

**Validation of the
Nurturing Skills for Families Programs**

Nurturing the Families of Hawaii
Three Year Program to Build Nurturing Parenting
Skills for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Final Report 2005-2008

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Nurturing the Families of Hawaii: Three Year Program to Build Nurturing Parenting Skills for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Abstract of Findings

A three year, state-wide parenting project designed for the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect was implemented in Hawaii from July 2005 to June 2008. The project, funded by Hawaii Department of Human Services (DHS) was implemented by the Institute for Family Enrichment (TIFFE) located in Honolulu. A 12 session parenting program was offered to parents and their children statewide. Participation in the program was voluntary. The Nurturing Program, evidence based parenting program, was modified and implemented to meet the specific needs of the families. Each lesson lasted 90 to 120 minutes with parents and children attending separate groups which met concurrently. Families would participate jointly in a snack/meal time that involved fun family activities.

Parents were required to complete pre and post program inventories. Highlights from the data generated from the completion of the inventories support the following findings:

1. One hundred fifty-two 12 session programs were implemented statewide.
2. A total of 1443 parents participated in the Nurturing the Families of Hawaii Parenting program. Of this total, 759 parents (53%) completed all 12 program sessions.
3. The data generated from the administration of the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) indicate that posttest mean scores in all five parenting patterns measured by the AAPI-2 showed significant increases. Parents who completed the program increased the appropriate expectations of their children; increased their level of empathy; learned alternatives to corporal punishment; increased their level of self awareness and self-worth; and increased their own power and independence as well as the power and independence of their children.
4. The data also show that parents who completed the 12 session program had significantly higher posttest mean scores than the pretest mean scores of parents who dropped out.
5. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the parents indicated they were abused as children while 31% indicated they experienced abusive partner relationships.
6. Posttest mean scores indicate no significant difference between the pre and posttest scores on the Nurturing Skills Competency Scale (NSCS) in knowledge of common parenting practices.
7. Posttest mean scores show a significant increase in the frequency of use of appropriate, nurturing parenting practices.

The findings indicate that families who completed the 12 session Nurturing the Families of Hawaii Parenting Program improved their nurturing parenting practices in comparison to families who dropped out of the program.

Introduction

In the summer of 2005, a three year project was initiated by the Institute for Family Enrichment (TIFFE) designed to enhance the parenting skills of families throughout Hawaii. Funded by the Hawaii Department of Human Services, the primary goal of the project was to offer families systematic instruction in parenting as a primary prevention for child abuse and neglect. The Nurturing Parenting Program was selected as the program to be implemented.

The Nurturing Programs are recognized by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Registry of Effective Parenting Programs and Practices (NREPP) as evidence based programs with over 25 years of research in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Studies have repeatedly shown that parents completing the Nurturing Parenting Programs have significantly greater posttest scores on measures of appropriate parenting beliefs and parenting knowledge; healthier family interaction patterns; positive changes in personality; a higher than national average of families completing their parenting program; much lower rate of re-abuse as measured by county and state records.

During the past 25 years, families over 1 million families world-wide have participated in Nurturing Programs and attended Nurturing Parenting classes. Nurturing Programs have been implemented throughout the United States, Mexico, Canada, Central and South America, as well as England, Israel, Greece, Turkey, and Offices of the US Embassy worldwide. The Nurturing Programs are currently offered in English, Spanish, Arabic, Hmong, and Creole by State, County and local Department of Social Services, Mental Health, Public Health, and Education including Head Start and Healthy Start. Nurturing Programs are widely implemented by public and private for profit and non-profit agencies. The Department of Defense (DOD), Departments of the Army and Navy utilize the Nurturing Parenting Programs for their New Parent Support Programs in bases and installations throughout the world.

Nurturing the Families of Hawaii Parenting Program

The *Nurturing Skills for Families* model of the Nurturing Programs was selected as the model to implement in Hawaii. The Nurturing Skills for Families is a curriculum of 80 lessons presented in two lesson guides: one presenting lessons for parents and the other presenting lessons for children. The lessons are taken from the two evidenced-based Nurturing Parenting Programs for parents and children birth to five and school-age. In the Nurturing Skills model, lessons are presented in 18 competency skill areas such as discipline, empathy, handling feelings, age-appropriate developmental expectations, etc. The Nurturing Skills Lesson Guides for Parents and Children allow professionals to tailor-make parenting programs for families by selecting specific parenting lessons that meet the specific needs of the target population.

In tailoring parenting lessons to a specific population, three factors have to be addressed:

Target Population: Who is the target population? Are they parents from the community looking to improve their parenting; parents high risk for child abuse and neglect; or parents charged by Child Protection Services with child abuse or neglect?

