



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Children, Youth & Families At-Risk 2006

Learning for Life

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

The Problem

- Many Georgia children are living in at-risk environments. Nationally, Georgia ranks 44th in overall child well-being, based on 10 indicators tracked by Kids Count 2006. Some indicators include teen deaths, births to teen parents, juvenile violent crime, and percent of children in poverty.
- Georgia ranks 41st for rate of teen childbearing with 53 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 in 2003 (Kids Count Data Book 2006).
- The percentage of children living in extreme poverty (income below 50% of poverty level) in Georgia is 10%, higher than the percentage of children living in extreme poverty in the U.S. (8%) (Kids Count Data Book 2006).

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 to 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

- Over 51% of the Georgians reached by Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programs in 2006 were audiences estimated to be at risk (low-income, illegal activity, or lack of school success).
- Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programs focused on Child, Youth and Family Development reached over 14,500 Georgians and provided over 40,000 hours of education.
- Family and Consumer Sciences Extension initiated two *New Communities Projects* in Candler and Colquitt counties in 2003. These projects integrate the children, youth, and families at risk (CYFAR) programming philosophy into the UGA Cooperative Extension programs. The total cost of the USDA funded project is \$500,000 for the five-year period.
- The Candler County CYFAR project is called "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 27 low income pre-adolescent males. The program provided 39 enrichment sessions during the 2005-2006 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 in rural Georgia. "Voz de la

Familia” is a collaborative program of the UGA Cooperative Extension, Ellenton Farm Workers Health Clinic, Moultrie Technical College, and Communities in Schools. In 2006, there were over 70 families in the “Voz de la Familia” program.

- The Missouri Community Action Poverty Simulation workshop was presented to more than 830 community leaders and service providers to help them to better serve the needs of people living in poverty.

Impact on Georgians

- The BOYS program in Candler County focused on building life skills and addressing problem behaviors. Evaluation data confirmed that 47% of the students in the BOYS program improved their life skills and 31% reduced their problem behaviors as reported by their teachers in 2006. The frequency of the students completing their homework on time significantly increased from the fall of 2005 to the spring of 2006.
- Evaluation data indicated that 96% of the “Voice of the Family” program participants who completed the parenting workshops are more likely to read books to their children beginning in early infancy and 84% are more likely to teach their children how to solve conflicts that arise during play. The Parent School Partnership Program, a 10-lesson series that focused on establishing a strong relationship between parents and schools, graduated 102 “Voice of the Family” participants. Evaluation results indicated that 97% of the participants are more likely to attend and participate in PTO meetings; 100% are more likely to provide a quiet environment for their child to do homework; and 100% are more likely to ask their child’s teacher for help if their child is having difficulties with schoolwork.
- Ninety-three percent (93%) of the “Voice of the Family” participants who attended home buyer education programs indicated that they are more likely to evaluate the type of home they need. Nine Latino families initiated the application process for first-time homebuyers including attending homebuyer education programs through UGA Cooperative Extension and USDA Rural Development. Three families have already closed on their new homes.
- The comparison of children’s academic data for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years indicates that the children who participated in the “Voice of the Family” program considerably improved their academic averages in Math, Reading, Social Studies, and Science. The children’s CRCT scores increased in both Math and Language Arts. The school absentee rate for these students decreased from 16.125 annually in 2004-2005 to 14.375 in 2005-2006 – an improvement of 11%.
- Just over 88% of the educators, services providers, and community leaders who participated in the *Welcome to the State of Poverty* simulation workshop said it was helpful in providing them with a better understanding of the problems faced by working poor families. For instance, a program participant said *“It was a real experience that showed me how difficult it is for families living in poverty to hold things together.”* Comparison of pre and post evaluations indicated that the poverty simulation participants who responded significantly reduced their negative attitudes toward people living in poverty. Over half (52%) were able to develop a more positive attitude toward working poor families and plan to help serve their needs. For example, 85% of the participants plan to work with other related community resources to assist people who live in poverty; 86% plan to seek out information that can be used to address poverty issues in their community; and 93% plan to share this information with others in their communities.

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