



Supporting Military Families Through
Research and Outreach



Enhancing Child Outcomes through High-Quality Parent Education

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Research

Outreach

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Military REACH, a project of the DoD-USDA Partnership for Military Families, utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach integrating both research and outreach to support those who work with and on behalf of military families. Through our three-fold approach, we provide empirical research that identifies and addresses key issues impacting military families and the programs that serve them, offer outreach and professional development through online resources, and host a Live Learning Lab for program staff seeking constructive professional development feedback for their programs.

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
Enhancing Child Outcomes through High-Quality Parent Education	1
Theoretical Models of Parent Education	1
Framework for Life-Span Family Life Education	2
National Extension Parenting Education Framework	2
Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework	3
Positive Parenting	3
Child and Youth Outcomes and Parent Education Programs	5
Child and Youth Outcomes in the Context of Parenting.....	5
Parenting Outcomes in the Context of Parent Education Programs	7
Components of High-Quality, Effective Parent Education Programs	9
Evidence-based	9
Based on theories of child development	9
Use consistent messaging	9
Focus on strengthening skills	10
Delivery Modes	12
Adult Learning	12
Face-to-face	13
Online.....	13
Self-Directed	14
Fidelity of Implementation	15
Conclusion.....	16
Implications for Programs and Policy	17
References	18



Executive Summary

Resilient children and youth are able to experience positive outcomes despite the presence of risk factors that may threaten their development (Masten, 2001). Some researchers have suggested that positive, healthy, effective parenting can increase resilience in children (e.g., Burns et al., 2013; Masten, 2001). Parents are often inundated with information regarding the best way to perform the functions of parenting to ensure children are safe, healthy, and developing to their full potential. Parent education programs can instruct parents in the healthiest parenting styles and the most effective parenting practices and how to use them. Through this, parent education programs can guide and support parents to bolster child and youth outcomes.

In order to gain an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and best practices for parent education, a comprehensive review of empirical articles, literature reviews, research reports, and book chapters was conducted using databases, including: PsycINFO, Google Scholar, PubMed, Web of Science, JSTOR, and library catalogues. A variety of search terms were used that included: parent education, parenting education, parent training, adult learning, and online parent education, among others. With particular focus on research published in the last ten years, over 2,000 resources were identified through that search, which were then reviewed to inform the development of this report.

Parent education frameworks organize information regarding important components and best practices for parent education programs (Arcus, 1995; Fisher & Kerckhoff, 1981; Ponzetti, 2015; C. A. Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994). Most models of parent education identify several common underlying principles as important for parent education programs, including the use of developmentally-appropriate material, a focus on parent and family strengths, the development of culturally-sensitive content, and awareness of the greater system in which parenting occurs. The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) Framework for Life Span Family Life Education, the National Extension Parenting Education Framework (NEPEF), the Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework (PECCF), and Positive Parent Education are four major models of parent education that can help guide the development of parent education programs.

Parenting includes two important components: parenting practices (i.e., what parents do) and parenting style (i.e., how they do it). Both are important in promoting optimal child outcomes and developing positive parent-child relationships (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The effects that parent education programs have on child outcomes happen through positive improvements in parenting practices and style (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005; Dishion et al., 2008; Sandler, Schoenfelder, Wolchik, & MacKinnon, 2011; Zhou, Sandler, Millsap, Wolchik, & Dawson-McClure, 2008). Therefore, high-quality parent education programs ought to be based on the parenting practices and styles that reliably lead to better child outcomes.

With regard to parenting practices, parents' acting as a model for healthy behavior, monitoring children's behavior, consistent discipline, and clear limit setting are associated with better physical (e.g., Edwardson & Gorely, 2010), intellectual (e.g., Kiernan & Huerta, 2008), psychological and emotional (e.g., Bariola, Hughes, & Gullone, 2012), and social and behavioral (e.g., Simons, Sutton, Simons, Gibbons, & Murry, 2016) outcomes for children. Parenting styles that feature high levels of warmth, autonomy, and boundaries are also associated with better physical (Lippold, Davis, McHale, Buxton, & Almeida, 2016), intellectual (e.g., Pinquart, 2016), psychological and emotional (e.g., Khaleque, 2014), and social and behavioral outcomes for children (e.g., Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Nielson, 2015).

Parent education programs increase the use of effective parenting practices (e.g., Webster-Stratton, 2001) and healthy parenting styles (Chen & Chan, 2016) associated with optimal child outcomes.



Furthermore, parent education programs have been found to positively influence the parent-child relationship (e.g., DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005), while reducing parental stress and increasing parenting self-efficacy (e.g., Sandler et al., 2011).

Parent education programs that produce these changes in parenting to improve child outcomes have been widely studied and evaluated. Through these studies, a pattern of components important to the development of parent education has emerged (e.g., Kaminski, Valle, Filene, & Boyle, 2008). High-quality, effective parent education programs are evidence-based, grounded in theories of child development, use consistent messaging, and are focused on strengthening important parenting skills. There are certain skills these programs aim to increase, including skills for: improving the parent-child relationship, helping children develop emotion regulation, effective discipline, supporting children through specific stressful situations, promoting healthy child lifestyles, effective problem-solving, and parent self-care.

In addition to the components of high-quality, effective parent education, it is essential to consider how parent education is delivered to parents. Delivery modes include face-to-face, online, self-directed, or hybrid formats. These modes of delivery address the different ways that adults learn and aim to give parents what they need regarding parent education. Another component of the successful delivery of a program is fidelity of implementation, which helps ensure the content is delivered accurately and effectively across administrations of the program.

Parent education programs are an effective way to influence parenting practices, styles, and parent stress, which in turn influence child and youth outcomes. These programs can increase the use of positive, effective parenting practices and styles while reducing parent stress and enhancing the parent-child relationship. These effects will in turn allow for children and youth to become more resilient and psychologically healthy, which will allow them to thrive.



Enhancing Child Outcomes through High-Quality Parent Education

Children exist within families who function within a broader social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In this complex environment, there are ample opportunities over the course of childhood for a child to encounter any one of a myriad of factors that may present a risk to his or her developing well. In the face of these potential risk factors, however, most children show resilience, through which they are able to experience positive outcomes despite these threats (Masten, 2001). It has been theorized that this resilience arises in part due to children's positive attachment to caregivers, who assure the child's needs are met and assuage anxiety, which allows for the normal functioning of the adaptation systems inherent to humans (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1958; Masten, 2001).

While much of the theory and research around these processes has focused on the general population of children and youth, the same processes occur for children and youth in military families (Easterbrooks, Ginsburg, & Lerner, 2013; Wadsworth et al., 2016). As such, some have suggested that resilience in children can be increased through increasing positive, healthy, effective caregiving (Burns et al., 2013; Masten, 2001). Typically, these interventions are targeted at parents, though they are applicable to all individuals who provide caregiving for children (note that from here forward the words "parents" or "parenting" should be taken to be inclusive of all caregivers).

