

PARENTING WISELY
EVALUATION REPORT
South Bay Youth Project

DEBORAH FREEDMAN

BACKGROUND

Raising successful children, who avoid substance abuse, is a challenge that transcends all communities and socioeconomic levels. El Segundo, California, not unlike many middle class suburban communities, is struggling with this problem. This community has many families who possess familial risk factors that increase the likelihood of substance abuse among their children, however given the relatively small size of the community; they lack resources to address the problems families' face. Many families are suffering economic hardships, are spending less time with their children as they work more hours in multiple jobs and live in high stress environments often burdened by excessive familial conflict. The City of Redondo Beach /South Bay Youth Project implemented the *Parenting Wisely* Program as part of a family strengthening initiative funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP).

Parenting Wisely is an interactive CD-ROM program that was used as an alternative to traditional family therapy. Parenting Wisely is designed for families with at-risk children from early elementary to high school age. It is a model program that has been shown to be highly effective in improving parenting skills and reducing problem behaviors among youth. Through this program families can enhance their relationships and learn to decrease conflict through behavior management. It has been shown to improve child adjustment and potentially reduces delinquency, substance abuse, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. The collaborative nature of the Parenting Wisely program enables families to improve communication and learn to problem solve together. Research has also found that participation in this program enhances parent-school communication as well as improves school attendance, grades, and reduced disciplinary infractions.

METHODOLOGY

South Bay Youth Project had two objectives for the Parenting Wisely Program.

- **Objective 1: To graduate 30 families through the Parenting Wisely Program.** Where graduating means completing the Parenting Wisely CD-ROM Program, participating in at least three therapy sessions and completing the pre implementation and post implementation measures.
- **Objective 2: Creating a control group of 30 families that received family therapy only.** The control group required clients to participate at least three family therapy sessions and complete the pre-therapy and post therapy measures.

Experimental Group

In order to enroll prospective clients into the Parenting Wisely program, eligible clients were identified by the South Bay Youth Project's Intake Counselor and asked to participate in the program prior to beginning their therapy. Clients who did not live El Segundo, the geographic boundaries outlined in the original proposal, were not invited to participate. Additionally, clients who were in immediate crisis were not considered eligible to participate.

Once a family agreed to participate in the program, they were assigned to one of the five participating therapists. They were assigned to the therapist that best matched the family and/or who was most geographically convenient. Each therapist was paid a stipend of \$2,000 for graduating six families from the Parenting Wisely Program. Initially, the Intake Counselor sent the new families a pre-program packet that included the pre-implementation surveys. Families were asked to complete the surveys and bring them with them to their first therapy visit. After several experiences in which the families did not bring the surveys with them and the therapists began the program without having the pre-implementation surveys completed, we changed the administration process. From that point on, we had the therapist provide the family with the pre-implementation packets to the families at the first visit, and provided them time to complete the surveys in the office to ensure 100% response. The therapists were allotted and reimbursed for an extra half-hour to ensure they administered the surveys. When the surveys were completed, the therapist oriented the family to the Parenting Wisely CD-ROM. As soon as they felt comfortable, the therapist left the family to work through the entire CD-ROM program. Although we expected the families to complete the CD-ROM program during the first session, many required several sessions to get through it.

At the first follow-up therapy session, the therapist provided the family with the Parenting Wisely workbook. Each week the therapist assigned a chapter for the family to complete, which was reviewed at the following weeks session. Once the family completed the workbook-based therapy sessions (minimum 3, target 6), the therapist provided the parents and youth with a post –implementation packet that included all the post measures. The family was asked to complete them immediately following the sixth session in order to ensure 100% response. The therapists were allotted and reimbursed for an extra half-hour to ensure the surveys were administered. The Parenting Wisely families were paid \$100 once they completed both the pre and post program survey packets.

If a family dropped out after three or more sessions, the therapist notified the Intake Counselor who followed-up and sent the family the post-implementation packet of measures and asked them to complete and return them in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Additionally, in order to track the implementation process, each therapist was provided with a Client Information Form for each Parenting Wisely participant. The therapist completed the form, which included information on how many sessions it took the family to complete the CD-ROM, the number of sessions the family completed and some general demographics of the family.

Six months after each family completed the Parenting Wisely program, the program evaluators contacted the families by phone to conduct a follow-up interview. Every participating family was called a minimum of 6 times and as many as 10 times in order to conduct the follow-up interview. Many of the families refused to be interviewed or could not be reached.

Control Group

The control group was composed of randomly selected families or families that did not want to participate in the Parenting Wisely program that lived in El Segundo, California – the target area for the program. The Intake Counselor asked selected families if they would be willing to complete evaluation forms prior to receiving family therapy and after completing six sessions. Those who agreed were included in the control group. The Intake Counselor sent these families a pre-therapy packet of measures with instructions to complete all surveys prior to their first family therapy session with the assigned therapist. The packet was much smaller, as it included only program specific measures. Families that did not return their packets at the initial visit were given another one and asked to complete it prior to beginning therapy.

After the control group family completed 6 family therapy sessions, the therapist administered the post –therapy evaluation. The family completed the surveys during the seventh session. The therapists were allotted and reimbursed for an extra half-hour to ensure the surveys were administered. If a family dropped out after attending at least three therapy sessions, the therapist notified the Intake Counselor, whom followed –up, sent the post-implementation packet of measures to the clients’ home and ask for them to return them in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Control group families who completed both the pre and post therapy surveys were paid \$50.00.

