

Knowing the Facts for Military Families



Enhancing Child Outcomes through High-Quality Parent Education

Parent education programs have the potential to enhance child outcomes; however, some programs are more likely than others to lead to these positive outcomes. Parent education programs that are most reliably associated with improved parent and child outcomes are characterized by the following key components:

- **Evidence-based:** Shown to have scientifically-demonstrated significant and sustained effects on parent and child outcomes through the use of high-quality, well-designed research trials
- **Grounded in theories of child development:** Help parents learn how best to assist their children through the developmental tasks they are currently facing
- **Use consistent messaging:** Affect change in parenting behaviors through the use of consistent messages
- **Focus on strengthening skills:** Focus on developing parents' skills as opposed to simply providing information on child development; skills that are most important include:



- **Skills to increase the quality of the parent-child relationship:** Help create more positive interactions between parents and children, and increase communication around emotions and consistency in parents' responses to children
- **Skills for effective discipline:** Increase parents' use of an authoritative parenting style that includes consistency in discipline accompanied by high levels of warmth and parent-child communication
- **Skills to promote children's healthy lifestyles:** Focus on specific skills parents can use to promote children's health (e.g., increasing fruit and vegetable intake, encouraging consistent child physical activity)
- **Skills for effective problem-solving:** Teach parents how to view their child's behavior in a developmental context, effectively communicate with their children, and use consistent and effective discipline
- **Skills to help children through specific stressful situations:** Give caregivers skills to use in helping children and youth deal with a specific stressful situation, taking into account the context in which these children and families are functioning
- **Skills for parent self-care:** Help parents learn skills to reduce their stress and regulate their own emotions

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Delivery Modes

The way in which a parent education program is delivered is another important element in the success of the program. There are several modes of delivery, each of which can be used effectively with a variety of populations. These delivery modes include:



Face-to-face: Most often in-person where parents and facilitators are both physically present, but can also include virtual interactions in which parents and facilitators still come face-to-face, such as videoconferencing



Self-directed : Materials (such as DVDs or workbooks) are given to parents so that they can teach themselves knowledge and skills to improve their parenting, that may include a range of facilitator input or support



Online: Training modules or education resources (e.g., websites) to deliver information about child development and parenting styles, practices, and skills



Hybrid: Makes use of multiple modes of delivery in order to meet the needs of diverse families

For more information, see the full report, *Enhancing Child Outcomes through High-Quality Parent Education*, at <https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/research/document/11068>

