

Pam Peterson
Family Living Educator – Door County
Plan of Work

2008

**Preventing Child Maltreatment; Fostering Resiliency Factors
in At-risk Individuals and Vulnerable Family Systems**

Affiliate State Teams: Families in Stress & Transition

Situational Analysis and Priority Setting

In our society families are formed and structured in a variety of ways. Different family formations provide different challenges and resources for families. Whether single-parent, blended or step-families, foster families or two parent families, most families accomplish similar tasks including meeting members' basic needs, providing emotional support, socialization and establishing family traditions. Few other social institutions have such a profound impact on society; this profound impact makes evident the importance of supporting and strengthening families.

Family strengths include the relationships and processes that support and protect families, especially during times of stress, adversity and change. Researchers have identified a number of characteristics that help maintain family cohesion while supporting the healthy development and well-being of family members. The same traits have been identified in families of different types, races, social backgrounds and religious beliefs. Included among these traits are caring and appreciation, time together, encouragement, communication and community connectedness.

Other researchers have looked at vulnerable families under stress to determine what makes them resilient; why some families endure with a few adjustments, some falter but bounce back and adapt, and still others deteriorate to a state of dysfunction and never recover. Researchers have identified patterns of functioning in resilient families. These include protective factors, which shape the family's ability to endure stress, and recovery factors which promote the family's ability to bounce back from a crisis involving family disorganization and decline in functioning.

The most prominent protective factors throughout all stages of family development include family celebrations, the family's attention to and recognition of special events; family hardiness, the members' commitment to the family and sense that the family will endure; family time and routines, family meals, chores and other routines that contribute to continuity and stability of family life; and family traditions. Communication, with emphasis on the process of how members exchange information and caring, and resource management, which includes sound decision making skills are additional protective factors. Throughout most stages of family development, a support network is also crucial to family resiliency.

Recovery factors are especially important when families are faced with serious events like coping with a serious illness, death, loss of a job or a natural disaster. Family integration and a belief that each family member is equally important, family and community support, esteem building, and a family schema or shared sense of values, beliefs, expectations and rules help families cope with adversity and recover.

Today's families are diverse, facing multiple challenges, and dealing with special risks and factors that contribute to family stress. Divorce is a risk factor that impacts approximately one-half of all new marriages in the United States. In Wisconsin during 2004, a total of 16,802 divorces occurred or 3.1 per 1,000. Fifty-four percent of Wisconsin divorces in 2004 involved children under age eighteen which resulted in almost 22 percent of children living in single parent households.

The ramifications of divorce can have significant impact on the well-being and subsequent development of children. Following divorce parenting often diminishes as parents tend to focus on their own stresses and emotional needs. Often children are called upon to take on additional responsibilities resulting in an overburdened or parentified child. Income also decreases dramatically for the single parent household. In Wisconsin, 35 percent of children living in single-mother families are below the poverty level compared to five percent living in married couple families. According to the 2000 census, seven percent of Door County households are headed by a single female and of those, nearly half with children under the age of five are living in poverty.

Another significant risk factor, child trauma, can occur in any family regardless of socioeconomic class, family structure race or ethnicity. Each year child welfare agencies in the United States receive more than three million allegations of abuse and neglect. In 2005 (the most current report available), 47,404 reports of child maltreatment were made in Wisconsin; Door County received 228 referrals 2006. Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment accounting for more than sixty percent of cases of child maltreatment nationwide in 2005. Physical abuse occurred in about seventeen percent of the cases, and cases of sexual abuse, which tend to receive more frequent attention in the media, constitute about eleven percent of the total number of substantiated victims. Emotional abuse or psychological abuse which includes verbal abuse accounts for about seven percent of victims. Emotional abuse typically receives the least amount of attention even though studies have shown that children who experience verbal aggression, such as belittling and insults from parents exhibit higher rates of physical aggression, delinquency, and interpersonal problems.

