

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Engaging Urban Parents of Early

Adolescents in Parenting Interventions:

Home Visits vs. Group Sessions

Key Details

KEY WORDS

Parent Engagement, Adolescents, Urban, Parent Involvement, Home Visits, Group Sessions, Parenting Interventions, African American, Mothers

POPULATION GROUP

Racialized Youth; Youth Living in Poverty; Youth Workers

STEPPING UP THEMES

Strong, Supportive Friends & Families

RESEARCH ORIGIN

USA

SOURCE

Academic

“Enhancing parent involvement can lead to improvement in academic engagement and family communication skills...” (p. 64).

1. What is the research about?

This research is about what strategies are most effective for encouraging parents to participate in parent-training and support programs. Previous research has shown that parent-training programs are an effective way to deal with youth’s behavioural issues and help them perform better in school. However, there are challenges involved in encouraging parents to enroll in, attend, and complete these types of programs. These challenges can come from parents’ inflexible work schedules and child care needs, attitudes about the value of these programs, and specific characteristics of the children and families involved. One way to manage these issues is to consider how a program can be provided to these families in the most accessible way. This study specifically looks at: (1) different types and combinations of home visits, telephone work, and group sessions, to see which are most likely to work well; and (2) identifying predictors of whether parents will stick with these programs to the end.

2. Where did the research take place?

This research review took place in the United States.

3. Who is this research about?

This study included 144 families, the majority of which included lone mothers and identified as African American. The families lived in a low-income, predominantly African American neighbourhood, and about one-third of parents had completed high school.

4. How was the research done?

Parents of youth (aged 11-13 years) from three different public schools were invited to participate in a parenting study. Those who agreed were interviewed in their homes before the beginning of the study to collect information about their level of parent-child communication and their family structure. They were then randomly assigned to one of three training programs – (1) six home visits, (2) two home visits and four group sessions, or (3) six group sessions. During the parenting program, researchers kept track of attendance and parent satisfaction after each meeting. A statistical analysis was completed to determine differences in enrolment, attendance, and completion of the program in each group. In addition, interviews with participants about their satisfaction were reviewed to look for common themes.

5. What are the key findings?

- The highest level of participation was from parents who were offered all in-home sessions, and the lowest was from parents who had to travel to six group sessions.
- Based on interviews, there were three main barriers that limited participation – scheduling conflicts (e.g. work), caregiving responsibilities (e.g. had younger children to care for), and feeling that the training program was unnecessary.
- Parents in the home visit group were more satisfied with the training compared to the other two groups. Interestingly, however, the researchers also note that some parents had specifically said they were interested in being part of the group sessions because they felt isolated in their communities and did not have much contact with other parents.
- Despite these findings, only 34% of all participants who agreed to participate actually enrolled in any parenting sessions. This number is similar to previous studies, and shows that there is more work needed to improve engagement.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

Overall, this study gives examples of the challenges related to engaging parents in low-income communities. Home visits seemed to be the most successful option for improving engagement, yet they may not be a realistic choice for all families. Similarly, offering benefits such as a stipend or meals during sessions may both increase participation and lessen the impact of some practical barriers. A consistent theme is the importance of tailoring any program to the specific needs of families, particularly in terms of scheduling, flexibility, and parents' understanding and perception of program goals. This may be facilitated by including a pre-program screening to figure out which of the available program options will best suit family needs.



Finigan-Carr, N.M., Copeland-Linder, N., Haynie, D.L., & Cheng, T.L. (2014). Engaging urban parents of early adolescents in parenting interventions: Home visits vs. group sessions. *School Community Journal*, 24(2), 63-82.

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