions	Appropriate when there is a baseline against which to track - Examples: phone calls to a new number, reports of child abuse within a month	Not appropriate

For additional information about how to plan effective PROGRAM evaluation, see this web site: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/nfr>

Family and Parent Education Evaluation

This was the original guideline for designing an evaluation form for CEMP 9 - FAMILY AND PARENT EDUCATION. By working through this example, you will have a form to use and return to the State work group for reporting purposes. There are 2 objectives. Be sure to identify with which objective this evaluation has been used. For additional information about CEMP9 evaluating, see the [Evaluation and Reporting Manual](#). *This was revised in January, 2000.*

(Note this evaluation form is here for archival purposes or as a sample to guide additional evaluation.)

To use this evaluation form:

1. Place a heading on your evaluation form that states the name of the county and the date of the learning session began.
2. Identify the objective at the top of the evaluation form that you create. Then list the TOPIC of the learning session, the target AUDIENCE for which the program has been designed, and the DELIVERY METHOD used. For example:

Objective number 1. Topic The homework blues

Audience Parents of school-age children in XYZ Apartment Complex

Delivery Method Two-hour workshop

Other target audiences may include (these are just examples):

Parents with young children
TANF eligible parents
Parents in XYZ Apartment complex
Parents with preschool children
Parents of adolescents

Adolescent parents
Parent educators
Child care providers
Incarcerated parents
Step parents
Single parents
Grandparents
Foster Parents
Other _____

Other Delivery Methods may include (these are just examples):

One-hour workshop
6-week session for 2 hours each
Display at a fair
Home visits
Small group computer assisted instruction
Radio call-in program
Satellite session (list length)
Monthly Newsletter to subscribers
Extension resource library
Semester credit course
On-site child care center training (length)

2. You have already selected the evaluative items for this objective. Recall the ones you are targeting to guide you in this section. You may add up to 3 of your own evaluative items if you wish. You may extend statements to be more descriptive.

Evaluative items:

Increase knowledge
Increase resource use
Increase problem-solving/decision making skills
Increase goal-setting ability
Increase activism, involvement
Improve health (physical or mental)
Increase safety/security
Change behavior of self or group (family)
Improve social skills
Improve stress management
Increase respect for differences
Improve communication skills
Increase flexibility/adaptability
Strengthen/enhance relationships
Develop new support networks
Organize/develop coalitions
Improve quality of life

For example -- if you are using the topic listed above (homework), to work towards your pre-determined goals of IMPROVING STRESS MANAGEMENT and STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS, then you may query with the following items on an evaluation form:

Improve stress management

- a. Learned strategies to use when tempers flare over homework
- b. Learned how to teach child to take personal responsibility for homework.

Strengthen relationships

- a. Learned how to structure child's time to assure homework is completed
- b. Learned about the emotional stages of development for school-age children

3. There are certain demographics we would like to have you include on each evaluation form. These should all be the same no matter the program. You may add more for your own information, but please use these as well.

Demographics:

a. What is your relationship to the child:

Mother

Father

Grandparent

Step parent

Caregiver

Other _____

b. What most closely describes your race/ethnicity?

White/Euro-American

African American

Hispanic/Latino

Native American

Asian

Bi-racial

Other _____

4. List the evaluation items to design your form and create a rating scale for the participants to complete on each item. You may add any other question on the end (in what other sessions are you interested, was the location suitable, what other method of learning do you prefer? etc.)

Thus your evaluation instrument would look like this:

Evaluation

Date

County name

Objective number 1. Topic The homework blues

Audience Parents of school-age children in XYZ Apartment Complex

Delivery Method Two-hour workshop

Thank-you for attending this learning program. Please help continue to improve Extension programs for you!
Please rate how this program has been useful to you relate to your children.

		<u>Not Useful</u>					<u>Most Useful</u>
1. Improved stress management							
	a. Learned strategies to use when tempers flare over homework	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
	b. Learned how to teach child to take personal responsibility	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
2. Strengthen relationships							
	a. Learned how to structure child's time to assure homework is completed	1	2	3	4	5	6 7
	b. Learned about the emotional stages of development for school-age children	1	2	3	4	5	6 7

Please circle the best descriptor of you.

3. What is your relationship to the child:

- a. Mother
- b. Father
- c. Grandparent
- d. Step parent
- e. Caregiver
- f. Other_____

4. What most closely describes your race/ethnicity?

- a. White/Euro-American
- b. African American
- c. Hispanic/Latino
- d. Native American
- e. Asian
- f. Bi-racial
- g. Other_____

How do you select an evaluation method?

Will you want numbers of text as an outcome? Refer to what you hope to accomplish in each objective you have written. Then respond Yes or No to the following questions for each objective.

1. Is your expected outcome a value (number, time)? (- to attract an audience of 50 parents, to offer 15 sessions to 20 parents)	Y	N
2. Are you interested in HOW things are going? (- how has this experience made you a better parent?)	Y	N
3. Do your objectives specify behaviors that must change? (-90% of the parents will learn a new practice)	Y	N
4. Do you want to know if your time with this program was well spent?	Y	N
5. Are delivery methods or activities the focus of the objective? (-To mail 500 new parent newsletters)?	Y	N
6. Are you interested in knowing the perspectives of others and how to improve or expand teaching?	Y	N
7. Is there a time by which the objective is to be achieved? (- The group will complete the self-study course within 6 weeks)	Y	N
8. Do you want reasons and explanations? Do you need to make recommendations based on human practices?	Y	N
9. Are you looking for a patterns, themes, relationships, or causes?	Y	N
10. Are you looking for respondents answers instead of supplying a list for them from which to select responses?	Y	N
11. Would participants' quote be helpful in future marketing or sustaining the program?	Y	N
12. Do you want to know HOW many attended or participated?	Y	N

List the Y and N responses here:

1. ___ 7. ___

2. ___ 8. ___

3. ___ 9. ___

4. ___ 10. ___

5. ___ 11. ___

6. ___ 12. ___

Evaluating Exercise Key:

If your responses to questions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 12 was yes, you may be interested in a quantitative measure for your evaluation. Quantitative measures take counts and are reported in the outcomes as numbers. This is usually quantitative (quantity) documenting numbers.

