

PY 2006-2007 Evaluation Report Executive Summary: Impact on Adult Participants

The widespread prevalence of child abuse and neglect is an important issue not only in the United States, but also in the state of Alabama. It demands strategic efforts focused on reducing its occurrence due to the harmful effects it can have on youth immediately during childhood (e.g., physical aggression, social impairment, low self-esteem, poor academic performance, etc.) and later during adulthood (e.g., low self-esteem, depression, abuse/neglect with offspring, etc.).

The Child Welfare Information Gateway of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, emphasizes that "protecting children from risk of abuse, and promoting healthy families involves information on **supporting families, protective factors, public awareness, community activities, positive parenting, prevention programs**, and more." With Alabama ranking 48th in child well-being in the national Kids Count rating, it is particularly important to support efforts that promote children's well-being in Alabama.

The Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/The Children's Trust Fund, which also serves as the state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, was established by the Alabama Legislature in 1983 to address the state's growing problem of child neglect and maltreatment. While other state agencies provide much needed intervention services for children and families, the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is **the only state agency specifically focused on preventing child abuse/neglect**. To accomplish this mission, CTF provides annual funding awards through a competitive process to community-based organizations throughout the State engaged in providing educational programs to build strengths in parents and children.

The value of prevention is seen in the results of a 2007 cost analysis study conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama. **The direct costs of child abuse/neglect (e.g., medical, enforcement, judicial) and indirect costs (e.g., education, delinquency, and social impact) result in a total cost to Alabama taxpayers of \$520,800,290 every year.** In contrast, CTF was provided just over \$6 million in federal and state dollars from four main funding streams during PY 2006-2007 to fund prevention efforts. The prevention programs funded by CTF throughout Alabama have the potential to reduce not only the significant emotional and social costs of child abuse, but also the significant economic expense to taxpayers.

Detailed evidence of the positive impact of these programs is in the PY 2006-2007 End of Year Evaluation Report prepared by the CTF Evaluation Team in the Human Development and Family Studies Department at Auburn University. The report documents the combined effort and effectiveness of program offerings through a systematic evaluation of CTF-funded programs across various program types. (The complete report is available at: <http://www.ctf.alabama.gov/Programs.htm>.)

Programs are provided for adult participants in four program types (i.e., parent education, home visitation, respite care, and fatherhood). At least 9,998 adults participated in program offerings during PY 2006-2007. The population served includes primarily low-resource parents. The modal age of the parents was 26. They were predominantly female (81%) and largely Caucasian (48%) and African American (45%). Only 41% reported working full-time, while 11% reported working part-time and 48%



reported not working for pay. Approximately one-quarter (26%) reported not completing high school, while 38% reported a high school degree or the GED as their highest level of education. Nearly half (49%) reported a gross household income of less than \$14,000. An additional one-third (32%) of participants reported an income between \$14,000 and \$39,999.

Analyses of data from programs serving these adults revealed **statistically significant ($p < .001$) improvements on the average level of commitment, skill, and knowledge in ALL targeted areas** of protective factors that reduce the risk of child maltreatment. Below is an overview of other empirical findings that indicate CTF programs are reducing the likelihood of adults in the State of Alabama engaging in child abuse/neglect:

- **Parent Education and Home Visitation** services (pp. 7-12 in report) were provided through 86 programs. An assessment of 24 learning objectives with 3,294 participants revealed rating levels of knowledge, ability, or commitment as “good” or “excellent” in key areas of family support and individual and family functioning **increased by a minimum of 27%, doubled** on many items, and, in some cases, **nearly tripled** as a result of program participation. Further evaluation of twelve programs demonstrated **statistically significant increases in levels of parental involvement, positive parenting practices, and parental efficacy**, as well as **statistically significant decreases in level of parental distress**.

Examples of Key Areas of Impact:

Parent Education & Home Visitation:

Significant improvements in ability to:

- Respond to child’s needs.
- Seek informal support.
- Recognize when at risk for harming child.

Respite Care:

Significant improvements in ability to:

- Use applicable social services.
- Understand children’s development.
- Manage stress and anger.

Fatherhood:

Significant improvements in commitment to:

- Complete high school and post-secondary education.
- Make full child support payments

- **Respite Care** services (pp. 13-16 in report) were provided through seven programs. An assessment of 20 learning objectives with 212 participants indicated rating levels of knowledge, ability, or commitment as “good” or “excellent” in key areas of family support and individual/family functioning **increased by a minimum of 11%, doubled** for many items, and, in some cases, **nearly tripled** as a result of program participation.
- **Fatherhood** program services (pp. 17-22 in report) were provided through twenty-two programs. An assessment of 24 learning objectives with 414 participants revealed rating levels of knowledge, ability, or commitment as “good” or “excellent” in key areas that facilitate father involvement and child support compliance and that promote child well-being **increased by a minimum of 45%, doubled** on many items, and, in some cases, **nearly tripled** as a result of program participation. Further evaluation of seven programs demonstrated **statistically significant increases in levels of parental involvement, beliefs about father responsibilities, and parental efficacy**.