

Meta-Analysis: Do Parent Training Programs Prevent Child Abuse?

Brian Lundahl, Janelle Nimer, and Bruce Parsons (2006) were interested in the effect of parent training and parent education programs on reducing risk factors associated with child abuse. They included only studies that met six eligibility criteria, including the following: The training was conducted with families in which there were no parent or child developmental or cognitive delays; the training was directed to preventing physical abuse, child neglect, or emotional abuse and not sexual abuse; and there was actual training, with pretests and posttests given to at least five participants. Using three keywords (*child abuse*, *child neglect*, and *parent training*), they searched three databases (ERIC, PsychInfo, and Social Work Abstracts) for any articles published between 1970 and 2004. Of 186 studies, they found 23 studies that met the eligibility criteria. They coded outcome measures (including parents' emotional adjustment, child-rearing attitudes, and child-rearing behaviors) and documented abuse and moderating and independent variables (including participant characteristics, parent training program characteristics, and the methodological rigor of the studies).

Overall, they found that parent training had a moderate effect and was effective in changing parental beliefs and attitudes toward children, improving parental emotional well-being, altering child-rearing behaviors, and reducing documented abuse. They also found that specific program characteristics influenced these outcomes. For example, programs that included home visitors had a greater impact than programs without home visitors, and programs that did training in both the home and the office were more effective than programs that limited training to one site.