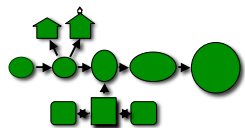


The "Parent Connectors" Program

*An empirical investigation
of a parent support program*



Albert Duchnowski, Ph.D. and Krista Kutash, Ph.D.

1

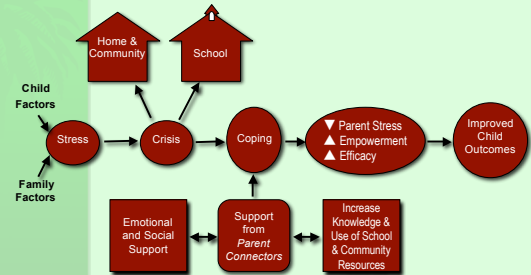
What is The Parent Connector Program?

A peer to peer support program for parents of children with emotional disturbances (ED).

Trained family members serve as *Parent Connectors* to deliver family support through weekly telephone contact.

2

Theoretical Framework



Theoretical Framework (Adapted from Helfinger, Northrup, Sonnichsen, Brannen, 1998, page 263)

3

Intervention

Based on prior
NIMH funded project
by Henry Ireys

Original project was a
City-wide intervention

4

Intervention

- Parents of children who have ED were provided a 16 hour training program on how to be a *Parent Connector*.
- *Parent Connectors* were provided with weekly group supervision by a psychologist to discuss the contact with each parent.
- *Parent Connectors* had an opportunity to meet their families face-to-face at three dinners held at the school.

5

Participants

Parents of and students served in
special education ED settings in
a school district in a large
metropolitan area.


6

Characteristics of Study Sample N=93

Family

People in home
 Avg. # of persons in home: 4.5
 Avg. # of children in home: 2.8

Poverty level
 At or below poverty level: 43%
 Average income: \$23,254



7

Characteristics of Study Sample N=93


Student

Gender Male: 74%

Years Special Education 7.4 years

Age Mean Age 14.4 years
 Age Range 10 to 19 years

Ethnicity Black 57%
 White 25%
 Bi-racial 8%
 Hispanic 8%




8

Research Design

- Nine month pre-post design
- Parent-Child dyads randomly assigned to two conditions

Comparison Group n=47	Experimental Group n=46
Teachers receive specialized training in increasing parent involvement	Teacher Training Plus Parents receive weekly telephone calls from <i>Parent Connector</i>




9

Support Delivered

Over the nine month period for the 46 parent participants:

- 📞 Average number of calls to each parent: 53 (range 28 to 83 calls)
- 📞 Average hours of individualized support & information: 4.7 hrs (range 1.2 to 15 hrs)
- 📞 Topics most discussed were issues dealing with family life & school



10

Goal 1 Reduce Stress, Increase Empowerment and Efficacy


Construct (Parent Respondent)	Instrument
Efficacy	• Vanderbilt Mental Health Services Efficacy Questionnaire
Parental Stress	• Caregiver Strain Questionnaire • The Ohio Scale – Hopefulness Subscale • Support Functions Scale
Parental Empowerment	• Family Empowerment Scale



11

Goal 2 Increase Use of Services and Knowledge of Resources

Construct (Respondent)	Instrument
Student Receipt of Mental Health Services (Parent & School Staff)	• Service Assessment for Children & Adolescents (SACA) • Counselor Report
Parent Involvement at IEP (Parent)	• Family Participation Measure



12

Goal 3 Improve Student Outcomes

Construct (Respondent)	Instrument
Improve emotional and behavioral functioning of students (Parent)	• Student Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
Decrease level of impairment (Parent)	• Brief Impairment Scale (BIS)
School Attendance (School staff)	• Attendance Report
Academic Achievement (Student)	• Wide Range Achievement Test 3 Reading/Math(WRAT3)

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Outcome 1 Reduce Stress, Increase Empowerment and Efficacy

	Effect Size Cohen's d*
Family Empowerment Scale	.32
Caregiver Strain Questionnaire	.40
Social Support	.39
Hopefulness - Ohio Scales	.42
Vanderbilt MH Services Efficacy Questionnaire	.14

*Cohen's d: Small = .2; Medium = .5; Large = .8

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Outcome 2 Increase Use of Services and Knowledge of Resources

	Experimental Group Mean	Comparison Group Mean	Effect Size Cohen's d*
Counseling at School (Total Average)	22 Hrs	12 Hrs	.47
Individual Counseling (Student Only)	15 Hrs	8 Hrs	.48
Individual Counseling (Family member Only)	51 Min	20 Min	.47
Family counseling (Family member & Student)	52 Min	28 Min	.29
Average Nights Spent in Detention	3 Nights	5 Nights	.26
Family Participation in IEP Meetings			.10

*Cohen's d: Small = .2; Medium = .5; Large = .8

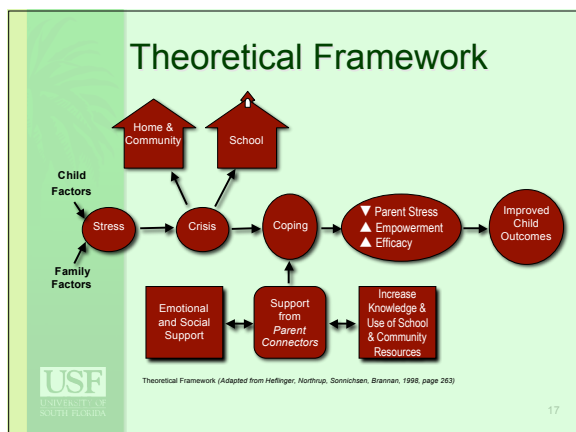
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Outcome 3 Improve Student Outcomes

	Effect Size Cohen's d*
Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire	.30
Brief Impairment Scale	.49
Achievement in Math and Reading	Mixed
Days Present at School (Avg. Exp 116 Days / Com 99 Days)	.35

*Cohen's d: Small = .2; Medium = .5; Large = .8

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