



Foundations for Success

Improving early childhood mental health

to support successful families and communities in Ramsey County

Outcome Assessment results: Incredible Years, Wilder CDC 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*. This final report summarizes all findings from the outcome evaluation of Incredible Years (Dina curriculum) at the Wilder Child Development Center 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 93 matched pretest/posttest SDQs from Wilder's Child Development Center (CDC) were submitted to Wilder Research. The SDQs were completed between May 2005 and June 2009.

Most of the questionnaires (89%) completed at intake were completed by teachers, while 11 percent were completed by parents. All of the SDQs

completed at intake were in English. Questionnaires were completed for more males (62%) than females. Children were primarily African American (67%) or multi-racial (20%), and ranged in age from 2 to 5 at the time the intake SDQ was completed.

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=93). The major SDQ findings are as follows:

- Overall, children showed statistically significant improvements in three domains of behavior assessed by the SDQ (prosocial behavior, peer problems, and conduct problems), as well as an improvement in their total difficulties score.
- The most significant gain, and largest effect size, occurred in the area of prosocial behavior.
- Between 4 percent and 36 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").

continued

- The largest clinical improvement was on the prosocial scale, in which 36 percent of children improved by at least one clinical category between intake and discharge.
- About one-quarter of the children also demonstrated improvement in their total difficulties scores, improving by at least one clinical category.
- Fifty-nine percent of children's total difficulties scores were "normal" at intake, compared to 68 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 (33%) compared to intake (47%).

Conclusions and recommendations

- In general, the results of the outcome assessments suggest that children at Wilder's CDC are showing improvements in their social-emotional behavior as a result of their participation in Incredible Years.
- In particular, children showed considerable gains in prosocial behavior. There was also a significant reduction in children's peer problems.

Wilder Research

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