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EVALUATION OF EXISTING PEER PARENTING PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

The Early Years program, at the Guelph Community Health Centre, is looking to build a volunteer “peer parenting” program from existing models. This program would be delivered by the Ontario Early Years Centers (EYC) based in Guelph. Their goal is to foster an intentional support space and allow for greater outreach into the Guelph parenting community. A literature review is needed to build a case for support and to help the project facilitator with program development.

5 peer parenting models were reviewed. The models were chosen for their emphasis on volunteer-based outreach. Training programs, risks/liability challenges, strengths, and evaluation and implementation models were of particular interest as well. The models are:

1. Nobody's Perfect;
2. Program for Early Parent Support;
3. Triple P – Positive Parenting Program;
4. Support Parent Component of Parents Helping Parents;
5. Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC).

Each program was reviewed using the same criteria to facilitate comparisons between the 5 models. When a model had no relevant information for a particular criterion, we removed that section during the presentation of the model.

PROGRAM SUMMARIES

Nobody's Perfect

Nobody's Perfect, owned by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), was introduced throughout Canada in 1987. Each province and territory delivers their own Nobody's Perfect Program around the guidelines of National Office. As such, provinces and territories might have slight differences in their programs. The program targets parents of children between 0 and 5 years of age. These parents are typically young,



single, and socially or geographically isolated. Parents might also have a low income or limited formal education.

Program Focus and Goals

The program promotes positive parenting to prevent family violence. They do this by increasing parents' understanding of children's health, safety, and behaviour. This education helps parents build on the skills they already have and learn new ones. This improves their self-esteem and coping skills. The group provides mutual support and helps inform participants of other community services and resources as well.

Volunteer Training

Nobody's Perfect uses a 'train-the-trainer' approach to train facilitators. This training usually takes about four days. The emphasis of the training is on becoming a good group facilitator and not on becoming an expert in parenting.

Program Resources

- Free group sessions held over a period of 6 to 8 weeks adapted to the needs and interests of participants.
- Trained facilitators (community workers, parents, and public health nurses) that promote a safe, friendly, and non-judgmental atmosphere.
- Five parent books (Safety, Body, Behaviour, Parents, and Mind) and growth and development charts available in English, French, and other languages.
- Childcare and snacks during the sessions.

Strengths

This program is a good model for the EYC because it is supported by the Government of Canada, is already established in many places across Canada, and it targets a similar population to the one the EYC intends to empower. As such, the program could offer a variety of support and learning resources to the EYC. The resources used by this program are also available to order and come in various languages. Lastly, the training model used for the volunteers relies on peer mentoring which minimizes the financial burden.



Limitations

Since the program is overseen by PHAC, it might not allow the level of flexibility the EYC desires.

Other Resources

Program website: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/parent/nobody-personne/index-eng.php>

Video description: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfY59tBiMWs&feature=youtu.be>

List of evaluations and reports:

<http://www.nobodysperfect.ca/innerpage.aspx?x=SKFCdBKfEk8VjBJNA1F1AgVfmsYwZjeRdMzqWD4rDuNqX4JHOFTpRj%2fQB79Biiq3>

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Program for Early Parenting Support (PEPS)

Established in 1983, PEPS is a universal parent support program for new parents that uses a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect (their research approach is called the Strengthening Families Framework, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy). The program is implemented through groups that meet during the day or evenings. Some of these groups include expecting first-time parents, parents of a newborn (0-4 months) or a young baby (5-12 months), expecting parents with at least one older child, as well as PEPS uniquely for dads.





Program Focus and Goals

PEPS aims to, “Enable parents of infants and young children to build communities that empower them to meet the challenges of parenting through mutual support and sharing of information” (<http://www.peps.org/about>). To achieve this, the program creates communities of “extended families” to ensure no new parent feels isolated, ill-equipped, or unsupported. Parents develop the confidence to build strong and healthy families that allow children to grow up in a social environment that allows them to thrive.

Volunteer Training

Volunteer group leaders receive 12 training sessions per year and 4 facilitation workshops per year.

Program Resources

- Series of 12 weekly meetings in groups of “extended families.”
- Volunteer peer facilitators that foster a comfortable, informative atmosphere that encourages peer interaction and builds trust among the group.
- A network of neighbourhood-based parenting resources to reduce isolation.
- The staff to track PEPS Group’s progress weekly during the program to provide advice and resources to keep PEPS parents together after the formal program ends.
- Groups meet in the homes of the participants.

