

Trauma-Informed Parenting: Reaching Rural Kinship Families through a Nursing Faculty and Extension Education Partnership

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BACKGROUND

Collateral damage from the opioid crisis often creates kinship families who have experienced trauma. In this pilot study, nursing faculty and Cooperative Extension Educators delivered trauma-informed parenting classes to kinship parents in rural Indiana counties.

PURPOSE

This multi-site, mixed methods, pilot study evaluated the impact of a trauma-informed parenting curriculum presented to rural-dwelling kinship parents.

SAMPLE

- Recruitment occurred across 11 rural counties in Indiana. Five classes were offered in four rural counties from 2014 to 2016.
- Forty-three parents registered for classes; 16 met study criteria and were used in the final analysis.
- Mean Age: 58.7 years; the majority were married ($n=12$), White/Caucasian ($n=16$); female ($n=12$), in very good or excellent health ($n=10$), with a high school diploma ($n=6$) or a high school diploma with technical/vocational training ($n=4$), and holding guardianship of the child(ren) ($n=11$).

RESULTS

After Classes...

74-year-old grandmother, caregiver to a five-year-old boy:
I let him know ahead of time what things are expected of him so that he can have time to figure it out more instead of just hitting him with, "this is what we are doing now." I think that is the main thing for me. I communicate much better with him.

Quantitative

Parenting Measures

Hypotheses Were Not Supported	
Improved family social environment	Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1994)
Decreased child behavioral difficulties score	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire-Parent Report (Goodman, 1997)
Increase in parent-child nurturing	The Child Rearing Practices Report – Modified; Scale: Nurturance. (Rickel & Biasatti, 1982)
Decreased symptoms of parenting stress	Parenting Stress Index (Short Form) (Abidin, 1995)

Satisfaction Data Findings

Satisfaction Item ($n=16$)	SA ($n/\%$)	A ($n/\%$)	N ($n/\%$)	D ($n/\%$)	SD ($n/\%$)
Content was helpful in caring for my child(ren).	11 (69)	2 (13)	0	0	0
I felt comfortable with the class content.	13 (81)	0	0	0	0
The case studies were useful.	10 (63)	2 (13)	1 (6)	0	0
The group activities were valuable.	9 (56)	3 (19)	1 (6)	0	0
Having free childcare was important.	9 (56)	2 (13)	5 (31)	0	0

FUNDING

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Qualitative: Themes

Themes	Subthemes
The Aftermath of Trauma	1. Child's past history of trauma/abuse/neglect: "Child witnessed parent being handcuffed behind back with sheriff holding gun..." 2. Unique family structure/dynamics: "It is so hard not to put myself in the middle of, "why is this happening." "why are you doing this to me," "why are you acting this way?"
Impact of Trauma-Informed Classes on Parenting Behaviors: Putting it Into Practice	1. Giving child more control, structure/routine, and choices: "lit up a light bulb in me." 2. Increased knowledge and awareness of trauma; increased observational skills "...easier for us to understand..." 3. Improved patience with child behaviors: "I think before I yell." 4. Increased parental empathy and new perspective: "...see things more through his eyes than mine..."
Processing of Caregiving Role	1. Parent vs. Kinship parent: "I'm not the fun grandparent. I am the disciplinarian..." 2. No one else to care for them: "Birth parent has no interest in the child."
Increased Social Support Through Classes	1. Increased social support for kinship parents: "It's just not us going through this." 2. Increased support for child: "There's several families who are like us." "...there was a whole bunch of kids being raised by grandmas and grandpas..."
Feedback on Curriculum	1. Appreciation: " Very encouraging + insiteful (sic) Thanks so much! 2. Course delivery and facilitators: "...doesn't seem like you are judgmental..." 3. Materials and manual: "...I pretty much carry it (the manual) with me..." 4. The need for additional support and resources for kinship parents "What I would have liked to have seen more of are things actually for the parents raising the children."
Wanting to Expand Program	1. Desire to meet community need: "...There is a lot of need out there. It is hard to get people to understand that and to give up their personal time." 2. Advocating for more participants: "I feel like (it) should almost be a mandatory thing..."

LIMITATIONS

Modest sample size; Short time period between pre/post-tests; Inability to provide incentives to increase recruitment; Extension Educator discomfort r/t intense trauma-related content

DISCUSSION

- Qualitative findings provide preliminary evidence of trauma-informed parenting classes effectiveness.
- Kinship parents able to identify and feel comfortable with the content.
- Overall, changes in parenting outcomes measured by quantitative measures were not significant.
- Stigma and lack of incentives may have been factors in recruitment.

CONCLUSIONS

Although quantitative measures failed to demonstrate the impact of the curriculum, qualitative and satisfaction data provide evidence to support this intervention.

REFERENCE

Foli, K. J., Kersey, S., Zhang, L., Woodcox, S., & Wilkinson, B. (in press). Trauma-informed parenting classes delivered to rural kinship parents: A pilot study. *The Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*.