

The Development of the Intervention

The Nurturing Parenting Program® Family Nurturing Camp (Nurturing Camp) is a multiple family group intervention held over a weekend. It was developed in 1993 and is held approximately 8 times a year as an alternative program for maltreating families. The goals of the intervention are to help families increase empathy, learn nurturing ways to encourage appropriate behaviors and build self-esteem. The intervention also breaks the isolation often experienced by at risk families and begins to build social support identified as a key element in recovery. The camp's therapeutic component is based on the nationally validated and cost effective **Nurturing Parenting Program®** developed by Stephen J. Bavolek, Ph.D. (1988).

In the original camp, the University of Maryland School of Social Work and Camp Fairlee Manor collaborated to provide this program. In Maryland, the camp intervention has always been held at an Easter Seals facility located on a 260 acre wooded waterfront. This facility operates year round, promoting inclusion and recreational opportunities for people with and without disabilities. The camp's natural setting creates a nurturing therapeutic environment. The setting affords dormitory style sleep and living areas with full bathrooms, community and recreational facilities and the great outdoors. The staff for the program consists of community professionals and social work interns trained in the nurturing philosophy. Referrals are facilitated through local departments of social services where social work interns are placed in field placements. Additional referrals are generated through the juvenile justice system, mental health services and educational institutions. The majority of referrals are initiated for families that have children who are at risk for foster care placement or are in the process of returning from out of home placement.

The Nurturing Camp program is a structured model, based on multiple components that include psycho-educational groups, family based intervention, and therapeutic recreational and art activities to address the specific issues that affect families at risk for maltreatment. This weekend program focuses on strengthening and preserving families as well as providing family respite care.

During the camp weekend, separate therapeutic nurturing groups are provided for parents, adolescents, youth, and young children. Recreational activities include family crafts, sports, hay rides, high ropes challenge courses, canoeing, nature hikes, and singing around the campfire. The combination of the intense weekend experiences of the Nurturing Program and the fun and safety of the camp experience has proven to be a powerful therapeutic intervention in the lives of families struggling to learn how to be together and interact positively.

Theoretical Foundation of the Intervention

The theoretical foundation of the Nurturing Camp intervention is drawn from a variety of disciplines — family systems theory, group work, art therapy, experiential education, and culturally competent practice. The program utilizes the theoretical components in unique ways to service the special needs of the at-risk families. This program is a non-traditional intensive weekend intervention that creates a milieu where family members are fully engaged in dynamic interactions that facilitate therapeutic unions and stronger family alliances. Through this experience, families achieve meaningful expression, healing, and increased bonding (McFeaters, 2000).

The families attending Nurturing Camp are provided with ongoing support and multiple opportunities for guidance in practicing skills that include problem solving, creativity, effective feedback, praise and encouragement, confidence building, relationship and social skills. In addition, through trained practitioners, there is constant modeling of functional family systems emphasizing listening, personal uniqueness, problem solving, supported risk taking, safety, trust, respect, and healthy communication. As a Chinese proverb reflects, *"Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand."*

Several research studies (Meezan & O'Keefe, 1998; McKay et al, 1995; Gritzer & Okun, 1983) have shown that a multifamily group intervention can be particularly powerful in working with families at risk for child abuse or have been indicated for abuse or neglect. It is believed that families participating in a multifamily group treatment experience a sense of validation and peer support from interactions with other families experiencing similar concerns (Meezan & O'Keefe, 1998) McKay et al (1995) identify that this modality is particularly relevant because the isolation of child abuse is removed in the group so parents and children are able to use each other as a support network. The families involved in the program have repeatedly reported that one of the benefits of the experience have been the connections that they have made with others who have had similar experiences. A number of participants reflect on their camp experience. *"I am learning that I am not alone and that help is there for me," "other people understand what we have been through." "The people at this camp have become a part of my family, they really understand."*

Group work is an essential component in the success of the camp weekend. The benefits of group work outlined by Shulman (1992) are clearly evident in this process — mutual aid, members giving and receiving empowering assistance, the "all in the same boat" phenomena, the interpersonal learning, the experience of intimacy along with some education and information sharing. With regard to the family therapeutic art experiences, Landgarten (1987) reports, "The group provides an opportunity to be together, work together, to relate honestly to each other and to learn about what blocks us from doing so. The experience shows to the family various different feeling states — shame, hurt, anger and also love — can be expressed and tolerated instead of avoided and denied. In doing together there can be pleasure even while there is discomfort and out of this comes hope." (p. ii).

During the camp weekend, families are also provided with numerous experiential education experiences. Knowledge from the experiential education field (Cain & Jolliff, 1998) supports the use of the team building and challenge course activities to promote growth in individuals and families. The high and low ropes challenge course activities facilitate a process through "challenge by choice" for individuals to push past their comfort zone (physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually) into their personal growth zone in a supportive and safe environment. The notion of "challenge by choice" is an individual process, and for some participants, just looking at the various elements is their challenge, for others it is putting on the harness and helmet, and for others it is scaling the wall. Each individual has an opportunity to utilize new skills, apply skills to new situations and internalize how he might use these to achieve goals. More than one individual has proclaimed upon completing the climb, in essence, *"If I can do that, I can do anything!"*

Implementing the Family Nurturing Camp Program

Planning

The planning for the camp starts with the identification of potential lead staff - family camp coordinator, facilitators for the groups, key players from referral sources, the camp director or designee. Together this group can assess the needs of the families in the community and determine if the camp will respond to the identified needs of families. At this meeting it is also important to identify the resources available - financial and human - that may be pooled in order to offer this intervention for families. Some factors to consider include site selection, staffing and funding.