Lesson Dosage: The number of lessons, the competencies of the lessons and the number of sessions need to be compatible with the parenting needs of the families.

Prevention Level: Primary Prevention: Education; Secondary Prevention: Intervention; Tertiary prevention: Treatment.

Program Description

The Nurturing the Families of Hawaii Parenting Program was created to address the parenting needs of families at the primary and secondary levels prevention. Parents and their children attend 12, ninety-minute group-based sessions.

Session1: Hope and Fears, Assessment, Nurturing as a Lifestyle, Nurturing Parenting
Session 2: Children's Brain Development and Ages and Stages of Development
Session 3: Developing Empathy in Parents and Children and Getting Needs Met
Session 4: Discipline, Morals, Values and Family Rules

Session 5: Rewarding and Praising Children and their Behavior
Session 6: Using Punishments to Guide Children, Time Out and Why Parents Spank
Session 7: Recognizing and Understanding and Handling Feelings
Session 8: Understanding, Handling and Expressing Anger and Stress
Session 9: Families and Alcohol and Keeping Kids Drug Free
Session 10: Building Personal Power and Helping Children Manage their Behavior
Session 11: Keeping Children Safe and Possessive and Violent Relationships
Session 12: Budget Management, Assessment and Graduation

Parents and children attend separate sessions that meet concurrently. Lessons for both programs have compatible competencies to reinforce the adoption of the new parenting concepts by all members of the family.

Program Assessments

Parents participating in the Nurturing the Families of Hawaii parenting program were asked to complete two inventories at the beginning (pre) and end (post) of their 12 session program. The two inventories are the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) and the Nurturing Skills Competency Scale (NSCS).

The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2), a norm-referenced inventory designed to assess the parenting and child rearing beliefs of parents. The AAPI-2 measures beliefs in five constructs:

- Construct A: Inappropriate Developmental Expectations
- Construct B: Parental Lack of Empathy
- Construct C: Strong Belief in Corporal Punishment
- Construct D: Reversing Parent-Child Family Roles
- Construct E: Oppressing Children's Power and Independence

Responses to the AAPI provide indexes of risk for abusive and neglecting parenting behaviors in all five sub-scales.

The Nurturing Skills Competency Scale (NSCS) is a criterion reference inventory designed to assess the quality of family relationships and history, knowledge of nurturing parenting skills, and frequency of use of program skills. The NSCS gathers information in six domains:

- Subscale A: About Me
- Subscale B: About MyChildhood
- Subscale C: About MyPartner
- Subscale D: About MyChildren and Family
- Subscale E: My Knowledge of Nurturing Parenting
- Subscale F: My Utilization of Nurturing Parenting Skills

Responses to the NSCS provide information about the nurturing atmosphere of the household and the ability of parents to implement nurturing parenting practices.

Three Year Findings

1. During the course of three years, 152 twelve session programs were implemented throughout Hawaii. Of this total, 40 programs were implemented on the Big Island; 29 programs on Maui/Molokai; 18 programs on Kauai; and 65 programs on Oahu.
2. A total of 1443 parents received Nurturing Parenting Skills. Of this total, 399 parents were from the Big Island; 293 from Maui; 114 from Kauai; and 544 from Oahu. Ninety-three cases (93) appear to have missing data that were not included in the total demographic or data analyses.

3. In FY 2005-06, the first year of the project, 463 parents attended the Nurturing classes. In FY 2006-07, the second year of the project 473 parents attended, which represents a 2% increase from year one; and in FY 2007-08, 550 parents attended which represents a 9% increase from year two and a nearly 20% increase from year one.
4. During the three years, 2,875 inventories (AAPI and NSCS) were completed. Of this total, 1,518 represent matched AAPI pretests (759) and AAPI posttests (759). This means, 759 parents had an AAPI pretest and posttest. These cases are referred to as Matched cases.
5. Of the 2,872 inventories, 729 AAPI inventories were either pre or posttests, but not matched (pre and post). These cases are referred to as Unmatched. It is likely that AAPIs in this category represent people who dropped out before the posttest was given during the last session; completed the program but failed to take a posttest; or took a posttest but did not take a pretest most likely because they entered the program after the first session when the pretest was administered. The other possibilities include the identifying data for the posttest was entered incorrectly which caused the program to treat the person as a new case, or the pre or posttest was lost or wasn't entered.
6. Of the 2,872 completed inventories, 524 were Matched NSCS inventories: 262 pretests and 262 posttests.
7. There were 104 Unmatched NSCS inventories (pre or posttests).
8. Based on the data presented above, 51% of the parents who completed a pretest in session one also completed a posttest in session 12.