For quantitative process evaluation you might assess not only the number of people who attend but how their composition (age, race, or economic class) represents the composition of your community. You might also measure if you did what you said you would do. This method also assesses participant satisfaction. Process evaluation measures how well the process is working.

You may wish to select one of these methods:

- Counting participation
- Measuring knowledge (scales of esteem, knowledge of facts)
- Measuring changes in attitude
- Measure changes in behavior
- Measure satisfaction level (rating scales)
- Using a pre/post/follow-up about learning process
- Using post only
- Using a post then pretests regarding the learning process
- Tracking community changes (demographics, events)
- Tracking economic benefits

Sample data that would be collected with process evaluation:

-Seventy-five attended the initial orientation meeting for the NEW program.

-Eighty-five percent of parents report they intend to use the information from the workshop.

-Thirty-seven percent of county high school seniors report use of alcohol in the past 30 days.

If your responses to questions 2,4,6,7,8,10, and 11 was yes, you may be interested in using a qualitative measure for your evaluation. Qualitative measures are generally reported in text using examples from anecdotes and success stories. Direct quotes add richness to the report. It might also be useful for you to gather follow-up information a few weeks, months, or years after the conclusion of your program. You can see how all these different kinds of evaluation information can help you improve your program and persuade stakeholders of the merit of your program.

Qualitative data is often referred to as outcome data. It evaluated is the program worked, did it do what it claimed to do and talks about outcomes that you directly were able to change. We also talk about impact data. This is sometimes measured qualitatively as well. With impact data you want to know if the program made a difference in people's lives. Impacts may take many years to realize. If you are addressing a human risk factor then this would take many years to realize the effects of the program. If you are working on developing trust between a parent and newborn, then not until several years later will you be able to OBSERVE or have parents report behaviors for effect.

- Professional observation and feedback
- Judgements and comments by participants
- Stories that describe events and historical events leading up to changes
- Success stories
- Focus group discussion
- Person to person or telephone interviews
- Transformative interview data
- Goal Attainment Scaling
- Input from community professionals

For examples of these see: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nnfr>

Note: Sometimes you will need to evaluate on more than one level. Process only data may be insufficient, outcome only doesn't get at the whole picture, but impact can create frustration in waiting for effect.

KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY KEY		
t=quantitative		
l=qualitative		
T1. Is your expected outcome a value(number, time)? (- to attract an audience of 50 parents, to offer 15 sessions to 20 parents)	Y	N
T2. Are you interested in HOW things are going? (- how has this experience made you a better parent?)	Y	N
T3. Do your objectives specify behaviors that must change? will learn a new practice)	Y	N
T4. Do you want to know if your time with this program was well spent?	Y	N
L5. Are delivery methods or activities the focus of the objective? (-To mail 500 new parent newsletters)?	Y	N
L6. Are you interested in knowing the perspectives of others and how to improve or expand teaching?	Y	N
L7. Is there a time by which the objective is to be achieved? (- The group will complete the self-study course within 6weeks)	Y	N
L8. Do you want reasons and explanations? Do you need to make recommendations based on human practices?	Y	N
L9. Are you looking for a patterns, themes, relationships, or causes?	Y	N
L10. Are you looking for respondents answers instead of supplying a list for them from which to select responses?	Y	N
L11. Would participants' quote be helpful in future marketing or sustaining the program?	Y	N
T12. Do you want to know HOW many attended or participated?	Y	N

Choosing Program Delivery Method

(Excerpts from North Carolina Extension publication SD-6 by Dr. John G. Richardson.)

The selection of delivery methods for a program delivery section should be based on:

- the needs and preferences of the targeted audience
- the specific educational objective
- the characteristics of the delivery method
- the method's utility for providing desired learning support

Delivery methods have multiple uses. In most cases, it will be necessary to use more than one method particularly since individuals all have different learning styles. To promote effective learning, program delivery whenever possible should include methods that provide experiential opportunities, reinforce the learner, and provide opportunities to use the new information with existing knowledge and skills.

Experiential methods allow the learner to feel the information presented. This may occur through physical activity or it may involve the senses, emotions, or social interaction depending on the content of the educational program.

Reinforcement methods provide informational, emotional, or social support for the learner to facilitate learning and enhance or maintain the motivation to continue in the learning process.

Integrative methods provide the learner opportunities to discuss, clarify, or otherwise gain greater understanding of new information. These methods generally allow the learner to merge new information with their existing knowledge.

There are other methods that are useful for a wide variety of situations and fit in more than one of the other categories.

For additional information see this web site:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/nfr>

Learning Styles

We are each born with a learning style. There are basically four types and some combination types. To assess what type of learner you are or the learners in your group, you can use the following handout to quickly assess this.

When building educational programs, design a sprinkling of activities that use each of the learning styles so that each person can grasp the information.

Recognize that there are a variety of learning types. We don't all approach tasks the same, nor are we all appreciative of the same rewards.

Learning Styles

Circle the response you prefer in each row.

Preference	Learner A	Learner B	Learner C	Learner D
How you become interested	You'll like it!	You'll learn something!	You'll be able to use it!	You'll have fun!
How you are encouraged	Experience it!	You'll understand it	Apply it!	Try it!
What question do you prefer?	What does it mean to you?	What have you learned?	How does it work?	How is it going?
How do you decide?	Listen to your "inner voice."	Think it through carefully	Solve it	How does it feel?
What type of learning experience you prefer	Personal experiences, self-discovery and time	Presentations by experts, discussions, readings	Experiments, workshops, problem-solving	Activities, independent projects, involvement with others
How do you gauge success?	It is meaningful to me	It is intellectually sound	It works	See what happens
Words to use to recognize you	Very insightful!	Good thinking!	Great job!	Cool!
How you like to be supported	I'll stand by you	I'll help you find the information	I'll tell and show you (tools and instruction)	I'll let you do it (freedom)
What you want	Unconditional love and harmony	Intellectual stimulation and fairness	Respect and guidance	Friendship and flexibility
What you have to offer	Imagination and insight	Curiosity and knowledge	Practicality and skills	Energy and enthusiasm

Total checked for

each column _____ A _____ B _____ C _____ D

Source: PETALS Parents Exploring Teaching and Learning Styles, Jackie Savage, JAS Group, Cary, NC.

