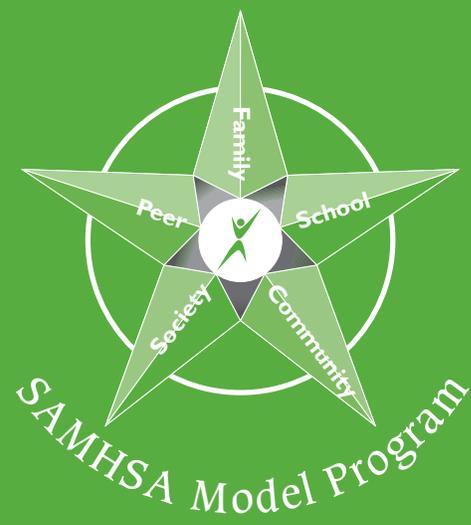




Also available  
in Spanish



*Effective Substance Abuse and  
Mental Health Programs  
for Every Community*

## Parenting Wisely

The Parenting Wisely intervention is a self-administered, computer-based program that teaches parents and their 9- to 18-year-old children important skills for combating risk factors for substance use and abuse. The Parenting Wisely program uses a risk-focused approach to reduce family conflict and child behavior problems, including stealing, vandalism, defiance of authority, bullying, and poor hygiene. The highly interactive and non-judgmental CD-ROM format accelerates learning and parents use new skills immediately. The Parenting Wisely program—

- Reduces children's aggressive and disruptive behaviors
- Improves parenting skills
- Enhances family communication
- Develops mutual support
- Increases parental supervision and appropriate discipline of their children

A highly versatile program, Parenting Wisely can be used alone, in a group, or with a practitioner at a variety of locations such as public agencies, schools, libraries, or at home. Semi-literate parents can use the Parenting Wisely program, as it provides the option to have the computer read all text aloud. Printed program portions are written at the fifth-grade level and the entire program is available in Spanish.

## Proven Results

- 35% to 58% reduction in child behavior problems
- 25% improvement in general family functioning
- 30% reduction on maternal depression
- 38% increase in parent participation in parent education classes

### INTERVENTION

Universal

Selective

Indicated



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

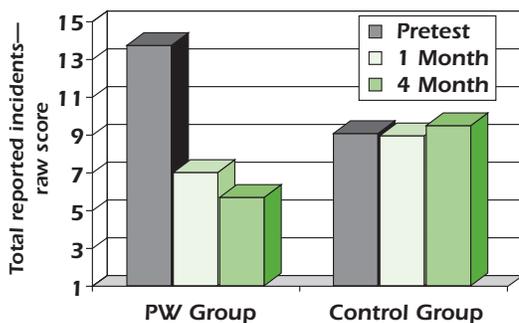
## OUTCOMES

Parents favored healthier problem solving strategies over coercive strategies with each other and with their children. The outcomes for parents receiving the PW intervention include:

- Increased knowledge and use of good parenting skills
- Improved problem solving
- Setting clear expectations
- Reduced spousal violence and violence towards their children.

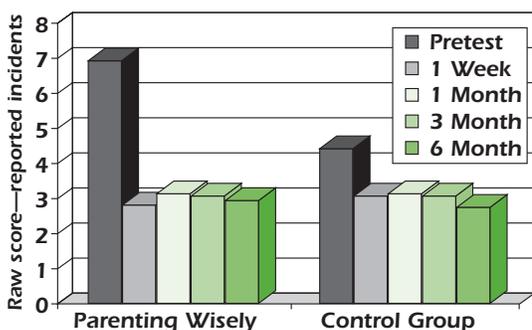
For children, clinically significant behavior improvement (two standard deviations) occurred between 20% and 55% of the time that their parents used the program. Program completion rates for parents ranged from 83% to 91%.

Eyeberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) for Parenting Wisely and control groups



*The ECBI is a parent report scale used to measure conduct problem behaviors in children between the ages of 2 and 16.*

Parent daily report on negative child behaviors in the past 24 hours



## TARGET POPULATION

Parenting Wisely is aimed at families with delinquent children or children at risk for becoming delinquent or substance users. Children 9 to 18 years old are usually targeted, especially during the middle and junior high school transition years. In particular, Parenting Wisely focuses on families who do not usually seek out or complete mental health or parent education treatment for child problem behaviors. Single-parent families and stepfamilies, whose children exhibit behavior problems, comprise the majority of families targeted. The program has been tested with families in rural and urban areas and is equally appealing to African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White families.

## BENEFITS

- Teaches parents effective child supervision and disciplinary skills and increases parental involvement
- Teaches parents and their children communication skills, resulting in increased bonding
- Improves family problem solving, which decreases conflict and improves family cohesion
- Increases parents' self-efficacy and validates their strengths
- Decreases coercive and authoritarian parenting practices thereby reducing conflict
- Reduces blaming attributions thereby increasing cooperative interactions
- Teaches a family systems perspectives to reduce scapegoating

## HOW IT WORKS

While the intervention is delivered on a personal computer, neither computer familiarity nor literacy is necessary in order to independently and successfully use the program. Parents interact intensively with this video-rich program which prompts them to—

- Choose family scenarios relevant to them;
- Within the chosen scenario, watch a challenging situation; and
- Resolve the situation by choosing from among the three problem resolution methods presented.