Summary tables detailing the specific findings for all programs offered on each of the Islands are available upon request from the author or from TIFFE.

Appendix A: Summary AAPI and NSCS tables by project year and cumulative;

Appendix B: Summary AAPI and NSCS tables for the Big Island;

Appendix C: Summary AAPI and NSCS tables for Kauai;

Appendix D: Summary AAPI and NSCS tables for Maui/Molokai;

Appendix F: Summary AAPI and NSCS tables for Oahu.

Demographic Findings

The following represent the salient findings of the demographic data gathered during the three year study. Demographic data provide us an indication of the characteristics of the families participating in the classes. A complete three year summary of all data collected are located in **Appendix A**.

1. Beginning July 1 of 2005 to June 30, 2008, 1,443 parents completed 2,875 program inventories. Of this total, 2,247 were AAPIs and 628 were NSCS'.
2. A total of 121 programs were implemented throughout the state.
3. Demographic findings of the parents who participated in the program indicate:
 - 72 % female and 28% male.
 - 28% White; 26% Pacific Islander; 17% Other; 17% Asian; 7% Hispanic; and 2% Black.
 - 41% are between the ages of 31 to 40 yrs; 22% between 41 to 50 yrs; 18% between 26 to 30 yrs.
 - 49% of the participants are married; 22% single; 29% other.
 - 29% of the participants finished high school—13% did not; 26% indicated they had some college while 20% graduated college; and 9% had post graduate degrees.
 - 29% of the participants indicated they earn under \$15,000 while 16% earn over \$60,000. The remaining 55% earn \$15,000 to \$60,000.
 - 80% of the participants indicated they were not in the military.

- 50% of the participants had one (25%) or two children (25%); 15% indicated they didn't have any children.
- 21% of the participants indicated they were abused by some one within their family; 35% indicated they were abused by some one outside their family.

AAPI Findings

1. A review of the AAPI data indicates 759 parents (51%) completed pre and posttests (matched pairs) and 49% of the parents (729) completed pretests or posttests only (unmatched).
2. The data indicate that posttest mean (average) scores per construct are higher than the pretest mean scores in each of the five constructs (subscales) of the AAPI.
3. The data also show that the posttest mean scores per construct are higher than the pretest scores of people who dropped out and didn't finish their program.
4. Data further indicate that the number of parents expressing high risk parenting beliefs dropped substantially in each construct: Expectations 1.4%; Empathy 10%; Corporal Punishment 7%; Reversing Parent Child Roles 7%; and Oppressing Children's Power and Independence 6%.

NSCS Findings

1. A review of the data generated from the administration of the NSCS indicates 346 parents completed 628 inventories.
2. Posttest data indicate that about 38% of the parents indicate personal histories of abuse/neglect and family dysfunction.
3. Posttest data indicate that about 31% of the parents indicate dysfunctional and/or abusive partner relationships.
4. Parent responses to Part D: Knowledge of nurturing parenting practices show little improvement between pre (12.66) and posttest (12.98) mean scores.
5. Posttest data for Part E: Utilization of Nurturing Skills shows an increased frequency of use of Nurturing Parenting skills from a pretest mean score of 11.25 to a posttest mean score of 13.85.
6. The Unmatched data for the NSCS show 70% of the parents that didn't complete a NSCS posttest indicated they use nurturing parenting practices very frequently, although only 26% showed a thorough understanding of the practices.
7. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the parents who didn't complete a NSCS posttest indicated they have a positive childhood and have a positive relationship with their partner (62%).

Island Data

1. **Big Island.** There were 399 parents on the Big Island who completed 545 AAPI's and 294 NSCS inventories. One hundred and ninety (190) parents completed pre and posttest AAPIs and 113 parents completed pre and posttest NSCS. These data are presented as Matched inventories (pre-posttest) on the tables located in **Appendix B**.

A review of the findings from the Big Island programs indicate:

- 69% of the parents who participated in the program were females, 31% male.
- The common characteristics of the parents participating in the program provide the following portrait: Pacific Islander female between the ages of 31 to 40 years, married with two children, a high school graduate earning under \$15,000 annually, with no military experience who did not feel she was abused as a child.
- The percentage of high risk parenting beliefs dropped in all five parenting subscales of the AAPI. **Interpretation:** Program participation impacted in a positive in empowering parents to substitute abusive and neglecting parenting beliefs for healthy nurturing practices.

