

Choices for Better Outcomes: A Multi-Faceted Approach for Parents and Youth Involved with Juvenile Court Systems

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INTRODUCTION

Parents of youth involved in Juvenile Court systems often feel frustrated with their child's behavior, while youth often are discouraged and may act out as a way to exhibit control or to gain attention. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) believe that as a result of inept parenting, some adolescents tend to be impulsive, defiant, physical and risk-taking.

In 2015, the Scioto County Juvenile Court and OSU Extension implemented this multi-faceted program for both youth and their parents. One of the goals of this partnership was to provide education to help parents impact with their teen's behavior. Another goal was for youth to participate in character education and life skill training with the ultimate goal of making better choices and being open to trying something new.

This program utilizes education in the areas of character education/student development, nutrition education, and parent education.

While the parent education and nutrition education curricula were already developed, research was done to identify the basic components to be addressed in the character education/student development section of this program. This resulted in a curriculum, *Taking the Higher Road* being developed to specifically address concerns identified by both participants and court personnel.

METHODS

Scioto County Juvenile Court is responsible for recruiting/mandating youth and/or their parent or caregiver to attend the six-week program. Each week, youth participate in one hour of character education/student development training and one hour of nutrition education, conducted as part of the SNAP-Ed opportunities. The parents attend two hours each week of parent education based on the *Active Parenting of Teens* curriculum.

Juvenile Court provides oversight of the youth by utilizing two probation officers to help with any behavioral issues. The youth are divided into separate groups based on gender and one probation officer is with each group throughout the entire program.

At the end of each six-week series, a celebration time is held with the parents and youth, recognizing their accomplishments and participation. Funding for this entire program is provided through the Scioto County Juvenile Court system.

After completing the six-week Taking the Higher Road class, 86% of the youth stated they felt more prepared to make better decisions.

Youth consistently recognized the importance of self-worth and the need to remain in school.



OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION	
Closing Program Student Development/Active Parenting October 18, 2016	
Welcome	Treva Williams
Dinner	
Remarks	The Hon. Alan Lemons, Judge and Staff
Recognition of Court Personnel	Treva Williams
Review of Programs	
Active Parenting	Treva Williams
Teen Nutrition	Lisa Kepler
Character Education	Dennis DeCamp
Presentation of Certificates	
Parents	Treva Williams
Teens	Kepler/DeCamp
Presentation of Special Commendations	
Teens	Kepler/DeCamp
Closing Remarks	Dennis DeCamp
Remember, MAKE BETTER DECISIONS, EVERYDAY!	

RESULTS

Youth Indicated they Learned:

- How today's choices affect the future
- Family is important
- How food choices impact nutrition and their overall health

Positive changes **youth** plan to implement:

- Stay to school and graduate
- Hang out with the right people
- Make better choices

Parents Indicated they Learned:

- How to communicate better with their child
- How to provide choices
- Ways to allow their teen to participate in determining consequences for misbehavior
- More about teen risks and how to handle serious situations

CONCLUSIONS

Youth face many tough decision today and without guidance from competent parents those choices become difficult. All youth need caring adults to help guide and support them as they make choices which ultimately affect their future.

While this program focused primarily on teens and their parents, it may be more impactful to begin these types of discussions even earlier – perhaps with youth as young as age nine.

Parents were more confident in their communication skills and throughout the classes reported trying various strategies.

Following participation, 100% of parents indicated they learned better communication skills to use with their children.

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- 3 *Nutrition Outreach Using Research to Improve SNAP Households (N.O.U.R.I.S.H.)* Ohio State University Extension, Columbus, OH. 2015.
- 4 Popkin, Michael H. *Active Parenting of Teens*; Active Parenting Publishers, Atlanta, GA. 2009.



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