

Colorado's ProDads Project

- Like many states, Colorado has a Child Fatality Review and Prevention system
- After many years of analyzing data and noting some significant patterns, we concluded that we needed to reach young men who may be in a caretaking role to teach them healthy parenting skills
- This is a traditionally difficult population to reach and, unlike their female counterparts, have few parenting models to follow.

Summary of Issue

- At a happenstance meeting of the right people, a group concluded that the best way to reach this population may be through the probation system
- A cursory examination of the data on-hand did not reveal a correlation between perpetration of child abuse fatality and previous involvement in correctional/judicial systems as the data had not been collected
- So, we decided to move ahead anyway and collect the data later!

Our Strategy Development

- Two counties, Denver and El Paso (Colorado Springs area), rose to the top of our list because of existing programs and need for services of this nature
- Denver County had an existing cooperative agreement in place between probation and a parent education provider and was providing the SafeCare Program
- El Paso County alone experienced six child fatalities from traumatic brain injury within four months of 2009 – largely from shaking or throwing.
- El Paso County is home to the Center on Fathering, a project of the County Dept. of Human Services, so that was a natural fit, too.

Selection of Sites

- The project started by convening a collaborative group to discuss current efforts to reach this population and best practices/curricula to educate these young men about the caretaking of young children.
- The collaborative group included the Colorado Departments of Human Services, Public Health and Judicial; Denver County Probation and program providers in both Denver and El Paso Counties

Collaborative Partners

- Although the two programs were going to be offering different curricula (Nurturing Fathering and SafeCare), we thought that we'd have a need to present shared evaluation results.
- So, one tool was selected for both programs: the Adolescent/Adult Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2), which is used in a pre/post test format.
- This is a forty-question tool that captures attitudes about parenting through the constructs of empathy, parental expectations, corporal punishment, child/parent roles and children's independence.

Pre-Evaluation Work

- There were some significant barriers to get the projects started:
 - The El Paso County Dept. of Human Services seemed reticent to start a new funding arrangement, especially for a relatively low amount of funding (\$25,000).
 - Referrals from probation were slow to start in both counties.
 - Another barrier has been scheduling of class sessions at a time that would be conducive to maximum participation. The majority of the young men who are involved use the bus or don't drive. In El Paso County especially, this was an issue as the buses don't run very late.

Barriers to Project Launch

- While the Denver County program focuses on young men who have children, the El Paso County also includes young males who do not have children but may be in a caretaking role someday.
- The Denver program suggested that we track recidivism of clients as a long-term outcome.
- Project has opened some doors with the domestic violence partners in each county.

Innovations

- As of earlier this year, the “n” has been slow to grow but results show some promise.
- Evaluations have shown that of the five constructs of the AAPI, program participants are showing the most improvement in the areas of:
 - Valuing children’s independence
 - Child/Parent role differentiation
 - Expectations of Children
- There was a LOT of evaluation regression (posttest scores were lower than pretest scores) – this bears further investigation but may be because we are working with an “institutionally wary” population. We may encourage programs to do a “retrospective” evaluation format as a result of this lesson.

Evaluation Results

- I had some initial trepidation about working with this population.
- I felt that there may be some issues regarding developing an investment in the curricula, working with the (mostly female) staff and completion of the full curricula (up to 16 weeks)
- While there were challenges, many young men actually indicated that they have appreciated this time to do something right in their lives, especially since few of them had experienced a healthy fathering environment growing up.

Lessons Learned

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**Let me know if you have any
further questions!**