Consequences of child maltreatment and the costs associated with child abuse and neglect are high. Research has clearly demonstrated that chronic neglect, stress and trauma early in life can damage the developing brain by literally changing the brain's chemistry. The child's brain becomes organized for survival in a threatening world; he interprets others' actions as threatening and is quick to respond aggressively. Traumatized children tend to do poorly in school; antisocial behavior and aggression are two of the most consistent outcomes. Maltreatment negatively impacts a child's emotional stability and self-regulation, problem solving skills, and the ability to adapt to new or stressful situations resulting in difficulty developing stable attachments to caregivers. Being abused or neglected also increases the likelihood of being arrested as a juvenile by as much as 53 percent and the probability of being arrested as an adult for a violent crime by 38 percent. A study of court-referred juvenile offenders in Milwaukee County found that 66 percent

of male offenders and 39 percent of female offenders previously had been victims in substantiated reports of abuse or neglect.

According to van der Kolk, nearly the entire criminal justice population in the United States is comprised of persons with a childhood history of trauma, abuse and/or neglect; a startling revelation when one considers that the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world with more than two million persons in U.S. prisons or jails. Of these more than two million imprisoned individuals, 713,990 or about one-third, were held in local jails. Between 1983 and 1999, Wisconsin's jail population increased 314%, the largest increase of any state.

Since 1991, the number of minor children with a parent in a federal or state correctional facility increased to almost 1.5 million. Research has shown that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system (juvenile and adult), more likely to develop attachment disorders, and often exhibit a variety of behavioral, emotional, health and educational problems. Incarcerated parents play a part in the intergenerational transmission of risk to their children and incarceration does little to improve their parenting skills or their connection to their children. Among educational programs offered for inmates, only eleven percent of Wisconsin jails provide programs in parent training.

According to Perry, humans unlike any other creature, have the ability to change the way they interact with one another. Humans invent the way they live together, the way their society works. Humans were neurobiologically designed to work in groups, including families. However, nowadays, family groups are smaller with an average only four persons to a household and siblings who sleep in separate bedrooms. Children have their own TVs and computer games; their world has become more compartmentalized. And as the relational landscape changes, the quality and quantity of time with family and friends has become more important than ever before. In spite of cultural material wealth, children suffer from poverty of social and emotional opportunity. This poverty of relationships undermines resiliency and diminishes individual and family protective and recovery factors.

Family life has changed dramatically in the past few decades and is likely to continue to change. However, the choices we make now in how we raise our children will influence the way society works one hundred, five hundred and even one thousand years from now. Attachment and family affiliation are fundamental aspects of human development. By building family strengths and promoting protective and recovery factors, Family Living Programs can help families successfully endure ongoing challenges, raise competent children and nurture family members so they contribute positively to the community.

“And now here is my secret, said the fox, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

~ Antoine de Saint-Exupery, The Little Prince

Intended Outcomes for Priority Program

Intended Outcome #1 Short term: Parents and youth who participate in evidence-based parenting/family education programs will increase their knowledge of child development, parenting skills and positive youth development techniques.

Indicators:

- 1-a Eighty percent of parents/caregivers will report an increase in knowledge of child development and parenting skills/techniques.
- 1-b Seventy-five percent of youth will report an increase in knowledge of positive youth development techniques.

Intended Outcome #2 Medium term: Families who participate in evidence-based parenting/family education programs will report improved parenting practices and youth decision making/ outcomes.

Indicators:

- 2-a Eighty percent of families will report improved communication at Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14 booster sessions.
- 2-b At booster sessions, eighty percent of parents will report positive youth decision making and reduced youth and family problems as evidenced by self-reports fewer parent-youth conflicts.
- 2-c At booster sessions, eighty percent of youth will report no alcohol or other drug use.

Intended Outcome #3 Long term: Families who participate in evidence-based parenting/family education programs will improve family functioning through use of positive parenting practices such as enhanced communication skills, more effective discipline practices and closer parent-child bonds.

- 3-a Sixty-five percent of parents/caregivers will report long-term (six months or longer) use of effective parenting practices.
- 3-b Sixty-five percent of parents will report long-term (six months or longer) increased family communication.
- 3-c Sixty-five percent of parents will report long-term (six months or longer) improvement of parent-child bonds.

Intended Outcome #4 Long term: Families who participate in evidence-based parenting/family education programs will have more optimal child outcomes such as enhanced school success, social responsibility and social competence and reduced youth and family problems such as drug use, delinquency and child abuse.

