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**UNITED STATES ARMY  
FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM**

**Raising Adults,  
Evaluation of a Self Instruction Parenting Program**

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Evaluation of a Self Instruction Parenting Program**

This report is the result of a cooperative study conducted by Brian D. Leidy, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate with the Strong Families, Strong Soldiers Prevention Project at the Family Life Development Center, NYS College of Human Ecology, Cornell University and Dr. Perry Crawford, FAPM, Fort Irwin, California. This evaluation project was done as part as the Family Advocacy Program's overall effort to encourage performance based evaluation of prevention programs. For additional information about the Raising Adults program contact Dr. Crawford at 760-380-5467.

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## **Raising Adults, Evaluation of a Self Instruction Parenting Program**

### **Background**

For three years, the Family Advocacy Program at Fort Irwin has used the Raising Adults parenting program which emphasizes a model of successful child discipline. During that time, officials in schools that enroll large numbers of military dependents have reported marked improvement in children's behavior, and FAP staff have seen a steady decline in reports of physical child abuse even though there has been a steady increase in the population at Fort Irwin.

Prior to the introduction of the Raising Adults home study program, FAP, Social Work Services, and the Family Life Chaplain conducted a coordinated comparison of their parenting programs at the direction of the Fort Irwin CG. Each was using a different program, which in sum represented three of the most popular class based parenting approaches. In spite of intensive promotion, all three programs experienced the two major difficulties associated with the class based format; low registration rates and high drop out rates. The potential gains achieved by a classroom environment (mutual support and the opportunity to discuss common problems) were being marginalized by poor attendance, particularly among single parent families and among two parent families where both parents were employed outside the home.

In order to reach a broader audience by solving the attendance problem, the Raising Adults audio-video home study program was introduced. To retain the potential gains of a class-based program, a weekly ninety minute Parent Roundtable was added as an optional feature for parents who desire a face to face interactive approach in designing their personal solutions to child behavioral change. Historically, over half the families using the Raising Adults program utilized the Parent Roundtable option either one time or not at all.

Based upon the experience gleaned from the weekly roundtables, a home study version of a roundtable was produced which contains a ninety minute video, six audio tapes and a sixty-five page guided study workbook. The goal of this self-study version of a Parent Roundtable was to reestablish a totally home based program and thereby minimize or eliminate the need for a class based roundtable for most families.

The new home based roundtable program was the only resource used by the parents during this study of the effectiveness of the Raising Adults program. The purpose of limiting the study to four weeks was to assess how quickly parents could learn and successfully implement the program in a totally unassisted self-study environment. In order to insure that parents would begin using the materials in the first week of the study, participants were required to view and return the video no later than five days after taking the pre-test and receiving the materials. During the four week course, parents showed

significant improvement in their attitudes about parenting, their parenting behavior, and their children's behavior. This program appears to have the dual benefit of being economical to implement and effective with a hard to reach audience, i.e. parents looking for a simple strategy to parenting they can quickly learn in the comfort and convenience of their own home.

## **Introduction**

The following is a summary of findings from an evaluation of the Raising Adults model of successful child discipline, a self instruction course which is offered by the Family Advocacy Program at Fort Irwin. In April 1997, in accordance with a request by DA, Dr. Perry Crawford, FAPM at Fort Irwin, contacted the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University concerning evaluation of the Raising Adults program. Raising Adults is a primary prevention program that teaches parents an easy practical way to use rules, limits, and consequences in a positive and consistent manner to achieve positive behavior change without conflict or power struggle. The study materials consist of video tapes, audio tapes, and a guided study workbook, which parents can use on their own to help develop responsibility, self-discipline, and self-reliance in their children. The goal of the program is to teach parents how to solve behavior problems without power struggles, by demonstrating that child discipline is a teaching process.

Parents who took part in the study completed a 46 item questionnaire about their attitudes toward parenting, their parenting behavior, and their child(ren)'s behavior prior to receiving the study materials. Families were included in the study based on several criteria. First, they had to have no previous exposure to the materials. Second, they could not have access to outside assistance while engaged in the self study. Normally parents have access to the Parent Roundtables where they can plan their strategies with the assistance of a trained staff person and are given a chance to discuss their successes and failures. When the materials were returned four weeks later, the same questionnaire is completed again. By comparing pre and post responses, it was hoped that an assessment could be made of the programs impact on families who used the self-study materials. Dr. Crawford was requesting assistance with data analysis, and Cornell agreed to do this and prepare a summary of findings.

Over a one month period, data was collected on 57 families. This data was forwarded to the Family Life Development Center where it was entered into a data base along with a small amount of demographic information concerning family size and composition. In addition to completing the pre and post study questionnaire, the parents in twenty families completed the questionnaire one additional time at the end of two weeks of self instruction.

This was done because feedback from many families at Parent Roundtables indicated that initial gains from the program occurred early, almost from the time families started using the materials and it was unclear to what degree these immediate gains could be assumed to

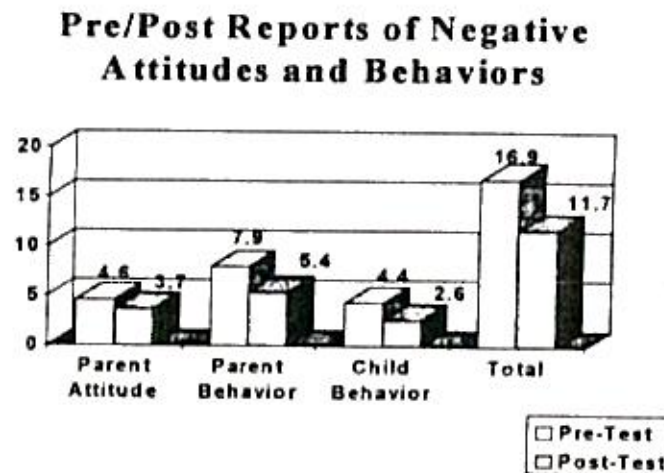
be the result of self-study alone. A separate analysis of this mid-point data showed that this assumption was only true for changes in parent attitude. This will be discussed in more detail later. Information was incomplete for seven families who were excluded from the study. In all, there were 70 sets of usable pre and post observations on the 57 families.