What kind of learner are you?

Learner A - Imaginative

Likes personal creativity, needs personal meaning, likes listening, counsel, sharing. Allow for time alone. Explain the "Why" of learning. Encourage self-exploration, brainstorming, one-on-one discussion. Discuss feelings, use poetry, music, rhymes. Raise questions of personal importance.

Learner B - Inquisitive

Likes to analyze, weigh options, then piece a solution together. Likes to design experiments, go to museums, expert presentation, organizing information. Likes to write summaries, essays. Likes fact based information. Provide readings and videos. Learn through questions. May retreat to figure things out first. Systematic

Learner C - Practical

This is a hands-on person, can fix things, likes puzzles, step-by-step problem solving. Facts, schedules, information, workbooks, clear goals and planning is important. These learners don't mind memorizing and so-it-yourself instruction. They may need to know the time frame for completion and value problem solving abilities. Very focused.

Learner D - Dynamic

This action oriented learner likes to try new things, will jump in and just "do it", dislikes too much structure and likes to approach tasks differently. Independent learning, exploration and risk-taking are preferences. These learners are able to see the larger picture and can juggle many different tasks at once.

Note that sometimes there are combinations of these (close scores).

Targeting your Parenting Audiences

Before planning a parent educational program, it is a worthwhile exercise to think about what you personally bring to the learning situation. Extension

Educators have many, many strengths, however knowing about every audience and every content area is difficult. As a parenting educator, you will want to think through areas in which you need additional preparation and knowledge. An excellent parenting education planning web site with a section on "personal perspectives" is located at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/nnfr> on the World Wide Web.

In this section, a brief introduction to some of the many diverse audiences with which we may work is presented. Following each section is a listing of some of the current titles or RESOURCES we have on hand located in the Agriculture Communications Media library. These are available for loan by calling (919) 515-2861 or e-mailing medialib@ces.ncsu.edu to request them by title. These resources were written with the target audience in mind, but depending on the needs of the parents, many other resources may be necessary to meet their learning needs.

Divorcing families

More than half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce; the majority involve children. Divorce is one of the most stressful life events a person can experience. This is true for both the person who sought the divorce (the leaver) or the person who was unprepared for divorce (the left).

The spouse who is the leaver often experiences a heightened sense of remorse and guilt while the left spouse may be unprepared for the marriage to end. The more sudden and unexpected the announcement, the more stressful the initial emotional reaction.

The decision to divorce is typically made with ambivalence, uncertainty and confusion. It is a difficult step. The family identity changes, and the identities of the individuals involved change as well.

Grief over the loss or death of a marriage is somewhat like the grief process described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) in *On Death and Dying*. That is, you may experience feelings of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally, acceptance, although there will likely be no order or pattern to your feelings of grief.

For example, one may begin the divorce process with a feeling of acceptance but later find themselves sinking into depression or becoming filled with rage.

Mourning and a sense of loss are common for both partners. Even if one person no longer loves their partner, they may still mourn the loss of the dream of living happily ever after.

If you have children, you may grieve because you will see less of them, or you may feel guilty about the changes in their lives that will be caused by the divorce.

Grief is normal, but if the intensity of grieving is too great or the grieving period seems to go on too long, then seeking counseling may be helpful and appropriate.

Couples facing divorce soon realize that divorce is not an event with a clear beginning and an end, it is a process. This process often begins long before any legal action and may last for years afterward, especially if children are involved.

According to Paul Bohannon (1970), the divorce process consists of several overlapping stages or experiences.

He has labeled and defined them as follows:

- The legal divorce -- the dissolution or ending of the marriage by the courts.
- The emotional divorce -- the chain of events and feelings that lead up to and continue through the divorcing process; the emotional separation or disengagement from your partner.
- The economic divorce -- the division of money and property, requiring individuals who once functioned as a couple to learn to function independently.
- The co-parental divorce -- the negotiation of parenting following separation.
- The community divorce -- the changes in relationships with friends and community during divorce.
- The psychic divorce -- the process of separating oneself from the spouse and developing autonomy.

(Source: Human Environmental Sciences publication GH6601 -- Reviewed July 15, 1997
Focus on Families: Divorce and Adults by Marni Morgan and Marilyn Coleman, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Missouri-Columbia)

Resources

Parenting Apart: Strategies for Effective Co-Parenting (divorce)
Children in the Middle
When Mom and Dad Break Up

Single parents

The growth in number of one-parent families with children has been one of the most dramatic changes in family composition of the last two decades. In the previous three decades, from 1940 to 1970, one-parent families constituted a consistent and stable proportion of families with children --about 10 percent. Today, 20 percent of families with children are one-parent families. The U.S. Census projects that 60 percent of the children born today will live in a one-parent home at some time before they reach the age of 18.

The trend toward lone-parenthood has two sources: a high divorce rate and out-of-wedlock births. In 1986, 42 percent of all single mothers were divorced women and 29 percent were never-married mothers. About a fifth of white families with children currently are maintained by one parent, while over half of black families with children are now headed by mothers. Among whites, divorced mothers constitute the largest group of single parents; whereas, among blacks, never-married mothers make up the largest portion. Families are changing as the world changes around them.

The terms "one-parent families," "lone-mother families" or "mother- only families" evoke the stereotype of the young and poor and never married. The reality reveals a more highly diversified group; one- parent families vary considerably in age, race, gender, family condition, and history. The problems faced by one-parent families may stem from a variety of causes: the lack of support from the absent parent, inadequacy of earnings or the inability to work, inadequate or expensive child care, to mention a few.

Children growing up in many one-parent families face multiple challenges. While it is important to note that living in a one- parent home does not automatically mean a child is at risk, certain combinations of risk factors have been shown to be particularly detrimental. For example, living in a one-parent home that also has a low income places a child at added risk. The increase in one-parent families is a major reason for the increased number of children living in poverty. The poverty rate for female-headed families is five times that for married-couple families.

Single working mothers had median incomes in 1985 equal to about 75 percent of the incomes of families headed by sole fathers and half the incomes of traditional husband/wife families with one wage earner.

