



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

-Children, Youth & Families At-Risk 2004

Putting Knowledge to Work for Georgia Families

The University of Georgia

Cooperative Extension Service

The Problem

- Many Georgia children are living in at-risk environments. Nationally, Georgia ranks 40th in overall child well-being, based on 10 indicators tracked by Kids Count. Indicators include teen deaths, births to teen parents, juvenile violent crime, and percent of children in poverty.
- Georgia ranks 45th for rate of teen childbearing with 33 births per 1,000 females ages 15-17. (Kids Count Data Book 2004).
- The percentage of children living in extreme poverty (income below 50% of poverty level) in Georgia (8%) is higher than the percentage of children living in extreme poverty in the U.S. (7%). (Kids Count Data Book 2004)

Research-based Solutions

- Programming that emphasizes positive youth development builds resiliency in at-risk children and youth.
- The most effective interventions target children at young ages and provide long-term support and education.
- Effective programming for children at risk intentionally involves their families and communities at all levels.

Extension's Role

- Conduct educational programs for parents, helping them to acquire skills in positive parenting and foster resiliency.
- Use the 4-H youth development delivery system to provide positive development opportunities for youth in high-risk circumstances.
- Collaborate within the community to design programs which target children, youth or families at risk and provide education, support and services which lead to positive outcomes.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem

- Family and Consumer Sciences Extension initiated two New Community Projects in Candler and Colquitt Counties in 2003. These New Community Projects integrate the children, youth, and families at risk (CYFAR) programming philosophy into the University of Georgia Extension programs. The total cost of the USDA funded project is \$500,000 for the five-year period.
- The Candler County CYFAR project is "Building Our Youths Skills" (BOYS). It provides educational and enrichment opportunities to help increase academic success and leadership development, while supporting parents, teachers, and community leaders in creating a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for 31 low income pre-adolescent males. The program provided 50 tutoring and enrichment sessions during the 2003-2004 school year.
- The Colquitt County CYFAR project is called "Voz de la Familia" or "Voice of the Family." This project is a comprehensive family centered community outreach program especially designed to help migrant farm workers build healthy, strong, and self-sufficient families for rural Georgia. "Voz de la Familia" is a collaborative program of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, Ellenton Farm Workers Health Clinic, Moultrie Technical College, and Communities in Schools. There were 19 families in the "Voz de la Familia" program.
- The Missouri Community Action Poverty Simulation workshop was presented to nearly 1,000 community leaders and service providers to help them better serve the needs of the people living in poverty.
- Nearly 52% of the Georgians reached by Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programs in 2004 were audiences estimated to be at risk (low-income, illegal activity, or lack of school success).

Impact on Georgians

- Of the children who participated in the Candler County BOYS after school program, 55% improved their language skills, 45% improved their science skills, 31% improved their math skills, and 38% improved history skills during the academic year. Eighty-six percent of the children in the BOYS program improved their reading grade equivalency and 78% improved their math grade equivalency. Nearly 41% of the children improved their overall academic skills. In addition to academic skill improvements, 48% of the children improved their life skills as reported by the teachers.
- The comparison of the Colquitt County “Voice of the Family” program participants’ type of housing before and after the program indicates that there was an economic development among the participants. For example, at the beginning 10% of the families lived with relatives or friends. Compared to this, only 5% of the families lived with friends or relatives at the end of the program year. 5% of the families became homeowners. Evaluation data indicates that the “Voice of the Family” program participants had increased their confidence in their ability to use banks and started banking with insured financial institutions.
- The comparison of children’s report card data for 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 school years indicates that the children who participated in the “Voice of the Family” program significantly improved their reading skills and reduced absenteeism slightly during the school year.
- Fifty-one percent of the community leaders and service providers who participated in the poverty simulation workshop realized the problems and constraints faced by the people living in poverty and developed positive attitudes towards them. Many participants said the workshop was an eye opener. For example a participant said, *“It was great! I thought I understood the problems of poverty, but I was really, truly, enlightened. Every city, county, and federal official should experience this simulation.”* As a result of the workshop most of the participants planned to help people living in poverty. For example, 85% of the participants planned to view people living in poverty differently to better serve their needs; 83% planned to share this information with others in their community; and 72% of the participants planned to work with other related community resources to assist people who live in poverty. One example was materialized in Athens. Several individuals who participated in the training workshop from Athens, Clarke County realized the transportation difficulties faced by the people living in poverty. They met with the local government officials to request free bus transportation for those who needed to go to polling stations on election day. In this way, the poverty simulation workshop empowered those living in poverty to execute their democratic rights.

Contact

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