- 4-a Seventy-five percent of youth will experience school success, as defined by parental report of school attendance, grades, and class retention following program participation.
- 4-b Eighty percent of families who have completed the program will have no child maltreatment referrals to the Department of Social Services.
- 4-c Eighty percent of youth who have completed the program will have no referrals to law enforcement for criminal (delinquent) behavior.

Intended Outcome #5 Short term: Parents who participate in research based parenting programs or programs that promote family resiliency factors will increase their knowledge of skills and techniques/activities that enhance family life.

Indicators:

- 5-a Eighty percent of parents who participate in research based parenting or family education programs will be able to identify at least three parenting skills that support positive youth development.

5-b Eighty percent of parents will report an increase in knowledge of skills/activities that meet the developmental needs of their child.

Intended Outcome #6 Short term: Participants in educational programs for individuals affiliated with the correctional system will increase their knowledge and practice of techniques to support and improve family functioning including better coping skills in times of personal difficulty and stress.

Indicators:

6-a Seventy percent of participants in educational programs for individuals affiliated with the correctional system will report an increase in knowledge of skills and techniques to improve family functioning (resiliency protective/recovery factors).

6-c Sixty percent of participants will report an increase in their practice of skills and techniques to improve family functioning.

Intended Outcome #7 Medium term: Families who participate in research based parenting or family education programs will improve their parenting practices including enhanced communication skills, effective discipline practices, better understanding of child development, closer parent-child attachment and improved family relationships.

Indicators:

7-a Seventy-five percent of participants in parenting or family education programs will report increased practice of techniques to improve parenting/family function.

7-b Eighty percent of parents will report enhanced parent-child interaction/relationship.

Intended Outcome #8 Short term: Professionals who participate in research-based child maltreatment education programs will be more knowledgeable about the conditions and issues affecting these populations as well as effective programs and services to create effective prevention and intervention strategies.

8-a Eighty-five percent of target audiences will report increased knowledge of child maltreatment issues.

8-b Eighty percent of target audience will be able to identify at least three signs of abuse and determine how to correctly report abuse.

Intended Outcome #9 Medium term: Professionals who participate in research-based child maltreatment education programs will build capacity and resources to create more effective services and practices for these populations.

9-a Seventy percent of participants will adapt existing programs, policies and/or initiatives to incorporate principles of effective programs.

9-b Sixty percent of participants will re-allocate resources or identify new resources for more effective practices.

Implementation Plan

Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Programs:

1. Child Maltreatment Education and Program/Services Development

Timeline: Fact sheets Summer 2008; Curricula Spring 2008

Inputs: Local and statewide Child Abuse and Neglect Surveys, State Specialist review, Planning & Evaluation Review

Activities: Findings of Child Abuse and Neglect Surveys done 2006 - 2008 will be summarized; local surveys of area professionals pertaining to child abuse and neglect knowledge and practice

will be utilized to develop training curricula based on needs identified in the surveys. Fact sheets and additional resources pertaining to different types of abuse will be developed/adapted from those utilized by other agencies/organizations. Child abuse resources and reporting policies will be explored within the organization with clarification of reporting responsibilities for staff.

Target Population: UW-Extension Family Living and WNEP coordinators, Home visitation staff, Door County Healthy Families Program staff, Local professionals and mandated reporters.

Programs to Enhance Resiliency Factors:

2. Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10 – 14

Timeline: Spring/Fall 2008; Longitudinal evaluation 2008

Inputs: Revised 7-session, evidence-based curriculum developed by Iowa State University, additional materials and equipment required for sessions, meals/preparation, program sites, coordinate volunteer facilitators and child care, additional information pertaining to family meals presented by WNEP coordinator.

Activities: Secure sites for all programs. Partner with 4-H, HCE and high school service learning programs to organize child care, meals, meal service/clean up. Recruit facilitators from local youth-serving agencies. Maintain/expand community agency partnerships to include program participation and funding. Recruit program participants through the development of a variety of media materials in English and Spanish. Marketing will include radio, newspaper, display board and PowerPoint presentation at school registration and open house events, church flyers, and Family Center newsletters. Latino outreach will include personal contact through Hispanic Resource Center, HCE and ELL programs. Organize annual meeting and annual report for local SFP Advisory Committee.