Unfortunately, we were only able to enroll 10 families into the control group, as the number of referrals from the city of El Segundo was not as high as they were in previous years. Thus, most appropriate families were placed in the Parenting Wisely experimental group.

Parenting Wisely Implementation

We successfully enrolled and graduated 30 families from the Parenting Wisely program over the course of approximately 22 months. On average, it took families 4 sessions to complete the CD-ROM program. Two family members, on average, viewed the CD-ROM program. Most often it was the mother and child who participated together. During the study period, 26 mothers, 10 fathers, and 7 children other than the target children participated in the program. All the families participated in a minimum of three family therapy sessions after completing the CD-ROM program, with the average completing six sessions.

Parenting Wisely Participants

Most (81%) of the parenting surveys were completed by the mother, although both parents participated in the program. Almost all of the parent respondents (89%) were biological parents and the average age was 40 and 43 respectively for the mother and the father. The ages of the “target child” ranged from 6 to 17 years of age, with the average age being 12 years old. Half (50%) of the target children were female and the other half were male. Rarely were these only children as almost every parent reported having other children. Half of the parents had two children under the age of 18, another quarter (24%) had three or more children under 18, and 28% had one child under 18. Many of these parents also had children over 21. In fact, 50% had two children over 21 and 31% had one child over 21.

Although nearly three-quarters (70%) of the families that participated in the program were White, they were diverse in terms of education and socio-economic indicators. Almost half (48%) were single-parent families. Education levels varied. Fifteen percent of the parents did not graduate high school and almost one quarter (23%) only had a high school diploma. Nearly half (45%) had some college education, 9% graduated college and 8% had some post graduate education. Nearly one-quarter (23%) were unemployed, over half (54%) worked 40 to 50 hours per week and 23% worked part-time. The levels of education and employment were consistent with the income composition of the participants. One quarter reported earning under \$20,000 a year, 13% earned between \$20,000 and \$30,000, about half earned between \$35,000 and \$50,000 a year and 16% earned over \$75,000 a year.

As stated above, the average age of the target child was 12 years old. It appears that the target children were predominantly in middle school, with nearly one-third (29%) in 6th grade and one-quarter were in 9th grade and another 13% in 7th and 8th grade.

RESULTS

PARENT MEASURES

GPRP Parent Survey

The following section outlines parental responses to the GPRP measures prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely program and following participation. The mean scores are reported and compared.

The Drug and Alcohol Use portion of the GPRP scale asked the participants to report on their alcohol and drug use. Specifically, they were asked how many times they had used alcohol and different types of illicit drugs in the past 30 days. Nearly half (48%) of the parents reported that they had not used any alcohol or drugs in the 30 days prior to the program. Parents were asked about their usage after completing the Parenting Wisely program. At that time 60% of the parents reported that they did not use any alcohol or drugs in the past 30 days. This decrease in usage was the most notable change measured among any of the GPRP items. Although the majority of the parents in the program had not used alcohol or drugs in the past 30 days, most had used these substances at some point in their lifetime. In fact, 85% had smoked cigarettes, 96% had used alcohol, 77% had smoked marijuana and 60% had used an illegal drug at some time. The following table shows the average age of parents' first use.

Substance	Mean Age of First Use
Cigarettes	14
Alcohol	15
Marijuana	14
Illegal Drug	13

When the parents were asked about their usage of alcohol to intoxication, almost all (88%) stated that they had not been drunk in the 30 days prior to the program and 96% stated that they had not been drunk in the 30 days prior to completing the program.

Both before and after the program, all parents reported that they had not used illegal drugs, such as cocaine, marijuana, or heroin 30 days prior to being surveyed. Very few parents reported using downers (4%), inhalants (4%) prior to participating in the program. More parents (26%) reported using other drugs (i.e., prescription drugs) in the 30 days prior to participating in the program. All drug use declined after participation with 100% of parents reporting zero days of usage across these three drugs. The table below shows the actual pre and post responses and the amount of change measured for each of these items.

GPRAs Items	Pre – Program 0 Days	Post – Program 0 Days	% Change
How many days have you used any alcohol in the past 30 days?	48%	60%	+12%
How many days have you used alcohol to intoxication (5+drinks in one setting)?	88%	96%	+8%
How many days have you used other drugs, i.e. prescription drugs?.....	74%	100%	+26%*
How many days have you used downers, benzodiazepines, barbituates, etc.?	96%	100%	+4%
How many days have you used inhalants, popper, rush, etc.?	96%	100%	+4%

*significant change ($t=2.3, p<.05$)

The Attitudes and Beliefs portion of the GPRAs scale asked parents how they felt about issues such as, cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use. When parents were asked how they felt about adults driving a car after having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage, over half (58%) reported that they “strongly disapproved” of this behavior. After the participating in the Parenting Wisely program, a significantly greater number of parents (77%) “strongly disapproved” of this behavior ($t= -1.7, p<.05$)

Another attitude that changed significantly between pre and post was parents’ feelings about adults trying marijuana or hashish once or twice. Prior to the program 27% of the parents reported that they “strongly disapproved” of this behavior yet after the program, almost half (45%) were this disapproving ($t= -2.2, p<.01$). Many parents also objected to adults smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day. Prior to the program, half (50%) of the parents responded that they “strongly disapproved” of this behavior and after the program, the negative responses increased to 67% ($t= -1.9, p<.05$).