Parenting includes a broad range of functions that are performed in order to ensure the health and safety of children, to promote accomplishment of age-appropriate tasks, and to reduce negative behaviors (Sandler et al., 2011). Parents are often inundated with a panoply of information regarding how they ought to perform these functions. This wealth of information often contradicts itself, leaving parents uncertain of the best way to fulfill their role as a parent. Parent education programs can simplify this daunting task and guide parents in learning how to use the healthiest parenting styles and the most effective parenting practices.

Parent education programs aim to provide parents with knowledge about child development and to assist parents in developing the skills that are most closely related to positive child outcomes (Kaminski et al., 2008). These programs educate and support parents so that parents can focus on developing relationships with their children and doing the functions required of them as parents. There are several theoretical models of content parent education programs can include and how parent education can be disseminated (e.g., Arcus, 1995; DeBord et al., 2002; Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education, 2011). While there are some differences among these models, there are also important similarities.

Theoretical Models of Parent Education

Frameworks can organize and conceptualize what constitutes parent education and how to provide the best parent education programs (Arcus, 1995; Fisher & Kerckhoff, 1981; Ponzetti, 2015; C. A. Smith et al., 1994). Therefore, it is important to review frameworks of parent education, as well as the broader theories of parenting (e.g., Baumrind, 1967) and child development (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Erikson, 1950, 1959b) upon which those frameworks are based.

Many models of parent education identify several common underlying principles as important for parent education programs. First, models suggest that while broad parenting skills are relevant for all parents, education must be tailored to the developmental level of the parent learner, as well as the level of their children (Arcus, 1987; C. A. Smith et al., 1994). Second, these models suggest that programs take

Resilience in children can be increased through increasing positive, healthy, effective caregiving.



a strength-based approach to parenting, striving to increase the overall well-being of families and focusing on parents' strengths, rather than shortcomings (Bredehoft, 2001; Myers-Walls, 2004; C. A.

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Smith et al., 1994; Thomas & Arcus, 1992). Third, models recommend program content that is culturally-sensitive and bias-free (Arcus, 1995; C. A. Smith et al., 1994). Finally, models utilize a systems theory approach (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1986) that considers the broader environmental and societal context in which parenting occurs when developing parent education content (Bredehoft, 2001). These underlying principles guide many parent education models, though specific models differ from one another in other ways.

Framework for Life-Span Family Life Education

Family life education, which includes parent education, began in the early 20th century to ameliorate societal problems, such as divorce, delinquency, and school drop-out (Arcus, 1995; Avery & Lee, 1964). As the field grew to encompass a broader array of topics, there was a lack of consensus regarding what comprised family life education (Arcus, 1995; Avery & Lee, 1964; Fisher & Kerckhoff, 1981; Thomas & Arcus, 1992). In response, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) developed the Framework for Life-Span Family Life Education beginning in the mid-1980s. This framework enumerated family life education content for learners of all ages (Arcus, 1987). After development of the NCFR framework, there was greater consensus among experts regarding conceptualizations, content, and goals of family life education (Thomas & Arcus, 1992). Since that time, this framework has been essential in guiding program development, research, education, and policy within the field of family life education (Arcus, 1995; Bredehoft, 2001).

The most recent version of the framework includes ten content areas (e.g., human sexuality, interpersonal relationships, family dynamics, human growth and development), one of which focuses on parent education and guidance (National Council on Family Relations, 2014). This content area, developed through conferences, focus groups, and expert panels, suggests numerous potential topics and skills to teach in parent education programs, including parenting practices and styles, parent-child communication, parent resources, demands and rewards of parenting, and many others (Arcus, 1987; National Council on Family Relations, 2014). Ultimately, the NCFR framework guides professionals in the development of comprehensive, relevant, and influential parent education to promote healthy families. Within that frame, it provides specific guidance for providing effective parent education programs.

National Extension Parenting Education Framework

Another nationally-recognized education framework, the National Extension Parenting Education Framework (NEPEF), provides information and guidelines specific to parent education (DeBord et al., 2002). The original model, the National Extension Parenting Education Model (NEPEM), provided common guidelines for parenting programs across all states' Cooperative Extension Services (CES; DeBord, 2015; C. A. Smith et al., 1994). CES agencies conduct research and provide families with education and learning opportunities, such as online trainings and community programs (DeBord, 2015; DeBord et al., 2002; C. A. Smith et al., 1994). The NEPEM was developed with extensive input from a team of human development specialists selected by a human development leader at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (C. A. Smith et al., 1994). The model allowed for parent education programs to be discussed, developed, evaluated, and reviewed consistently nationwide (C. A. Smith et al., 1994).



The NEPEM included six parenting practices vital to healthy parenting and important to include in parent education programs. The six parenting practices are care for self, understand, guide, nurture, motivate, and advocate. They represent the need for parents to care for their own well-being, understand children and their development, guide children in developing self-control and reasonable limits, nurture children by caring for their needs, motivate children to succeed academically and in other domains, and advocate for resources for their children.

Following the NEPEM, the NEPEF was created in order to address a lack of information regarding topics and skills parent educators must master to competently teach parent education programs (DeBord, 2015; DeBord et al., 2002). In the updated framework, six processes competent parent educators must use were identified (i.e., grow, frame, develop, embrace, educate, build; DeBord, 2015; DeBord et al., 2002). Apart from the added parent educator processes, the assumptions, principles, and original six parenting practices of the NEPEM remain mostly unchanged in the NEPEF. This model continues to provide valuable recommendations about guidelines and content areas for parent education programs.

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Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework

Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education programs developed a comprehensive model of parent education based on social ecological theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979) called the Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework (PECCF; Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education, 2011). This model emphasizes that parents operate in a complex network of social systems and encourages the development of parent education curriculum that is relevant to parents within those contexts (Walker & Rudi, 2014). It identifies five domains (i.e., parent development, parent-child relationships, early childhood development, family development, and culture and community), 21 components (e.g., role of the parent, relationship skills, general child development, family traditions and values, community resources), and 64 categories (e.g., parenting philosophy, trust, brain development, rituals and celebrations, media) to be considered in parent education (Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education, 2011). These domains, components, and categories are meant to be used as a guide for the development of parent education curriculum that is most relevant to the population being served. The PECCF also includes a two-phase, ten-step process for developing the curriculum to fit within the domains, components, and categories (Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education, 2011). Though this framework was developed for use in early childhood parent education, it can easily be extended for use in parent education more generally.

Positive Parenting

Positive parenting has been conceptualized as parenting behaviors high in warmth, support, responsiveness, discipline, and control, which promote positive child adjustment and outcomes.

