

Nurturing Parenting Program Helps North Dakota Parents in 2010-11

The Situation

Child abuse and neglect prevention is an important public policy priority to strengthen families and safeguard the well-being of children. Nationally, research indicates that approximately 1 in 4 children will be a victim of child abuse or neglect. In North Dakota, there were 1,255 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect in 2009 (and nearly 7,000 reports of suspected abuse to state government). Parent education provides a mechanism to intervene with families that may face challenges in raising children and assist them in developing patterns of nurturance and care.

Extension Response

Parent training programs have been shown to be helpful for families involved in the child welfare system. The *Nurturing Parenting Program* (NPP) is used by the state of North Dakota as its primary parent training program with families involved in the child welfare system. The program operates at multiple sites across the state under a grant provided by the ND Department of Human Services – Children & Family Services Division. The NDSU Extension Service partners with the ND Department of Human Services to provide training, support, and evaluation of the *Nurturing Parenting Program* in North Dakota. In the 2010-11 program year, the NPP operated at 9 sites and conducted 24 4-month sessions with a total of 238 families participating.

Impacts

Based on responses by participants who completed the *Nurturing Parenting Program* in North Dakota in 2010-11, the following impacts were reported:

- Nearly 70 percent of individuals who participated in the intensive 4-month program completed the parent training course. This is a substantial record of participation for such an intensive parent training program.
- Demographic findings indicate that program participants are more likely to be women than men (77 percent to 23 percent); cluster in age between ages 20 and 40; typically have 1 to 3 children with an average of 2.42 children per

household; are predominantly Caucasian (63 percent) and Native American (31 percent); are mixed between single, married, divorced, and unmarried partner statuses; typically earn less than \$25,000 per year; and 2 in 5 experienced some type of abuse within the family while growing up.

- Pre- and post-program surveys showed that parents showed moderate to substantial changes in all of 5 parental attitudes measured, with all changes showing positive increases. The largest increase occurred in parental empathy toward children's needs, followed by increased belief in using alternatives to corporal punishment and more healthy expectations of children. These changes were statistically significant.
- Each parental construct showed a decrease in the percentage of individuals who fell into the "high risk" category. For example, 1 in 3 participants (32 percent) were in the "risk" category regarding empathy for child needs and this fell to 8 percent following course participation; for each construct, the percentage of individuals scoring in the "risk" range dropped from 30 to 80 percent, a commendable shift.

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