

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

A Multi-Site Quantitative Evaluation of Parent to Parent Programs

Singer, G., Marquis, J.G., Powers, L.K., Blanchard, L., DiVenere, N., Santeli, 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

At Parent to Parent programs in five states, parents completed measures that assessed how they think about their child's disability and its impact on the family, their sense of empowerment, and their ability to cope with stress. Collectively, the 56 parents who were participants in a Parent to Parent program scored better on these measures than did the 72 parents who were not participating in such a program. A high percentage (89%) of Parent to Parent program participants rated their program as helpful.

Beach Center on Disability

Making a Sustainable Difference in Quality of Life



ACTION STEPS

- Find out if there is a Parent to Parent program in your area. If its support interests you, pursue a match through the program with a veteran parent who can provide you with emotional and informational support.
- Recognize the importance of the veteran parent being closely matched to your priorities, concerns, and questions.
- Stick with your veteran parent over time because maximum impact comes from sustained support.
- Advocate for state and local funds to sponsor parent-to-parent programs.

Parent to Parent-USA
(www.p2pUSA.org) has translated these research findings into evidence-based practices for the 35 statewide Parent to Parent programs nationally.

KEY FINDINGS

- Participation in Parent to Parent programs has a significant effect on parents' attitudes and adjustment to their child's disability.
- There are significant differences between participants in Parent to Parent programs and non-participants, when it comes to rating their progress in getting help to solve problems.
- Parent to Parent program participants who entered the study with relatively low scores on a measure about coping with stress scored significantly better at the end of the study than did parents who did not participate in a Parent to Parent program. Parents in both groups who already scored high on coping did not change.
- A total of 89% of Parent to Parent program participants rated their Parent to Parent program as helpful.

METHOD

- The study was conducted at Parent to Parent programs in five states. The staff explained the study to parents contacting the programs and, with their permission, assigned them to either the group of Parent to Parent program participants or to the group of people waiting to participate. There were 56 parents in the group of program participants, and 72 on the waiting list group.
- Researchers used several measures to determine how the parents think about their child's experience with disability, sense of empowerment, and ability to cope with stress. Researchers also asked the parents some general questions about progress in solving problems and the helpfulness of their involvement with their Parent to Parent program.
- Parents answered questions twice — at first contact and then again two months after their initial match with a veteran parent (or two months later for parents in the waiting-list group).

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Ainbinder, J.G., Blanchard, L.W., Singer, G.H., Sullivan, M.E., Powers, L.K., Marquis, J.G., & Santelli, B. (1998). A qualitative study of Parent to Parent support for parents of children with special needs. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 23*(2), 99-109.
- Santelli, B., Turnbull, A.P., Marquis, J., & Lerner, E. (1995). Parent to Parent programs: A unique form of mutual support. *Infants and Young Children, 8*(2), 48-57.
- Santelli, B., Turnbull, A.P., Sergeant, J., Lerner, 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.

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