Nurturing Parenting Program Fosters Better Parenting and Child Safety in North Dakota

The Situation
Preventing child abuse and neglect is a critical public issue and requires strengthening families and safeguarding children. In the U.S., research shows that 1 in 4 children will be victimized by abuse or neglect. In North Dakota, there were 1,616 confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect in 2014 (and many more cases reported or suspected abuse). Parent education provides a mechanism to intervene with families that may struggle in raising children and support them in developing needed knowledge and skills for giving care to children.

Extension Response
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. Through a grant provided by the ND Department of Human Services, the NDSU Extension Service partners to provide training, support, implementation and evaluation of the Nurturing Parenting Program. In the 2015-16 program year, the NPP operated at 12 sites and conducted 22 4-month sessions with a total of 252 families participating.

Impacts
Based on responses by participants who completed the Nurturing Parenting course in 2015-16:

- Parents showed substantial and statistically significant changes in key areas, including increases in parental empathy toward children’s needs, belief in using alternatives to corporal punishment, and more healthy expectations of children.
- The percentage of individuals in the “substantial risk” category regarding harsh punishment of children fell from 29.4% to 15.3% following course participation, a very significant drop in potential risk to harm children.

Resource Link
- www.ndnurturing.org

Feedback
- “The class helped me think of how I will act toward my children, and gave me a great guide to follow.” – Female participant, Fargo, ND
- “The information is all useful! Everyone could benefit from this class. I am glad I gave it a chance!” – Female participant, Bismarck, ND

Public Value Statement
Strengthening families through parent education reduces costs spent on child welfare, lowers crime by adults, and improves well-being of children.

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Non-Extension Collaborators
ND Department of Human Services; ND Parent Education Network; local NPP facilitators and collaborators.

Gains in Parenting Skills - NPP

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before NPP</th>
<th>After NPP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Expectations of Children</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>6.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Empathy</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>7.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid Use of Corporal Punishment</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>7.65</td>
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