

Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14

Door County Program Results 2008



**HELPING KIDS
HAVE A GREAT FUTURE**



"I learned how to listen more to my child about what bothers him or makes him happy."

The Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10 – 14 is an evidence-based, nationally recognized prevention program.

The Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP) was developed by Iowa State University and designed to prevent teen substance abuse and other behavior problems, strengthen parenting skills and build family strengths and resiliency. The Strengthening Families Program is an evidence-based program, which has been shown to be an effective **prevention** program and has been recognized as exemplary by six federal agencies including OJJDP and SAMHSA.

Funding for local programs is provided through a drug prevention grant from Door County Department of Community Programs with program support from the Door County Department of Social Services and the Wisconsin Inhalant Coalition - Aaron J. Wake Foundation. The program has been offered at least annually throughout Door County since 2003.



"We are strong and caring parents who show love and set limits. We are helping our kids become responsible young adults."

Motto for Parents

Though the program was developed as a prevention program, it has been utilized in Door County as an **intervention** program for several years. In 2008, the seven week program served high risk families (six adults and six youth) with a range of special needs including mental health issues, developmental disabilities and behavioral problems. Four professionals with special training and experience working with high risk populations facilitated the program sessions each week.

Cost-Benefits of the Strengthening Families Program

Cost-benefit calculations from a longitudinal prevention trial with Midwest families done by the Partnerships in Prevention Science Institute suggests a savings of \$9.60 for each dollar spent implementing the program. Analysis by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy resulted in two benefits: a return of \$7.82 for every dollar spent and a cost benefit of \$5,805 for each youth participating in SFP 10 -14.



The seven-week program has been offered throughout Door County since 2003

While it is unclear if these cost-benefits from a prevention standpoint would reflect savings gained with an intervention application, it may be reasonable to consider the savings of costs associated with placement in a residential care center as an alternative to the seven week program. Families participating in the fall 2008 program were high risk and acting out behaviors exhibited by youth combined with poor parenting practices and disabilities and/or mental health issues of parents and youth suggested out-of-home placement of several youth was a likely outcome.



"The steps we learned help resist peer pressure and bad things that others ask you to do."



"The most helpful parenting skills I learned were 5-minute chores and how to hold family meetings."



"When I speak with her using I statements, she tends to be less argumentative."

While the cost of residential care centers varies by facility and the specific needs of the child, based on the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services memo 2005-02, the average daily rate in 2005 (the most recent data available) was \$249 per day. If program participation prevented just one youth from being placed in a residential care center during the seven week program, \$12,201 in placement costs would have potentially been saved. Typically, placement of a youth in a residential care center is longer than seven weeks. The average length of stay for youth in alternate care also varies by age and type of placement. However based on the 2006 Wisconsin Children in Out of Home Care Report, the median time to discharge from out of home care for youth 10 – 14 years is between 95-187 days. For just one youth that would amount to an additional \$11,454 in cost savings.

The program operates locally on a budget of about \$1,200 which includes meals, child care costs and program participation incentives. Facilitator costs are provided as an in-kind contribution but would total about \$2,100 for four facilitators at \$25 per hour. Utilizing the placement figures above for just one youth, cost savings for the 2008 program are estimated at more than \$20,000.

Both parents and youth found value in the program.

Parents comments included:

"It can be a valuable tool to help you relate to your child."

"I have mentioned the program to others. I thought it was fun and a good learning tool."

"It's worth the time."

"I learned to take away privileges instead of just saying it and not doing it."

Youth shared:

"Eating dinner and spending time together was good."

"I learned how to say no to peer pressure, drugs and alcohol."

"I learned fun things about my mom."

All the participants completed a post workshop assessment. The parent survey used a four-point scale comparing parenting actions before and after the program. The most significant improvements were found in the following areas:

- letting youth know exactly what parents expect regarding alcohol and drug use
- being able to work with the youth to solve problems
- finding ways to encourage positive behavior
- being more likely to monitor the whereabouts of their youth

In addition to improvements reported by participants, significant behavioral changes were *observed* in parents and youth:

During dinner a mom became aware that her children were too disruptive and intervened before being asked to do so.

During a family session activity a youth self-monitored, removed himself from an inappropriate negative situation with peers and sat with his parent.

A youth sincerely apologized for her acting out behavior.

A youth was overheard making positive comments about her parent to another youth.

During a family session activity, a youth recognized she was transferring negative emotions associated with her dad to her "foster" father. Because of this breakthrough, the family reports they have made significant progress in family therapy, have better communication and have formed a stronger family connection.

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