
Parenting/Family Skills Training

The program focuses on the following:

- Strengthening family bonds and establishing clear standards of behavior
- Helping parents to manage their teenage child's behavior more appropriately and, at the same time, to encourage the child's independence

In this way, the program seeks to address specific risk factors in the family and peer domains to include:

- Drug abuse by a parent or sibling, parental tolerance of drug abuse
- Poor and inconsistent family management practices
- Family conflict
- Lack of family communication
- Involvement and bonding and association with delinquent and drug-abusing peers

The groups are delivered utilizing an evidence-based educational skill-building program *Staying Connected with Your Teen* (formerly Parents Who Care). This educational program, coupled with a cognitive behavioral process group is administered in a group of up to 12 families.

Two Group Options:

- The group is comprised of 6, two-hour sessions where parents/guardians of at-risk teens meet on a weekly basis and then apply the work at home on practicing new skills with their adolescent children. The program also incorporates *Staying Connected with Your Teen* curriculum-based videos.
- The Parent/Family Skills group meets for 12 weeks when facilitated with a high-risk CLOSED intensive 12 week adolescent substance abuse treatment group.

All Groups:

- 2 Hour Sessions
- *Staying Connected with Your Teen* curriculum
- Family Guides provided to each family

The program is based on the social development model (Catalano and Hawkins, 1996), which is shaped by social control theory, social learning theory, and differential association theory. The social development model contends that children are socialized through four key processes: 1) opportunities, 2) involvement, 3) skills, and 4) rewards. Children need opportunities and skills to engage in prosocial activities. They also need to be rewarded for engaging in productive or prosocial activities with positive peers. Bonding with prosocial individuals inhibits deviant behavior.

Goals & Objectives:

The Parenting/Family Skills Building groups build upon identified protective factors (such as association with pro-social peers and family bonding) by teaching parents and children strategies that will guide them through a more positive social development process.

- Parents learn how to provide their children with opportunities to contribute to their family and to use reward and recognition strategies to encourage bonding with their children.
- Adolescents learn how to develop skills to participate in activities and opportunities.
- Families also learn how to reduce risk factors that can lead to negative social development.
- Parents attain more effective family management practices by increasing their parental supervision and enforcing consequences for misbehavior by targeting children at specific developmental periods.
- *Staying Connected with Your Teen* aims to decrease problem behaviors such as substance abuse and delinquency.

Specifically, the program aims to achieve the following:

- Enhance parent awareness of risk and protective factors involved in the development of adolescent problem behaviors
- Enhance parent awareness of normal adolescent behavior and development
- Strengthen family management practices
- Establish parental commitment to strengthen family bonds and establish healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior
- Provide teens with an opportunity to be involved in the learning process with their parents
- Teach parents and teenagers skills for resisting social influences to engage in problem behaviors

All families are provided with a 108-page family workbook with chapters that accompany each session. Each discussion unit focuses on a different core lesson, and chapters proceed in the same fashion. The lessons are:

1. Roles: Relating to your teen,
2. Risks: Identifying and reducing them,
3. Protection: Bonding with your teen to strengthen resilience,
4. Tools: Working with your family to solve problems,
5. Involvement: Allowing everyone to contribute,
6. Policies: Setting family policies on health and safety issues, and
7. Supervision: Supervising without invading.

Families receive written instructions about how to use the workbook and a checklist of 61 key activities to complete as a family. Parent Group facilitators discuss and process the families' completed activities, motivate families to use the materials with their teen, and help them problem solve implementation into their daily lives.

The *Staying Connected with Your Teen* program has been recognized as:

- *Effective*, Model Programs Guide, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)
- *Best Practice*, Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies (CASAT)
- *Model Program*, Strengthening America's Families
- *Evidence-Based Program*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- *Level 2 Program*, Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP)
- *Promising Program*, Office of Justice Programs' CrimeSolutions.gov

†Program tested under its previous name, Parents Who Care. Source: Haggerty, K., et al. 2006. Participation in 'Parents Who Care': Predicting program initiation and exposure in two different program formats. *Journal of Primary Prevention* 27 (1): 47-65.