

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities Parenting Skills for High-Risk Families

Issue

When families are torn by fighting, abuse, alcohol or drug addictions, with parents too young or too tired to take care of children, they need help. The Family & Community Connection, sponsored through the Arizona Cooperative Extension, trains paraprofessionals to teach parenting to high-risk families.

What has been done?

Extension staff and volunteers work in small groups and one-on-one with at-risk families. The Extension-developed curriculum includes child development, parenting skills, home management techniques, life skills and resource referral. Partnering of families with staff and volunteers works because they can relate to each other. These staff members and volunteers range between 16 and 75 years of age, and are of all ethnic backgrounds. They come from the

same communities as the family with whom they work. The program has expanded to include court-referred truancy cases, about-to-be-released prisoners who will be returning to parenting roles, and welfare-to-work (TANF) participants.

Impact

During 2001, a total of 2,848 families participated in Family & Community Connection. Statewide surveys completed by 656 participants show there were significant improvements in the parents' ability to control their children's behavior in a positive manner. More than 80 percent of the respondents reported that the discipline they use at home with their children is less harsh and has improved. More than 90 percent reported that their lives have changed in a positive way as a result of the classes.

The Family & Community Connection program in Pinal County has worked closely with the local court system to implement a series of educational classes attended by the offending youth and their guardians. In 2001 the overall recidivism rate remained very low (5-10 percent.) Comments from participants:

"At first I didn't know how I would discipline when he got older. Now I use redirecting as a method of discipline, that way the child doesn't feel wrong all the time."

"I learned better communication skills with my children, better ways to deal with discipline and helping to improve kids' self esteem."

Funding

Department of Economic Security
Arizona Cooperative Extension

Contact

Darcy Dixon, extension agent
Pinal County Cooperative Extension
The University of Arizona
820 E. Cottonwood Lane, Bldg. Casa Grande, AZ 85222-2726
Tel. (520) 836-5221, FAX: (520) 836-1750
Email: ddixon@ag.arizona.edu