

Parenting programs (for incarcerated parents) Adult Criminal Justice

Literature review updated August 2016.

As part of WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies, WSIPP determines "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using an approach called meta-analysis. For detail on our methods, see our [Technical Documentation](#). At this time, WSIPP has not yet calculated benefits and costs for this topic.

Program Description: The goal of parenting programs is to help incarcerated parents acquire skills to increase efficacy of parenting, increase parental confidence and satisfaction, and reduce stress associated with parenting during incarceration. These programs teach parents about child development techniques for managing child behavior. Parents are assisted with strategies to communicate effectively with their children given the unique circumstances. Visitation is an important component of the program, which can include didactic instruction (learning through experience/teaching) while supervised by a program instructor. Programs vary in length; they typically last two to three months.

This meta-analysis includes studies of parenting programs for incarcerated mothers and fathers. The interventions include filial therapy—family-focused play therapy—and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). Studies in this meta-analysis did not report recidivism as an outcome measure; however, they did report a variety of parenting measures, including parental stress, satisfaction, empathy, acceptance, and locus of control. We combined all of these measures into a broad "parenting success" outcome for each study. A positive effect size indicates improvement in one or more of these parenting measures, on average.

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect size and standard error			Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
			ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Parenting success	3	49	0.280	0.206	33	0.596	0.074

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

- Harris, Z.L., & Landreth, G.L. (1997). Filial therapy with incarcerated mothers: A five week model. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 6(2), 53-73.
- Landreth, G.L., & Lobaugh, A.F. (1998). Filial therapy with incarcerated fathers: Effects on parental acceptance of child, parental stress, and child adjustment. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 76(2), 157-165.
- Wilczak, G.L., & Markstrom, C.A. (1999). The effects of parent education on parental locus of control and Satisfaction of incarcerated fathers. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 43(1), 90-102.

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