

## **“RISK GROUP” VERSUS “NON-RISK” PARENTS**

INSTRUCTIONS: When using the contrast of “non-risk” versus “risk group” parents for figure 7, the following two sections should be used in place of the sections “Which Parents Need Our Help the Most” and “Effects on First-Time Parents” that were used in the Fond du Lac report. You will need to edit the sections to fit your data. You may also want to add some parent comments that seem especially applicable for this section.

### **Which Parents Need Our Help the Most?**

We have special concern for some parents, for whom parenting a toddler might be especially difficult. First-time parents are often inexperienced and therefore might have more need for child-rearing information. And prior research has shown that parents in particular socioeconomic categories are more likely to have difficulty with the stressful “toddler” years (Belsky, 1984; Belsky & Vondra, 1989). These categories are defined and the numbers of parents in each category are shown below.

1. First-time parent (may or may not be included in the contrast for your data).
2. Teenage parents (age 19 or less).
3. Low education (less than high school diploma).
4. Low family income (less than \$14,000 previous year).
5. Single parent (whether married or not).
6. Socially isolated (defined as not having “friends with children about the same age as your child).

If any of these conditions was true of a parent, we placed them in the “risk” category. We then contrasted the self-reported behavior changes of risk group and non-risk parents.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Risk group		
Non-risk		

## **EFFECTS ON AT RISK PARENTS**

The risk group parents reported more positive influence from the newsletters than the non-risk parents, in all six key areas of behavior (see figure 7).

While most of these differences were small, risk group parents were 17% more likely than non-risk parents to say “reading the newsletter caused me to explain why when I tell my child to do something,” and 14% more likely to report “reading the newsletters caused me to set rules and firm limits with my child.” Both of these changes represent a shift toward a more authoritative style of parenting, which is predictive of more positive social, emotional and intellectual development for children.

Risk group parents, who may be young, less educated, socially isolated, single and/or low income, are more likely to have limited knowledge of child development, as well as parenting beliefs and behaviors that are less optimal for children’s development (Okagaki & Divecha, 1993). They also may lack the support they need to be sensitively responsive to their children.

The newsletters are an effective way to provide knowledge about children’s development to parents most in need of this information. In addition, the newsletters may increase parents’ awareness of ways they can have a positive influence on their children’s development. This is suggested by the self-reported changes in parenting of risk group parents.