## Findings

The 46 items on the survey were worded in such a manner that an affirmative answer represented a less than optimal situation. A copy of the questionnaire is attached. The only exception was item 10 in section B which asked if parents followed through immediately with the consequences they set. This item was re-coded so that all the items were poled in a similar positive and negative direction. Scores were then computed for each of the three areas; parents' attitudes toward parenting, their descriptions of their parenting behavior, and their descriptions of their child(ren)'s behavior. A total score was also computed.

Data analysis shows significant change during the four week course in all three areas, as well as the overall score. From pre-test to post-test, parents' reports of negative attitudes and behaviors fell 30%, from an average of 16.9 on the 46 item questionnaire to 11.7. The largest gains were in parent's behavior. Parents reported 50% less negative parenting behaviors, 32% less negative behavior from their children, and 16% fewer negative attitudes about parenting. While these gains do not indicate a complete resolution of all parenting problems, they represent substantial progress that some parents view as dramatic improvement. These differences are presented graphically in Figure 1.

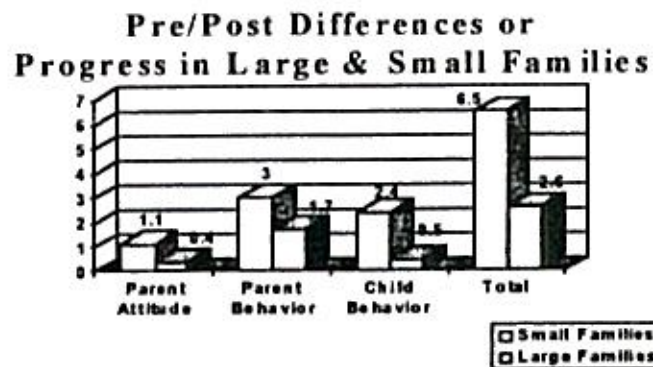
Figure 1



The gains noted above were not evenly distributed among all families who used the materials. Smaller families made considerably greater improvement than larger families. Parents with fewer than three children reported more than twice as much progress in

reducing negative attitudes and behaviors as did parents with three or more children. This difference was statistically significant and resulted mainly from reported changes in children's behavior. There was some tendency for parents of younger children to make greater progress than parents of older children. This difference was not statistically significant, and can be explained to some extent by the fact that larger families are more likely to have older children. Figure 2 shows the difference in pre and post scores for large and small families, e.g. families with three or more children and those with one or two. No other large differences were seen in the amount of progress families made based on their size or composition.

Figure 2



As stated earlier, because of reports from families at Parent Roundtables, staff wanted to examine whether families would experience initial successful behavior change in the first few weeks, and spend the final two weeks in the study fortifying gains. Except for changes in parent attitude, this actually does not appear to be the case. Figure 3 shows what percentage of change occurs in the first two weeks and in the second two weeks for each area and in the three areas combined. Parent attitudes change more in the first two weeks (59% of the progress vs. 41% of the progress), but their parenting behavior (37% vs. 63%) and their children's behavior (26% vs. 74%) improve more in the second two weeks. Overall there are more gains in the second two weeks of the program (38% vs. 62%).

**SUBJECT: Raising Adults Program Evaluation**

1. I desire to keep you apprised of our status and progress using the Raising Adults child discipline system as a part of our Schools 2000 agreement here at Fort Irwin. We are in our fourth year using the program. Raising Adults serves as our primary parent education program maintaining an active average enrollment of over 200 families. We are currently using the program in a variety of applications:

a. Raising Adults is used as a support to parents with troubled teens via referrals from the Garrison Commander's Juvenile Justice Committee for youthful offenders on the post (vandalism, shoplifting etc.)

b. We have added the Chaplains, Child Development Center, and Family Child Care staff (as well as parent volunteers) to get as many families as possible using the materials. This will also enable us to eventually offer parent training roundtables in several locations (schools, villages, Forum, ACS, Chapels etc).

2. Having used the program over a period of years we have been able to document many of the benefits of the program. These include:

a. An annual decrease of thirty percent per year fewer incidents of child physical abuse.

b. Cost Savings:

1. Less referrals to therapists has translated to a gross savings of over one hundred thousand dollars per year over the four years we have been using the Raising Adults program. Exact cost savings are not available as many families use the home based program without reporting progress to the Family Advocacy program Manager.

2. Estimates are conservative and are based on a cost of approximately \$1,000.00 per family over an eight week period for outpatient clinical therapy and \$60,000.00 per family for inpatient treatment.

3. Staff costs were reduced \$75,000.00 annually.

3. A study done in tandem with Cornell University (copy attached) shows that the program achieves positive changes in as little as four weeks:

a. Parent Attitudes: 30% overall improvement.

b. Parent Behaviors: 50% overall improvement.

c. Child Behaviors: 32% overall improvement.