Parenting Matters
Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0-8

Board on Children, Youth, and Families
Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education
# Study Sponsors

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Study Timeline

- **SEP 2014**: Project Launch
- **APR 2015**: 2nd Committee Meeting & Public Session
- **SEP 2015**: 4th Committee Meeting
- **JAN 2016**: 6th Committee Meeting (virtual)
- **JUL 2016**: Report Release (Prepublication)

**2014**
- **SEP 2014**: Project Launch
- **JAN 2015**: 1st Committee Meeting & Sponsor Panel

**2015**
- **APR 2015**: 2nd Committee Meeting & Public Session
- **JUN 2015**: 3rd Committee Meeting & Public Session
- **NOV 2015**: 5th Committee Meeting

**2016**
- **FEB-JUN 2016**: Final Report Drafting and Report Review

**2017**
- **AUG-APR 2017**: Dissemination and Final Report Production

The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE
The Changing Landscape for Parents

- Recent increase in child poverty
- Fewer fathers live with their children
- More parents are unmarried
- Increase in variance of cultural practices
Statement Of Task

- Identify parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices that support positive parent-child interactions and healthy development of children ages 0-8
- Describe effective strategies for supporting parents in carrying out parenting practices associated with healthy child development
- Identify barriers and facilitators to strengthening parenting capacity and parents’ participation and retention in effective programs and services
- Identify areas for future research to strengthen the evidence on strategies for supporting parents
- Make recommendations to promote the wide-scale adoption of effective strategies across public and private sectors and to health, human services, and education systems
The Following Questions Were Of Particular Interest To The Committee

1. What are core parenting knowledge, attitudes and practices that support healthy child development, birth to age 8?

2. What evidence based strategies to strengthen parenting capacity have been shown to be effective with parents of young children, prenatal to age 8?

3. What types of strategies work and for which populations of parents and children?

4. What are the most pronounced barriers to strengthening parenting capacity and retention in effective programs designed for children birth to age 8?

5. Are there evidence-based models that support parenting capacity and build upon existing family assets?

6. What are 3-5 research areas that warrant further investigation, in order to inform policy and practice?
Study Methodology

Extensive review of literature pertaining to parenting as well as reports from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

Held two public information gathering sessions

Conducted group and individual semi-structured interviews with parents

Commissioned papers

- The Role of Healthcare in Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0-8
- Evidence for Investing in Parenting Programs at Scale
- Parenting and Children’s Mental and Behavioral Health
Major Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations
Recommendations and Conclusions Focused In These Key Areas

- Parenting Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices
- Interventions
- Parent Engagement
- Future Research
Parents who know and understand child development have increased:

- Quality in parent-child interactions

- Are more likely to engage in evidence-based parenting practices

Attitudes about roles of raising young children:

- Contribute to variation in practices and in the uptake of services for families among individuals and subpopulations
Parenting practices associated with positive child development include:

- Showing Warmth and Sensitivity
- Contingent Response
- Routines & Reduced Household Chaos
- Appropriate Discipline
- Reading Books and Talking to Children
- Practices Promoting Health and Safety
Interventions to Support Parents and Parenting: Scaling Effective Interventions

Several interventions promote effective parenting practices:

- Formal sources of parenting support
- Parenting skills training programs
- Interventions targeted to specific populations of parents

Many families that could benefit from interventions do not receive them. Leveraging services such as early care and education as points of intervention and referral would improve the reach of effective strategies.
Recommendation

**Actors**
US Departments of Health & Human Services, Education, state and local agencies, community based organizations

**Actions**
Form a working group to identify points in the delivery of these services that reach large numbers of families

**Goal**
To implement evidence-based strategies for supporting parents, and to enhance referral of parents to needed resources
Interventions to Support Parents and Parenting: Scaling Effective Interventions

Evidence is needed to:

- inform the creation of a system for disseminating evidence-based programs and services to the field
- to assess fit with community needs
- develop needed adaptations
- monitor fidelity and progress toward targeted outcomes

Findings can then be used in an ongoing way to inform the integration of evidence-based interventions into widely used service platforms.
2

Recommendation

**Actors**

US Departments of Health & Human Services, Institute of Education Sciences, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, and private philanthropies

**Actions**

Fund research focused on developing guidance for policy makers and program administrators and managers

**Goal**

To scale effective parenting programs as widely and rapidly as possible
Enhancing the Workforce’s Ability to Deliver Evidence-Based Interventions

One of the Problems

Providers of routine services for parents, and services not designed for parents but with the potential to benefit them, often lack knowledge and competencies in evidence-based parenting interventions.