GPRA Items	Pre – Program Strongly Disapprove	Post – Program Strongly Disapprove	% Change
How do you feel about adults driving a car after having one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage?.....	58%	77%	+19%*
How do you feel about adults trying marijuana or hashish once or twice?	27%	45%	+18%*
How do you feel about adults smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day?.....	50%	67%	+17%*

**significant change*

Parents’ knowledge about the risk of using drugs and alcohol was quite high prior to participating in the program, consequently we did not measure any increases in knowledge or perceived risk at post implementation. Prior to participating in the program 85% of the parents responded that people greatly risked harming themselves physically and in other ways when they smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day. At that same time, 96% of parents responded that people greatly risked harming themselves when they have four or five drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day.

Outcome Measures

The following section outlines parent responses to the psycho-social measurements that we administered to parents prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely program, following participation, approximately six weeks later, as well as during a six-month follow-up interview. Each table shows the mean scores of the parent surveys at pre, post and follow-up. Statistical analyses were performed to determine whether any differences measured were significant. However, significant differences were difficult to measure given that only 30 families were enrolled in the program. In order to measure a significant change between pre, post and follow-up evaluation the change would need to be extreme given the small sample size. Aside from the sample size, it was exceptionally problematic to measure change, as the responses of many of these scales were so high at baseline that there was very little room for improvement, regardless of the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, caution must be taken when interpreting follow-up data, as the sample only included one-third (10) of the participating families, thus responses may not be generalizable to the rest of the population.

Specific Family Needs

Before participating in the Parenting Wisely Program, we asked each parent to list the three major changes they would like to see in their family as a result of participating in the Parenting Wisely Program. The most common responses to this question prior to participating in the program were 1) to improve communication; 2) to get along better; 3) to increase cooperation. Parents reported that their family had little or no strength in these

areas prior to participating in the program. We asked parents about these areas once they completed the program. Although we didn't measure significant changes in their perceived strength, at post, parents more often indicated that their family had some strength in these areas. All parents felt that there was some family improvement as a result of their participation.

Family Conflict Scale

This scale measured parents' perceptions of the level of conflict and arguing that occurred in the family. Although none of the differences measured significant, the mean scores indicate a reduced level of conflict at post implementation and this trend appears to continue at the six month follow-up.

Scale: 5=definitely not true, 1=Definitely true	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. We fight a lot in our family.	2.4	2.9	3.0
2. Family members rarely become openly angry.	4.0	3.7	3.1
3. Family members hardly ever lose their tempers.	4.1	3.6	2.7
4. Family members often criticize each other.	2.7	3.0	3.8
5. We really get along well with each other.	3.0	2.5	1.9
6. In our family, we believe you don't get anywhere by raising your voice.	3.6	3.2	2.7

Family Relations/Cohesion Scale

The following scale measures parents' perceptions of how well family members get along and the sense of closeness that they have with one and another. Although we did not observe any major shifts in these items from pre to post, we again saw some positive trends in perceptions. Most notably was the change in feeling that they could "easily think of things to do together as a family" ($t=-2.0, p<.05$).

Scale: 1=Hardly true, 4=Always True	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. I am available when others in the family want to talk to me.	3.7	4.0	3.3
2. I listen to what other family members have to say, even when I disagree.	3.6	3.9	3.8
3. Family members ask each other for help.	3.3	3.3	3.0
4. Family members like to spend free	2.9	3.2	2.7

time with each other.			
5. Family members feel very close to each other.	3.4	3.6	3.0
6. We can easily think of things to do together as a family.	2.9	3.4*	2.7

*significant change

Family Attachment Scale

The following scale measures the parents' feelings towards the "target" child, as well as their feelings towards their spouse/significant other. According to the results, it appears that, in general, parents felt closer to their child than they did to their spouse/significant other. Although these parents may not feel very close to their partners, they reported a significant increase in "discussing parenting ideas" after participating in the program.

We measured only slight changes in feelings towards the child following the program, however this is likely to be due to the high levels of closeness reported by the parent at the beginning of the program.

Also of interest is the slight decrease in scores at the six-month follow-up. However, great caution must be taken when considering these results as they only reflect nine (9) respondents, thus the results are not necessarily generalizable to all participants.

Scale: 1=Mostly not true, 5=Definitely true!	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. I feel very close to the child in this program.	4.3	4.5	3.7
2. I share thoughts and feelings with the child in the program.	4.4	4.6	4.0
3. I enjoy spending time with the child in this program.	4.3	4.5	3.7
4. I feel very close to my partner.	3.3	3.4	2.9
5. I discuss parenting ideas with my partner.	3.0	3.6	2.8

Family Management/Monitoring Scale

The Family Management scale measures parents' self-report of conducting certain parenting behaviors. Specifically these items determine the extent to which parents indicate that they monitor their child's behavior, as well as believe communicate the rules of their home.

In general, parents' self-reports were quite high at pre implementation, thus, as would be expected, we didn't measure many dramatic increases at post implementation. Nevertheless, there were two items that significantly increased after participating in the

program: “asking their child if he/she would be late getting home” ($t=-2.1, p<.05$) and feeling confident that the “family rules are clear” ($t=-2.2, p<.05$).

We did not note any changes between post implementation and the follow-up interview. Again, making an interpretation that parent behaviors remained the same would be presumptive given the low response rate of the follow-up survey.

