



The Impact of Family Support: Informal Drop-In Sessions Benefit Children, Families and Communities

Family Support initiatives are designed to achieve a number of outcomes for families on both a short and long-term basis. By supporting connections between families, facilitating access to parenting and child development information through both formal and informal interaction, and by supporting access to needed community resources, Family Support programs and services impact families and communities in these ways:

- Reduced social isolation and increased social support,
- Reduced parenting stress,
- Increased parental knowledge, efficacy and confidence, and ultimately,
- Better child outcomes and increased parental investment in their communities.

Recognizing the importance of documenting these multi-faceted outcomes, the Greater Cleveland Family Support Consortium conducts focused evaluations of its core programs. One such evaluation effort has attempted to document outcomes of participation in informal drop-in play and learn sessions held at three Family Support Centers. The drop-in sessions are held at regularly scheduled times each week, and families - without need to pre-register - come to interact with others in a family environment. Children learn to socialize with each other, parents share ideas and support one another, and staff facilitates connections *between* families and *to* community resources.

Following are results from administration of our outcome to 73 participants at three Family Support Centers. In a series of questions, parents and caregivers were asked to reflect upon how participating in informal, drop-in programming at the Family Support Centers had resulted in changes in various areas of family life. They were also asked, whether these areas had been one of concern before their participation. Notably, participants reported experiencing change not only in areas where they had concerns prior to their participation, but also experiencing change other areas, suggesting they got value from their participation in ways they weren't even actively seeking.

Reducing Parental Stress

<u>Item</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Some Change</u>	<u>Much Change</u>	<u>Was Concern Before Participation</u>
Manage stress better	15.7%	51.4%	32.9%	60.4%

Social Support vs. Social Isolation

<u>Item</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Some Change</u>	<u>Much Change</u>	<u>Was Concern Before Participation</u>
Less isolated as a parent	0%	31%	69%	80%
Socialize more with other parents	1.4%	27.8%	70.8%	75.5%
More supported as a parent	11.3%	35.2%	53.5%	47.9%
Get ideas and advice about children and family issues from other parents	4.2%	38%	57.7%	56.3%
Made friends who care and listen to my ideas/concerns	8.3%	38.9%	52.8%	62.7%
Helped other parents and received help with child care and other family needs	32.4%	43.7%	23.9%	34%

Enhanced Parent Knowledge, Skill and Sense of Competency

<u>Item</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Some Change</u>	<u>Much Change</u>	<u>Was Concern Before Participation</u>
Have more information about child growth and development	11.1%	50%	38.9%	46.9%
Learned new ways to encourage child's learning	4.2%	51.4%	44.4%	55.6%
Learned new ways to manage difficult situations with my child	12.5%	41.7%	45.8%	61.2%
Better able to help child learn positive behaviors	12.5%	52.8%	34.7%	55.3%
Less anxious about doing good job as a parent	9.9%	50.7%	39.4%	56%
More confident and better able to handle day-to-day parenting challenges	5.6%	55.6%	38.9%	61.7%

Child(ren)'s Developmental Progress

<u>Item</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Some Change</u>	<u>Much Change</u>	<u>Was Concern Before Participation</u>
Child learned to get along better with others	4.5%	40.9%	54.5%	82.1%
My child is better prepared for school	9.1%	40.9%	50%	76.7%

Sense of Community

<u>Item</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Some Change</u>	<u>Much Change</u>	<u>Was Concern Before Participation</u>
Have place to come where my child can have fun and play with other children	1.4%	16.9%	81.7%	94.6%
Feel more part of my community	1.4%	32.4%	66.2%	69.8%
More interested in becoming active in my community	16.9%	49.3%	33.8%	34%