

A baseline evaluation of family support programs

Reis J., Barbera-Stein L., Herz E., Orme J., Bennett S.

Center for Health Services and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 629 Noyes Street, Evanston, 60201, Illinois, United States

Abstract: This paper presents a baseline evaluation of four demonstration family support programs located in communities identified as having a disproportionate number of families at risk for malfunctioning. In this baseline evaluation, a one year cohort of 422 family support participants were assessed along key dimensions of parenting known to contribute to child well-being and potentially to the incidence of child abuse or child neglect. These dimensions include parents' attitudes toward child rearing, knowledge of child development, level of perceived social support, and level of depression. Black participants and teenage parents had more punitive attitudes toward child rearing, less knowledge of child development, and less perceived social support than white or older parents. Overall, attitudes, knowledge, level of perceived social support and depression are inter-related in accordance with previous clinical observations and developmental theory, e.g., depressed parents are less knowledgeable, more punitive and have less support than nondepressed parents. The results of the baseline evaluation suggest that the demonstration projects are successful in reaching some subgroups of families at risk for parenting problems. © 1986 Human Sciences Press.

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Correspondence Address: Reis, J.; Center for Health Services and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 629 Noyes Street, Evanston, 60201, Illinois, United States

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Authors with affiliations:

1. Reis, J., Center for Health Services and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 629 Noyes Street, Evanston, 60201, Illinois, United States
2. Barbera-Stein, L.
3. Herz, E.
4. Orme, J.
5. Bennett, S.