

Evaluation

The Strengthening Families Program has been evaluated in as many as 15 different research studies by independent evaluators. The original NIDA study (1983 to 1987) involved a true pre-test, post-test, and follow-up experimental design with random assignment of families to one of four experimental groups: 1) parent training only, 2) parent training plus children's skills training, 3) the total three component SFP program including the family relational skills component, or to 4) no treatment that included drug treatment as usual with no parent or child training.

Because of the positive results, SFP was then replicated and evaluated on five CSAP High Risk Youth Program grants with diverse ethnic groups by independent evaluators using quasi-experimental, pre-, post- and 6-, 12-, 18-, and 24-month follow-up statistical control group designs comparing drug-abusing families with non-drug abusing families.

SFP has also been evaluated on a CSAP Predictor Variable grant in two rural Utah school districts employing a true experimental pre-, post-, 12 and 24 month follow-up design which randomly assigned elementary schools to either: 1) the full SFP, 2) a child-only school-based program—I Can Problem Solve (ICPS), 3) a combination of SFP with ICPS, or 4) no new family intervention services.

SFP was found highly effective in decreasing anti-social behaviors, conduct disorder, and aggression with Effect Sizes (ES) ranging from .85 to 1.11 range depending on outcomes measured.

The results of a NIDA effectiveness research study with 195 African-American and White WDC families randomly assigned to parent training only, children's skills training only, the full SFP, or minimal contact control suggest very positive results in reducing children's behavior problems (e.g., aggression and conduct disorders) and improving children's social skills.

The original Strengthening Families Program lessons have been evaluated in non-experimental and quasi-experimental studies in 17 countries; and in randomized control trials (RCTs) in nine countries (United States, Canada, Australia, UK, Sweden, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Thailand) with different cultural groups by independent evaluators.

Using documented evaluation tools (below), SFP skills-training proved to be effective in reducing multiple risk factors (below) for later alcohol and drug abuse, mental health problems and delinquency. Participants reported:

- Increased family bonding
- Increased parental involvement
- Increased positive parenting skills
- Increase positive communication
- Increased family organization
- Decreased family conflict
- Decreased youth depression
- Decreased youth aggression
- Increased youth cooperation
- Increased number of pro-social friends
- Increased youth social competencies
- Increased youth school grades

FAMILY RISK FACTORS FOR YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE, DELINQUENCY, AND DEPRESSION

- Neglect; lack of love, care, & support
- Family conflict
- Difficulties in communicating respectfully
- Lax or harsh discipline
- Lack of supervision
- Substance use by parents (or child)
- Stressful life events
- Exposure to violence/abuse
- Low expectations for school success / school failure
- Lack of family customs, traditions
- Low self-esteem (from poor parenting)

FAMILY FACTORS PROTECT AGAINST YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE, DELINQUENCY, AND DEPRESSION

- Strong, loving parent-child bonds
- Functional, well-managed home
- Clear rules against alcohol, tobacco, and drug use
- Mild, consistent discipline
- Monitoring of child's activities & friends
- Parents set a good alcohol, tobacco, and drug use example
- High expectations; involved parent
- Family customs & traditions
- School attendance and success

Strengthening Families Program Pre-Post Evaluation Study scales, reliabilities, and sources

Parenting Scales

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Parental Involvement (4) ^λ | <i>I talk to my youth about his or her plans for the next day or week.</i> | .75 ^β | Alabama Parenting |
| Parental Supervision (5) | <i>I know where my child is and who he/she is with.</i> | .70 | Kumpfer (1989) ^γ |
| Parenting Efficacy (3) | <i>I handle stress well.</i> | .75 | Kumpfer (1989) |
| Positive Parenting (4) | <i>I praise my child when he/she has behaves well.</i> | .79 | Alabama |
| SFP Parenting Skills (5) | <i>I use physical punishment when my child will not do what I ask.</i> | .64 | Kumpfer (1989) |

Family Scales

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----|------------------------------|
| Family Cohesion (2) | <i>I enjoy spending time with my child.</i> | .75 | Moos FES (1974) ^π |
| Family Communication (6) | <i>We hold a family meeting weekly.</i> | .69 | Kumpfer (1989) |
| Family Conflict (4) | <i>Our family argues a lot with each other.</i> | .87 | Moos FES (1974) |
| Family Organization (4) | <i>We go over schedules, chores, and rules to get better organized.</i> | .71 | Moos FES (1974) |
| Strengths/Resilience (12) | <i>We show we care for each other in our family</i> | .90 | Kumpfer (1997) |

Youth Behaviors

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-----|----------------|
| Concentration (11) | <i>Stays on task until completed.</i> | .86 | POCA-R, Kellam |
| Covert Aggression (6) | <i>Damages other's property on purpose.</i> | .69 | POCA-R, Kellam |
| Depression (6) | <i>Looks sad or down.</i> | .64 | POCA-R, Kellam |
| Social Behavior (9) | <i>Plays well with other children.</i> | .79 | POCA-R, Kellam |
| Parent Alc. & Drug Use (6) | <i>I have 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a day</i> | .61 | NIDA |
| Youth Alc. & Drug use (4) | <i>My child drinks alcohol. (Age of first use: _____ yrs.)</i> | | NIDA |

Note: Numbers in parentheses reflect the number of items in the scale. Reliabilities were computed using Cronbach's alpha. Kumpfer scales were developed specifically for SFP intervention program modules and have been tested in multiple studies. Moos (1974) scales modified by Kumpfer (1989).