



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Parenting Education 2007

Learning for Life

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

The Problem

- The total number of annual births is increasing steadily in Georgia. In 2006, there were 148,403 births in Georgia, 39% of which were first births.
- Many Georgia parents are experiencing transitions and stresses that can challenge their capacity to attend to the social and emotional needs of their children. Since 2000, the percent of all births in Georgia to unmarried mothers has increased each year. In 2006, 12% of all births in Georgia were to adolescents. Teen parents are twice as likely as older parents to abuse their children
- A high proportion of children are likely to experience parental divorce (roughly 65% of couples divorcing have children) and nearly 1 in 3 children will reside in a stepfamily (married or unmarried) household.
- Children growing up in Georgia families are at an increasing risk of experiencing economic hardship: in 2005, 20% of children were living in poverty (vs. 18% in 2000) and 34% were living in families where no parent had full-time, year round employment (vs. 32% in 2000). Child abuse and neglect are strongly related to family poverty, especially in combination with depression, social isolation, and substance abuse.¹
- Every 30 minutes in Georgia, a child is the victim of confirmed abuse or neglect. There were 92,900 child abuse and neglect reports and 39,000 substantiated cases of abuse and neglect in Georgia in 2006. About 85% of those children were victims of severe neglect.²
- Child abuse and neglect are strongly related to family poverty, especially in combination with depression, social isolation, and substance abuse.³
- Poor parenting skills can place children at risk for abuse, neglect, school failure, and many other problems.

Research-based Solutions

- Positive parenting skills can be learned.
- Practicing positive parenting habits can prevent abuse and neglect or stop ongoing cycles of abuse.
- Teen parents are particularly receptive to research-based education.

Extension's Role

- Conduct parenting education for all interested parents.
- Present parenting education classes for parents identified as needing special assistance, including teen parents, families in poverty, and families dealing with stressful transitions such as divorce.
- Provide in-depth parenting and family management education to parents at high risk of abusing or neglecting their children.
- Collaborate with other family-serving organizations to provide seamless support.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem

- Provided more than 4,428 hours of parenting and family education to 2,320 Georgians.
- A demonstration project funded by Georgia DHR targeted families in seven southwest Georgia counties that were identified as at-risk for child abuse and neglect. The project's primary goal was to provide educational support to families diverted from open case status in child protective services.
- Parenting education was provided to many Georgians through media. This includes 260 newsletters targeted to 30,000 readers; 17 newspaper columns circulated to 153,000 million potential readers.

- Extension provided parenting education to 220 families referred from the Department of Family and Children Services as part of the *Back on Track* program.

Impact on Georgians

- 96% of the participants who evaluated the parenting education programs said that those educational programs were helpful in developing their parenting knowledge and skills. After the programs, most of the participants who didn't already practice the parenting practices promoted planned to do so. For example, 100% intend to set clear limits and enforce them every time they are broken, enforce expectations of child's behavior calmly and consistently, and give clear expectations regarding tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, and 96% indicated that they plan to use consequences to guide children's behavior.
- At the end of 2007, there were 94 active families involved with the *Back on Track* program, and 34 graduated families. Graduated families participated in at least 20 hours of home education visits, accomplished goals established at initial visits, improved parenting skills, and completed Department of Family and Children Services mandates. Graduates of the Back on Track Program demonstrated improved scores on a standardized instrument that measures parenting skills, called the *Adult and Adolescent Parenting Inventory* (AAPI). Comparisons of pre- and post-test mean scores on the AAPI indicate that there was a statistically significant reduction in measured risk on all constructs measured, including inappropriate expectations, lack of empathy, and physical punishment.

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¹ Haskins, R., Wulczyn, F. & Webb, M.B. (2007). *Child Protection: Using Research to Improve Policy and Practice*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

² Protective Services Data System Annual Report 2006. Georgia Department of Human Resources. Available at: http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR-DFCS/DHR-DFCS-publication/PSDS_2006_Report.pdf

³ Haskins, R., Wulczyn, F. & Webb, M.B. (2007). *Child Protection: Using Research to Improve Policy and Practice*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.