



Common Sense Parenting®

Program Description

The goal of Common Sense Parenting (CSP) program is to develop or enhance parenting skills that encourage positive behavior, discourage negative behavior, and teach alternatives to problem behavior in children. Participating parents learn and practice techniques that address issues of communication, discipline, decision-making, relationships, self-control, and school success.

CSP is based on a social learning/behavioral model that aims to enhance the role of parents as teachers. The program content is adapted from effective childcare methods developed by Girls and Boys Town, a leading nonprofit organization specializing in the treatment and care of abused, abandoned, and neglected children. The program has been used effectively with children from all age groups and diverse populations, including children with significant behavior problems. Girls and Boys Town has evaluated CSP for evidence of effectiveness over the past five years. Outcome studies have shown that parents report significantly fewer child behavior problems and improved parent and family satisfaction after participating in the program.

Target Audience

Parents raising children.

Special Populations/Available Adaptations

Spanish versions of CSP are available.

Program Components

Professional parent trainers lead two-hour parenting sessions held once a week for six-weeks. The training model used in all CSP classes emphasizes experiential learning. The five training components—review, instruction, modeling, practice and feedback, and summary—enable the trainers to conduct classes that build on skills the participating parents already possess.

Three main instructional tools are used in the program: the parenting book; videotapes; and the trainer's manual. The parenting book includes a description of each of the skills taught in the program, along with additional information and tools for parents to use with their children. (Trainers may choose to include this book in the cost of the training and allow parents to keep the book after the training is over.) Narrated videotapes show examples of the correct and incorrect use of the skills. These examples include families of various cultural backgrounds and children of all ages. The trainer's manual includes specific outlines and activities for the trainer to use with parents.

Training

Girls and Boys Town offers a three-day comprehensive training program for trainers to prepare them to teach in their own communities. There are no qualification requirements for becoming a trainer. This training is offered in the Village of Boys Town in Omaha, and Grand Island in Nebraska. Onsite training is also available.

Training Costs

The cost of this training is \$675 per participant and includes a trainer's kit which has all the materials needed to conduct parenting classes. For information about additional training locations or onsite trainings, contact Girls and Boys Town at (800) 545-5771.

Evaluation Results

In a study of 379 parents from 25 U.S. Air Force bases offering CSP, results indicated a decrease in behavioral problems (as measured by the Child Behavior Checklist), an increase in family satisfaction (as assessed by the Family Satisfaction Scale), and a decrease in the risk of physical child abuse (as indicated by the Child Abuse Potential Scale). These results were maintained at follow-up six months after class completion (Thompson, Ruma, Brewster, Besetsney, & Burke, 1997).

A study of 206 children, ages 2 through 16, showed that CSP is effective with children in all age groups and with children who have significant behavior problems. Three groups were examined: early childhood (ages 2–5 years), middle childhood (ages 6–11 years), and adolescence (ages 12–16 years). Parents of all age groups reported a decrease in behavioral problems (as measured by the Child Behavior Checklist) (Ruma, Burke, & Thompson, 1996).

In addition to the above findings, other studies indicate that:

- Working parents who attended CSP reported their child's behavior problems had decreased, they felt more positive about their children, their family functioned better, and their children were happier at home.
- CSP outcomes are consistent across socio-economic levels and racial/ethnic backgrounds of parents.
- CSP outcomes have been successfully replicated at various sites throughout the world with consistent results.

Recommended Evaluation Components

There is no required evaluation component to CSP. While Girls and Boys Town evaluates their own trainers and staff, most of the program evaluation has been carried out in the research phase through large pilot programs (such as the US Air Force study listed in the references below). Feedback is not required of program implementers. If requested, an evaluation can be carried out by Girls and Boys Town.

Agency/Institution Recommendations

- Rated 'Outstanding' by The Parent Council
- Winner of The National Parenting Center's Seal of Approval

Contact Information

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References

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