



Parenting Wisely

Program Description

Parenting Wisely is a self-administered, interactive, computer-based program that teaches parents important parenting and conflict management skills. The program is designed to enhance child adjustment and to reduce delinquency and substance abuse. It also seeks to improve problem-solving, parent–school communication, school attendance, and academic performance. Parenting Wisely was developed at Ohio University by Dr. Donald Gordon.

Target Audience

The target audience for Parenting Wisely is low-income, at-risk families who have children ages 9 to 18 with mild to serious behavior problems. Most of the targeted families are those who do not usually seek or complete mental health or parent education treatment for their children’s problem behaviors. A version of the program for parents with young children (ages 3 to 9) has also been developed.

Special Populations/Available Adaptations

Parenting Wisely has been evaluated with white, African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Portuguese families. The families studied have been primarily from lower income homes. The program was developed for use in rural, urban, and suburban settings. A Spanish version is available. A version of the program is also available for use with foster parents.

Program Components

Parenting Wisely is a stand-alone computer-based program. The program addresses nine typical problem situations, including doing household chores, improving stepparent–youth relationships, monitoring “troublesome” friends, improving poor school performance, reducing sibling fighting, and complying with parental requests. It takes parents two to three 3-hour sessions to complete the nine case studies. Parents also receive a workbook that outlines all problems and solutions included in the program, as well as a glossary of terms, sample behavior charts, and practice exercises. Parenting Wisely may be also implemented in a group format, or used in conjunction with a practitioner’s work with families.

Training and Technical Assistance

Training is not required for Parenting Wisely, as it is a self-administered program. The *Service Provider’s Guide* supplies all the information necessary to implement the program. Training is available from the developer (Family Works, Inc.) to help sites to add clinical components (e.g., group presentation or family consultation) or to generate community support for the program. Technical assistance is available by phone or e-mail at no charge.

Program and Training Costs

The Parenting Wisely *American Teen Program Kit* includes an interactive CD-ROM, five parent workbooks, five program completion certificates, 20 informational parent brochures, a disc with evaluation forms and a program evaluation guide, and the *Teen Group Curriculum* for use with parent groups. This kit costs \$659. Program materials for the Parenting Wisely *American Teen* program and for all of the variations of the program (e.g., Parenting Wisely *Foster and Residential Care Program Kit*, Parenting Wisely *Young Children Program Kit*) can be ordered online, at http://www.familyworksinc.com/online_store/index.php. Agencies may also subscribe

to the online interactive version of the program, at a cost of \$30 for one user for a one-month subscription. Costs and subscription information for the interactive version of Parenting Wisely are available at <http://www.familyworksinc.com/parentingwisely/subscribe/index.php>.

Evaluation Results

Many studies evaluating the effectiveness of Parenting Wisely have been conducted with a variety of populations in different settings. The program has been evaluated in juvenile detention, child protective services, health and mental health centers, probation departments, schools, and families' homes. White, African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Portuguese families were included in these studies, and families were primarily from lower income homes. Studies have also been conducted in Australia, and in France and Quebec with a French version of the program. Outcomes of studies include:

- Up to a 58% reduction in child problem behavior
- Improvements in child's prosocial behavior
- 30% reduction in maternal depression
- Reduction in parental use of physical punishment and yelling
- Reduction in spousal violence and violence toward children
- 29% improvement in general family functioning
- Improved school grades
- Increased knowledge of and use of good parenting skills
- Increased parental self-efficacy

Evaluation Components

The Parenting Wisely program comes with a disc containing evaluation forms and an evaluation guide. The forms measure child problem behavior, family relationships, and parenting knowledge and skills. The developer offers technical assistance around evaluation at no cost.

Agency/Institution Recognition

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Model Program
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Exemplary Program for Family Strengthening
- Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies: Best Practices Program
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Best Practices, Youth Violence Prevention

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