Promote “Keeping Out of Trouble and Keeping Friends” a two-hour workshop based on SFP Youth, Parent and Family Sessions 5 & 6. Adapt materials for additional workshop to be used for program promotion. Build program capacity throughout Wisconsin working with TOT group to train additional facilitators and further develop SFP website.

Request Human Subjects Protection approval for longitudinal research, including survey of families who have completed Strengthening Families for Parents and Youth 10 -14 in Door County from 2003 through 2007 and Department of Social Services records check for youth who have completed the program with their parents/caregiver.

Target Population: Parents/caregivers and youth ages 10 - 14, with special emphasis on including at-risk/underserved populations, Latino/Hispanic community. Longitudinal evaluation will include past program participants.

3. Life After Incarceration

Timeline: Ongoing 2008

Inputs: Focus on Families, Life After Incarceration curricula, additional parenting and literacy materials adapted for local incarcerated population; collaboration with community partners/co-facilitators and Rotary Club for program delivery.

Activities: Continue adaptation of curriculum with expanded adult/youth literacy and family resiliency/connectedness component. Recruit additional co-facilitators from community partners. Coordinate with county jail staff, Rotary and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College HSED Program. Screen/recruit participants, recruit participation of inmate’s families. Adapt program evaluation, provide summary and written report to Door County Justice Coalition.

Target Population: Male inmates housed short-term (2 – 12 months) at the Door County Justice Center jail facility who have families and children living in the community.

4. Promoting Resilience Through Work-Life Management

Timeframe: Ongoing 2008

Inputs: Intentional Harmony facilitator training and curriculum developed by University of Illinois Extension, Collaboration/review of program materials by University of Wisconsin – Green Bay Social Work Department and/or Northeast Wisconsin Training Partnership

Activities: Collaborate with University of Illinois Extension, UW-Green Bay Social Work Department and/or NEW Training Partnership to adapt curriculum and materials to address needs of social workers and home visitation staff. Pilot program through UW-Green Bay and/or NEW Training Partnership. Adapt curriculum to include financial component.

Target Population: Social workers, home visitation staff, low income/at-risk families

Evaluation Plan

1. Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Programs

An online survey or follow-up survey will be used with colleagues who participate in WisLine Web program. Results will be compared with the statewide 2006 Child Abuse and Neglect Zoomerang Survey results to provide pre/post test analysis. Additional curricula developed will be evaluated through a pre/post retrospective survey. Evaluation data from multiple program events will be linked to provide a broader picture of program impact.

2. Programs to Enhance Resiliency Factors

The Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10 – 14 (SFP) will utilize the evaluation developed by the Parenting Education Team SFP trainers. Results will be added to the statewide SFP data base. In addition, following Human Subjects Protection protocol, a survey questionnaire of parents and a review of social service records will be utilized to measure long term outcomes for youth and families from Door County who participated in the Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10 - 14 during a five year period from 2003 – 2007.

Evaluation of programming for incarcerated will be adapted to reflect program enhancement. Evaluation will include a pre and post test component, results of which will be added to the Families in Stress & Transition Team Planning and Evaluation System.

Work/Life Management programming will be evaluated by a statewide evaluation to be developed by the Stress and Transition Team. An evaluation to measure outcomes for local programs will be developed based upon program evaluations currently utilized by University of Illinois Extension and will include assessment based on Prochaska and DiClemente's "Stages of Change" model.

Professional Development

1. Continuing literature review of child abuse and neglect research for the purpose of program development.
2. Attend Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar, "Looking Beyond the Prison Gate: New Directions in Prisoner Reentry."
3. Attend facilitator training for Within My Reach Curricula.
4. Attend 2008 National Prevent Child Abuse America Conference.
5. Participate in additional training pertaining to high risk families, child development and parenting issues; focusing on brain development and building healthy couple relationships as training opportunities become available.
6. Participate in training pertaining to curricula development and program evaluation as training opportunities become available.

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