

Originally developed by the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Adapted for use in California by WestEd for the California Collaborative on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CA CSEFEL) May 2013

Facilitator's Guide



Positive Solutions for Families



*The Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning*



Promoting Social Emotional Competence in California's Young Children



Overview of Positive Solutions for Families Sessions

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning has developed an evidence-based, user-friendly parent training series of six sessions to help professionals working with parents to promote positive and effective parenting behaviors in order to promote children's social and emotional development and address the challenging behavior and mental health needs of children in child care and Head Start programs. This version has been adapted for use in California. The term family member and parent are used interchangeably to mean anyone who has the primary responsibility for raising a child.

About the Content

The training materials provide information for families on how to promote children's social and emotional skills, understand their problem behavior, and use positive approaches to help children learn appropriate behavior. The trainings are designed to give parents general information on key strategies that may be used with all children. Sessions are not designed to offer parents specific advice for their child's individual issues. Facilitators of the training session should be knowledgeable about local agencies and service providers that may be able to assist families who have complex support needs or children with problem behavior that requires the guidance of a professional. Series One can be offered for all families and may happen over a four to six week period of time. Series Two is intended to go deeper for families of children with challenging behavior. It can be done in two or three weeks, however it is important that family participants have been through Series One. In the last session of Series One, parents will be offered a routine guide that offers parents advice for supporting their children across common family routines. Participants practice using the guide at end of Series Two.

The following table provides an overview of each Positive Solutions for Families session with the objectives covered:

Series One

Session	Primary Focus	Objectives
Session 1 Positive Solutions for Families: Making a Connection!	Building relationships, Quality time, Positive comments and encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the purpose of the group and the importance of social emotional development for young children. Meet each other and learn about our families. Discuss goals and ground rules we might have for our group. Identify the importance of building positive relationships with children. Discuss the "power" of using positive comments and encouragement with children.
Session 2 Positive Solutions for Families: Making it Happen!	Play as a powerful parenting practice, supporting the development of friendship skills, encouraging positive behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss <i>Things to Try at Home</i> from previous session and link to the importance of supporting social emotional development. Understand how play can be a powerful parenting practice. Learn ways to help children develop friendship skills. Link building relationships, using positive comments/encouragement, and play to children's behavior.

Facilitator's Guide

Session	Primary Focus	Objectives
Session 3 Positive Solutions for Families: Why Do They Do What They Do?	Determining the meaning of behavior, making expectations clear, developing and teaching household expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine why children do what they do. • Practice ways to determine the meaning of behavior. • Understand how to make expectations clear for children. • Understand effective ways to develop and teach household expectations.
Session 4 Positive Solutions for Families: Teach Me What to Do!	Emotional literacy, managing anger and handling disappointment, problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the concept of emotional literacy. • Identify feeling words and identify effective ways to teach feeling vocabulary. • Demonstrate the use of books to support emotional literacy and social emotional development. • Identify how the turtle technique can be used to cope with feelings of anger and disappointment. • Learn how to teach problem solving skills.

Series Two

Session	Primary Focus	Objectives
Session 5 Positive Solutions for Families: Facing the Challenge Part 1	Strategies to promote positive behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine nine specific strategies that can be used to promote positive adult and child behavior in home and community settings. • Learn to use the <i>Family Routine Guide</i> to identify supports for use with children during daily routines.
Session 6 Positive Solutions for Families: Facing the Challenge Part 2	Problem solving, challenging behavior, and everyday routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify that problem behavior has meaning. • Identify the meaning of behavior by examining what happens before and after the problem behavior. • Identify the three parts of a behavior plan: preventions, new skills to teach, and new responses. • Practice using the <i>Family Routine Guide</i> to identify supports for use with children during daily routines.

Tips for Facilitators

Who should facilitate these sessions?

Anyone with these skills:

- Someone who is familiar with the Teaching Pyramid for children when the series is being conducted with families of children attending an implementing program.
- A thorough **understanding of behavioral principles** as applied in a parent-child context. For more information, you can consult the resources on this topic listed in *Essential Reading and Resources on Effective Parenting*.
- A genuine **respect for and good understanding of parenting** and how difficult it can be—issues, concerns, typical problems, common pitfalls
- Excellent skills and **experience in conducting group trainings**. *Resources on Group Facilitation* have been included for those who would like to get more information on developing group process skills.
- A demonstrated **ability to organize** information, physical space, details, and paper. Leading a group entails many details from developing and disseminating flyers, organizing the modules, copying and disseminating handouts and home activities, keeping track of flip chart papers from previous sessions, arranging dinners and child care, etc.
- A history of being **reliable**. Parents are counting on the facilitator to hold the session each week, to be responsive to their concerns throughout the week and to complete the nine training modules.
- Ability to **handle sensitive situations** in group settings. Discussing behavior and parenting can bring up many strong emotions in participants. The facilitator must be able to support the process for the individual family member while also meeting the needs of the rest of the group.