Scale: 1=NO!, 2=no, 3 = yes, 4 = YES!	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. I check to see if my child has gotten his/her homework done.	3.4	3.5	3.7
2. I ask my child to call if he/she is going to be late getting home.	3.5	3.9*	3.7
3. I would know if my child did not come home on time.	3.8	3.8	3.7
4. When not at home, I know where my child is and who he/she is with.	3.7	3.7	3.4

*significant change

Scale: 1=NO!, 2=no, 3 = yes, 4 = YES!	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
5. My child(ren) has a set time to be home on school nights.	3.7	3.9	3.9
6. My child(ren) has a set time to be home on weekend nights.	3.6	3.7	3.8
7. The rules in my family are clear.	3.0	3.5*	3.6
8. My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.	3.8	3.9	3.9
9. I talk to my child about his/her plans for the coming day.	3.2	3.3	3.6
10. I talk with my child about what he/she has actually done during the day.	3.4	3.5	3.6
11. If you or another adult are not home, does your child leave you a note or call you to let you know where he/she is going?	3.5	3.5	3.7
12. When you are not at home, does your child know how to get in touch with you?	3.8	3.8	4.0
13. When you and your child are both at home, do you know what he/she is doing?	3.7	3.8	3.9

*significant change

Rewards for Prosocial Involvement Scale

These two items measured how often parents' report giving their child positive reinforcement. According to the results, parents reported doing it "often" prior to participating in the program. It does not appear that positive accolades increased after participating in the program. The follow-up mean scores are somewhat lower than the pre and post scores, however that is likely to be a resultant of the small sample size.

Scale: 4=All the time, 3=Often, 2=Sometimes, 1=Never	Mean Scores		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. How often do you notice when your child is doing a good job and let him/her know about it?	3.0	3.2	2.6
2. How often do you tell your child you're proud of him/her for something he or she has done?	3.1	3.3	2.4

Discipline Style

This series of questions asked parents what type of discipline they utilized when their child did something wrong. The **higher** the mean score the **less** likely they were to perform the particular behavior. According to the scores, most parents did not change their discipline style as a result of participating in the Parenting Wisely program. In general, most parents reported that they did not use corporal punishment prior to participating in the program, and it appears that those who did were significantly less likely to report doing so after participating in the program ($t = -1.9, p < .05$). Many reported using other consequences such as taking away privileges, sending them to their room, and using time out. Because parents reported doing these at such high frequency prior to participating in the program, we observed little change after participation. Yelling was another discipline behavior that significantly reduced after participating in the program ($t = -1.9, p < .05$). However, the number of parents that calmly talked to the child did not change. Given the ceiling effect we observed among these measures, we did not include them on the follow-up interview.

Scale: 1=YES!, 2=yes, 3 = no, 4 = NO!	Mean Score	
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)
When your child does something wrong, do you...		
1. Spank your child with your hand?	2.9	3.3*
2. Ignore your child?	3.2	3.4
3. Slap your child?	3.3	3.6
4. Take away privileges or money?	1.6	1.5
5. Send your child to his/her room?	1.6	1.9
6. Hit your child with a belt, switch or other object?	3.5	3.7

7. Yell or scream?	1.7	2.1*
8. Calmly explain why his/her behavior was wrong?	2.1	2.1
9. Use time out (make him/her sit or stand in a corner)?	2.5	2.8
10. Give your child extra chores?	2.7	2.5

*significant change

Discipline Effectiveness

The following scale measures parents' perception of how effective their discipline is at controlling their child's behavior. It also measures parents' reluctance and fear of discipline. (*It is important to pay close attention to the measurement scale and the wording of each of the questions to correctly interpret the means of each question.*)

In general we did not measure significant changes in perceptions of discipline effectiveness between the pre, post or follow-up surveys, however we did observe trends in the positive direction. For example, parents reported that the discipline and punishments they use were slightly more effective following participation in the Parenting Wisely program. Parents seemed to feel that they had more control of their child when they were alone with him/her following the program compared to before. The one major finding was that parents significantly reported less hesitation or reservations about disciplining their child in fear of retaliation following participation in the Parenting Wisely program ($t=-2.8, p < .01$).

Scale: , 1=Always, 2= Often, 3=Sometimes, 4=Almost Never, 5=Never	Mean Scores		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. Does the discipline you use for your child work?	2.9	2.5	2.8
2. If your son/daughter is punished, does the punishment work?	2.9	2.7	2.4
3. If you punish your child, does his/her behavior get worse?	3.3	3.6	3.4
4. Do you hesitate to enforce the rules with your child because you fear he/she might then harm someone in your household?	4.6	4.7	4.6
5. Do you feel that you must be careful not to upset your child?	4.0	4.3	4.4
6. Do you feel that other family members must be careful not to upset your child?	4.1	4.3	4.1
7. Do you feel that it is more trouble then it is worth to ask your child to help	3.4	3.6	3.7

you?			
8. Do you think that your child will take it out on other children if you try to make him/her obey you?	4.2	4.6	4.9
9. When you are by yourself, do you have much difficulty controlling your child?	3.8	4.3	4.0
10. When other adults are present, do you have much difficulty controlling your child?	4.0	4.1	4.0
11. Do you leave your child alone because of his/her moodiness?	3.8	4.0	4.0
12. Do you think that your child will try to get back at you if you try to make him/her obey you?	4.2	4.8*	4.4

*significant change ($t=-2.8, p<.01$)

Beck Depression Scale

The Beck Depression Scale was administered to all parents at pre and post implementation in order to see if participating in the program reduced their levels of depression. Parents were asked to respond to a series of 11 questions indicating how true or untrue they were. The **higher** the score the **less** depressed a person was. Based on the overall Beck Score, parents were more depressed (mean 3.9) prior to beginning the program than they were once they completed the program (mean 4.4). This change was significant ($p<.05$).

The table below shows the mean score for each item in the Beck Scale at pre and post. Although we included the mean scores for the follow-up interview, we are not concluding that rates of depression changed either for the better or for the worse given the small sample size of this group.