Program Evaluations

This program has annual reports from 2011 to 2014. PEPS also evaluates programs by surveying parents before and after their group sessions. This includes asking parents about their perceptions about the 5 protective factors for family wellness. These are:

- Parental Resilience;
- Social Connections;
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development;
- Concrete Resources in Times of Need;



- Social-Emotional Competence in Children.

From Pre/Post-Group Participant Surveys in 2014, they found the following:

- 92% "I feel confident about my ability to parent well."
- 90% "I know about typical stages of development in a baby."
- 89% "I have connections to people who can support me as a parent."
- 84.2% "I feel I can manage my day-to-day routine and handle tasks that need to be done."
- 74% "I know about local resources for families."

Strengths

PEPS is informed by research and may be of particular interest to the EYC if they are thinking about developing a longer program (PEPS is a 12-week long program). Additionally, PEPS helps to foster a network of support parents. Financially, PEPs has policies in place to cover the program fees for certain participants. Their guidelines might help the EYC offer stratified program fees depending on the means of a participant.

Limitations

While this program is aimed at many different populations, they do not target vulnerable populations specifically. This is the goal of the EYC. This program also requires the delivery of many training workshops that might be more resources than the EYC is able to provide. Moreover, there is a fee to participate in the program. However, this barrier is mitigated through financial assistance when necessary. This financial assistance usually covers between 25 to 75 percent of program fees but in special situations, 100 percent of the fees might be covered. This is made possible through the support of donors.

Other Resources

Program website: <http://www.peps.org/about>

PEPS network (established in 2013): Program that facilitates sharing the PEPS Model with other organizations or communities who want to offer peer-support for new parents.



PEPS consults with each organization to customize the PEPS program model to meet the needs of their specific client population. This can include training and consult to organizations.

Information videos: <https://youtu.be/Z4YSGlwAqAA> and <https://youtu.be/avAPYJMBV00>

Triple P – Positive Parenting Program

Triple P is a clinically-proven parenting program that focuses on family life. It operates in 25 countries worldwide including the USA, England, Canada, Germany, Iran, Japan, Singapore, and Romania. Triple P is ranked number one in the United Nations' ranking of parenting programs due to the body of evidence supporting it. Since it operates in many countries worldwide, the information below is mostly from Triple P in Australia, where the program started, and Triple P in Ontario. The Triple P program has been official since 1992. Before then, it was developed through rigorous research in the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland, Australia.

Program Focus and Goals

The program is for anyone that takes care of children. This includes grandparents, foster parents, and other caregivers. The program recommends both parents attend if possible but states that Triple P will still be a benefit even if only one parent can attend.

There are many types of Triple P programs but they all focus on the family life. The programs aim to provide parents with a toolbox of ideas that a parent might consider using. These tools can help parents and other caregivers to raise happy and confident kids, manage misbehaviour so everyone in the family can enjoy life more, set rules and routines that everyone respects and follows, and allow parents to take care of themselves as well.

Volunteer Training

Providers running Triple P programs have completed an approved training course to become an accredited provider.

Program Resources

- Single visit consultations.



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- Public seminars (in Ontario, these seminars are a series of 3 presentations of about 1.5 hours each).
- Group courses that are usually 7 to 8 week long programs.
 - In Ontario, groups are made up of 8 to 12 parents of children 3-10 or 11-14 years of age. There are 4 sessions of 2 hours, followed by 3 phone calls of 15 to 30 minutes, and a final group session.
- Private sessions.
- Online option.
- Types of Triple P programs.
 - Group Triple P: Child has serious behaviour problems.
 - Standard, Enhanced, Pathways Triple P: Intensive programs if having serious problems at home.
 - Stepping Stones Triple P: For parents of a child with a disability.
 - Family Transitions Triple P: For parents going through divorce or separation.
 - Triple P Online: Eight-module web program that can be done anywhere.
 - Lifestyle Triple P: For parents who want a healthier, more active lifestyle for their children.
- Parents can complete as many Triple P programs as they wish.
- Accredited providers that have completed training.
- Community schools, recreation centers, and other family-serving agencies.