Can a group be co-led?

Yes, in fact there are several benefits of co-facilitating a group, including:

- While one facilitator presents content, the other can be a time-keeper, take care of logistics, chart paper recorder, etc.
- Keeps group running (if one is sick or needs to miss)
- Brings the classroom experiences to life if the co-leader is a classroom teacher

- Can work with the group if there is something that comes up for an individual and the co-facilitator needs to work individually with a family member
- It is strongly recommended that all groups be co-facilitated

Parents as Facilitators

Absolutely! Although, it is advised that a parent has previously participated in the *Positive Solutions for Families* group and has a clear understanding of the main messages, objectives, and how the modules are organized and facilitated.

How to recruit family members for a parenting group

Successful recruiting of parent and family member participants for groups includes:

- **Personal contacts.** Reaching out and making a personal contact with a parent who you believe would benefit from the parenting group is essential. This can be through a phone call or preferably in person, such as when the parent is dropping their child off or picking their child up from the program. What you say depends on the depth, history and nature of your relationship. If you have had previous conversations about the child's behavior and/or the parents' approaches to handling the behavior, then you can be explicit about why you believe the group would be beneficial for the parent and the child. Regardless, making a personal contact with parents enhances the likelihood that they will show up for the first group.
- **Flyers/Announcements.** Developing and conspicuously posting flyers, as well as sending announcements about the group home with children is another effective recruiting strategy. Be sure that all written material is translated into the languages utilized by your parents. Flyers should include a statement addressing what parents will take away from the group; when and where the group will be held; what is provided (e.g., transportation, meals, child care, any incentives for completing the group).
- **Reminders.** After personal contacts and flyers have been sent home, it often takes reminders to get parents to commit to the group. These reminders can be made in person, over the phone and in writing. It is most effective to do all three.

- **Incentives.** While all parents are motivated to do the best by their children, some parents need some extra motivation to make a six week commitment in the context of their busy lives. Therefore, it is often helpful to provide incentives for attending a group. Incentives can be gift certificates for grocery stores, children's books, memberships/admission to family events (e.g., zoo, aquarium, museum, etc.), raffle tickets for a large item to be given away on the last day of the training, or any thing else that you can think of and deliver.
- **Address barriers/concerns.** As personal contacts and reminders are made, try to gain an understanding of the barriers and/or concerns a parent has about starting and completing the group. These may be regarding transportation, child care, time, lack of support from significant other or perceived relevance. If these are brought up, have a plan to address each one with the parent. Below are some suggestions:
 - **Make it relevant.** Explain to the parent that the goal of the parenting group is to help them reach a personal goal they have for their child and family. Describe how the process is very collaborative and interactive and is based upon each person's experiences as a parent. Let them know that you know of another parent who is thinking about joining who has a similar situation to their own (e.g., single parent, homeless, three children, etc.).
 - **Childcare.** Providing quality child care is essential to recruitment and retention of parents. Child care availability also increases the likelihood that all caregivers can attend the group – allowing for more support and consistency.
 - **Transportation.** It is obvious that parents will not come if they cannot get to the group, thus providing transportation is another essential barrier that needs to be addressed for a parent to participate. Consider gaining permission to use the center's bus to pick up parents and children who need a ride, arrange a carpool among parents, obtain bus tokens or cab fare, or hold the group very near a lot of the parents' homes so that they can walk. A group can be held at the community library, community center of a housing development, or local school, as well as at the program's center.
 - **Convenient time.** While recruiting parents for the parenting group, determine the best time for them to meet. It may be the case that many parents work or attend religious services in the evening hours and would prefer a morning/day time or weekend meeting. Some programs have been able to schedule the group in the last two hours of the center's hours. Family members can come to the group while their child remains in the center program.
 - **Foster relationships among family members.** Some parents may want to change their parenting behavior but feel unsupported by others in their lives (extended family, significant other). In this instance, the best strategy is to try and recruit the other care provider into the group. However, if this is unsuccessful, encourage the parent to come alone and work diligently to build a support network for him or her with the other parents. In addition, if time is taken to build relationships with parents in the groups, other parents will want to participate in future groups! Word of mouth is a great recruitment tool!