- Posttest mean scores are higher in all five AAPI subscales than their pretest scores. **Interpretation:** parents who attended all 12 sessions increased their nurturing parenting beliefs.
 - Posttest mean scores for parents who completed all 12 sessions are higher in all five subscales of the AAPI than parents who dropped out of the program. **Interpretation:** Staying in the program and completing all 12 sessions is a critical factor for parents accepting nurturing parenting skills.
 - Posttest mean scores on the NSCS are higher than pretest mean scores in knowledge and utilization of nurturing parenting skills. **Interpretation:** Parents learned nurturing parenting practices and indicated they were using their new skills more frequently.
 - Parents who completed the program generally gave a low rating to the quality of their life in childhood. This rating was consistent in their pre and posttest rating. This low rating was also true of parents who dropped out. **Interpretation:** The quality of life in childhood for the parents on the Big Island doesn't seem to be the factor in whether or not they completed their program.
 - Parents who completed the program did indicate their relationships with their partners improved from the start to the end of the program. This is also true for parents who completed the program in comparison to those parents who dropped out. **Interpretation:** Learning nurturing parenting skills did have a positive carryover to improving partner relationships.
2. **Kauai.** On Kauai, 114 parents completed 189 AAPIs and 40 NSCS inventories. Of these 62 were matched AAPI pre and posttests and 19 were matched pre and post NSCS inventories. Sixty-five (65) AAPIs and 2 NSCS were unmatched (pretest without posttest).

A partial review of the data generated from Kauai families participating in the program follows. A complete listing of all the data is located in **Appendix C** of this report.

- 96% of the participants were female; 4% male.
- The common characteristics of the parents participating in the program provide the following portrait: White female, 31 to 40 years of age, married with one child, college graduate earning \$40,000 to \$60,000 annually with no military experience who indicated no abuse in her childhood.
- The percentages of parents who express high risk parenting beliefs were lowered in four of the five parenting constructs. The percentage of parents with high risk parenting beliefs in Empathy stayed the same. **Interpretation:** Empathy scores pretty much remained the same. Lessons taught in the Kauai program seemed to not have focused on building empathy.
- Posttest mean (average) scores on the AAPI show gains from the pretest data in four of the five constructs. The mean score in Construct B: Empathy went down. **Interpretation:** More education in empathic parenting practices needs to be addressed in the Kauai program.
- Posttest mean scores in all five AAPI subscales are higher in parents who completed the program than for parents who dropped out. **Interpretation:** Completing all 12 lessons increased positive nurturing parenting practices in comparison to parents who dropped out.
- Scores on the NSCS regarding the participant's childhood generally reflect positive childhoods.
- Regarding the quality of the relationship with one's partner as measured on the NSCS, the data show two distinct populations: those with positive partner relationships (32%) and those with more abusive/negative partner relationships (26%). Overall quality of relationship between partners did not

change. **Interpretation:** These differences in the positive quality of partner relationships may be the contributing factor to lower levels of empathy.

- Data on the NSCS indicate a fairly high knowledge of nurturing parenting practices among the Kauai parents. No changes were noted pre from posttest. **Interpretation:** The demographic data indicated a high percentage of parents with college degrees.
- Parents did indicate a higher rate in using nurturing parenting skills from pre to post measurement.

3. **Maui & Molokai.** On the two islands of Maui and Molokai, 293 parents completed 658 parenting inventories. Of this total 497 AAPI's were completed: 192 Matched (pre and posttest) and 113 Unmatched (pre or posttest only). A total of 161 NSCS inventories were completed: 69 Matched and 23 Unmatched.

A complete review of the data generated for Maui and Molokai is presented in **Appendix D.**

A review of the findings generated from parents from Maui and Molokai participating in the program follows:

- 79% of the parents were female; 21% male.
- The common characteristics of the parents provide the following portrait: White female between 31 to 40 years of age, married with two children, some college/college grad earning over \$60,000 annually with no military experience who indicated no childhood abuse.
- Posttest AAPI scores show that the percentage of parents expressing high risk parenting beliefs were lower than pretest data and lower than parents who dropped out. **Interpretation:** Program participation and completion has a significant impact on reducing the percentage of parents expressing high risk parenting beliefs.
- Posttest mean scores on the AAPI were higher in three of the five subscales Expectations, Empathy and alternatives to Physical Punishment; stayed the same on Role Reversal; and were slightly lower in Power and Independence.
- Posttest mean scores were higher in all five subscales for parents completing the 12 sessions in comparison to parents dropping out. **Interpretation:** This is a constant finding for the program statewide.
- As measured on the NSCS, parents in Maui/Molokai indicated two distinct types of childhoods: very positive (49%) and very unpleasant (42%). **Interpretation:** Polarizing groups generally interpret and integrate the parenting skills on different levels. Those with positive experiences are generally quicker to integrate the new parenting skills in comparison to parents with dysfunctional childhoods.
- Parents participating in the program did not indicate and significant improvement occurred in their relationships with their partners.
- Parents did improve their knowledge and utilization of nurturing parenting practices as indicated on their posttest scores on the NSCS.

