



Foundations for Success

*Improving early childhood mental health
to support successful families and communities in Ramsey County*

Outcome Assessment results: Incredible Years February 2010

Foundations for Success was a five-year initiative designed to develop and implement a county-wide system for early childhood mental health services in Ramsey County. Funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and coordinated by the Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties, the initiative promoted culturally competent and family friendly services. Services were developed and implemented by a collaboration of more than 100 community agencies, representing local foundations, government, parents, school districts, health, mental health, early childhood professionals, and the University of Minnesota.

The initiative was evaluated by Wilder Research, including an annual analysis of outcome data collected through the project. Outcome data were collected for children participating in Incredible Years using the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*. Outcome data for parents participating in the Incredible Years Parent Group were collected using the *Parent Practices Interview*. This final report summarizes all findings from the outcome evaluation of Incredible Years (Dina curriculum and parent group) over the duration of the initiative.

Overview of completed SDQs

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) are completed for children at the beginning (intake) and end (discharge) of their time in Incredible Years. A total of 765 matched pretest/posttest SDQs were submitted to Wilder Research. The SDQs were completed between May 2005 and June 2009. Most of the SDQs submitted to Wilder Research through June 2009 (97%) were for children participating in the Incredible Years Dina Curriculum program. Eighteen Incredible Years Dina Curriculum sites submitted completed questionnaires; of these, most were from Wheelock Early Childhood Special Education (20%), followed by Normandy Park (17%), Swede Hollow Head Start (14%), and Wilder's Child Development Center (13%). The remaining 3 percent of SDQs were completed for children whose parents participated in the parent group.

Most of the questionnaires (89%) completed at intake were completed by teachers, while 11 percent were completed by parents, primarily mothers (82% of all parent-completed forms). Most SDQs completed at intake were in English (99%); the remaining forms were completed in Spanish. Questionnaires were completed for slightly more males (59%) than females. At the time the SDQs were completed, children ranged in age from 2 to 8, with a mean age of 3.8 years at intake and 4.4 years at discharge.

Results of the SDQ

The SDQ is comprised of five subscales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, peer problems, and prosocial behavior. In addition to subscale scores, a total difficulties score (sum of scores on all scales except prosocial behavior) was calculated for each child.

All scores can further be classified into one of three clinical categories: normal, borderline, or abnormal. An abnormal total difficulties score can be used to identify children who may have mental health concerns.

Changes in scores from intake to discharge are based on individually matched cases (n=765). The major SDQ findings are as follows:

- Overall, children showed statistically significant improvements in all five domains of behavior assessed by the SDQ (emotional symptoms, peer problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, and prosocial behavior), as well as an improvement in their total difficulties score.
- The most significant gains, and largest effect sizes, occurred in the areas of peer problems and prosocial behavior.
- Most children (52% to 86%) who were in the “normal” category on the subscales at intake maintained that status at discharge.
- Between 7 percent and 27 percent of children demonstrated clinical improvements from intake to discharge (i.e., they improved from “abnormal” to “normal” or “borderline,” or from “borderline” to “normal”).
- The largest clinical improvement was on the prosocial scale, in which 27 percent of children improved by at least one clinical category between intake and discharge.
- One-quarter of the children demonstrated improvement in their total difficulties scores, improving by at least one clinical category.
- Sixty-three percent of children’s total difficulties scores were “normal” at intake, compared to 76 percent at discharge.
- Parents and teachers reported that fewer children had “at least minor” difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior, or getting along with others at discharge (37%) compared to intake (49%).

Overview of completed PPIs

The Parent Practices Interview (PPI) is completed by parents participating in the Incredible Years Parent Group at intake and discharge. This report summarizes the results of 48 matched PPIs (intake and discharge only) completed between March 2005 and June 2009.

Most of the parents who participated in the Parent Group were female (83%), Caucasian (89%), between the ages of 30 and 49 (72%), and married (68%).

Results of the PPI

The PPI is comprised of seven domains that assess parenting in the following areas: appropriate discipline, harsh and inconsistent discipline, positive verbal discipline, monitoring, physical punishment, praise and incentives, and clear expectations. Parents’ scores in each domain can also be classified as “clinical” or problematic/high-risk if above established cut-offs.

Changes in scores from intake to discharge are based on individually matched cases (n=45 to 48, depending on the subscale). The major findings from the PPI are as follows:

- Parents demonstrated significant improvement from pretest to posttest in six of seven parenting skill areas: appropriate discipline, harsh and inconsistent discipline, positive verbal discipline, praise and incentives, physical discipline, and clear expectations.
- The most significant improvement was the decline in self-reported use of harsh and inconsistent discipline between pretest and posttest; the increase in parental use of praise and incentives and positive verbal discipline was also highly significant.
- Almost one-third of parents (29%) moved out of the “clinical” range on the harsh and inconsistent discipline domain by posttest, which was highly significant; one in five parents (19%) also moved out of the clinical range in the area of physical punishment, which was significant as well.
- Although not statistically significant, between 7 percent and 19 percent of parents moved out of the “clinical” range on the remaining five domains by posttest.

Conclusions and recommendations

- In general, the results of the outcome assessments suggest that children and parents are showing improvements in their social-emotional behavior and parenting skills, respectively, as a result of their participation in Incredible Years.
- Children showed considerable gains in prosocial behaviors and in the reduction of peer problems, while parents' largest improvement was in using less harsh and inconsistent discipline with their children.

Wilder Research

Information. Insight. Impact.

451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700

www.wilderresearch.org



For more information

For more information about Foundations for Success, contact Catherine Wright at Community Action Head Start, 651-603-5813 or cwright@caprw.org.

For more information about this report, contact Monica Idzelis at Wilder Research, 651-280-2657 or mli@wilder.org.

Author: Monica Idzelis

FEBRUARY 2010