Solutions for Scaling Up Greater Access

A workforce with knowledge and competencies in implementing evidence-based interventions.

Build on the commonality of specific and nonspecific elements across interventions.
Recommendation

**Actors**

US Departments of Health & Human Services

**Actions**

- Continue to promote the use of evidence-based parenting interventions
- Should support research designed to further operationalize common elements of effective parenting interventions
- Compare intervention benefits with specific evidence-based programs from which the elements originated

**Goal**

- To create an open-source curriculum for use in educating health and human service professionals
- Develop common terminology for describing common elements and training materials
- Ensure knowledge of effective parenting interventions among professionals
Increasing Parents’ Engagement in Programs and Services

Parents’ engagement in young children’s learn can improve:

- Children’s literacy
- Behavior
- Socioemotional well-being

Parent engagement is facilitated when providers, skilled in communication, participate in joint decision making with diverse families about their children’s education.
Increasing Parents’ Engagement in Programs and Services

Points of Consideration:

Programs that prepare individuals to work with young children do not always include evidence-informed strategies for creating successful partnerships with families.

There is limited official guidance at the local, state, and federal levels on how to increase parent engagement, along with a lack of attention on impact of family culture and language on engagement programs.
Recommendation

Actors
US Departments of Health & Human Services, Education

Actions
Convene a group of experts in teaching and research and representatives of relevant practice organizations and research associations

Goal
To review and improve professional development for providers who work with families of young children across sectors

Professional development should be evaluated as to whether its core elements include best practices in engagement of and joint decision making with parents
Recommendation

**Actors**
US Departments of Health & Human Services, Education

**Actions**
Convene experts in parent engagement

**Goal**
To create a toolbox of evidence-informed engagement and joint decision-making models, programs, and practices for implementation in early education settings
Communicating Evidence-Based Parenting Information

Key Opportunities:

- Awareness about parenting practices is foundational for behavior that supports children.

- Public health campaigns are an effective low-cost way to reach large and heterogeneous groups of parents.

- Information and communication technologies offer promising opportunities to tailor information based on needs, background and social circumstances.

Inequalities exist in how parenting information is generated, manipulated, and distributed among social groups, in the ability to access and take advantage of the information.
Recommendation

**Actors**
US Departments of Health & Human Services, Education, state and local departments of health and education and private partners, including businesses and employers

**Actions**
Lead an effort to expand and improve the communication to parents, with particular emphasis on informing parenting practices of underserved populations

**Goal**
So that parents have up-to-date information on children’s developmental milestones and parenting practices associated with healthy child development
Addressing Gaps in Research

A number of interventions have shown promise in supporting specific groups of parents but require further research to understand whether and how they should be scaled.

To best guide policy and practice, research must focus on major gaps in current knowledge and use methodologies most likely to produce evidence that can inform policy or practice.
Recommendation

**Actors**
Secretaries of US Departments of Health & Human Services, Education

**Actions**
Launch a national effort based on an assessment aimed at identifying the gaps in knowledge that if filled, would most advance parenting-related policy and practice

**Goal**
To address major gaps in the research-to-practice/practice-to-research pipeline related to parenting
Addressing Gaps in Research

Three areas in need of additional research are aimed at strengthening the evidence on:

- Interventions for parents with special needs
- Interventions that engage fathers
- Differences in parenting and engagement in interventions across diverse populations and family forms
Elements of Effective Interventions

- View parents as equal partners
- Tailor interventions to specific family needs
- Collaborate and integrate services to support families with multiple needs
- Create opportunities for peer to peer support
- Address trauma
- Create culturally relevant programs
- Enhance efforts to involve fathers
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For more information visit
www.nas.edu/parentingmatters