Positive parenting is a term frequently used, but rarely defined, in parent education (Myers-Walls, 2004; Russell, 1997). Positive parenting has been conceptualized as parenting behaviors high in warmth, support, responsiveness, discipline, and control, which promote positive child adjustment and outcomes (Baumrind, 1967; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Padilla-Walker, Carlo, Christensen, & Yorgason, 2012; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). Furthermore, parent involvement and teaching of social skills have also been considered important to positive parenting



(Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997). Positive parenting often explicitly focuses on strengths of both parents and children, rather than focusing on fixing their deficiencies (Myers-Walls, 2004; Rodrigo, Almeida, Spiel, & Koops, 2012).

Just as there are many components of positive parenting, there are several different types of positive parenting programs. Positive parenting programs include at least one of the following three components: fostering a positive parent-child relationship (Brody et al., 2005; Chaffin et al., 2004), promoting positive child outcomes, namely health and well-being (Gardner, Hutchings, Bywater, & Whitaker, 2010; Sanders, Turner, & Markie-Dadds, 2002), and emphasizing a positive or strength-based view to empower parents (Pearson & Andersen, 2001; Rodrigo et al., 2012).

The importance of a positive parent-child relationship is well-researched in the context of attachment theory, which posits that a strong relationship with a caregiver provides a child with a sense of security and a foundation from which to grow and develop (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1958; Bretherton, 1992). Several evidence-based parenting programs focus on improving the quality of the parent-child relationship. These programs demonstrate that the parent-child relationship provides elements that contribute to healthy child development, including a healthy role model, a positive relationship example, and exposure to environments that develop child competencies (Bernstein, Hans, & Percansky, 1991; Chaffin et al., 2004; Johnson, Kent, & Leather, 2005). Thus, a positive parent-child relationship is one key aspect of positive parenting to include in parent education programs.

Another frequently stated goal of positive parenting programs is promoting child health and well-being outcomes. Behavioral and learning theories suggest that children's behavior can be shaped by environmental contingencies (e.g., reward, punishment), including those provided by parents (Bouton, 2007; Branscum & Dick, 2005; Mowrer, 1960; T. K. Taylor & Biglan, 1998). Behavior can also be shaped by social learning through watching others and the consequences they receive (Bandura, 1977; O'Connor, Matias, Futh, Tantam, & Scott, 2013). These theories serve as a framework for parent education programs to teach parents how to modify their children's behaviors and achieve a range of positive child responses and outcomes (Gardner et al., 2010; Nowak & Heinrichs, 2008; Sanders et al., 2002).

Finally, positive parenting programs frequently emphasize a strength-based view of parents and parenting abilities. These programs focus on providing resources to improve parenting and increase positive parenting behaviors, instead of focusing on problematic parenting behaviors (Myers-Walls, 2004; Rodrigo et al., 2012). Successful strength-based parenting programs have provided parents with resources such as psychoeducation, social support groups, and skills training (Pearson & Andersen, 2001; Riley et al., 2008; Sheely-Moore & Bratton, 2010). These programs have had positive outcomes for both parents (e.g., increased knowledge and confidence, decreased stress; Pearson & Andersen, 2001; Rodriguez, Dumont, Mitchell-Herzfeld, Walden, & Greene, 2010; Salmela-Aro, 2012) and children (e.g., increased self-efficacy, decreased depressive symptoms and behavior problems; Riley et al., 2008; Sheely-Moore & Bratton, 2010). This suggests a strength-based approach to parent education is valuable in promoting healthy and effective parenting. Overall, promoting positive parent-child relationships, positive child outcomes, and positive views of parents are three important components to consider in parent education programs.

Positive parenting programs frequently emphasize a strength-based view of parents and parenting abilities.

These three frameworks each provide important information regarding the development of parent education programs. While there is a broad array of potential parenting content, important principles



that span parent education topics include providing developmentally-appropriate material, focusing on families' strengths and resilience, tailoring material to be sensitive to families of all backgrounds and cultures, and attending to the larger systems in which parenting occurs. Ultimately, these principles can be used to provide parent education that promotes the use of healthy parenting styles and effective parenting practices, which, in turn allow for children and youth to thrive.

Child and Youth Outcomes and Parent Education Programs

Parenting includes two important components: parenting practices and parenting style. Parenting practices are *what* parents do (e.g., providing discipline, monitoring children, developing routines), and parenting style is *how* they do it (e.g., levels of warmth and control, amount of autonomy granted). Both are essential for promoting optimal child outcomes and creating positive parent-child relationships (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The effects of parent education programs on child outcomes are due to positive improvements in parenting practices and style (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005; Dishion et al., 2008; Sandler et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2008), and so it is crucial to consider parenting practices and parenting style when developing such a program. A well-designed parent education program can help participants develop effective parenting practices such as supporting, monitoring, and disciplining their children and appropriate parenting styles including authoritative and positive parenting, which in turn may lead to better child outcomes.



The effects of parent education programs on child outcomes are due to positive improvements in parenting practices and style.

Child and Youth Outcomes in the Context of Parenting

The impact of parenting practices and styles on child and youth development and outcomes has been extensively demonstrated in the child development literature (e.g., Brotman et al., 2011; Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2012; Pinquart, 2014). This impact extends to the physical, intellectual, emotional and psychological, and social outcomes of children and youth.

Physical outcomes. Raising physically healthy children is one of the most important responsibilities of parents. There are certain parenting styles and practices that are associated with better child and youth health. Higher parental warmth and responsiveness is associated with fewer physical signs of stress and lower body mass index (BMI) for children and youth (Lippold et al., 2016; Rhee, 2008; Schofield, Conger, Gonzales, & Merrick, 2016). This benefit extends into adulthood, possibly because this type of parenting helps children develop strong and regulated physiological response systems, keeps children's stress low, and offers reliable psychosocial resources (Andersson, 2016; Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002; Taylor, Way, & Seeman, 2011; Wegman & Stetler, 2009). Furthermore, harsh and inconsistent parenting is associated with worse self-reported physical health and increased BMI in adolescents (Brody et al., 2014; Miller, Chen, & Cole, 2009; Schofield et al., 2016). In addition, parenting practices, such as acting as a model of healthy behaviors, monitoring children's behavior, and providing pragmatic support for child and youth physical activities are associated with more positive health behaviors in children and youth (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010; Hennessy, Hughes, Goldberg, Hyatt, & Economos, 2010).

Intellectual outcomes. Parenting also plays an important role in children's cognitive development (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000). For example, parenting practices that include cognitively stimulating activities, such as reading to the child, are strongly associated with children's intellectual development and may act as a protective buffer in the face of multiple risk factors (e.g., maternal depression, poverty; Guo & Harris, 2000; Kiernan & Huerta, 2008). With regard to parenting style, more positive mother-child relationships are also associated with better child cognitive development (Kiernan & Huerta, 2008).



