

# Evaluating the Effectiveness of ‘Beyond the Basics’ Parenting Groups for Parents/Caregivers of Young Children involved with Child Welfare

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Welfare Parenting Education Workgroup (Workgroup) championed this BEYOND THE BASIC Parenting Group (BBPG) study. From the late 1990’s onward, the Workgroup evolved from an ongoing partnership with many community agencies whose work identified two key needs. The first need was for a supportive and effective parenting education course designed for parents with young children, who are involved with a child welfare agency. The second need was to advance evidence-based practice of parenting education/support groups for parents involved in child welfare where the parent may not have their child in their care. Knowing BBPG was an established group intervention for parents with young children involved with child welfare and that it had a standardized resource manual and training program developed by *Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre*, the Workgroup applied for, and was awarded \$25,000 in research funding through the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare in 2003/04. The goal of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness, impact, and parent’s satisfaction with the BBPG intervention.

The study involved 95 parents who were involved with one of the four Toronto child welfare agencies, had a child aged six or under, and either wanted/required a parenting course. A BBPG group has eight to twelve parents per group, is held over a 10 week period, each session is 90 minutes in length, and is co-facilitated by one male and one female agency group facilitator who have received standardized BBPG training. All parents volunteered for the study, signed study consents and completed three tools: Parent Questionnaire, Parent Self-Report Study, and the AAPI-2 (a standardized tool that assesses the range of harmful and nurturing parental attitudes and beliefs, at three time points: beginning of BBPG (pre-test), at the end of the group (post-test), and three months after the group ended (follow up).

The study intent was to evaluate BBPG for its impact, effectiveness and participant satisfaction. The goal was to compare BBPG parents’ results to a comparative sample of parents who had not taken BBPG. However, there were not enough “Wait List” parents to generate a comparison/control sample. Notwithstanding the lack of a comparison group, study findings supported BBPG’s effectiveness in advancing parent’s knowledge about children, its potential to change harmful attitudes and parenting practices, coupled with high recipient satisfaction. Preliminary findings from the AAPI-2 of High Risk parents suggest BBPG can positively impact parents who believe in corporal discipline and non-nurturing parenting behaviours. See Table A for a summary of the study’s findings.

Table A - Summary of Study Findings				
AREAS	STUDY QUESTION	OUTCOME	EVIDENCE (Significance = p <.05)	SOURCE
Satisfaction	Are BBPG parents satisfied with the service?	YES	89% rated it “Excellent” (62%) or “Good” (27%)	Self-Report
	Would BBPG parents recommend the group?	YES	94% would recommend BBPG to another parent	Self-Report

<b>Knowledge Changes</b>	Did BBPG parents learn more about child development (CD)?	<b>YES</b>	<i>p = .04 = difference from pre-test: post test scores</i> Parents said they “learned more” about CD	Self-Report
	Did BBPG parents learn more non-physical child discipline (NPD) methods?	<b>YES</b>	<i>p = .00 = difference from pre-test:post-test scores</i> Parents said they “learned more” about NPD	Self-Report
	Did BBPG parents learn more about how to use community supports (CS)?	<b>YES</b>	<i>p = .05 = difference from pre-test:post-test scores</i> Parents said they “learned more” about CS use	Self-Report
<b>Attitude Changes</b>	Did BBPG change how parents view their parenting role?	<b>YES</b>	<i>p = .000 from pre-test: post-test = positive change</i> <i>p = .000 from post-test: follow up = positive change</i>	AAPI-2
	Did BBPG change High Risk Parents views on use of corporal punishment / physical discipline	<b>SUGGESTED</b>	<i>Pre-test 3.4% (% High-risk parents) dropped to post-test 2.3% (% High-risk parents)</i>	AAPI-2
<b>Behaviour Changes</b>	Did BBPG change parent’s use of physical discipline (PD)?	<b>YES</b>	<i>p = .001 Pre-test (65% say “never use PD”) to Post-test (93% say “never use PD”)</i>	Self-Report

Much more research on BBPG is needed to better understand how, why, what, for whom, and for how long BBPG works. Practice knowledge needs to be informed by empirical evidence in order to better guide more effective differential response. For example, would the highest risk parents benefit from a more intense and longer BBPG service? Reporting, investigation and substantiation of child maltreatment across Canada jumped from 9.64 per thousand in 1998 to 21.71 in 2003 (Trocmé et al., 2005). Thus, there is a compelling need to fund BBPG intervention and to continue to evaluate its ability to reduce child risk and increase child safety over time through improved parenting. While much remains to be known about the effectiveness and impact of BBPG, this study marks a successful and important first step in that journey.

## References

Trocmé, N., Fallon, B., MacLaurin, B., Daciuk, J., Felstiner, C, Black, T. et al (2005). *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2003: Major Findings*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.