Some food for thought about single parent families:

- When tension is high between parents on their way to divorcing, children's emotional needs are often ignored. Rules are not consistently enforced and children feel less secure. When tension is gone, single parents can focus more on children's needs and return to greater consistency in rule enforcement.
- A single parent may have greater flexibility in planning time with children. Single parents aren't distracted by the expectations or time demands of another adult. With fewer schedules to negotiate, there may be greater flexibility to spend time with each child.
- Single-parent families may become more interdependent, working-together approach to problem solving and daily living. Single parents depend more heavily on the voluntary cooperation of their children. This cooperation is encouraged by holding family councils, where children are involved directly in decision-making and solving problems. When children are thus involved, they are more likely to help carry out the decisions.
- Single parenting provides many challenges that are opportunities for growth and sharing. Single parents often need to develop new skills and obtain additional education. While it isn't easy, pursuing the task of balancing a full-time job with full responsibilities for housework and parenting can help make us stronger people.
- Children have wider experiences because they may go between two differing spheres of influence. Each single-parent family will have its own unique influence. This can be a broadening experience for children.
- The extended single parent community can provide support. Single parent families are not necessarily isolated or cut off from the broader community. Nor do they necessarily lack support. Groups for single parents such as Parents Without Partners can be a valuable resource for activities, sharing, personal growth and forming new relationships.
- Young people may feel more needed and valued as contributing members of the household. I still remember Mom's "duty lists" she gave out each Saturday. All five of us were expected to fulfill our responsibilities. Failure to do so only placed increased burdens on Mom. In two-parent families, parents share the major responsibilities. In single parent families, each child's help is needed and vital in day-to-day living.

As a result, they may feel more valued and realize the importance of their contribution.

Resources:

Empowering Single-Parent Families

Single Parenting

Vital Link: Single Parent Family

Single Parent & Blended Families: How the School can Help.

Supportive Connections: Rural Communities and Single Parent Families

Step Parents

About 20% of U.S. children live in step families. Another 20% shuttle between divorced bioparents, many of whom will remarry. Around 2 of 3 step family remarriages eventually split up now, vs. about half of first unions. Most of these remarriages followed a prior divorce for at least one partner. The trauma, stress, and pain of repeated marital and family breakups is agonizing, deep, and long-lasting for kids, parents, and relatives alike. The emotional and social costs are enormous.

Divorce and remarriage each change, but don't end the biofamily relationships involved! All stepparents re/marry at least 2 adults and 1 child - not just their beloved mate alone. Co-parents (and others) can avoid unconsciously adopting unrealistic step family expectations by:

- acknowledging clearly: "we're all equal members of a normal multi-home step family";
- believing "what we don't know about step family norms can hurt us all!";
- learning "how does our step family differ from a typical biofamily? and "what's normal in a typical step family?"

Some issues of concern:

- Grieving losses

- Family histories, rituals and traditions
- New relationships
- Divided loyalties
- Meeting everyone's expectations
- Roles, rules and responsibilities
- Finances

For more information, see NC Fact sheet # HE 398-2Stepfamilies

Resources:

Blended Families

Step parenting

Strengthening Step families

Grandparents

Presently nearly 4 million children in the United States live with grandparents. Over one-third (1.5 million) of these children do so without their own parents living with them. Countless other grandparents and other concerned relatives are dealing with situations in which they wish their grandchildren lived in safer, healthier environments. This is a generation of older people between the ages of 40 and 80 who are deeply involved, in a non-traditional way, with their grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, and even needy children unrelated by blood. At a time when they expected to be leading very different lives grandparents are enmeshed in diapers, PTA, Little League, and Girl Scouts, not to mention the court system, social services departments, mental health professionals, special education services, and health care battles.

A few additional facts:

- Nearly 46% of the children living with grandparents are African-American and 12% are Hispanic.

- Reported reasons that children live with grandparents includes parental substance abuse (44%), child abuse or neglect/abandonment (28%), teen-age pregnancy (11%) in addition to death of a parent, parental unemployment, parental divorce (all 5% or less)
- About half (49%) have children in their care more than two years.
- 71% of grandparents report their role as primary caregiver as permanent

Resources:

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Grandparenting

Grandparent Connection

Teen and Adolescent Parents

Teenage pregnancy and parenthood are not new, but the circumstances surrounding them are. Twenty years ago, teen parents were usually married, and the father either was or had a good prospect of earning a wage to support a family. Today a teen parent is more likely to be unmarried, and both parent and child are likely to live in poverty with minimal prospects of economic independence.

Adolescents face higher medical and psychological risks in pregnancy than do women who are older. When they become pregnant, teenage mothers are 15 percent more likely to suffer from hypertension, 92 percent more likely to be anemic, 23 percent more likely to give birth prematurely with an increased rate of neonatal mortality and developmental retardation. Negative psychosocial

consequences of teenage pregnancy include reduced educational attainment, single parenthood, marital instability, economic problems, difficulties in family size regulation, difficulties in child rearing, and heightened prospect for welfare dependency.

When working with adolescent and teen parents, consider that they are just that--adolescents. They are developing a self-identity, concerned with body image, seeking peer acceptance, have an emerging sexual identity, and experimenting as well as pushing for independence. They may be moody or reactive and vague about career plans. They are typically "present-oriented."

When teens become parents, the adolescent must reorganize his/her role. Sometimes the role of parenthood can conflict with the needs of adolescents. For example body image may influence breast-feeding choices (Leitch, 1998).

Teaching must occur as it would for an adolescent--realizing that identity is still developing, that they have not completed their own childhoods and they still have many often unrealistic dreams and fantasies. Remember there are two parents and consider ways to involve both in learning about being a parent. Another key factor to remember is that school completion and breaking the barriers to completing school* is critical to the economic independence of this family. Additionally, the early years for the newborn child is critical in forming an early attachment between the parent and child. These are key areas in which to focus programs.

See the Adolescent development section for more information on adolescents.

Source:

Leitch, M. L. (1998). Contextual Issues in Teen Pregnancy and Parenting: Refining our scope of inquiry. Family Relations. 47(2). 145-148.

Resources

Just a Beginning...Prenatal Care for Teens

Mentor Mom Program

Resource Mothers

Four Pregnant Teenagers

Just a Beginning...Prenatal Care for Teens

* See section on low literacy and school completion

Parents with Low Literacy

More than 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth-grade level -- far below the level needed to earn a living wage and over 40 million Americans age 16 and older have significant literacy needs. The National Literacy Act defines literacy as "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job

and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

As the education level of adults improves, so does their children's success in school. Helping low-literate adults improve their basic skills has a direct and measurable impact on both the education and quality of life of their children.