Scale: 1=Very True, - 5=Not at all true	Mean Scores		
	Pre (n=26)	Post (n=30)	Follow-Up (n=9)
1. I feel sad all the time and can't snap out of it.	3.9	4.3	3.7
2. I feel I have nothing to look forward to.	4.1	4.7	4.9
3. I don't get real satisfaction out of anything anymore.	4.1	4.5	4.9
4. I feel irritated all the time now.	3.7	4.2	3.9
5. I get tired from doing almost anything.	3.7	4.2	4.1
6. I don't sleep as well as I used to.	3.5	4.1	3.6
7. I cry all the time now.	4.1	4.6	4.4

8. I am disgusted with myself.	3.9	4.5	4.3
9. I blame myself all the time for my faults.	3.5	4.3	4.4
10. I have lost most of my interest in other people.	4.1	4.6	4.7
11. I have greater difficulty in making decisions than before.	4.0	4.4	4.8

Parental Attitudes Toward Child Drug Use Scale

The following three questions measured parents’ perceptions regarding the use of drugs by their child. According to the results, almost all parents found it “very wrong” for their child to drink regularly, smoke cigarettes or smoke marijuana. Given this high disapproval rating initially, it is not surprising that we were not able to measure any attitude changes following program participation. We eliminated these questions from the follow-up interview.

	Mean	
	Pre	Post
<i>Scale:4=Very wrong, 1=Not at all Wrong</i>		
1. How wrong do you feel it would be for your child/children to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whisky, gin) regularly?	3.9	3.9
2. How wrong do you feel it would be for your child/children to smoke cigarettes?	3.9	3.9
3. How wrong do you feel it would be for your child/children to smoke marijuana?	3.9	3.9

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The SDQ is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire about children under 17 years of age. The 25 item questionnaire has five sub-scales: 1) emotional symptoms; 2) conduct problems; 3) hyperactivity/inattention; 4) peer relationship problems; and, 5) prosocial behavior. The scores from the first four sub-scales are added together to result in one final “difficulties” score. On the parent version of the SDQ, scores between 0 and 13 are normal, scores between 14 and 17 are borderline and scores over 18 indicate abnormalities in behavior.

The average difficulty score prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely Program, as measured on the parent survey, was 14. The mean difficulty score following participation was 11. This decrease in the difficulty score is not statistically significant, but illustrated a trend in the right direction.

YOUTH MEASURES

GPRAs Youth Survey

The following section outlines youth responses to the GPRAs measures prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely program and following participation. The mean scores are reported and compared.

The Drug and Alcohol Use portion of the GPRAs scale asked the participants to report on their alcohol and drug use. Specifically, they were asked how many times they had used alcohol and different types of illicit drugs in the past 30 days. When youth were asked about their usage of illegal drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, and downers, 96-100% the respondents responded that they had not used these drugs in the past month before or after the program. Very few youth every used marijuana, thus we measured little change between pre and post. Prior to the program, 9% of youth had used marijuana in the 30 days prior and after the program, only 7% had used marijuana in the past month. Youth were also asked how many days they have used any alcohol in the past month. Eighty-seven percent of the youth reported that they had not used any alcohol in the month before participating in the program. No change in alcohol usage was measured after the program, where 85% of the youth reported that they had not used any alcohol in the past 30 days.

GPRAs Items	Pre – Program 0 Days	Post – Program 0 Days	% Change
How many days have you used marijuana/hashish?	91%	93%	+2%
How many days have you used cocaine?.....	100%	100%	--
How many days have you used heroin?	100%	100%	--
How many days have you used downers?	100%	100%	--
How many days have you used any alcohol in the past 30 days?	87%	85%	-2%
How many days have you used other drugs, i.e. prescription drugs?.....	87%	85%	-2%

Although the majority of the youth in the program had not used alcohol or drugs in the 30 days prior to the participating or completing the program, some of the youth had used these substances. Nearly one-third (30%) had smoked cigarettes, 35% had used alcohol, 22% had smoked marijuana and 13% had used an illegal drug at some time. The following table shows the average age of youth's first use, which was considerably younger than were their parents first age of use.

Substance	Mean Age of First Use
Cigarettes	10
Alcohol	11
Marijuana	11
Illegal Drug	10

The Attitudes and Beliefs portion of the GPRA scale asked youth how they felt about issues such as, cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use. The youth perceived these behaviors somewhat less risky than their parents. Prior to the program, 17% of the youth reported that people “moderately” risked harming themselves physically and in other ways when they have four or more drinks of an alcoholic beverage once or twice a week. After the program, the percentage of youth that thought this behavior was harmful significantly increased to 37% ($t= 2.5, p<.01$). We also measured a small increase in perceived harm with regard to having four or more drinks nearly everyday. Prior to participating in the program, 61% of the youth responded that people greatly risk harming themselves when they have four or more drinks nearly everyday, whereas 67% perceived this level of risk after participating in the program. When the students were asked how they felt about people smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day, 75% reported that this was a great risk. This perception increased to 79% after program participation.

