



What does national research tell us about parenting programs?

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Why is this important?

- Nationally, at least 400,000 parents involved in public child welfare and another 448,000 parents not served after an initial child welfare investigation are estimated to participate in parenting programs each year (Barth, et.al., 2005).
- Thousands of other parents participate in parenting programs offered through family support centers or other community based programs.



What are parenting programs?

- *May* be designed to:
 - Enhance parenting attitudes and skills
 - Strengthen families
 - Enhance family functioning
 - Increase social support
 - Increase child safety and well-being



What is parent training?

- Often include four components:
 - Parenting problems are assessed;
 - Parents are taught new skills;
 - Parents apply the skills with their children; and
 - Parents receive feedback about that application.



Unique needs of high-risk parents

- All parenting programs won't be effective with high-risk families
- Parenting programs that target high-risk parents need to consider the various challenges that affect parenting, e.g., intimate partner violence, serious mental health problems, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and poverty.



What does research tell us?

- Limited research on the effectiveness of parenting programs with high-risk parents (e.g., those at risk for child abuse and neglect or already involved with the child welfare system).



Key lessons from research Parenting programs:

- Will be most effective when services:
 - Are provided to *all* members of the family
 - Consider the unique strengths and needs of all family members
 - Are tailored for each family and family member (individualized services)
 - Are provided via a helping alliance empowering family members to select among available services



Key lessons from research

Parent training:

- Should be used selectively when an assessment indicates parenting problems due to:
 - lack of knowledge of child development;
 - unrealistic expectations of children;
 - negative attitudes toward children;
 - harsh or punitive disciplinary practices; and/or
 - lack of skills to meet the basic needs of children.



Examples of motivational strategies*

- Provide opportunities for getting to know the facilitators, other parents, & the program (e.g., recreational activities)
- Provide food, child care, & transportation
- Organize sessions with parents with similar needs (e.g., same age children, similar age parents, etc.)
- Deliver at convenient times and places

*Strategies may vary if parents are court-ordered to attend services



Considerations:

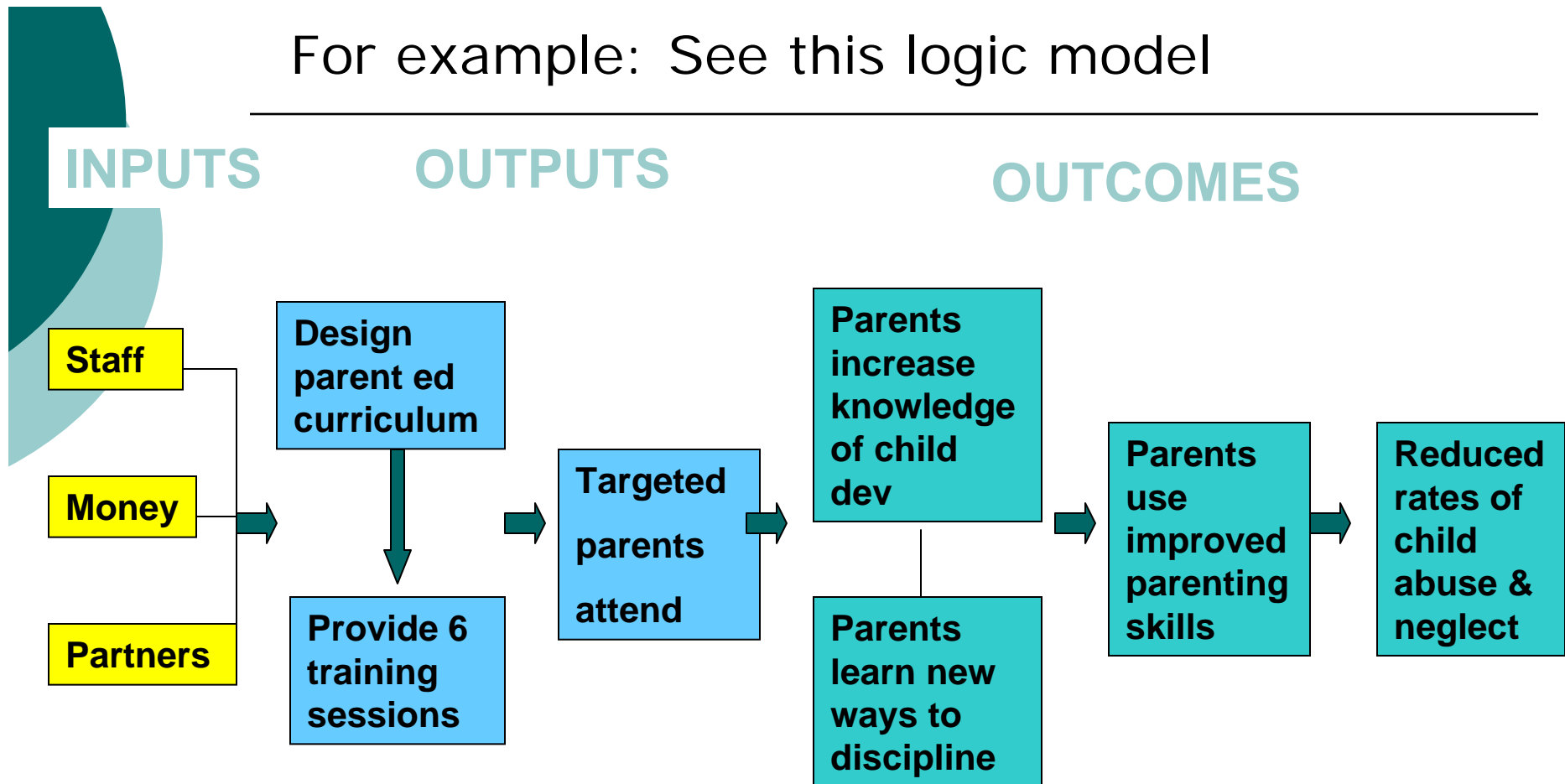
- Length and format of sessions
- Center versus home based
- Qualifications and competence of practitioners (need for consistency)
- Length of sessions or services (e.g., 12 weeks, 16 weeks, 6 months)
- Opportunities for multiple intervention methods to reinforce and model skills and behaviors
- Multi-target groups (e.g., parents, children, families)



Evaluating results

- Our approaches to evaluate efficacy and effectiveness have to move to randomized controlled trials
- Success should be measured based on changes in attitudes and behaviors, not on compliance or attendance.

For example: See this logic model





Selected references

- Barth, R. P., Landsverk, J., Chamberlain, P., Reid, J.B., Rolls, J.A., Hurlburt, M.S., Farmer, E. M.Z., James, S., McCabe, K. M., & Kohl, P. L. (2005). Parent-training programs in child welfare services: Planning for a more evidence-based approach to serving biological parents. *Research on Social Work Practice, 15*, 353-371.



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- Berry, M. (1988). A review of parent training programs in child welfare. *Social Services Review, 62*, 303-323.
- Dore, M.M., & Lee, J. M. (1999). The role of parent training with abusive and neglectful parents. *Family Relations, 48*, 313-325.

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