Parenting is also associated with child and youth achievement in school. When parents believe in the importance of school readiness skills, believe in their children's competence, and have high expectations, children tend to do better in school (Wu & Qi, 2006). Parental involvement in education, which includes the extent to which parents interact with the school as well as how parents actively support children's education through the parent-child relationship, is also associated with higher academic achievement (Kim & Hill, 2015). Furthermore, a parenting style that features high warmth, autonomy, and supervision is associated with higher child academic achievement over time, while a parenting style that features harsh control is associated with lower child academic achievement (Grolnick, Raftery-Helmer, Flamm, Marbell, & Cardemil, 2015; Pinquart, 2016). It is important to note, however, that these associations tend to account for limited amounts of the differences among children and youth with regard to academic achievement (Pinquart, 2016).

Psychological and emotional outcomes. There is considerable evidence that parenting is related to children's psychological health (e.g., Brumariu & Kerns, 2015; King, Vidourek, & Merianos, 2016; McLeod, Weisz, & Wood, 2007), including the development resilience (Bradley, Davis, Wingo, Mercer, & Ressler, 2013). This relationship between parenting and the development of child and youth resilience occurs in many different types of families (Bradley et al., 2013), including military families (Gewirtz & Zamir, 2014). A warm and affectionate parenting style is associated with better psychological adjustment in children and with the development of emotional stability, high self-esteem, and high self-worth (Khaleque, 2014; Nelson et al., 2015). Furthermore, a parenting style characterized by low warmth and high control is associated with lower psychological health, higher anxiety and depression, and lower self-worth for children (Brumariu & Kerns, 2015; McLeod et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 2015), which may be due to high levels of control interfering with a child's development of self-efficacy and agency (Wood, McLeod, Sigman, Hwang, & Chu, 2003).

One way in which parenting may influence children's psychological and emotional well-being is through its influence on emotion regulation in children. Children learn emotion regulation skills in part from their parents through observing, modeling, and social referencing (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Indeed, there is some evidence that when parents possess healthy emotion regulation, children are more likely to develop healthy emotion regulation (Bariola et al., 2012; Fosco & Grych, 2013). Parenting style may also influence children's development of emotion regulation since children who experience parenting that is high in warmth and support tend to have better emotion regulation (Fosco & Grych, 2013). Furthermore, certain parenting practices contribute to the development of children's emotion regulation. For example, refocusing a child's attention (i.e., attention refocusing) and helping children to interpret a negative situation in a more positive way (i.e., cognitive reframing) are the most useful methods to help children manage their negative emotions. Attention refocusing is more useful for younger children, while cognitive reframing is more effective for older children (Morris et al., 2007). Children's healthy emotion regulation is in turn associated with increased resilience and psychological well-being (Cicchetti, Ackerman, & Izard, 1995; Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2007).

A warm and affectionate parenting style is associated with better psychological adjustment in children and with the development of emotional stability, high self-esteem, and high self-worth

Social and behavioral outcomes. The possession of healthy social skills and high levels of prosocial behavior are important for the development and well-being of children and youth (Yoo, Feng, & Day, 2013). These skills and behaviors can be cultivated by certain parenting styles and parenting practices.



For example, authoritative and positive parenting styles are associated with better social skills in children (Popliger, Talwar, & Crossman, 2011), influences that may extended to early adulthood (Betts, Trueman, Chiverton, Stanbridge, & Stephens, 2012). Moreover, a parent-child relationship that balances closeness and autonomy can promote prosocial behaviors in children, whereas extensive parental psychological control is associated with less prosocial behavior and empathy in children (Kerr, Beck, Downs Shattuck, Kattar, & Uriburu, 2003; Yoo et al., 2013).

Parenting is also associated with children and adolescents' problem behaviors, such as disobeying rules, bullying, being physically aggressive, or engaging in risky health behaviors (e.g., drug or alcohol use, risky sexual behaviors). Increased child problem behaviors are associated with certain parenting practices, including physical punishment and high parental expression of anger (Denham et al., 2000; MacKenzie, Nicklas, Brooks-Gunn, & Waldfogel, 2015). Other parenting practices, such as the use of monitoring, clear limit-setting, and consistent discipline, are associated with fewer child problem behaviors (Denham et al., 2000; Kerr et al., 2003; Simons et al., 2016). Parenting styles are also associated with differences

in child problem behaviors, with high levels of warmth being associated with lower levels of problem behaviors and high levels of harshness being associated with higher levels of problem behaviors (Baumrind, 1991; Denham et al., 2000; Nelson et al., 2015; Simons et al., 2016).

Parent education programs have two major benefits: parents learn healthy and effective parenting practices and parenting styles that help parents cultivate more positive parent-child relationships and parents experience reduced parental stress and higher parenting self-efficacy.

Parenting Outcomes in the Context of Parent Education Programs

As there are important, robust associations between parenting and child outcomes, it is essential to examine whether parent education programs can influence parents in order to enhance child and youth outcomes while directly benefiting parents' quality of life. Indeed, parent education

programs have two major benefits: parents learn healthy and effective parenting practices and parenting styles that help parents cultivate more positive parent-child relationships (e.g., Brotman et al., 2008) and parents experience reduced parental stress and higher parenting self-efficacy (Sandler et al., 2011).

Parenting practices. Parent education programs can improve parenting practices both short-term (Brotman et al., 2005; Webster-Stratton, 2001) and long-term (Brotman et al., 2008; Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong, 2009; DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005). These improvements include but are not limited to: enhanced disciplinary strategies (Brotman et al., 2008; Webster-Stratton, 1998), greater encouragement for learning (Brotman et al., 2005), effective parental monitoring (Dishion, Nelson, & Kavanagh, 2003), effective and healthy communication and problem solving skills (DeGarmo, Eddy, Reid, & Fetrow, 2009), and more involvement in the care of their children (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005). For example, parent education programs directed specifically at fathers have been shown to increase fathers' connection with their children, involvement in caring for their children, and relationships with children's mothers (Cookston, Braver, Griffin, De Luse, & Miles, 2007; Doherty, Erickson, & LaRossa, 2006; Hawkins, Lovejoy, Holmes, Blanchard, & Fawcett, 2008). Other parent education programs have been shown to help mothers

The effect of parent education on parenting practices is promising especially considering that most of the programs are short-term yet demonstrate lasting long-term effects.



develop improved parenting practices such as positive involvement, promoting child skill development, and effective monitoring of youth (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005). There is evidence that parent education programs that include fathers as well as mothers may be more effective in changing parenting practices than programs that are targeted only toward mothers (Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2007). The effect of parent education on parenting practices is promising especially considering that most of the programs are short-term yet demonstrate lasting long-term effects (Brotman et al., 2008).