A substantial number of children are being born or are growing up in circumstances that put them at risk of low achievement and school failure. Each of these conditions -- low parent education and poverty are two -- has been shown to increase a child's chances of experiencing problems in school. These problems include having to repeat one or more grades, requiring remedial instruction or special educational services, being suspended or expelled from school, and, perhaps eventually, dropping out before finishing high school.

Data from the National Health Interview Survey on Child Health have shown parent education to be a better predictor of grade repetition than family income, welfare and poverty status, family structure, ethnic group, or family size.

Nationally, almost one in every four babies born each year in the U.S. is born to a mother who has not completed high school (NCHS, 1991b). Research has shown that these children are one and a half times more likely to repeat a grade in school than those whose parents' have a high school degree, and almost five times more likely to repeat a grade in school than children whose parents have graduate education. The situation is even more alarming for rural children. According to a government study, nonmetro children of parents with less than a high school degree are almost 12 times as likely to live in poverty as those whose parents have 2 or more years of college (Evans, 1991).

-Children of adults who participate in literacy programs improve their grades and test scores, improve their reading skills, and are less likely to drop out.

-Forty-three percent of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty; 17 percent receive food stamps, and 70 percent have no job or a part-time job.

-Workers who lack a high school diploma earn a mean monthly income of \$452, compared to \$1,829 for those with a bachelor's degree.

The KIDS COUNT 1997 Databook identified several factors that help protect against female high school dropout. These include:

- Access to adequate preschool programs that prepare students to learn.
- Early identification of at-risk students, particularly in elementary school and during transition periods from elementary school to junior high, and from junior high to high school.
- Individualized attention for youth at risk of dropping out.
- Presence of teachers able to identify and address cultural differences that might affect minority students.
- Access to physical and mental health services in schools.
- Supportive services to teen parents such as child care and mentoring.
- Services to children with disabilities, especially behaviorally disordered children. [Source](#)

In North Carolina, adult basic skills / literacy education includes several different programs, each designed to serve a particular population. The types of basic skills / literacy programs offered are:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE): A program of basic skills for adults, 16 years of age or older and out of school, who function at less than a high school level.
- Basic Literacy A program of basic skills for adults, 16 years of age or older and out of school who function at beginning literacy level. This term is used primarily by volunteer organizations.
- Adult High School (AHS): A program of instruction offered cooperatively with local public school system to help adults earn an Adult High School Diploma.
- Compensatory Education (CED): A program to compensate mentally handicapped adults who have not had an education or who have received an inadequate one.
- English as a Second Language (ESL): A program of instruction to help adults with limited or no English language proficiency.
- General Educational Development (GED): A program of instruction designed to prepare adult students to pass the GED tests that lead to a high school diploma equivalency.
- Workplace Literacy: A program designed to help adults improve basic skills, especially skills needed in the workplace.
- Family Literacy: A program designed to help adults improve basic skills with an emphasis on parenting and parent and child interaction.

Source: From the National Institute for Literacy, 800 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006-2712 -- 202/632-1500

<http://novel.nifl.gov> | http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/facts_overview.html

Resources:

Parenting Skills Workshop Series , Strong Families, Resourceful Living Series

Low Income Parents

In 1995, 21% of children in the U.S. were poor. Poor adults comprise 11 percent of the poverty rate (CDF, 1997). New legislative actions regarding welfare reform have affected families in many differing ways. Families at risk, struggling with today's social problems (including educational failure, teen pregnancy, single parenting, unemployment, inadequate housing, homelessness, substance abuse, and AIDS) exist in every town and city in America. These families can be members of any ethnic group, at high as well as low socioeconomic levels. Individual victims of these at risk situations can be any age, from infants to the elderly: preschool victims of abuse, adolescents dropping out of school, adults dependent on drugs or drug dealing, or older persons slowly dying of malnutrition.

Current national, state, and local studies indicate, however, that young families (families with children from birth through the teen years) represent the highest percentage of vulnerable Americans. They tend to be found either clustered in housing developments in the inner-cities or isolated in rural areas. Most of these families live in poverty, struggling to make ends meet from day to day. Researchers see increasing numbers of young families caught in cycles of poverty. This trend

indicates the possibility of a permanent underclass. Public policy experts are concerned that current intervention strategies are not enough. More in-depth interventions are needed to deal with the environmental as well as the individual needs of families.

Through empowerment, individuals and families can move away from the despair of long-term poverty and begin taking advantage of opportunities that could lead to a better quality of life. Before educators can effectively implement this model, it is important that they understand whom they are helping and why their "helpees" are caught in situations that prohibit personal growth. Keep in mind Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Assess where parents are in the pyramid and begin there. Building trust may begin in a different content area than parenting.

Source:

Children's Defense Fund State of America's Children, 1997

Marge Slinski, Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Specialist

Resources:

Resourceful Living Series

African American parents

Since many of the all time favorite parenting curricula have been designed for and by a white middle class audience, it is important to be aware of and pay attention to the images and values you are conveying.

Sometimes there is a confounding of the variables of race and class. America's racism puts people of color at a disadvantage even with a good education or a middle class income. TheParentLinkguide for selecting African American curriculum indicates that ...the current status of race is still one that one must fight to be validated regardless of individual skill, education, or expertise. Parents need to empower children to live in a race conscious world.

Parents play a major role in their children's development of self-esteem and racial identity. Attitudes about the race are developed unconsciously, and according to Toni Weaver (To Change the Future-Change the Children) most parents teach their children to "love" one another and to be "nice" but with many families, there is a "but" associated with this rule often in the name of self-protection.

If the facilitator is not of the same race as predominant in the audience, consider partnering with a leader from that community of learners. Build trust by studying and reading, however, as with all audiences, get to know the parents involved as people and avoid stereotyping by race or any other characteristic.