GPRA Items	Pre – Program <u>Moderate Risk</u>	Post – Program <u>Moderate Risk</u>	Percent Change
How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically and in other ways when they have 4 or more drinks once or twice a week?.....	17%	37%	+20%*

	<u>Great Risk</u>	<u>Great Risk</u>	Percent Change
How much do you think people risk harming themselves physically and in other ways when they have 4 or more drinks nearly everyday?	61%	67%	+6%
How much do people risk harming themselves physically and in other ways when they smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?	75%	79%	+5%
How much do people risk harming themselves physically and in other ways when they smoke marijuana once or twice a week?	58%	59%	+1%

**significant change*

The perceived risk of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use was relatively high, yet intentions to use were high in some cases. For example, 92% reported that they definitely would smoke cigarettes. The intention to use other substances was lower, with only 20% reporting that they planned to drink alcohol in the next year and 17% indicating that they would smoke marijuana. Youth intentions to smoke cigarettes or smoke marijuana did not change after participating in the Parenting Wisely program. However fewer youth (11%) reported that they would drink alcohol in the next year after they completed the program.

Outcome Measures

The following section outlines youth responses to the psycho- social measurements that were administered to youth prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely program, following participation, approximately six weeks later, as well as during a six-month follow-up interview. Each table shows the mean scores of the youth surveys at pre, post and follow-up. Statistical analyses were performed to determine whether any differences measured were significant. However, significant differences were difficult to measure given that only 30 families were enrolled in the program. Each table shows the mean scores of the youth surveys at pre, post and follow-up. Significant differences were difficult to measure given that we only had 30 families enrolled in the program. In order to measure a significant change between pre, post and follow-up evaluation the change would need to be extreme given the small sample size. Aside from the sample size, it was exceptionally problematic to measure change, as the responses of many of these scales were so high at baseline that there was very little room for improvement, regardless of

the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, some caution must be taken when interpreting follow-up data, as the sample only included one-third (10) of the participating families, thus responses may not be generalizable to the rest of the population.

Family Conflict Scale

This scale measured the youth’s perceptions of the level of conflict and arguing that occurred in the family. Although no differences were measured between pre and post participation, the mean scores from the six-month follow-up interview did indicate a notable reduction in the level of conflict. We didn’t conduct a t-test, however, given the large difference in sample size between the post and follow-up groups.

<i>Scale: 4=NO!, 1=YES!</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
1. People in my family often insult or yell at each other.	2.4	2.3	3.3
2. People in my family have serious arguments.	2.4	2.4	3.2
3. We argue about the same things in my family over and over.	2.1	2.2	2.7

Family Relations/Cohesion Scale

The following scale measures youths’ perceptions of how well family members get along and the sense of closeness that they have with one another. Although we did not observe any major shifts in these items from pre to post, we did observe some positive trends in perceptions. Similar to the parent perceptions, the most prominent change was in the youths’ belief that they could “easily think of things to do together as a family ($t=1.9$, $p<05$)”

<i>Scale: 1=Not true, 5=Always True</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
1. I am available when others in the family want to talk to me.	3.4	3.5	4.3
2. I listen to what other family members have to say, even when I disagree.	3.3	3.4	4.1
3. Family members ask each other for help.	3.2	3.3	4.3
4. Family members like to spend free time with each other.	2.8	3.0	3.9

<i>Scale: 1=Not true, 5=Always True</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
5. Family members feel very close to each other.	3.3	3.5	4.7
6. We can easily think of things to do together as a family.	2.5	3.0*	3.9

*significant change

Family Management/Monitoring Scale

The Family Management scale measured youths' perceptions of the extent to which their parents supervise their behavior. Additionally, we are measuring youth's perception on how well family rules and expectations of behavior are communicated to them.

Overall, youth reported that their parents performed the following parenting behaviors quite frequently, even prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely program. Due to these high baseline scores, it was of no surprise that the youth did not perceive an increase in most of the parenting behaviors once they completed the program. The one exception was knowing the "family rules about alcohol and drugs." The mean scores for this item indicated that the rules became increasingly clear after participation and at follow-up.

<i>Scale: 1=NO!, 2=no, 3 = yes, 4 = YES!</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
1. My parents ask if I've gotten my homework done.	3.6	3.4	3.7
2. My parents want me to call if I am going to be late getting home.	3.5	3.5	3.7
3. Would your parents know if you did not come home on time?	3.7	3.6	3.7
4. When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am & who I am with.	3.2	3.4	3.6
5. The rules in my family are clear.	3.4	3.0	3.8
6. My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.	3.6	3.7	4.0

Parental Monitoring Scale & Rewards for Prosocial Involvement Scale (6&7)

The following scale measures youths' perception on how frequently in the past three months their parents helped them, enforced restrictions on their activities, as well as praised them when they did well. On average, the youth indicated that their parents "sometimes" did these things, and although we did not measure any perceived increases at the post, there were significant increases in several areas at the six month follow-up,

including helping them with homework, making them do chores, and limiting TV. Most notable was the increase in parental praise between the pre survey and the six-month follow-up. Although these changes were significant, it must be stressed that the small sample size of the follow-up group impacts the generalizability of these results.

<i>Scale: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4 = Always</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
<i>During the past 3 months did your parents...</i>			
1. provide help with your homework when you needed it?	3.0	3.0	3.8
2. make you do work or chores around the house?	3.0	3.1	3.7
3. limit the amount of time you watched TV?	2.6	2.3	2.8
4. limit the amount of time you went out with friends on school nights?	3.0	3.0	3.4
5. let you know when you'd done a good job?	3.2	2.9	4.0
6. tell you they're proud of you for something you had done?	3.4	3.1	3.8

Family Attachment Scale

Based on the following scale, youth felt closer to their mothers than to their fathers. Closeness did not appear to grow as an immediate result of participating in the Parenting Wisely program. However, we did see significant increase in perceived closeness by the six-month follow-up. Nevertheless, the follow-up group was considerably smaller, thus the findings must be interpreted with caution.

