

San Mateo Probation

Probation Parent Programs Annual Evaluation

FISCAL YEAR 2018-2019



Helping People
Build Better Communities

About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Program Description

The Probation Parent Programs (PPP) serve court-ordered or court-directed probation-referred parents of children 12 years and older. Generally, one parent is required to complete the series (as defined by attending at least eight classes), and the other parent may also attend. Sessions range in length from two to three hours each. There are two curricula administered by the Parent Program, described below:

- **The Parent Project®:** The Parent Project¹ is a parent training program designed specifically for parents of strong-willed or out-of-control teens ranging in age from 13 to 18. The program targets key issues, including: poor school attendance and performance, emotional/behavioral problems, family conflict, runaway behavior, violence, substance abuse, criminal activity, and gang affiliation. The curriculum teaches concrete prevention, identification, and intervention strategies for the most destructive of adolescent behaviors. Parents learn how to increase communication, create positive parent-teen relationships, improve teen's school performance, intervene with substance abuse, and apply techniques for active listening and discipline. This is a 10-week program (3-hour groups and 2 hours for the last 4 sessions), and is taught in English and Spanish. The Parent Project is led by trained, certified facilitators, and parents practice "homework" between groups. Facilitators encourage the group to function independently during the last four weeks. Parents are provided with the UCLA Self-Help Model and are encouraged to continue to meet together when the "formal" group ends.
- **Staying Connected with Your Teen – Prevention Program:** Staying Connected is an educational and skill building program created for families with youth between the ages of 12-18. The goal of the program is to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors that are known to predict later alcohol and other drug use, delinquency, violent behavior, and other behavioral problems in adolescence. The program focuses on strengthening family bonds, establishing clear standards for behavior, and helping parents more appropriately manage the behavior of their teens while also encouraging appropriate growth toward independence. The program is 10 weeks in length.

Programmatic Challenges in Fiscal Year 2018-19

Challenges in 2018-19 remain unchanged from 2017-18. The program has had difficulty filling classes and maintaining regular attendance (due mainly to conflicting work schedules, childcare needs, and transportation issues).

¹ See more at www.parentproject.com

Evaluation Methods

Programs funded by San Mateo County Juvenile Probation (Probation) monitor their programs and report client, service, and outcome data to the department and its evaluator, Applied Survey Research (ASR). The methods and tools used to collect this data are described below.

Clients and Services: Grantee programs collected demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and service data (e.g., type of services, hours of services, etc.) for individual clients. Program staff entered these data into their own data systems prior to transferring the data to ASR for analysis.

Outcomes: PPP also conducts its own locally-developed survey to parent participants to track progress toward creating better relationships between parents and their children by improving parenting practices. Some of the indicators measured on the survey include:

- Creating positive parent-teen relationships
- Improving children’s school performance
- Intervening with substance use
- Applying techniques for active listening and discipline
- Strengthening family bonds
- Establishing clear standards for behavior
- Helping parents more appropriately manage the behavior of their teens
- Reducing alcohol and other drug use, delinquency, and violent behavior.

Evaluation Findings

Fiscal Year 2018-19 Highlights

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of participating parents were female, and 74% identified as Latino/Hispanic.
- Parents showed statistically significant improvements in communication with their children, having difficult conversations, monitoring their children, and enforcing consequences.

Profile of Clients Served

In FY 2018-19, Parenting Programs served 52 parents of 42 youth, all of whom had at least some demographic data. A majority of parents were female (65%) and identified predominantly as Latino/Hispanic (74%), followed by White/Caucasian (12%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (7%). The average age of children was 16.4 years old and the average age of parents was 47.3 years old. Parents received an average of 12.7 hours of service and spent an average of 1.6 months in the program.

Table 1. Client Services

CLIENT SERVICES	FY 12-13	FY 13-14	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19
Number of Clients Served	121	93	50	84	52	64	52
Average Number of Hours Served	16.2	15.8	14.7	17.5	17.3	12.5	12.7
Average Time in the Program (Months)	2.1	2.5	2.4	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.6

Program Specific Outcomes

PPP administered a locally-developed survey to parents who attended the Parent Project and Staying Connected programs. PPP administered pre- and post-surveys to nineteen parents in the Parent Project program and nineteen parents in the Staying Connected program in FY 2018-19.² Parents made significant improvements from pre- to post-test in several areas targeted by the course. In fact, 39% (15 of 38) of the pre- and post-test item scores showed statistically significant improvement in behaviors in both the participants and their children as seen in the tables below.³

Interpreting Outcomes

Within each table, a statistically significant result (marked by an asterisk*) indicates that the change from pre to post is likely real but does not indicate the degree of the difference. The effect size provides a standardized measure of the *degree* of difference between the two means. The effect size measure used in this report is *Cohen's d*, which indicates whether an effect is small, medium or large.