Resources

Effective Black Parenting

Black Madonnas & Young Lions: A Rites of Passage for African American Adolescents

Diversity: Crossing The Lines "Make Contact" (for Asian too)

Valuing Diversity: Multi-cultural Communication

Latino/Hispanic Parents

From 1980 to 1989, the Census Bureau reported a thirty-nine percent increase in the national Hispanic population. The term Hispanic refers to people from Spain, Portugal, and countries in Latin America, generally Spanish speaking. Latinos in the United States predominately have origins in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala and Ecuador. As with any group, there is diversity among Latinos. Meeting the needs of Latino parents in the United States requires more than mere Spanish translations of parenting materials.

Language is a strong conveyor of culture however, a simple translation is not necessarily culturally sufficient. Parenting practices vary from culture to culture. Research findings show that Latinos have a group-specific preference for particular channels of information (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984). Some channels may be perceived as more credible than others due to cultural norms that include "hierarchical regard" or respect toward those with power and positions of authority within the home, state, and church. The level of respect paid and the type of relationship developed depends on the person's age, gender, and social class (Saracho & Hancock, 1986). Cultural scripts, or patterns of social interaction, are manifested in the acceptance of others' ideas and rights above personal rights as a way to maintain positive interpersonal relationships. The cultural script of "simpatía" emphasizes the expectation of individuals to avoid interpersonal conflict and to expect high frequencies of positive social behaviors (Triandis et al., 1984).

Collectivism and familism are also important values for parenting educators to understand. Collectivism is a value in loyalty to and the contribution of the group--as opposed to focusing on a particular individual (Toro, 1996). Familism is a value that underlies the strong Latino identification with members of the extended family (Toro, 1996). After reviewing the literature on familism, Regear (1991) stated that the term familism is used to describe a cultural value that includes three elements: an integrated network of privileges and obligations that function to support the total family system; the interest of the family as a group has precedence over the individual's interests; and a sense of commitment to other family members.

Time orientation is also a cultural concept that may lead to misunderstandings in meeting times. Plan a meeting starting time, but loosely structure the beginning as an informal arrival time to allow for some latecomers.

If English is not the predominant language, parenting educators should consider partnering with a parent or another trusted individual from the Hispanic community, particularly for translation. Since children are more swiftly acculturated through the school systems, often parents depend on their children to translate and even interpret for them. Since children may not understand some adult concepts, this procedure can be difficult for the family. Consideration can be given, however, to including parent and child both in learning sessions and using language as a conduit to parent- to-child communication and learning.

Resources:

Los Ninos Bien Educados Program:

Parent Express Newsletter

Platica de Autoestima (Talking about Self-Esteem)

The Magic Years (Los Anos Magicos Newsletters)

Tabu

La sexualidad

La Familia

Nueva Familia

Diversity: Crossing The Lines "Make Contact" (for Asian too)

Valuing Diversity:Multi-cultural Communication

Asian-Pacific Islander

There are three general ethnicities within the Asian-Pacific Islander (API) community: (1) Pacific Islanders, mostly Hawaiians, Samoans, and Guamanians; (2) Southeast Asians, largely comprised of Indochinese from

Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Burmese and Philipinos; and (3) East Asians, including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

Not only do these three large groups differ, but subgroups within each group often also differ, so it is important not to generalize an understanding of one group to another. For example, although both groups are Indochinese, the Vietnamese, many with a Chinese ancestry, are very literate and can easily find work in America, while the Hmong have no written language, and their skills frequently do not meet American labor needs.

Immigrants from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are more likely to have a middle-class background, while Southeast Asian refugees were mostly rural villagers or the urban poor. Middle-class APIs encourage intellectual ability and self-direction, and may have less trouble interacting with teachers. The fatalist beliefs and rigidity in thinking more common among poor and/or APIs can create communication problems with school personnel.

Asian Americans born in the U.S. can usually communicate with educators more easily than immigrants who had traumatic experiences in war or refugee camps. These experiences can also profoundly influence children's reaction to a new environment.

In general, APIs think about social institutions such as school quite differently from educators, seeing teachers as professionals with authority over their children's schooling. They believe that parents are not supposed to interfere with school processes, and may regard teachers who seek parent involvement as incompetent.

East Asians, particularly Chinese, highly value formal education, and believe that high achievement brings honor and prestige to the family, while failure brings shame. The intense pressure upon children to succeed often leads to intergenerational conflicts, and many API children suffer from test anxiety, social isolation, and low self-esteem because of their mediocre school performance.

Asians have difficulty accepting learning disabilities and depression, and believe that psychological distress is an indication of organic disorders and shameful to both the individual and the family.

A barrier to schooling for some Southeast Asians (rural Laotians, the Hmong, and Montagnards from Vietnam) is their prior lack of exposure to any writing

system. Their language problems may be increased by other psychological or physical problems such as learning disabilities and hearing impairment. So it may be difficult to separate language differences (characteristics of learning English as influenced by the native language) from speech disorders (language difficulties resulting from mental or physical disorders).

Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders perceive time as a process that lets different things happen at the same time. Westerners schedule events one at a time. Thus, API parents may come late for an appointment without apologizing, or seem to be inattentive when teachers are speaking. Some APIs, such as the Hmong, believe time itself can solve problems better than human intervention, and, therefore, don't like to move quickly to solve problems.

APIs, particularly East Asian Americans, behave politely and even submissively. They stay constantly "tuned" to the moods of the people they are talking to, and expect the others to do the same. In conversations, Asians nod their heads a lot, avoid eye contact, and usually don't speak spontaneously or critically. Westerners, who only pay attention to what is said, often ignore nonverbal cues. So, when Americans do not hear Asians disagree, they may move to resolve an issue, only to have the Asian Americans respond angrily because they were upset that the Americans did not understand their nonverbal messages.

Suggestions:

- Respect API cultural beliefs.
- Establish the professional's role and assume authority.
- Communicate in person, rather than in writing.
- Be clear and firm about meeting times.
- Be patient at meetings, and do not interrupt periods of silence.
- Watch for nonverbal cues.
- Understand that some APIs' smiles often express confusion and embarrassment, not pleasure.
- Provide clear and full information, such as what will be provided by, and is expected from, each person in the meeting.
- Be sensitive when asking for information about API's children, because many had bad experiences with authoritarian systems, and because they don't like to talk about themselves.
- Deal with immediate needs and give concrete advice.
- Reach agreement by compromising.
- Explain that parent involvement is a tradition in American education.