<i>Scale: 1=NO!, 2=no, 3 = yes, 4= YES!</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
1. Do you feel very close to your mother?	3.4	3.1	3.7
2. Do you share your thoughts and feelings your mother?	2.9	2.9	3.5
3. Do you feel very close to your father or stepfather?	2.7	2.7	3.7
4. Do you share your thoughts and feelings your father or stepfather?	2.1	2.4	3.1

School Achievement

Prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely Program, the youth reported an average grade point average of 2.7. Although, there was an average of eight weeks between the pre and post survey, the youth reported a higher GPA of 3.2 once completing the program.

Hawkins CTC Feelings Scale

The following scale measures the extent of depression in youth. Based on the mean scores, the youth did not report much depression prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely program; consequently we measured very little change in depression following participation. The overall mean depression score was 2.7 prior to participation and 2.8 after participation. However, the youth that participated in the six-month follow-up reported significantly less depression compared to the pre and post measures.

	Mean Score		
<i>Scale: 1= YES! 2= yes, 3 =no, 4 = NO!</i>	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=10)
1. Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.	3.0	2.7	3.5
2. At times I think I am not good at all.	2.5	2.5	3.8
3. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	2.9	3.0	3.8
4. In the past year, have you felt depressed or sad <u>most</u> days, even if you felt OK sometimes?	2.7	2.8	3.5

Hawkins CTC Conduct Problems Scale

The following scale measured youths' beliefs about maladaptive and unethical behavior. Overall, youth understood the difference between right and wrong and held fairly high ethical beliefs. We measured little or no change following participation in the Parenting Wisely program.

	Mean Score	
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)
<i>Scale: 1=YES!, 2=yes, 3 = no, 4 = NO!</i>		
1. I think sometimes it's ok to cheat at school.	3.4	3.3
2. It is all right to beat up people if they start the fight.	3.0	3.2
3. I think it is ok to take something without asking if you can get away with it.	3.6	3.4
4. I do the opposite of what people tell me, just to get them mad.	3.5	3.6
5. I like to see how much I can get away with.	3.4	3.5
6. I ignore the rules that get in my way.	3.0	3.3

Parental Attitudes Toward Drug Use Scale

According to the results of these two scales, youth understood that their parents believed it was quite wrong for them to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or smoke marijuana. Given that youth knew their parents' stance about drug use prior to participation, it is logical that no changes were measured following program participation.

	Mean Score	
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)
<i>Scale: 1= Not at all Wrong, 2= A little bit wrong , 3 = wrong, 4 = Very Wrong!,</i>		
1. How wrong do your parents feel it would be for <u>you</u> to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whisky, gin) regularly?	3.7	3.6
2. How wrong do your parents feel it would be for <u>you</u> to smoke cigarettes?	3.8	3.6
3. How wrong do your parents feel it would be for <u>you</u> to smoke marijuana?	3.8	3.8

<i>Scale: 1= Neither approve or disapprove 2=Somewhat disapprove, 3 = Strongly disapprove</i>	Mean Score		
	Pre (n=23)	Post (n=28)	Follow-Up (n=9)
How do you think your parents would feel if you...			
1. have one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day?	2.8	2.8	3.0
2. try marijuana or hashish once or twice?	2.8	2.6	3.0
3. smoke one or more packs of cigarettes per day?	2.9	2.8	3.0

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The SDQ, a brief behavioral screening questionnaire was also created for youth to provide self-reports. The same 25 item questionnaire was used and has five sub-scales: 1) emotional symptoms; 2) conduct problems; 3) hyperactivity/inattention; 4) peer relationship problems; and, 5) prosocial behavior. The scores from the first four sub-scales are added together to result in one final self “difficulties” score. On the youth version of the SDQ, scores between 0 and 15 are normal, scores between 16 and 19 are borderline and scores over 20 indicate abnormalities in behavior.

The average difficulty score prior to participating in the Parenting Wisely Program, as measured on the target youth was 23. The mean difficulty score following participation was 21. This slight decrease still falls within the abnormal category in terms of behavior and the difference between pre and post was not significant. Most notable is that parents perceived a greater reduction in negative behaviors compared to the youth themselves.

CONTROL GROUP

The original objective was to assign 30 equivalent families into the control group in order to assess the effectiveness of the Parenting Wisely program coupled with workbook-based therapy sessions compared to family therapy alone. Unfortunately, during the study period the South Bay Youth Project did not obtain enough eligible referrals from the city of El Segundo to meet the target sample size for the control group. A total of 8 families were assigned to the control by the end of the study period. Pre and post measures were administered to both the parent and child of each of these families, however given the significantly smaller sample size of the control group, statistical comparisons would not be reliable.

Demographics

When looking to see the equivalency of the two groups prior to participation, it appears that they were quite comparable. The ethnic composition of the groups was nearly the same, with most (77%) of the control group being White. The economic indicators such as education level and income were categorically identical to the Parenting Wisely participants. The average age of the control group parents was the same as the Parenting Wisely group, however the target children of the control group were slightly older on average than the Parenting Wisely group (13 and 12 respectively).

Alcohol and Drug Use

The control groups, like the Parenting Wisely groups, reported very low 30 day prior usage rates of alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, youth and parent perceptions of risk due to the use of alcohol and drugs were also quite similar, with the control groups finding use quite harmful and wrong.