Overview of the Group Structure and Process

The *Positive Solutions for Families* series includes information sharing and activity-based learning opportunities. Parents are asked to take part in role-plays, provide each other with feedback and to try weekly "Thing to Try at Home" activities.

Format of the Sessions

Most of the session materials are presented in the following format:

Agenda

A recommended agenda is provided. The session agendas are structured to be conducted in about 1 ½ hours time. The time it takes to move through the agenda will also depend on how many questions families ask and ability to move through the content while maintaining supportive and responsive interactions with the participants. You may wish to schedule the session for 2 hours and allow for time to linger or to address personal questions or have more than 6 sessions (several of the sessions have enough content to split into two sessions). You could also add some make and take sessions so parents could have materials to take home and try with their child.

Objectives

Each session has a set of objectives that are intended as the learner outcomes.

Materials Needed

A list of materials required for each session is provided.

Facilitator Script

A detailed facilitator script is provided for each of the six sessions. The script begins with the welcome and then proceeds through each agenda item in detail. There are helpful icons along the way to alert you to different types of activities:

- Listing on chart paper
- PowerPoint slides/overheads
- Facilitated discussion/activities
- Video

PowerPoint™ Slides and Video Vignettes

Powerpoint™ slides are provided for each session. You may choose to use the Powerpoint™ or the sessions, use the Powerpoint™ as a handout only, or even as a guide for yourself. The most important thing to remember is that you are a *facilitator* of the group. These are not meant to be training sessions as much as facilitated sessions where parents participate in group learning, sharing of experiences, and activities.

The Learning Opportunities/ Experiences Used in These Sessions

Facilitated Group Discussion. The sessions offer parents an opportunity to learn through facilitated group discussion. The facilitator's task is to guide the discussion so that parents can explore the issues and come to an understanding of the positive parenting practices being promoted. Here are some general tips to facilitate discussions:

- **Seating.** To facilitate a collaborative group process, it is helpful to have parents sit in a circle. The facilitator(s) should be sitting along side and not apart from the parents, be sure that everyone can see the flipchart easel and paper, as this used frequently.
- **Encourage Participation:** Communicate your respect and appreciation for each contribution made to the discussion. Periodically, check to make sure that everyone has had a chance to offer ideas. Be aware of the non-verbal signals a parent makes that might indicate they have something to offer, then encourage them to share their ideas with the group. Be aware of one person habitually dominating the conversation and use strategies to

encourage others to contribute. Simply reviewing the ground rules can help limit this behavior. Also, sitting next to the person inclined to talk a lot and simply touching them gently can signal for them to give someone else a chance to talk.

- **Keep Focused.** Keep the participants focused on the topic and issue at hand.
- **Use Questions:** Remember this is a collaborative process and the discussions are key. Rather than providing information in the form of proclamations, ask probing questions that inspire participants to discover the answers for themselves.

Brainstorming. The purpose of the brainstorming is to let each participant freely flow ideas related to the topic. Discourage premature evaluations or comments on the items listed. Each brainstorming session should be captured in writing on the flip chart paper.

Situation studies. Frequently throughout the session material, situation studies are used. Situation studies include scripted lines and assigned parts. Typically the situation studies provide non-examples and positive examples for the participants to react to. After each situation study some possible discussion questions are provided to prompt the participants to discover the positive parenting practices. One parent will act as the child, and another will act as a parent. Parents will naturally be hesitant to participate in these in the beginning, so it is suggested that the facilitators begin the situation studies and allow the parents to make comments. This may need to be done a few times before a parent can be recruited to act. Be sure the mood is light and friendly during role-plays. It sometimes works to be silly, and talk about award-winning performances for parents who take the risk to act. If parents are still very hesitant, break into smaller groups, or dyads.

Home activities. Each session has an accompanying "Things to Try at Home" activity. These home activities typically ask a parent to track their experiences with a new parenting skill (e.g., delivering encouragement, etc.). Home activities are not required, but when parents do make the time and effort to complete them they should be noted and reinforced.

Evaluations. At the end of the series, provide parents with an opportunity to react to the program, explain how you can improve it with modifications and adaptations.