Learning is rapid due to the interactivity, video modeling of good responses, and privacy and non-defensiveness afforded by a computer program. The program usually takes one to three sessions to complete, substantially reducing the program dropout that often occurs with at-risk families. Printed program portions and workbooks are written at the fifth grade level and the program disk can also deliver the text as spoken word.

Parenting Wisely is delivered to parents in a variety of methods and settings:

- Agencies refer parents to a private room where they use the program on a computer and take home the workbook for reference and skill practice.
- Case managers, practitioners, or volunteers take the program to the families' homes for use by several family members.
- Parents use the program in groups led by a facilitator. (Group participation increases after parents use Parenting Wisely alone.)
- Parents are loaned the CD-ROM or video series to use at home.
- Families use the program before, during, or after family treatment to complement the treatment.
- Use in juvenile court and detention centers; offices of social, health, mental health, and child protective services agencies; schools, libraries, and adult literacy/education locations; community centers, homeless shelters, and public housing offices.

## IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Successful replication of the Parenting Wisely program is enhanced when—

- A local champion or coordinator stimulates program use.
- The program is located in multiple sites in a community.
- Managers, such as supervisors of practitioners, support full implementation.
- Evaluation is conducted. (Program outcomes or number of families served.)

## Training and Technical Assistance

Staff training is not required to implement the program, as it stands alone and is self-administered. A Service Provider's Guide supplies all the information necessary to fully implement the program. However, training is available to show potential sites how to generate community support for the program, and how to add clinical components to the intervention (brief family consultation, group presentation). Technical assistance from Family Works Inc. is available without charge.

## Program Materials

The Parenting Wisely program is contained on a CD-ROM that is formatted for a personal computer (PC). The PC must have a CD-ROM player, and the ability to play video on the computer screen and play sound.

Complete program materials include:

- One interactive CD
- One Program Manual
- Five parent workbooks

## Target Areas

### Protective Factors To Increase

#### Individual

- Accepting personal responsibility
- Personal power
- Self-esteem
- Attachment to parents
- Problem solving skills

#### Family

- Family support and cohesiveness
- Parent-child bonding
- Clear and positive communication
- Clear rules and consequences
- Monitoring

#### Peer

- Parental monitoring of peer activities
- Healthy communication with peers

#### School

- Parental involvement in schoolwork
- Parent-teacher communication

### Risk Factors To Decrease

#### Individual

- Lack of bonding to parents
- Aggressive or disruptive behavior

#### Family

- Poor supervision and control
- Inconsistent rules and consequences
- Poor communication and support
- Child abuse or neglect
- Domestic violence
- Favorable attitudes toward substance use

#### School

- Lack of parental support and involvement in school work
- Truancy
- Academic failure

#### Peer

- Lack of parental supervision of peer activities

## HERE'S PROOF PREVENTION WORKS

- Parent completion certificates, program description brochures
- Program poster and referral cards
- Evaluation instruments (on a floppy disc, for duplication).

### Timeline

From placing the order to installing the program on computers and familiarizing staff with the program, most agencies require 3 to 6 weeks.

### PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Parenting Wisely was developed at Ohio University as an alternative or complement to family interventions. The developer used his knowledge of the functional family therapy model and experience with program dissemination to create a program that would reduce or eliminate many of the barriers that keep at-risk families from receiving good family interventions. A multidisciplinary team identified critical goals for such a program: brief, since at-risk families are difficult to engage for multi-session treatment; accessible—available when families are; flexible (to be delivered in many venues, with and without other interventions); non-stigmatizing; low cost; not dependent upon training or continued supervision, but with high treatment integrity; appropriate for families with diverse ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic characteristics; and effective. The resulting prototype, an interactive computer, laser disk was field-tested in 11 southern (Appalachia) Ohio counties under an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice formula grant.

### EVALUATION DESIGN

Thirteen evaluations of the Parenting Wisely program have been conducted. Five studies involved random assignment of parents to treatment and control groups (no treatment, other treatments). Evaluations were conducted in juvenile detention, child protective services, health and mental health centers, probation departments, schools, and in families' homes. Represented among these studies were approximately 990 families of Caucasian (including Appalachian), African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Portuguese origin and primarily from lower income homes. Details on the studies are available on the Web site [www.parentingwisely.com](http://www.parentingwisely.com).

### PROGRAM DEVELOPER

#### Donald Gordon, Ph.D.

Dr. Gordon is a child clinical psychologist, family therapist, and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Ohio University. His orientation is cognitive behavioral, social learning, and family systems. His general mission, with the support

of Ohio University, was to develop and evaluate intervention methods for at-risk families that are effective with underserved populations, and to disseminate these methods. He has modified the Functional Family Therapy program and assisted in its dissemination. Together with colleague Jack Arbuthnot, he developed, evaluated, and disseminated the Children In The Middle program for divorcing parents.

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### RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services

Exemplary II Program—Family Strengthening, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

Pathways Project—Youth Justice Board, London, England