

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Who Benefits and How Does it Work? Moderators and Mediators of Outcome in an Effectiveness Trial of a Parenting Intervention

Gardner, F., Hutchings, J., Bywater, T., & Whitaker, C. (2010). Who benefits and how does it work? Moderators and mediators of outcome in an effectiveness trial of a parenting intervention. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 39(4), 568-580. doi:10.1080/15374416.2010.486315

**SUMMARY:** Parenting intervention has been found effective to reduce child problem behaviors. Two groups of preschoolers at risk for conduct problems were included in the study, with one group's parents receiving parenting intervention, and the other group not. Results revealed that families with certain characteristics benefited more from the intervention than others, and positive parenting was the key to intervention success.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- The parenting intervention was most effective in terms of preventing conduct problems for boys, younger children, and those with more depressed mothers.
- Children who had more or fewer deviant behaviors at baseline were equally likely to benefit from the intervention program.
- Improvement in positive parenting skills after the intervention were predictive of changes in conduct problems.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Participate in professional trainings to learn more about preventing and reducing conduct problems in preschoolers, and how these relate to military families
- Help military parents develop strategies to reduce children's and adolescents' conduct problems

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Increase outreach efforts to military families to advertise available parenting intervention programs
- Host workshops for military parents to improve their parenting skills

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs aimed at increasing the well-being of military parents and their children
- Raise awareness of the importance of parenting education for disadvantaged and distressed military families

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## METHODS

- Families were recruited in 11 socially disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- Participants were randomly assigned to the intervention and control groups, and parents in the intervention group received the 12-week Incredible Years parenting intervention; the mean attendance was 9.2 sessions.
- Families in both groups were assessed at entry and at 6-month follow-up (average retention rate = 87%); the assessments included parent questionnaires regarding child problem behaviors and parent depression, and home observations of parent-child interactions.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 153 preschoolers at risk for conduct problems; 104 of them were randomly assigned to the intervention group, and 49 were in the control group.
- The average ages of the children in the intervention and control groups were 46.4 months (SD = 6.6) and 46.2 months (SD = 4.3), respectively.
- The race/ethnicity of the participants were not indicated in the article.

## LIMITATIONS

- All participants in the study came from distressed and disadvantaged families, therefore the results may not be applicable to the general population.
- Participants were assessed six months after the start of the program, thus the long-term effect of the intervention is unknown.
- The race/ethnicity information of the participants was missing, which limits the ability to generalize the results.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Collect longitudinal data to assess the effectiveness of the parenting intervention over time
- Recruit families from various socioeconomic backgrounds to increase the diversity of the sample
- Examine the effect of parenting intervention on other aspects of child outcomes, such as social competency and intellectual development

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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