

Circle of Parents National Evaluation – September 2011

The Circle of Parents National Evaluation Project had ten states/major metropolitan areas participate. Circle of Parents groups in Milwaukee, Illinois, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Vermont, Washington, and Florida contributed to this study.

Over 300 survey instruments were completed and analyzed.

Study Objectives:

There were two study objectives:

1. To measure positive change in protective factors that work toward preventing child abuse and neglect among new participants in Circle of Parents groups.
2. To compare responses in the conventional pre and post administration of the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) to responses using a retrospective pre and post format.

Design:

The study design required:

- voluntary participation
- new participants in Circle of Parents groups
- single group design with no control or comparison groups

Measurement Tool: The Protective Factors Survey (PFS)

The measurement tool was the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) which included:

- several demographic and socioeconomic items
- questions regarding reasons for joining the group
- questions regarding how participants learned about the group
- a question regarding their experience with abuse or neglect while they were growing up
- 20 items that covered five categories or domains that correspond with protective factors for preventing child abuse and neglect.

The response scales for the questions addressing protective factors were 7 point Likert scales that included variations in frequencies of occurrence of an activity or event (1 = never and 7 = always) or levels of agreement/disagreement (1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree).

The section of the tool that includes the 20 protective factor questions was validated by a research team at the University of Kansas (Counts, Buffington, Chang-Rios, Rasmussen, & Preacher, 2010).

Survey Administration:

Administration of the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) occurred at two time points.

- First Administration: The first was at the second or third parent group session for the new participants. This administration was for the purpose of completing the first page of the questionnaire with the demographic, socio-economic and reasons for joining a group questions as well as the “pre” program responses for the 20 protective factor items.
- Second Administration: The second administration for each study participant was at least 6 sessions later than the first administration. The second administration included the “post” program responses to the 20 protective factor items and a set of questions to measure the retrospective “pre” and “post” responses to the 20 protective factors items.

Survey Format:

The questionnaire used during the second administration had separate sections for the “post” conventional responses and the retrospective “pre” and “post” responses. It is also important to note that most of the questions have expected response patterns between “pre” and “post” responses that are to the right or higher on the response scales. However, there are several questions that have expected response patterns that move to the left or to smaller numbers on the response scales. These items are 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 16 and are indicated with an “R” next to each item in Table 1.

Results:

Table 1 displays the results using a T-test (paired comparison) to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the “pre” and “post” responses in the conventional administration of the PFS and the “pre” and “post” retrospective formatting of the PFS.

The table displays:

- the means for the response scales (What was the average participant response pre and post?)
- the number of participants for that test of differences (How many participants responded on that item?)
- the t-test value (How likely is it that these results were due to chance?)
- the significance level (How confident are we in the results of this item?)

Those questions with a difference in responses between “pre” and “post” that are at the 95% level of confidence or $p < .05$ are highlighted in yellow.

Differences between PFS Administration Formats:

We see differences in the results across the two PFS administration formats.

- **Conventional Pre and Post Results:** In the conventional “pre” and “post” results, there is only one set of responses that is not significant at the 95% level of confidence. That is item #19 which asks the respondent how often they are able to soothe their child when he/she is upset. When looking at the means for the “pre” and “post” responses, the participants indicated that they “soothed” their child when they were upset at a high level of frequency early in their participation in the program. It might be suggested that this was not an activity that could have benefited significantly from parent group participation, other than to maintain that level of frequency. Since the “post” response mean was higher than the “pre” response mean, there is some evidence that the reinforcement and/or maintenance of that activity occurred.
- **Retrospective Pre and Post Results:** For the “pre” and “post” retrospective administration, all of the protective factor item responses had statistically significant differences, except for three items that refer to “concrete support.” Further evaluation will be needed to determine why the conventional pre and post results measured change in the “concrete needs” domain, but the retrospective pre and post administration did not indicate change in this domain.

Conclusion:

Based on this set of results, there is evidence that these Circle of Parents participants had statistically significant changes in the expected response directions across 4 out of 5 protective factors categories with both the conventional pre/post and the retrospective pre/post formats.

Table 1. Multi-State Results (T-test) for Conventional Pre/Post and Retrospective Pre/Post PFS Items by Protective Factor Categories

(Notes: Yellow highlighting for p value < .05 or significant at 95% level of confidence.)

PFS Protective Factor Categories and Items	Conventional Pre/Post				Retrospective Pre/Post			
	N	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Significance	N	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Significance
Family Functioning/Resiliency								
1. In my family, we talk about problems.	311	4.59	5.09	.000	335	4.31	5.32	.000
2. When we argue, my family listens to “both sides of the story.”	311	4.26	4.86	.000	333	4.23	5.20	.000
3. In my family, we take time to listen to each other.	309	4.59	5.10	.000	332	4.38	5.36	.000
4. My family pulls together when things are stressful.	310	4.85	5.34	.000	332	4.61	5.57	.000
5. My family is able to solve our problems.	310	4.57	5.15	.000	333	4.44	5.44	.000
Social Support								
6. I have others who will listen when I need to talk about my problems.	311	5.27	5.67	.000	334	4.71	5.91	.000
7. When I am lonely, there are several people I can talk to.	310	5.06	5.56	.000	333	4.60	5.84	.000
10. If there is a crisis, I have others I can talk to.	307	5.20	5.60	.000	335	4.67	5.69	.000
Concrete Support								
8. I would have no idea where to turn if my family needed food or housing. (R)	311	2.81	2.42	.001	334	2.82	2.78	.736
9. I wouldn’t know where to go for help if I had trouble making ends meet. (R)	311	3.03	2.72	.016	334	2.95	2.85	.346
11. If I needed help finding a job, I wouldn’t know where to go for help. (R)	311	3.35	2.93	.002	334	3.18	3.05	.195
Nurturing and Attachment								
17. I am happy being with my child.	307	6.29	6.45	.023	332	5.99	6.51	.000
18. My child and I are very close to each other.	307	6.03	6.22	.005	331	5.82	6.30	.000
19. I am able to soothe my child when he/she is upset.	306	5.85	5.96	.165	333	5.47	6.11	.000
20. I spend time with my child doing what he/she likes to do.	307	5.63	5.80	.017	332	5.30	5.93	.000
Child Development/Knowledge of Parenting								
12. There are many times when I don’t know what to do as a parent. (R)	309	3.67	3.13	.000	332	3.58	3.07	.000
13. I know how to help my child learn.	307	5.28	5.74	.000	334	4.90	5.73	.000
14. My child misbehaves just to upset me. (R)	306	2.99	2.57	.000	334	3.10	2.56	.000
15. I praise my child when he/she behaves well.	308	5.74	5.94	.016	333	5.32	6.14	.000
16. When I discipline my child, I lose control. (R)	307	2.41	2.22	.026	334	2.55	2.20	.000