- Encourage involvement without increasing family tension; respect that tradition demands that the young obey the elderly, even though in daily life English literate teenaged APIs often serve as interpreters and participants in family decision-making.
- Offer a family English literacy project to help parents understand how teaching and learning takes place in the U.S., and to bridge the generation gaps within families.
- Make it clear that a child's psychosocial problems are not a source of shame, and that cooperation between the family and the professionals can solve them.

Source: Information in this guide was drawn from a digest published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education: Beyond Culture: Communicating with Asian American Children and Families. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Box 40, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, 800/601-4868, FAX: 212/678-4012. Internet: eric-cue@columbia.edu

Resources

Diversity: Crossing The Lines "Make Contact"

Valuing Diversity: Multi-cultural Communication

Native America Parents

As with other cultures, there is not a standard approach to working with Native Americans. Research the tribes of the parents with whom you will be working. Beliefs and traditions differ among the 500 tribes in the United States.

Be prepared to address issues of mixed-tribe or mixed-race marriage and children. Distinguish between biology (Native America blood) and lifestyles (living the old way) when involving parents in activities. Some parents may not identify with the biological and some may not identify with the lifestyles. Teaching the Native American tradition is often done by a teacher modeling the designed behavior. Be aware of conflicts that may arise between Christian and Native American beliefs. Using all the senses (including imagery) when teaching is effective with some learners.

Source: ParentLink Guide to Choosing Native America Parenting Curriculum

Resources: Bitter Earth, Teaching The Native American

Fathers

Good fathering is hard work, but the most important kind of work men can do (Pickard, 1998).

That fathers care is documented in a variety of reports and studies (e.g., Achatz and MacAllum, 1994; Bowman, 1990; Lamb, et al., 1982). Father caring may assume many different forms -- from emotional commitment to children's development to hands-on support in the home and responsibility for child care.

The research in the area is constrained, however, by a narrow focus on fathers in middle-class, well-educated, white, intact families. Some understanding of the possibilities for father caring is limited by the newness of the field (which is less than 20 years old) and the exclusion of different populations of minorities, the poor, and the young from much of the literature.

Some of the current questions researchers are addressing (good for discussions!)

- What are the ways that fathers demonstrate that they care? What are examples of father attachment and support?
- What are the personal, familial, and social complexities to fathers caring? To what degree do these complexities revolve around social and developmental needs of young fathers or the problems encountered in making role transitions?
- What does it matter that a father is in the home-- to a child's emotional, social, and cognitive development? From the child's point of view, what difference does it make to live with or have access to one parent only?
- How does father absence affect family well-being? For example, how does father absence contribute to poverty in families?
- What is the relationship between father involvement and joblessness, particularly among African American fathers and other fathers of color? How does joblessness and limited access to well-paying employment affect family formation choices and patterns, parenting activities, and decisions to marry?
- What types of policies are necessary to respond to unemployment among young fathers, particularly African American fathers and other fathers of color?
- How do current and proposed initiatives, e.g., welfare reform, affect father involvement and support? How complex are the systemic barriers to father involvement, e.g., at local and state levels?

- What are the specific policy changes necessary to ensure father engagement and to support young parents' commitment to the welfare of their children? What is the nature of systemic barriers encountered by programs and fathers in providing support to their children, and what approaches do they use to override or minimize the impact of the barriers?
- What is the quantity and quality of social support available within families of origin, and how do these families influence the parenting behaviors of young fathers and their participation in co-parenting efforts?

Father presence matters -- in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development. Research on father presence is scant, one exception being Smith and Morgan's (1994) study on the impact of father presence on adolescent girls' delay of sexual activity. Rather, the importance of father presence typically is inferred or generalized from research on effects of father absence and information gleaned from practitioner reports. (Center for the Study of Social Policy and the Philadelphia Children's Network, 1994). Studies on father absence, similar to other research on families, focus primarily on adjustment to divorce. The enduring effects of living in a single-parent, female-headed household are unclear, although a variety of negative outcomes for children are associated with father absence (e.g., poor school performance, low self-esteem, early sexual activity, and economic deprivation).

Joblessness is a major impediment to family formation and father involvement. Work and the income associated with it are valued in most communities. Two decades ago, Goodwin found that people in all ethnic groups in American society, across social classes, seemingly value work for similar reasons, including feelings of self-worth, survival needs, and support of children and families. When the normal venues to obtain work are unavailable or inaccessible, many fathers -- particularly young fathers with few skills and few years of schooling -- either avoid the responsibility of supporting their children or often turn to informal economies (e.g., unrecorded and untaxed work such as car washing, home-based instrument repair, and the drug trade) to provide the necessary income.

Existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment operate to create obstacles and disincentives to father involvement. The disincentives are sufficiently compelling as to have prompted the emergence of a phenomenon dubbed "underground fathers" -- men who acknowledge paternity and are involved in the lives of their children but who refuse to participate as fathers in the formal systems. Research. However

indicates that children who experience positive father involvement are more likely to develop their personal resources and social competencies while paternally deprived children are at risk to suffer from psychological problems depending on their biological predisposition and social circumstances (Pickard, 1998).

A growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills to share the responsibility for parenting. The transition from biological father to committed parent has significant developmental implications for young fathers. Role transition is the process of changing from one set of expected behaviors in a social system to another (Allen and Van de Vliert, 1984).

Sources:

Pickard, M. J. (1998). Fatherhood in a contemporary society. Family Relations, 47 (2).

Resources: [Fathering:For Dads Only | What dads need to know about fathering](#)

Incarcerated Parents

1.5 million children in this country have parents who are in jail or prison. In addition to the 145,000 children whose mothers are incarcerated and the 1.38 million children who have incarcerated, fathers, there is another, perhaps larger population of children who have experienced the incarceration of a parent at some point in their lives.

As a result of parental incarceration, and the crimes and arrests that precede it, many of this population of children have experienced multiple placements, decreased quality of care, financial hardship and irreparable damage to family bonds. Because of these traumas, they are at risk for poor academic achievement, substance abuse, delinquency and criminal activity that can lead to their own incarceration.