Parenting style. Besides increasing parents' use of positive parenting practices, some parent education programs also help parents develop the positive, healthy parenting styles that are associated with more positive child outcomes. For instance, some programs have been successful at promoting the use of parenting styles high in warmth, responsiveness, and limit-setting, while decreasing other styles that are more harsh, permissive, or neglectful (Brotman et al., 2008; McVittie & Best, 2009; Webster-Stratton, 1998). Moreover, parent education programs that aim to prevent child maltreatment have been found to be effective at promoting a nurturing, positive parenting attitude and a greater understanding of children's needs and developmentally-appropriate behaviors (Chen & Chan, 2016; Cowan et al., 2009; Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, & Lutzker, 2009).

Parent-child relationships. The parent-child relationship is one of the basic adaptive processes for humans, and it is vital for the optimal development of children and youth (Masten, 2001). A positive parent-child relationship is loving, nurturing, supportive, responsive, and respectful (Sandler et al., 2011). A number of parent education programs have been found to be effective at improving parent-child relationships (DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005; McKenry, Clark, & Stone, 1999; Tein, Sandler, MacKinnon, & Wolchik, 2004; Wolchik et al., 2002). For example, multiple father education programs have been shown to be effective at cultivating a closer father-child relationship, and increasing fathers' involvement in caring for their children (Cookston et al., 2007; Cowan et al., 2009; Doherty et al., 2006). In general, the effects of parent education programs on positive child outcomes are due to improvement in parent-child relationship quality (Tein et al., 2004; Zhou et al., 2008).

The parent-child relationship is one of the basic adaptive processes for humans, and it is vital for the optimal development of children and youth.

Parental stress reduction. Although most parent education programs are designed to achieve better child outcomes and improved parenting skills, parents may directly benefit from the interventions through decreased parenting stress and increased parenting self-efficacy and general well-being (Durrant et al., 2014). Parenting self-efficacy refers to parents' confidence in their ability to perform parenting-related tasks that enhance their children's development and ability to thrive (Sandler et al., 2011). Parent education programs have been found to help parents gain self-efficacy, allowing them to confidently utilize healthy and effective parenting practices and parenting styles (Durrant et al., 2014), which in turn reduces parenting-related stress (Baugh, Ballard, Tyndall, Littlewood, & Nolan, 2015; Piquart & Teubert, 2010). Furthermore, many parent education programs have been effective at reducing parental stress as a direct objective of the program (e.g., Neece, 2014; Treacy, Tripp, & Baird, 2005), including specifically for military families (Kelley, Schwerin, Farrar, & Lane, 2006).

The associations between parenting and child outcomes and parent education programs and parenting demonstrate that parent education programs are an effective way to improve child outcomes. Given the importance of certain parenting practices and styles and the power of parent education programs to influence parents' use of those practices and styles, it is essential to determine the components of parent education programs that have been shown, through rigorous scientific research, to work best.



Components of High-Quality, Effective Parent Education Programs

Parent education programs have been widely studied and evaluated. Through the various studies of parent education, a pattern of important components has emerged (e.g., Kaminski et al., 2008). These components are the elements of programs that are reliably associated with positive parent and child outcomes. High-quality, effective parent education programs are evidence-based, grounded in theories of child development, use consistent messaging, and are focused on strengthening important parenting skills.

Evidence-based

Parent education programs that have been shown to be effective through the use of high-quality, well-designed research trials are considered to be “evidence-based” (Carlson & Christenson, 2005). These programs have scientifically-demonstrated significant and sustained effects on parent and child outcomes (Chaffin & Friedrich, 2004).

Often, this is done through the use of randomized controlled trials or rigorous quasi-experimental designs. In these studies, parents participating in the particular parent education program of interest are compared to parents who are not participating in the program or who are receiving a different type of parent education. This allows researchers to make inferences about parent and child outcomes that are affected by participation in the program (Sibbald & Roland, 1998). If parent education programs are not thoroughly tested through carefully designed and controlled research studies, there is no way to know whether the programs will actually be effective in enhancing parent and child outcomes. The following components were identified through an analysis of components common to evidence-based parenting education programs.

High-quality, effective parent education programs are evidence-based, grounded in theories of child development, use consistent messaging, and are focused on strengthening important parenting skills.

Based on theories of child development

A child’s development is often seen as progression through a series of stages (Erikson, 1959a; Kohlberg, 1973; Piaget, 1962). At different points during a child’s growth, certain aspects of development are more salient than others (Erikson, 1959a); as such, for parent education programs to be effective, they must help parents learn how best to assist their children through the developmental tasks they are currently facing (Sandler et al., 2011). Indeed, parents with children in different stages of development

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demonstrate varying responses to the same parent education program, with certain programs having stronger effects for parents with children in certain age groups (Adams, 2001). Therefore, parent education programs must be rooted in an understanding of child development and the developmental tasks inherent in each stage. From that understanding, parent education can be formulated so that it is as meaningful, relevant, and impactful as possible for parents and children (Sandler et al., 2011).

Use consistent messaging

Parents are inundated with seemingly endless amounts of information about parenting every day. This can lead to information overload in which the amount of information available will actually hinder parents from parenting well (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). One way to combat this potential for information overload is for parent education programs to consistently convey the same message over time. This strategy has been used in many campaigns and programs to promote parenting behaviors



that increase children's health. These campaigns and programs start by identifying certain parental behaviors that have been strongly linked to improved child outcomes (Ahlers-Schmidt, Kuhlmann, Kuhlmann, Schunn, & Rosell, 2014). Then, the programs develop a consistent message through which they hope to change those behaviors and they disseminate the message through a variety of media (e.g., television commercials, billboards, written communication) in multiple settings (e.g., work, home, communities; Rogers et al., 2013). Many of these campaigns and programs have demonstrated significant effectiveness in changing parenting behaviors through the use of consistent messaging (e.g., Blitstein, Evans, Davis, & Kamyab, 2012; Pollack & Frohna, 2002; Rogers et al., 2013). Effective parent education programs can develop messages related to high-impact parent behaviors and deliver them consistently over time to parents.

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Focus on strengthening skills

Parent education programs are most effective at increasing positive child outcomes and decreasing child problems when they focus on developing parents' skills as opposed to simply providing information on child development (Bearss et al., 2015; Kaminski et al., 2008). The effect of focusing on skills is particularly robust when parents practice the new skill (Kaminski et al., 2008) and are given feedback or coaching regarding that practice (Duncan & Bardacke, 2010; Niec, Barnett, Prewett, & Shanley, 2016; Shanley & Niec, 2010). Furthermore, there are some specific skills that effective parent education programs often incorporate into their structure and curriculum. These include skills to increase the quality of the parent-child relationship, nurture children's emotion regulation, use effective discipline, promote children's healthy lifestyles, help children through stressful situations, and incorporate parent self-care into daily life.

