



Practice Recommendations for Family Relations and Parenting Skills Interventions

Family relations and parenting skills interventions focus on improving outcomes through enhancing or improving parental or family influences on youth, particularly through improved parent-child relationships and positive parenting behaviors.

Examples of Family Relations and Parenting Skills Interventions

- Family therapy
- Parenting skills training
- Coping skills training for divorce or other family issues
- Social support groups for caregivers

Our recommendations are specific to the outcomes that your program is targeting. Below, we present our recommendations for **improving social competence and improving self-regulation**.

Is your program focused on improving social competence?

Social competence refers to the social skills and social adjustment necessary to successfully navigate interpersonal relationships and one's social environment. Examples include cooperation, assertive communication, helping others, social awareness, peer acceptance, adaptability, and a sense of belonging.



Incorporate opportunities for individualized formats

Family relations and parenting skills interventions **delivered primarily in individualized sessions with children, parents, or parents and children together** showed greater improvements in social competence than those using group formats.



Increase frequency of sessions over longer periods of time

Family relations and parenting skills interventions that **met with participants more than once per week and for longer than 10 weeks** showed greater improvements in social competence than those that did not have this level of intensity. The most successful interventions addressed the needs of children and their parents, with services at least twice per week for at least several months.



Provide opportunities for youth to learn and practice cognitive and interpersonal skills

Family relations and parenting skills interventions that included **content for children/adolescents relating to cognitive skills such as problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, or interpersonal skills** showed greater improvements in social competence than those that did not include this content. Ten of these interventions included more than one of these content elements.

Is your program focused on improving self-regulation?

Self-regulation is an individual's ability to manage one's emotions and behavior in accordance with the needs of the situation. Examples include the ability to calm oneself when upset, to pay attention and persist on a task, control impulses, "switch gears" in response to changing demands, and engage in planning prioritizing, and juggling multiple tasks toward a goal.



Incorporate opportunities for individual formats

Family relations and parenting skills interventions **delivered primarily in individualized sessions with child and parent(s) together** showed greater improvements in children's self-regulation than those using group formats.



Include instruction for parents on the use of behavior modification strategies

Family relations and parenting skills interventions that used **positive reinforcement combined with positive and negative punishment** showed greater improvements in children's self-regulation than those that did not include either of these techniques or only included positive reinforcement.

Evidence for Program Improvement was established by The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) to develop evidence-based practice guidelines for youth programs using a core components approach. Our goal is to better understand the characteristics of effective programs for youth and share guidelines about how to make those programs more effective with those who design, support, and implement them.

Visit our website (<https://youth.gov/epi>) to learn more about the core components approach and to view our practice recommendations.

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