



## **Assessing Parenting Education Access & Barriers Parent Focus Groups and Program Provider Surveys**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Background**

During 2010 and continuing into 2011, the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) has been gathering information to better understand issues related to availability and access, gaps and barriers in parenting education in our state. Sources of information include:

1. Focus groups in ten communities across the state, involving a total of 112 parents.
2. A written survey of programs, with 302 responses received from 212 agencies.
3. Forums with child-and-family serving agencies are underway as of this writing.

#### **PARENT FOCUS GROUPS**

Focus groups were conducted in all regions of New York State. About two-thirds of participants had attended parenting education programs. Almost half have children with emotional/mental health challenges. Each focus group included discussion with the entire group and breakout sessions with parents who'd received parenting education services vs. those who had not.

#### **Key Findings**

##### **Barriers to Taking Part in Parenting Education:**

Most frequently described:

- Time constraints
- Financial issues
- Transportation/Program locations
- Childcare

For parents familiar with parenting education:

- Class times too limited (e.g. some work nights, others days)
- Eligibility

For parents who hadn't attended parenting education:

- Lack of awareness of the programs (and of parenting education), need for better marketing in locations families frequent
- Time constraints
- Felt they didn't need help (until there were problems with their children)
- Belief that parenting classes are for parents who are in trouble

##### **To Encourage/Enable Participating In Parenting Education:**

- Providing childcare, transportation, and meals were most important
- Locating parenting programs in schools
- Educators well versed in and accepting of culturally diverse traditions in parenting.

### Needs in Parenting Education

- Most frequently described: Continued follow-up after program is completed: with instructor and/or parents' discussion support group
- Education about behavioral disorders and warning signs, before and after birth.
- Help to address special challenges: for addicts, individuals released from prison, military members coming back to family, parents of homosexual children
- Parents with similar struggles or particular success as co-educators
- Website with information on programs and general parenting tips.

### Unexpected Recurring Theme: Schools and Other Providers

- Concern about disconnect and lack of communication between schools and organizations that provide parenting education.
- Teachers unaware of parenting programs and unable to provide resources and help.
- Parents' difficulty in communicating with schools and getting information about children's academic performance and behavioral issues.
- Teachers, doctors, other providers need to have the same information, work together.

### **Program Implications**

- 1) Provide childcare, transportation and meals, so parents can attend. If necessary, partner with other community organizations to do so.
- 2) Marketing programs' availability and relevance.
- 3) Partner with schools, and after-school programs, as hosts for the programs.
- 4) Continue asking the experts, parents, about their needs and barriers to access.

### **PROGRAM PROVIDER SURVEY**

Parenting education providers' perceptions about access and barriers were elicited through an online survey, which was also available as a fillable form. Surveys were returned from all areas of the state, 93% of respondents provide group/class sessions, sometimes in combination with individual sessions.

### Barriers to Parenting Education (Enrolling In or Completing Programs), in Order of Frequency

1. Time: scheduling conflicts, other commitments and demands, or the program not being available when they needed it
2. Transportation problems
3. Childcare problems
4. Lack of interest/had been pressured to attend
5. Chaotic lives.

### Gaps in Meeting the Needs of Parents, Programs Are Less Available for:

- Families where child or parent has developmental disabilities
- Families where child or parent has significant health issues
- Parents who are new immigrants and/or English language learners.

However, the respondents receive few requests for services for those groups; determining how well the level of availability relates to the level of need would require further exploration.