Beck Depression Scale

The Beck Depression Scale was administered to all parents at pre and post implementation in order to see if participating in the Parenting Wisely program reduced their levels of depression any more than traditional family therapy. The **higher** the score the **less** depressed a person was. According to the mean scores on this scale, parents in the control group were less depressed at baseline and remained less depressed following therapy. However, the control group parents' level of depression was unchanged, whereas parents in the Parenting Wisely group were significantly less depressed after participating in the program.

	Pre Mean Depression Score	Post Mean Depression Score
Parenting Wisely Group	3.9	4.4
Control Group	4.6	4.7

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The SDQ was administered to the parents and youth in the control group as well in order to determine if the Parenting Wisely program had a greater effect on the youth's behavior problems as compared to traditional family therapy. The higher the score the more problematic behaviors were observed among the rater. Parents in both the Parenting Wisely group and the Control group reported, on average, the same difficulty score at baseline. However, parents in the Parenting Wisely group observed fewer behavior problems after participating in the program, whereas the parents in the control group actually reported a higher difficulty score, on average, after six sessions of therapy. Youth that participated in the Parenting Wisely group had higher difficulty scores at baseline compared to the youth in the control group. Furthermore, the youth in the Control group reported more improvement following therapy compared to the youth in the Parenting Wisely group. The most interesting finding is that with the exception of the Control youth post measure, parents reported lower difficulty scores than the youth did themselves.

	Mean Parent Rating		Mean Youth Self-Report	
	Pre Difficulty Score	Post Difficulty Score	Pre Difficulty Score	Post Difficulty Score
Parenting Wisely Group	14	11	23	21
Control Group	15	17.6	17.0	12.2

CONCLUSION

The Parenting Wisely Program, based on this evaluation, can be considered somewhat effective at achieving its overall objectives. There are indications that the program was effective in changing some parenting behaviors and improving family relationships. Specifically, we found that Parenting Wisely parents significantly reduced their use of prescription drugs while in the program. Additionally, participating in the program appeared to open up lines of communication between parents. Parents reported that they talked about parenting issues more frequently with their partner than they did prior to participating in the program. Family relationships also seemed to be strengthened, as parents and youth alike believed it was much easier to think of things to do with other family members after participating in the program.

Although not all parenting behaviors improved as a result of the Parenting Wisely program, there were a few significant changes that were observed by parents and youth alike. Parents and youth agreed that parents were more likely to know if the child were going to come home late after they participated compared to before. Also, parents indicated that they were clearer about family rules after their participation. The youth respondents corroborated this perception.

Discipline behaviors were not overwhelmingly altered in reaction to what they learned in the Parenting Wisely program. This, however, could be due to the fact that parents, at baseline, reported high levels of constructive discipline. Nevertheless, parents who hit their kids were less likely to report doing so after they participated in the program. Parents also reported yelling less at post implementation. Furthermore, after participating in the Parenting Wisely program with their children, parents were less worried about their child trying to “get back at them” if they disciplined them.

Parental depression levels were not extraordinarily high at baseline; however, after participating in the Parenting Wisely program, parents reported significantly less depression..

The effect of the Parenting Wisely program was not as obvious with the youth that participated. Drug and alcohol use was minimal among them, thus we were not able to measure changes in substance use. The perceived risk of alcohol use significantly increased following participation in the program; however, the perceived risk of other substances did not appear to change. Intention to use alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana also did not change after participation in the program. Many youth reported that they were likely to smoke cigarettes, however, indicated low intention to use alcohol and marijuana both at baseline and at post-implementation.

Youth in general, did not report higher levels of family attachment after participating in the program, however, like their parents, they reported that it was easier to think of things to do with the family following the program. Family conflict was not reduced as an immediate result of the Parenting Wisely program from the youths’ perspectives. Furthermore, they did not note any real changes in their parents’ discipline style

following participation. However, they reported high levels of constructive types of discipline at the baseline, thus detecting any changes would be difficult.

Similar to the parents, youth were not typically depressed upon the start of the program, and we did not measure any change in depressive symptoms after participating in the Parenting Wisely program. Youth also reported strong beliefs regarding unacceptable conduct, such as cheating, prior to participating, thus very little change occurred in these perceptions once participating in the program. We observed the same ceiling effect with regard to the youth's understanding of their parent's feelings about alcohol and drug use. Most indicated, at baseline, that their parents would strongly disapprove of them using substances; therefore little change was measured on these items after program participation.

Overall, we did not measure statistical differences on any of the youth measures between pre and post. However, we did note some considerable mean changes between post and follow-up. We did not conduct statistical analysis between these two time periods, as the sample size of the follow-up group was considerably smaller than the sample size of the post-implementation group. Thus, we did not have enough statistical power to measure differences reliably. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that many of the areas in which we saw no immediate change, changed for the better by follow-up. Although the follow up results are not statistically reliable, they still merit acknowledgment. Below are a list of the items on which we observed larger mean changes between post and follow-up.

- People in my family often insult or yell at each other.
- People in my family have serious arguments.
- We argue about the same things in my family over and over.
- I am available when others in the family want to talk to me.
- I listen to what other family members have to say, even when I disagree.
- Family members ask each other for help.
- Family members like to spend free time with each other.
- Family members feel very close to each other.
- We can easily think of things to do together as a family.
- The rules in my family are clear.
- My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.
- My parents provide help with my homework when I needed it.
- My parents make me do work or chores around the house.
- My parents limit the amount of time I watched TV.
- My parents limit the amount of time you went out with friends on school nights.
- My parents let me know when I've done a good job.
- My parents tell me they're proud of me for something I've done.
- Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.
- At times I think I am not good at all.
- All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
- In the past year, have you felt depressed or sad most days, even if you felt OK sometimes?