Skills to increase the quality of the parent-child relationship. Parent education programs often work by helping parents develop skills that create a more positive parent-child relationship (Sandler et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2008). These parent education programs focus on creating more positive interactions between parents and children, increasing communication around emotions, and increasing consistency in parents' responsiveness to children, which are all elements of a more positive parent-child relationship (Kaminski et al., 2008; Pinguart & Teubert, 2010; Wilson, Hahn, Gonzalez, Henry, & Cerbana, 2011). Through increasing the quality of the parent-child relationship, parent education programs can continue to influence child outcomes even up to six years after the parent education program has ended (Zhou et al., 2008).

Skills to nurture children's emotion regulation. Many parent education programs aim to give parents the skills to nurture the development of emotion regulation in their children. The goal is to help parents

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learn the skills they need to allow their children to develop the ability to manage their emotions and their emotional expressions in adaptive and healthy ways (Sanders & Mazzucchelli, 2013). Some programs accomplish this task by focusing on the parents' emotion awareness and regulation (Duncan & Bardacke, 2010; Sanders & Mazzucchelli, 2013). There are multiple reasons programs may focus on parent emotion regulation. Parents' ability to model adaptive,

effective emotion regulation skills can increase children's use of adaptive, effective emotion regulation skills (Sanders & Mazzucchelli, 2013). Furthermore, when parents are able to regulate their own



emotions, they are able to respond to children rather than reacting to their own emotions (Duncan & Bardacke, 2010). Other programs work to enhance parenting skills that foster the development of children's emotion regulation, including parental responsiveness, non-reactivity to child emotions, empathy, and compassion (Coatsworth et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2011).

Skills for effective discipline. Another important component of parent education programs is the focus on increasing skills for effective discipline. Programs that incorporate this component aim to increase parents' use of an authoritative parenting style that includes consistency in discipline accompanied by high levels of warmth and parent-child communication (Dishion et al., 2008; Hagan et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2008). Based on the developmental stage of the child, and specifically for parents of children in middle childhood, these programs may also include training for parents in how to monitor their children's behavior in a respectful and effective manner (Dishion et al., 2003; Sandler et al., 2011).

Programs are most effective when they have explicit, concrete goals for parent and child health behaviors.

Skills to promote children's healthy lifestyles. Parent education programs that focus on specific skills parents can use to promote children's health (e.g., increasing fruit and vegetable intake, encouraging consistent child physical activity) are often effective at strengthening those skills and increasing children's healthy behaviors (Pinquart & Teubert, 2010; Rogers et al., 2013; Schmidt et al., 2012). These programs are most effective when they have explicit, concrete goals for parent and child health behaviors (Rogers et al., 2013; Schmidt et al., 2012); for example, focusing on children eating at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day (Rogers et al., 2013).

Skills for effective problem-solving. Some parent education programs are effective at influencing positive youth outcomes by increasing family problem-solving (e.g., DeGarmo et al., 2009). These programs aim to increase parents skills for effective problem-solving through meaningful integration of several of the other skills described above. In order to increase parents' problem-solving skills, parents are taught how to view their child's behavior in a developmental context, how to effectively communicate with their children, and how to use consistent and effective discipline (Adams, 2001; Kaminski et al., 2008; Sandler et al., 2011). This combination of skills allows parents to react to problems that arise in a responsive manner that is appropriate for the developmental stage of their child.

Parenting can be a stressful endeavor and the most effective parent education programs recognize this fact and help parents learn skills to reduce their stress and regulate their own emotions.

Skills to help children through specific stressful situations or events. Sometimes, parent education programs are developed in the face of specific situations children may face that are difficult or stressful (e.g., loss of a parent, parental deployment, medical illness; Ross & Devoe, 2014; Sandler et al., 2011). These programs can be especially helpful because they focus on giving caregivers specific skills to use in helping

children and youth deal with the stressful situation while taking into account the unique context in which these children and families are functioning (Hagan et al., 2012; Sandler et al., 2003). Focus on this type of skill may be particularly relevant for military families, whose children are dealing with stresses such as parental deployment and relocation (Wadsworth et al., 2016).

Skills for parent self-care. Parenting can be a stressful endeavor and the most effective parent education programs recognize this fact and help parents learn skills to reduce their stress and regulate their own emotions (e.g., Coatsworth et al., 2015; Sanders & Mazzucchelli, 2013). Parent education



programs that affect parenting and child outcomes through targeting parent stress reduction contain many different elements. These elements have included training regarding mindfulness skills (Duncan & Bardacke, 2010; Neece, 2014); time management skills, relaxation techniques, and cognitive restructuring (i.e., replacing problematic thoughts with more helpful thoughts; Treacy et al., 2005); and strategies for managing stress and dealing with anger (Raj et al., 2015).

It is important to intentionally consider the components to include in a parent education program. Certain components are commonly found in many parent education programs that have been shown to be effective and of the highest quality (e.g., Kaminski et al., 2008). When developing a parent education program, it is essential to consider both components that have been found to be important across many different parent education programs as well as components that are more unique and important for the specific population being served (e.g., Sandler et al., 2011).

Delivery Modes

The previous review of the components of high-quality and effective parent education programs proposes empirically-informed content areas that allow for improved parent and child outcomes. These content areas that contribute to optimal parent and child functioning are one part of the development of parent education programs; how these components are delivered to parents is another part. Delivery of content includes how the information is presented to maximize adult learning as well as the modes of delivery of parent education programs (e.g., Merriam, 2015). Delivery modes vary and are usually classified into the following formats: face-to-face, online, or self-directed (which may include components of other modes of delivery). These modes of delivery address the different ways that adults learn and aim to give parents what they need regarding parent education (e.g., McGoron & Ondersma, 2015). Furthermore, another component of the successful delivery of a program is fidelity of implementation, which helps ensure the content is delivered accurately and effectively across administrations of the program.

Modes of delivery address the different ways that adults learn and aim to give parents what they need regarding parent education.

Adult Learning

The concept of “adult learning” is a combination of theories related to how people acquire knowledge and perform on learning tasks, the social and environmental influences on learning processes and experiences, and characteristics of individuals (e.g., degree of motivation) and materials for learning (e.g., relevancy; Merriam, 2015). All aspects of adult learning must be considered when developing a comprehensive and effective parent education program. For example, successful parent education programs will integrate relevant, problem-centered materials that address parents’ needs during their children’s different developmental stages, while also considering potential social influences (e.g., social background, family influences, etc.; Cincinnato, De Wever, Van Keer, & Valcke, 2016) that impact how parents apply newly-learned knowledge and skills.

One aspect of adult learning theories is the concept of context-based learning, which is defined as the function of different factors in the context where the learning occurs (Merriam, 2015). Three factors that structure the context in which learning occurs are: the individuals, the tools used to facilitate learning (e.g., content materials, language), and the actual learning activity. It is proposed that in parent education programs, context-based learning should also include the program delivery mode (Merriam, 2015). Specifically, context-based learning regarding adult learners in parent education programs refers to the intersection between the parents and program facilitators (individuals), any materials used to teach new knowledge and/or skills (tools), the activities parents engage in to learn (learning activity), as



well as different ways to provide parents information to build knowledge and skills (delivery modes). There are three predominant delivery modes within parent education programs: face-to-face, online, and self-directed.