Communication

Over the course of the program, parents showed statistically significant improvements (with medium effect sizes) in telling their children that they love them, hugging or kissing their children, paying attention to children when they talk, showing or telling their children they are proud of his/her actions, and recognizing when their children do something positive.

Table 2. Communication Survey Results

COMMUNICATION ITEMS	n	PRE-TEST MEAN	POST-TEST MEAN	PRE/POST CHANGE	EFFECT SIZE
I tell my child that I love him/her	37	3.14	3.54	0.40*	MEDIUM
I hug or kiss my child	26	2.92	3.35	0.43*	MEDIUM
I write my child notes that say I love him/her	25	1.68	2.08	0.40	[not sig.]
I pay full attention when my child talks to me	29	3.34	3.55	0.21*	MEDIUM
I am able to tell or show my child that I am proud of his/her actions	36	3.00	3.42	0.42*	MEDIUM
I recognize when my child does something positive	37	3.19	3.46	0.27*	MEDIUM
I listen to my child without interrupting	35	3.17	3.31	0.14	[not sig.]

Note: 'n' column represents number of paired responses to both pre and post items (out of 38). Statistically significant at * p < .05. Pre-post change is the absolute value of change. Effect sizes for statistically significant findings were calculated using Cohen's d and categorized as small (0.0-0.2), medium (0.2-0.5), and large (0.5-0.8).

² Each survey item was measured on a 4-point scale, with 1=Never, 2=Not often, 3=Often, and 4=Always.

³ Paired t-test applied to determine significance.

Difficult Conversations

Parents reported modest increases in conversations with their children about drugs and alcohol, but changes in other subject areas such as peer pressure or gangs were not statistically significant.

Table 3. Conversations Survey Results

I HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH MY CHILD ABOUT ...	n	PRE-TEST MEAN	POST-TEST MEAN	PRE/POST CHANGE	EFFECT SIZE
Drugs	37	2.84	3.24	0.40*	MEDIUM
Alcohol	35	2.83	3.26	0.43*	MEDIUM
Peer Pressure	36	2.92	3.22	0.30	[not sig.]
Gangs	35	2.83	3.00	0.17	[not sig.]
Sexual Activity	35	2.60	2.83	0.23	[not sig.]
Depression	32	2.66	2.94	0.28	[not sig.]
Suicide	30	2.50	2.83	0.33	[not sig.]
Running Away	32	2.38	2.75	0.37	[not sig.]

Note: 'n' column represents number of paired responses to both pre and post items (out of 38). Statistically significant at * $p < .05$. Pre-post change is the absolute value of change. Effect sizes for statistically significant findings were calculated using Cohen's d and categorized as small (0.0-0.2), medium (0.2-0.5), and large (0.5-0.8).

Behaviors

Parents reported a small increase in activities with their children by the end of the program. Changes in nine other behaviors were not statistically significant.

Table 4. Behavior Survey Results

BEHAVIOR ITEMS	n	PRE-TEST MEAN	POST-TEST MEAN	PRE/POST CHANGE	EFFECT SIZE
My child yells at me (rs)	36	2.94	3.00	0.06	[not sig.]
I yell at my child (rs)	37	3.16	2.97	0.19	[not sig.]
My child and I verbally argue (rs)	31	2.81	2.90	0.09	[not sig.]
My child and I do things together	36	2.61	2.86	0.25*	SMALL
My child lies (rs)	25	2.68	2.88	0.20	[not sig.]
My child cheats (rs)	24	3.00	3.17	0.17	[not sig.]
My child steals (rs)	21	3.57	3.52	0.05	[not sig.]
My child complies with his/her curfew	23	2.70	2.83	0.13	[not sig.]
My child complies with house/family rules	23	2.65	2.83	0.18	[not sig.]
My child cuts classes at school (rs)	22	2.86	3.00	0.14	[not sig.]

Note: 'n' column represents number of paired responses to both pre and post items (out of 38). Statistically significant at * $p < .05$. Pre-post change is the absolute value of change. Negatively worded items (e.g., "My child yells at me") were reverse-scored (noted as "rs") so that for all items, higher scores were associated with more positive parenting practices.

Enforcing Consequences

After their time in the program, parents reported substantial increases in having house and/or family rules in place, knowing the consequences to apply when their child breaks a rule, and a greater ability to enforce the consequences.