Mandatory sentencing and a crackdown on crime have led to more people being incarcerated for longer periods of time. Women, in particular, are being imprisoned for non-violent drug offenses at a rapidly increasing rate. Of the 90,000 women in prison, more than 75% are mothers who have, on average, two children. One in five women now in prison lived in a family foster home

or group care facility while growing up, and about 4 of every 10 report that they were sexually abused before age 18.

The experiences and special needs of children with parents in prison have gone largely unrecognized. There are few statistics on children of offenders, and very little research is available. An estimated 42,000 children in out-of-home care have a parent in prison, but preliminary results of a recent CWLA survey indicate that few state child welfare agencies know how many children in their caseloads have incarcerated parents. The research on children of incarcerated parents indicate that the loss of a parental figure, especially the mother, has profound effects on children and adolescents. Children retain bonds and love for parents regardless of the label attached to her by society. For adolescents, parental incarceration has been associated with poor academic achievement, involvement in delinquency and gang-related activities, violence and eventually adult criminal behavior. One study estimated that children with imprisoned parents are almost six times more likely than their counterparts to become criminally involved and incarcerated at some point in their future.

As with any parent audience, sit down with a group of potential parent attendees and discuss their concerns about their children, their caregivers in the outside, and ways they can keep a positive presence in the lives of their children.

Resources not available in Media Center:

The Write Connection- A letter writing kit for incarcerated parents. 1-800-334-3143

Assessing short and Long Term Outcomes

- Were your objectives written in a way you could track progress?
- What parts of planning might you change with a similar program in the future?
- What are your expectations for the long term?
- What types of support or resources do you need at this point?

- Did your evaluation provide you with what you expected to learn?
- Did the way in which you measured your objectives answer your questions?
- How can you improve, adapt, change, lengthen, shorten or restructure your program?
- What have you learned that can be shared with others?
- Would you like to conduct a follow-up evaluation?

Report Outline

Many times people will complete a wonderful evaluation and never tell the story of what happened as a result of their program. Don't be guilty of this!! Use this format until you come up with your own methods of reporting.

a. Begin with a few basic demographics about the problem

Example: Children need good beginnings that start with their parents. That positive start is critical for children to develop healthy bodies, minds, feelings, and social skills. Positive attention to the development of trust the first year of life provides a lifelong basis of good relationships and a sense of belonging. Early academic performance and high quality child care lay a foundation for success measured in terms of enhanced lifetime earnings and increased employment rates.

b. List your basic objectives/intention of your program

Example: The XYZ program addressed the needs of children of teen parents. The intent was to teach and support first year attachment between teen parents and their infant children.

c. Report what you did in your program

Example: The program used multiple methods to address the needs of teen parents from a personal perspective and the perspective of their child. The personal areas that were addressed included personal support networks including their families, their schools, and the community; and the health and well being of the teen emotionally and physically. The areas addressed for the infant child included the physical, emotional and cognitive aspects of development.

Experienced parents were trained to serve as mentors to teen parents. They met at least weekly with the teen parentetc.

d. Report what results/outcomes you found. What happened as a result of the program? This can be orally delivered in paragraph form or written as bullets. Be sure to tie this to the original objectives.

Example: The success of the program was based on several types of evaluation. Teens were asked to complete an assessment of their child development knowledge during their 8th month of pregnancy. These results were compared to a second assessment using the same instrument after their child was 6 months of age. Their scores increased by 75%. A focus group evaluation was conducted separately with teen parents and with their parent mentors. Results indicated a theme of....etc. - Teens indicate they feel supported by this program

- 90% of the teens from the pilot have completed high school - Parents of teens indicate that they feel less stress after 6 months in the program due to the support system.

e. Strong Summary. Outline next steps, additional needs.

Example: As a result of this program, plans are to replicate this process in at least two other communities. The project advisory board has recommended seeking grant funding to support this effort. A full time staff person to administer the program will enhance this prevention educational outreach effort. The investment for this program will offset additional youth concerns that require intervention. Etc...

Report Checklist:

- The report includes information regarding results that address the stakeholder' needs.
- The results are of interest to your stakeholder
- The report is a concise, organized, clear presentation
- The report is brief one-page document front and back or a tri-fold for example.
- The report if used as a handout is printed on the quality paper using attractive fonts and layout. Appropriate art may be incorporated. Use of shading and boxes to highlight sections might be suggested.
- For presentation purposes, you have prepared legible easy to read overheads or used a computer graphics presentation
- If seeking additional funding, uses of funding needs are outlined.

- Separate report formats are used with different audiences.
- The report has been reviewed by others for typos, clarity, accuracy prior to printing the final version.
- This report can be used for marketing. Have you considered additional ways to distribute and present the information?

Redesigning Programs

The most important use of your evaluation results is to use the results to redesign your program so that it will be more effective.

Ask yourself:

- What did you learn?
- What worked?
- What did not work?
- What can you learn from the drop-outs?
- Can you call them and ask about why they were unable to complete the session?
- What changes can be made to the teaching?
- What did you learn from the audiences?
- What additional services should/could be added (transportation, child care, etc?)
- Were new issues identified along the way

There is a progression and a pattern to conducting educational programs. After you have proceeded through this decision tree, you can loop back to the beginning. There will be new issues, new goals and new objectives.

Generic Evaluation Form

Parenting Learning Session Evaluation Form

Name of program _____

Name of local program planner _____

Location of Program _____
 _____ Date _____

Circle the overall quality of the program.

	5=Outstanding 4=Good 3=Average 2=Fair 1=Poor				
1. Overall quality of program	5	4	3	2	1
2. Teaching effectiveness of the instructor(s)	5	4	3	2	1
3. Usefulness of the materials and activities	5	4	3	2	1
4. Program provided me with new knowledge	5	4	3	2	1
5. Program provided me with new skills	5	4	3	2	1
6. As a result of this program, I plan to _____ _____ _____					
7. Comments: _____ _____					

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 [● Starting and Ending Programs](#) |
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 [● Basics in Child Development](#) |
 [● Positive Guidance and Discipline](#) |
 [● School Readiness and Success](#) |
 [● Self-Esteem](#) |
 [● Talking About Acceptance](#) |
 [● Talking About Sexuality](#) |
 [● Talking About](#)

[Death](#) | ● [Talking About Violence](#) | ● [Family Fun](#) | ● [Changing Families](#) | ●
[Fatherhood](#)