Face-to-face

Face-to-face has been the most common delivery mode of parent education programs for many years, and, consequently, is the most widely-researched method of delivering parent education (McGoron & Ondersma, 2015). Face-to-face programs can include individual or group formats, and parents may participate alone or with the child who is the target of the program. Face-to-face delivery modes often describe an in-person delivery mode where the parents and facilitators are both physically present with each other. More recently, however, this mode of delivery also includes interactions through videoconferencing where parents and facilitators can communicate by seeing each other (as opposed to communicating by e-mail or telephone) but do not inhabit the same physical space (McGoron & Ondersma, 2015).

Face-to-face parent education or training programs have been found to be effective for a range of child outcomes (e.g., managing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] symptoms; Xie et al., 2013), and parenting outcomes (e.g., educating parents about healthy parenting practices; Bert, Farris, & Borkowski, 2008). Although many face-to-face parent education programs were designed and implemented with middle class White families, many programs have been successfully adapted to be culturally applicable to diverse racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Gross et al., 2009). Some data suggest parents who participated in face-to-face parent education groups reported fewer problematic child behaviors at the end of the program than parents who participated in self-directed parenting groups (Kling, Forster, Sundell, & Melin, 2010). However, emerging data suggest that exclusive use of a face-to-face delivery mode may present obstacles for parents as there may not be enough flexibility to meet many families' needs (e.g., sessions only meet once or twice a week, families need to arrange child care; Duppong-Hurley, Hoffman, Barnes, & Oats, 2016; Gross et al., 2011). Further, there are data to support different rates of engagement related to family characteristics, where dual-earner families and families

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with three or more children were less likely to enroll in a parent education program than single-parent families (e.g., Eisner & Meidert, 2011), although their level of engagement and completion were comparable to other family compositions. Taken altogether, new modes of delivery of parent education programs have become more popular and diverse to address parents' needs (Breitenstein, Gross, & Christophersen, 2014).

Online

Online delivery of prevention and intervention programs has not only grown in popularity but has expanded in breadth of topic, from addressing specific mental and physical health concerns to inclusion of more general family and parenting issues (Pugh, Chan, & Korol, 2015). For most parent education programs, online programming consists of training modules or education resources (e.g., websites) to deliver information about child development and parenting styles, practices, and skills.



Delivering parent education programs online has several advantages. These programs can more consistently deliver the same message than therapist or facilitator led programs. With this mode of delivery, it is easier to control the consistency of how information is delivered and to assess parents' understanding of the information (e.g., Sanders, Baker, & Turner, 2012). In addition, online programs allow parents with transportation or child care obstacles to participate as these programs remove those obstacles. For some online programs, parents are better able to tailor the parent education program content toward the areas in which they have the most need or interest. Further, online programs provide families with anonymity, which may increase openness and self-disclosure by parents about their well-being and parenting, though this also may limit social support developed among parent participants (Pugh et al., 2015). One major disadvantage of online programs is that internet access may be limited among some demographic groups (e.g., families living below the poverty line and various racial or ethnic groups; Swindle, Ward, Whiteside-Mansell, Bokony, & Pettit, 2014). Inconsistent internet access greatly compromises the effectiveness of online programs. Also, most online programs do not allow for immediate feedback or clarification about the materials (Pugh et al., 2015), and therefore some parents' concerns may not be addressed in a timely manner.

Despite these disadvantages, there are data to support the effectiveness of online-based parent education programs compared to general internet resources (Sanders et al., 2012) and self-directed written materials with the same content (Sanders, Dittman, Farruggia, & Keown, 2014). Specifically, online parent education programs have been associated with reduction in parents' harsh discipline and laxness, and improvement in behavioral intentions and parenting efficacy (Irvine, Gelatt, Hammond, & Seeley, 2015). In addition, online programs have been found to maintain significant improvements in problem behaviors months after completion of the parent education program (e.g., Enebrink, Hogstrom, Forster, & Ghaderi, 2012).

Of note, many education, training, prevention, and intervention programs have been adapted for online delivery (e.g., Hogstrom, Enebrink, Melin, & Ghaderi, 2015), which has allowed for an identification of important elements to consider when undertaking such an adaptation. Aside from transferring parent education materials to online formats, adaptations have included incorporating software to encrypt data if parents are asked to upload assignments and a brief tutorial to orient parents to the features and tools of the website (e.g., Feil et al., 2008). Further, adaptation of face-to-face interventions to online delivery may also involve different recruitment and retention strategies to keep parents engaged (Hughes, Bowers, Mitchell, Curtiss, & Ebata, 2012). As a result, innovative strategies should be considered when adapting traditional parent education programs to online formats.

Online parent education programs have been associated with reduction in parents' harsh discipline and laxness, and improvement in behavioral intentions and parenting efficacy.

Self-Directed

The self-directed mode of delivery of parent education (also referred to as "self-administered") has emerged as an option for parents who experience barriers to face-to-face or online parent education programs. The self-directed delivery mode is modeled after self-help prevention and intervention formats where parents are given the necessary materials to teach themselves knowledge and skills to improve their parenting outcomes (Tarver, Daley, Lockwood, & Sayal, 2014). Materials for the self-directed delivery mode come in various formats, such as DVDs or workbooks, and, depending on the program, parents may also receive a range of facilitator input or support (e.g., biweekly telephone



consultations or weekly in-person meetings). Self-directed parent education has been found to be more effective than no treatment to reduce problematic child behaviors and harsh parenting practices as well as to increase reports of parenting satisfaction and efficacy (Markie-Dadds & Sanders, 2006b). Further, self-directed parent education paired with weekly telephone consultations with professionals yielded fewer reports of disruptive child behaviors and higher reports of parenting efficacy than self-directed parent education without weekly telephone consultations (Markie-Dadds & Sanders, 2006a). There are mixed results regarding parents' satisfaction with self-directed modalities. Although some studies have found that parents report high satisfaction with self-directed parenting programs (e.g., Nefdt, Koegel, Singer, & Gerber, 2010), others suggest there may be less parent satisfaction with self-directed parent education programs only than with self-directed delivery modes that include contact with a therapist or consultant (Morawska & Sanders, 2006). Although it is unclear as to why parents' satisfaction may differ, some concerns associated with self-directed parenting education programs include higher drop-out rates than face-to-face modalities due to parents feeling less connected or invested in the program (e.g., O'Brien & Daley, 2011). Nonetheless, self-directed modes of delivery appear to have similar child outcomes as other delivery modalities (Lundahl, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2006), which suggests self-directed delivery may be an effective option for some parents with certain parent education programs.