Table 5. Enforcing Consequences Survey Results

ENFORCING CONSEQUENCES ITEMS	n	PRE-TEST MEAN	POST-TEST MEAN	PRE/POST CHANGE	EFFECT SIZE
I have house or family rules for my child	33	2.91	3.24	0.33*	MEDIUM
I enforce consequences when my child breaks the rules	34	2.71	3.24	0.53*	LARGE
I know what consequences to apply when my child breaks the rules	35	2.66	3.20	0.54*	MEDIUM

Note: 'n' column represents number of paired responses to both pre and post items (out of 38). Statistically significant at * $p < .05$. Pre-post change is the absolute value of change. Effect sizes for statistically significant findings were calculated using Cohen's d and categorized as small (0.0-0.2), medium (0.2-0.5), and large (0.5-0.8).

Monitoring

After the program, parents reported more closely monitoring their children's grades, backpack, free time, and friends.

Table 6. Monitoring Survey Results

MONITORING ITEMS	n	PRE-TEST MEAN	POST-TEST MEAN	PRE/POST CHANGE	EFFECT SIZE
I monitor my child's grades	35	3.14	3.37	0.23*	SMALL
I monitor my child's school attendance	36	3.31	3.47	0.17	[not sig.]
I check my child's backpack	36	2.89	3.19	0.30*	MEDIUM
I check my child's room	32	2.97	3.19	0.22	[not sig.]
I check my child's car	8	2.00	2.25	0.25	[not sig.]
I know how my child spends his/her money	23	2.57	2.83	0.26	[not sig.]
I know how my child spends his/her free time	35	2.86	3.11	0.25*	SMALL
I am aware of where my child is after school, at night and/or on weekends	35	3.11	3.34	0.23	[not sig.]
I know who my child's friends are by name	24	2.50	2.96	0.46*	MEDIUM
I know how to contact my child's friends and their guardians	24	2.25	2.42	0.17	[not sig.]

Note: 'n' column represents number of paired responses to both pre and post items (out of 38). Statistically significant at * $p < .05$. Pre-post change is the absolute value of change. Effect sizes for statistically significant findings were calculated using Cohen's d and categorized as small (0.0-0.2), medium (0.2-0.5), and large (0.5-0.8).

Client Story

Parent Education

Each year, Parent Project staff provide a client story to help illustrate the effect of services on their clients. PPP provided a client story from each of their two programs in FY 2018-19. The following are the client stories provided for the Parent Education Program and the Staying Connected Program.

Table 7. Parent Education Program Client Story

Name of Client	Veronica (Pseudonym)
Age and Gender	32, female
Reason for Referral	Veronica joined my program because her son was out of control and she was not having success in getting him to go to school or stop using drugs.
Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	When I first started working with Veronica, she looked very stressed and cried frequently. She stated that she felt completely lost because she was unable to efficiently parent her child. Also, her brothers who live with her and her son were criticizing her constantly and this caused her additional stress.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	Veronica participated in 12 Staying Connected Program classes. Every week she did the home practice and was very pleased to report back to the group about her successes or experiences with each exercise.
Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	After a few weeks, Veronica started showing up to class with a smile on her face and appeared more relaxed. Although, things were far from perfect, she was able to start changing how she interacted with her family. She was able to communicate clearly the changes she was making and how her mood and attitude were changing.
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	She learned that sometimes it is necessary to try many different parenting techniques before finding one or two that work.
What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program	She stopped screaming and yelling at her kids
The Value of the Program in the Client's Words	She stopped blaming herself for everything that went wrong with her kids

Staying Connected Program

Table 8. Staying Connected Program Client Story

Name of Client	Robert (Pseudonym)
Age and Gender	68, male
Reason for Referral	Robert joined Parenting Programs because his son was on probation. He was court ordered.
Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance When They First Started in the Program	He was calm and very quiet.
Activity Engagement and Consistency	Robert came to every class. He was always on time. He began to share his ideas about half way through the program.
Client's Behavior, Affect, and Appearance Toward the End of the Program	Toward the end of the program (last 3 classes) he shared with the group every time.
What the Client Learned as a Result of the Program	Robert learned how to communicate with his son and tell him "I love you."
What the Client is Doing Differently in Their Life Now as a Result of the Program	Robert is now taking time every day to spend 5-10 minutes checking in on his son. Before the program, his son refused to speak to him, but now they talk and interact with each other.
The Value of the Program in the Client's Words	He valued listening to other parents and hearing their perspective. He was happy to learn new techniques, especially about communication. Robert feels his relationship with his son has improved.