4. **Oahu.** On Oahu, 544 parents completed 1039 inventories: 882 AAPIs and 157 NSCS'. Of the completed AAPIs, 302 parents completed pre and posttests (referred to as Matched data) while 278 parents completed pre OR posttests only (referred to as Unmatched data). There are also 157 completed NSCS inventories, 70 of which are Matched (pre and posttest) and 17 of which are Unmatched. A complete set of the tables are presented in **Appendix D.**

A review of the findings of the data generated from the programs in Oahu indicates the following:

- 69% of the participants were female; 31% male.

- The common characteristics of the parents participating in the program provide the following portrait: Pacific Islander female between 31 to 40 years of age, married with 2 children, a high school graduate earning under \$15,000 with no military experience who generally have not experienced abuse as a child.
- Posttest AAPI data indicate a reduction in the percentage of parents expressing high risk parenting beliefs in four of the five AAPI subscales. Only Construct A: expectations of Children saw a slight increase in the percentage of high risk parenting beliefs. **Interpretation:** The data also show a substantial increase in empathic parenting beliefs. Often times when parents increase their level of empathy they become more sensitive to having expectations sensing the expectations maybe inappropriate.
- Parents who completed their program had higher posttest mean scores in comparison to their pretest scores.
- Posttest mean score on the AAPI also show three of the five subscales indicate parents who completed their program did better than parents who dropped out. However, parents who left the program early expressed slightly higher mean scores than parents completing the program in two subscales: Expectations and Power/Independence. **Interpretation:** Parents leaving the program before it was complete may have been parents with higher levels of education and hence had more knowledge to begin with.
- As measured on the NSCS, parents indicated they had a fairly abusive childhood.
- NSCS data also indicate a significant number of parents (71%) who didn't complete the program felt their relationship with their partner was very good in comparison to 48% of the parents who completed the program.
- Pre and posttest scores measuring parent's knowledge of nurturing parenting skills were at the average level and showed no substantial improvement.
- Posttest data did however show a increased utilization in nurturing parenting skills in comparison to pretest data.

Summary and Conclusions

The findings support the following conclusions:

- Parents who complete all 12 sessions of the Nurturing the Families of Hawaii parenting program develop a stronger nurturing parenting philosophy which entails stronger nurturing parenting beliefs, attitudes and knowledge. The program lessons and the program facilitators are generally doing a competent job improving the nurturing parenting skills of parents, while concurrently reducing their risk for child abuse and neglect.
- Across the entire state of Hawaii, the data show that parents who complete their 12 session program do improve their nurturing parenting beliefs and practices in comparison to parents who drop out and leave the program. Participating in the entire program provides the best opportunity for parents to reduce their high risk parenting beliefs and behaviors and adopt healthier nurturing practices.
- The program is targeting and attracting the appropriate families for the nurturing parenting classes. Self-report data indicate 21% of the parents indicated they were abused as children by someone outside their immediate family. In addition, 35% of the parents indicated they were abused as children by a member of their immediate family. For many families, abuse and neglect become a way of life that is viewed upon as "normal" within the context of their reality. Because self report abuse and neglect data have a tendency to be under-reported, it can be suspected that the percentage of actual abuse and neglect is much higher than the percentage of self-identified reports.
- Other self-report data gathered on the NSCS suggest that a high percentage of the families are living in conditions that generate the type of stress that challenge nurturing parenting practices from being a consistent and daily occurrence. The

classes are proving to be a resource for the parents to manage their stress, socialize with parents in a supportive learning environment, and improve the quality of their life by seeking help for domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and emotional disturbances that can be controlled with the help of therapy and medication.

- The percentage of parents who express high-risk parenting beliefs and who lack knowledge of nurturing parenting practices is lower among parents who have completed all 12 parenting classes. Education in nurturing parenting is replacing old, unwanted and abusive parenting practices for newer, healthier nurturing practices.
- The continuation of the program is recommended for several reasons:
 1. Parents and their children are participating in a family based parenting program designed to improve positive parent-child interactions.
 2. Hawaiian communities across the Islands are participating in a parenting philosophy that teaches positive, empathic, non-violent parent-child interactions.
 3. Prevention designed parenting programs opened to the community allow parents to build their parenting skills and for families to build positive attachments.