As parent education programs evolve and as online technologies advance, modes of delivery are becoming more inclusive of hybrid models of face-to-face, online, or self-directed formats (e.g., Breitenstein et al., 2014; Sanders, Carol, Tully, & Bor, 2000) to try to fit the needs of diverse families.

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There are examples of effective hybrid parent education programs specifically targeted toward military families and their unique experiences, including parental deployment and reintegration (e.g., Gewirtz, Pinna, Hanson, & Brockberg, 2014). The hybrid model of delivery may also lend itself to a "portfolio of services" that not only integrates multiple modes of delivery, but also incorporates perspectives of diverse professionals (e.g., family life educators, mental health therapists, etc.) to support parents as they engage in prevention and intervention programs (McGoron &

Undersma, 2015). Furthermore, there are data to suggest that preference of specific delivery modes may be related to numerous factors, such as culture, available resources, and experiences related to military service (Doty, Rudi, Pinna, Hanson, & Gewirtz, 2016; Mejia, Calam, & Sanders, 2015). Therefore, a hybrid mode of delivery of parent education programs may be a way to combine strengths of each mode in order to maximize the possibility of obtaining the best child and parent outcomes.

Fidelity of Implementation

Fidelity of implementation describes practices that are used to ensure that parent education programs' procedure and content follow the empirically-derived implementation and are accurate across subsequent applications of the program (e.g., Lize, Andrews, & Whitaker, 2014). Lack of fidelity of implementation is a threat to the reliability and validity of a program (Wainer & Ingersoll, 2013). As such, assessing fidelity of implementation is of particular importance when administering parent education programs in the "real world," away from controlled, research settings or when administering programs in new settings (e.g., families of different demographic backgrounds).

Models of fidelity of implementation often include several dimensions that refer to fidelity related to content (e.g., adherence), quantity (e.g., dosage), quality (e.g., competence), and participant experience (e.g., engagement) as well as continuous evaluation (e.g., Proctor et al., 2011). One model of fidelity of



implementation (originally developed for parent training programs for families with children diagnosed with autism) is comprised of four dimensions: training delivery, treatment delivery, treatment enactment, and moderators (e.g., social validity and complexity; Wainer & Ingersoll, 2013). The model is not only intended to provide a guide as to how to evaluate and understand parent training or education programs, but also how to better develop and design future parent education programs. Other researchers have used a comprehensive implementation support service to address fidelity of implementation that includes trainings, technical assistance (especially pertinent to online programs), supervision and meetings, and continuous performance feedback (e.g., Bloomquist et al., 2013) to ensure accurate and consistent implementation of content.

Adherence, one of the most studied aspects of fidelity of implementation, is the extent to which the program was implemented as intended (Proctor et al., 2011). In order to determine adherence and other aspects of fidelity of implementation, several different methods are used, such as rating systems (e.g., checklists), audio or visual recordings, or group discussions based on observations of the implementation (e.g., J. D. Smith, Stormshak, & Kavanagh, 2015; Welterlin, Turner-Brown, Harris, Mesibov, & Delmolino, 2012). There are mixed findings related to the extent that fidelity of implementation measures are associated with child or parent experiences of the program. For example, within the same study, higher adherence to the components of a family-based prevention program was associated with more adolescent satisfaction with the program and less parent satisfaction (Byrnes, Miller, Aalborg, Plasencia, & Keagy, 2010). There are several measures and scales that assess fidelity of implementation as an outcome for mental health interventions (e.g., Schoenwald, Letourneau, & Halliday-Boykins, 2005), yet, a review of the literature did not yield any fidelity of implementation measures developed specifically for parent education programs. Rather, general fidelity of implementation measures have been adapted or created for use to evaluate programs that incorporate parent education or training (e.g., Byrnes et al., 2010).

Without procedures to monitor fidelity of implementation of parent education programs, it will be unclear if positive parent and/or child outcomes are a result of the program or if a lack of positive outcomes is due to incorrect implementation of the program.

There are important factors to consider when choosing the delivery mode for a parent education program, including resources, family needs, and parent motivation. These factors allow for selection of the most effective delivery mode. Furthermore, fidelity of implementation must continually be assessed to ensure that parent education programs are being delivered accurately. Ensuring fidelity of implementation will allow for parent education programs to have the most robust effects for parents and children.

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Conclusion

Parent education programs can influence parenting practices, styles, and stress, which in turn influence child and youth outcomes (e.g., Zhou et al., 2008). These programs can increase the use of positive, effective parenting practices and styles while reducing parent stress and enhancing the parent-child relationship (e.g., Sandler et al., 2011). These effects allow children and youth to become more resilient and psychologically healthy, which will enable them to thrive (e.g., Bradley et al., 2013).

There are important aspects to consider when developing a parent education program. Many models of parent education include the elements of using material appropriate to the needs of the parents and



their children, concentrating on the strengths and resilience of families', creating material that is culturally-sensitive, and recognizing the broader context in which parenting occurs (e.g., Arcus, 1995). Along with these elements, there are certain components that have been shown to be important in the development of parent education (Kaminski et al., 2008). High-quality, effective parent education programs are evidence-based, based on the principles of child development, use consistent messaging, and focus on strengthening parents' skills. These high-quality, effective parent education programs can be delivered through face-to-face, online, or self-directed modes, each of which have important considerations to address when developing a program.

Implications for Programs and Policy

Parent education programs could:

- Focus on helping parents build skills, including skills for increasing the quality of the parent-child relationship, nurturing children's emotion regulation, effective discipline, promoting children's healthy lifestyles, and effective problem-solving
- Include curricula that allows parents to build stronger skills around their own self-care and stress reduction
- Develop parent education programs for military families that include information on how to help children through specific stressful situations or events (e.g., parental deployment, relocation)
- Offer information and resources that are appropriate to the developmental level of the parent and their children
- Take a strength-based approach by focusing on parents positive qualities and building family resilience, rather than focusing on problems and shortcomings
- Provide culturally-sensitive program content
- Consider the broader environmental and societal context in which parenting occurs when developing content and curricula
- Include information regarding the needs of the particular population being served when choosing the parent education mode of delivery
- Continually assess fidelity of implementation in order to ensure that the program is being implemented in the way it was designed

Policies could:

- Continue to support the development of parent education programs for military families, with specific attention to the unique context in which they live
- Endorse the use of parent education programs as a way to increase child and youth resilience
- Promote the development of healthy parenting styles and practices in order to increase positive child and youth outcomes
- Support the use of positive parent education practices, including strengths-based programming, focus on promoting healthy outcomes for children and youth, and strategies to encourage the development of strong parent-child relationships
- Recommend the development of special parent education for parents of children with chronic health conditions and special needs

Parent education programs can be an efficient and effective way of enhancing outcomes for children and youth. When these programs are developed intentionally, with attention to these elements, components, and considerations, they can have a significant impact on parents and on the resilience of children and youth.



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