



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

-Children, Youth & Families At-Risk 2005

Learning for Life

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

The Problem

- Many Georgia children are living in at-risk environments. Nationally, Georgia ranks 39th in overall child well-being, based on 10 indicators tracked by Kids Count 2005. Indicators include teen deaths, births to teen parents, juvenile violent crime, and percent of children in poverty.
- Georgia ranks 43rd for rate of teen childbearing with 56 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 in 2002. (Kids Count Data Book 2005).
- Eighth graders who scored at or above proficient reading level was only 26% in Georgia compared to 30% nationally in 2003 (Kids Count Data Book 2005)
- The percentage of children living in extreme poverty (income below 50% of poverty level) in Georgia (9%) is higher than the percentage of children living in extreme poverty in the U.S. (8%). (Kids Count Data Book 2005)

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 programs focused on children, youth and families at risk reached 9,460 Georgians and provided 13,510 hours of education.
- 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 32 low income pre-adolescent males. The program provided 50 enrichment sessions during the 2004-2005 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. *Voice of the Family* 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 54 families in the *Voice of the Family* program in 2005.
- The Missouri Community Action Poverty Simulation workshop was presented to more than 1,100 community leaders and service providers to help them better serve the needs of the people living in poverty.

- Nearly 53% of the Georgians reached by Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programs in 2005 were audiences estimated to be at risk (low-income, illegal activity, or lack of school success).

Impact on Georgians

- The BOYS program in Candler County focused on building children's life skills and addressing problem behaviors. Evaluation data confirmed that 58% of the children in the BOYS program improved their life skills as reported by their teachers and parents in 2005. Nearly 50% of the children improved their behavior and avoided problems.
- Evaluation data indicate that the *Voice of the Family* program participants who completed the *Ready for Reading* child care training workshop, learned to do more reading activities with their children. For example, 97% intended to read books to their children; 90% intended to encourage and model reading for pleasure; and 97% intended to read the same books over and over if children want to hear.
- The comparison of children's report card data for 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 school years indicates that the children who participated in the *Voice of the Family* program considerably improved their Math, Social Studies, and Language Art skills. Nearly 75% of the children in the program improved their Language art and Math skills during the school year. Nearly 43% of the children who participated in the *Voice of the Family* improved their overall academic performance in 2005.
- At the end of the poverty simulation workshop, 95% of the participants said that that they would view people living in poverty differently to better serve their needs. More than 75% intended to share this information with others in their communities and assist people who living in poverty. The workshop contributed to change participants' stereotype attitudes and prepared them to better serve the needs of people live in poverty. Many participants said the workshop was an eye opener. For example a participant said, "*This simulation made me really see how the littlest problem can cause the hard situations and it allowed me to experience obstacles faced by struggling families daily.*"

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