One barrier to participating in the program is literacy. Parent materials are designed for reading level of an average 11-year-old. However, the program can offer DVD's and behaviour rehearsal so a provider can deliver the program without relying on reading material.



Program Evaluations

Triple P has been tested with thousands of families over more than 30 years. There are more than 580 international trials, studies, and published papers that show Triple P works for most families. Moreover, all major validation studies have included high-risk, low-income families.

Strengths

This program is clinically proven and supported by years of research. It is also delivered in many countries which could help the EYC learn how to tailor the program specifically to the local context. This program can also be delivered through many mediums and over many time periods. Lastly, they also have targeted programs for different groups. The EYC could learn from their ability to tailor to a specific group of people.

Limitations

Some of the programs require a lot of resources from the organization. These resources might be more than the EYC can afford. None of the programs are directed specifically to vulnerable populations either.

Other Resources

Program in Australia: <http://www.triplep-parenting.net/glo-en/home/>

Program in Ontario: <http://www.triplepontario.ca/en/home.aspx>

Support Parent Component of Parents Helping Parents (PHP)

PHP has been particularly useful for parents with children with special needs. The program fills a gap which many parents were experiencing in outreach for families in their situations. Established in 1975, the program has been running for many years with hundreds of thousands of parents being helped in the process.

Program Focus and Goals

The focus of the program is to link parents with the resources they will need to empower parents through support, education, and training. One aspect of PHP is linking parents with other parents who have gone through similar experiences with their children.



Volunteer Training

The primary outreach workers are parents volunteering their time. These parent-volunteers receive online training. The modules are always available online and they provide a good idea of the expectations of the role of a support parent and how to engage the parents in supportive discussion. Support parents are also given resources to print and keep with them.

Program Resources

- Online training module to support parents by walking them through recommendations.
- Meetings that take place over the phone or in person at parents' discretion.
- Central organization building that contains many resources such as books and classes for parents and children to use.
- Comprehensive matching program to ensure that parents can provide the best support for the other parent.

Strengths

The training material and structure of the parent outreach group will be of use for the EYC in developing a peer parenting program.

Limitations

The particular context of the program (that is, parents and children with special needs) is different than that specified by the EYC.

Other Resources

Program website: <http://www.php.com/services/parent-to-parent-program>

Training link: <http://www.php.com/SupportParentPart1>.

Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC)

EPEC is a community run program under The Centre for Child Support in the U.K. EPEC trains local experienced parents to facilitate courses for other parents. The



courses are meant to reach out to underserved communities thereby helping to build positive parenting skills and coping methods.

Volunteer Training

The training to become a Parent Facilitator is provided free to the parents. Courses run on a volunteer basis. Parents participate in a 10 week/60 hour training and facilitate an 8 week/16 hour course.

Program Evaluations

Two evaluations (Day et al., 2012 and Thompson et al., 2015) of EPEC were reviewed. Two notable challenges from the evaluations include high drop out and support resources.

EPEC experiences a high rate of dropout in the beginning from parents completing their training. Parents noted the large time commitment, in combination with other responsibilities, weighed on their ability to participate. To mitigate (although not eliminate) this, EPEC provided more upfront information to parents to ensure they understood the commitment they were making. Parents should have a good idea of the time commitments and detailed parameters of their volunteer work before signing up.

It was also a large time commitment for EPEC to check in with the facilitators. This time, commitment is large due to the level of responsibility parent facilitators had in running group sessions. Still, the EYC should be prepared to support volunteer parents with regular check-ins.

Strengths

This is a peer-led initiative that has sought to develop programming that will appeal to local parents. Program development has been built on the unique skills of parents from communities and, therefore, caters to specific needs.

Limitations

EPEC is facilitated in a group format.

Other Resources

The Centre for Parent and Child Support EPEC link:

<http://www.cpcs.org.uk/index.php?page=empowering-parents-empowering-communities>



CONCLUSIONS

The reviewed models offer a wide variety of programming potential for the EYC. A number of models focused on peer facilitated parenting groups. While these groups diverge from the one-to-one peer parenting model desired by the EYC, the training components will be valuable to the program facilitator. The existence of training modules was notable throughout all reviewed programs. The reviewed programs offer a good foundation for building a peer-parenting lead initiative through the EYC.



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