Site Selection

Researching camp or retreat facilities in your area is one of the first steps. The continued success of our program can be largely attributed to the strong collaboration between the camp staff and the Family Nurturing Camp lead staff. The camp staff is also trained in the Nurturing principles and the administrations of the respective organizations are included in the process. The facility and the staff need to be able to help the families feel emotionally and physically safe and nurtured. It is important to work with a program that celebrates diversity and recognizes the strengths in families. It is helpful if the facility has sleeping arrangements where families can be together as a unit. Food is important to nurturing so the dining facilities and quality of food are important components as well. Thought should be given to where the four groups will be held. These should be spaces that will not be interrupted by the flow of people in the camp. While the high and low ropes challenge courses are a plus to the therapeutic process, they are not essential. Many of the team building activities can be done with modification in a large room or outdoor area. All standard camp facilities such as basketball courts, campfire grounds, and large fields for group games are needed. Canoes, fishing, swimming pools, hiking trails, and game rooms are all an advantage, but not necessary. Comfort and safety are important so heating, air conditioning, handicap accessibility, medical responsiveness are all considerations. All camp participants should sign **Liability and Photo Release Forms** (examples in the appendix).

Staffing

In Nurturing Programs you need enough laps and hugs and eyes and ears to attend to each individual fully (Kaplan & Bavolek, 1998). It is recommended that at least 12 staff be present for the weekend, which is about a 3:1 ratio. Four lead facilitators (one for each group: parents, adolescents, youth, children), a recreation and art coordinator, and a camp staff person responsible for the facilities. These individuals usually receive a small stipend for their coordinator roles and their experience. Six of the twelve staff may be volunteers or students from related fields such as social work, psychology, or education. Some agencies have added additional staff and provided baby sitting and programming for children under 3. Since the overall program is treatment oriented it is recommended that there be a skilled clinician with each of the four groups. The staff, both volunteer and paid, is trained in the principles and key elements of Nurturing Parenting philosophy.

Selecting Families

Families need to complete the **Family Camp Application** located in the Appendix. Since this program is a non-traditional intensive weekend, ideally all family members should attend to maximize the impact of the intervention.

Camp Schedule of Activities for Families

Located in the Appendix is a typical **Family Nurturing Camp Schedule**. Make copies of this schedule and hand them out at Friday evening family introductions. The schedule is provided as a model of activities. However, in some campsites, activities such as the High Ropes Course may not be available. In this situation, alternative experiential activities may be substituted.

Camp Schedule of Activities for Staff

Located in the Appendix is the **Schedule of Activities for Camp Staff**. This schedule provides camp staff with more detailed information.

Friday Evening Schedule	
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.	Welcome, orientation and dinner generally take the first two hours of the evening.
7:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Family members attend their first group meeting (Activities 1.1 to 1.4). There are four separate groups that run con-currently. Parents' Group (Adults) Adolescents' Group (Teens 13 to 18 years) Youth Group (Children 7 to 12 years) Children's Group (Children 6 years and younger) The group meetings are experiential in nature, designed to enhance self-awareness and communication.
9:00 - 11:00 p.m.	Families gather together to watch movies, play games and have a snack
11:00 p.m.	By 11:00 p.m., families adjourn to their rooms.

Saturday Schedule	
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Morning activities begin with breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and end with Group Meetings (2.0 Activities).
12:30 to 5:30 p.m.	Lunch, additional experiential activities and group meetings (3.0 Activities) comprise the afternoon.
5:30 - 11:00 p.m.	Dinner, family activities and a dance fill the schedule for evening.

Sunday Schedule	
8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Morning activities begin with breakfast and continue with family recreational activities, group meetings (4.0 Activities), lunch and a farewell activity.

Before You Implement Your Family Nurturing Camp

There are a number of handouts and forms that need to be developed and/or copied. These handouts and forms are located in the Appendix.

1. Family Camp Application

Each family should complete this application to determine the appropriateness and for your records.

2. Camp Rules and Liability Statement

Each parent needs to understand the **Camp Rules** and sign a **Liability Statement**.

3. Camp Schedules

There are two schedules: **Schedule of Activities for Staff** and **Schedule of Activities for Families**. Feel free to alter the schedule to meet the needs of the staff and families.

4. Evaluation Forms

Make sufficient copies of the **Client Satisfaction Survey** for families to complete on Sunday as evaluation of their camp experience. The **Caseworker Feedback Form** and **Graduate and Undergraduate Educational Reflection Tool** are also located in the Appendix.

The **Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2)** is an inventory designed to assess the parenting and child rearing attitudes of adult and adolescent parent and pre-parent populations. Based on the known parenting and child rearing behaviors of abusive parents, responses to the inventory provide an index of risk for practicing behaviors known to be attributable to child abuse and neglect. The AAPI-2 is given pre and post intervention. It can be purchased from Family Development Resources, Inc. at 1-800-688-5822 or by ordering online at www.nurturingparenting.com.

5. Family Certificates

Complete **Family Certificates** located in the Appendix for all members.

Funding

A grant budget would include rental of the facility, food, stipends for staff, payment for high ropes or low ropes challenge course activities, art supplies, photo development, and transportation. In a fee for service model, payment on a per participant basis would be made directly to the camp facility by the local department of social services, juvenile justice, or through respite care services. Actual costs depend on multiple variables such as number of participants, retail cost of the facility, the number of volunteers, and donated resources.