

Research Highlights

Topic: Parent to Parent

Singer, G., Marquis, J.G., Powers, L.K., Blanchard, L., DiVenere, N., Santelli, B., Ainbinder, J., & Sharp, M. (1999). A multi-site evaluation of Parent to Parent programs for parents of children with disabilities. *Journal of Early Intervention*. 22(3), 217-229.

BOTTOM LINE

Parents who participated in a Parent to Parent program had higher scores on measures of cognitive adaptation and coping than a comparison group of parents who did not participate. The Parent to Parent group also showed greater progress in addressing the problems they faced. Eighty-nine percent of the parents in the Parent to Parent program rated the programs as helpful. Follow-up telephone interviews conducted with the parents revealed that it was especially helpful to exchange practical information and to have someone to talk to who had already dealt with some of the same problems they were facing. The perceived equality among the matched parents was an important factor in the helpfulness of the Parent to Parent experience.

TIPS

- Use the research results from this study in proposals for funding Parent to Parent support.
- Advocate for state and local funds to sponsor Parent to Parent programs.
- In making matches between parents, it is important that the parent seeking the match perceives that the matched parent faces a similar situation.
- Care and effort must be sustained in order for parent matches to have maximum impact.

KEY FINDINGS

- Statistical analysis (Analysis of Covariance) indicated that participation in Parent to Parent programs has a significant impact on attitudes that are important for the cognitive adaptation of parents to disability.

KEY FINDINGS

cont.

- Statistically significant differences between the Parent to Parent group and the control group were also found on the measure of parents' progress in getting help for the problem they first brought to Parent to Parent.
- Parents who entered the study with relatively low scores on the coping instrument and who were assigned to the Parent to Parent group scored significantly better on the coping instrument at post-test than did the similar wait-list group who also had low initial scores on coping.
- On rating the helpfulness of Parent to Parent, 89% of the participants in the treatment group rated the program as helpful; 11% rated the program as not helpful.
- In addition, based on the telephone interviews, many parents reported that they experienced gains in their perceived ability to cope with the child and family due to their involvement with Parent to Parent.
- Also, the practical exchange that is facilitated by parents who perceive themselves to have similar circumstances appeared to help parents meet the primary need that brought them to initially contact Parent to Parent.

METHOD

- Parents were randomly assigned to either a Parent to Parent group or a waiting-list group.
- Measures of cognitive adaptation, empowerment, coping efficacy, social support, and progress on the presenting problem were given to all parents over a 2-month period. The first measure was taken before the Parent to Parent match was made. The second measure was given two months after the initial match.
- For the qualitative portion of the study, a sub-sample of 24 parents was selected from each of the five participating states. A semi-structured telephone interview was conducted with each parent. The interview focused on the helpful and non-helpful aspects of the Parent to Parent programs.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Katz, A.H. (1993). *Self-help in America: A social movement perspective*. Twyane Publishers: New York.

Santelli, B., Turnbull, A.P., Marquis, J., & Lemer, E. (1995). Parent to Parent programs: A unique form of mutual support. *Infants and Young Children*, 8(2), 48-57.

RELATED
PUBLICATIONS
cont.

Santelli, B., Turnbull, A.P., Sergeant, J., Lemer, E., & Marquis, J. (1996). Parent to Parent: Parent preferences for supports. *Infants and Young Children*, 9(1), 53-62.

Silver, E.J., Ireys, H.T., Bauman, L.J., & Stein, R.E.K. (1996). Psychological outcomes of a support intervention in mothers of children with ongoing health conditions: The parent to parent network. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 25, 249-264.

Thoits, P.A. (1986). Social support as coping assistance. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 54(4), 416-423.

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