



Evaluation of the *Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development* Program: A Comparison of Individually and Group Administered Conditions

In recent years, efforts to prevent child sexual abuse have been expanding beyond an emphasis on child-focused programs to facilitating meaningful involvement of adults in keeping children safe. Prevent Child Abuse Iowa, in partnership with an independent researcher and with grant funding from the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, undertook a study to evaluate a parent-focused child sexual abuse prevention program called *Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development*. The evaluation sites provided instruction in a home-based (n=55) or group form (n=48). The study also used a control group of parents (n=55) in programs that provided parenting instruction as usual (e.g., education on child development, positive discipline, and communication) but without the sexual abuse educational component. Counties receiving funding from Prevent Child Abuse Iowa were matched with communities comparable to the extent possible for purposes of comparison.

Results indicated that there were some significant differences between groups on scales measuring gaining factual information and the ability to identify concerning sexual behaviors in children. However, the importance of this finding is reduced by a finding that the groups were not equivalent regarding the original matching intention (i.e. the home-based group scored higher on the pre-test than the group-based intervention, even prior to receiving the education).

The control group showed significant gains in a few fact items and one action item. By comparison, the individual and group intervention participants showed significant gains on three to four times as many items. Further, although the demographics of the participants were not equivalent in each group, nonetheless both treatment conditions made significant gains in identifying concerning child sexual behaviors, learning facts, and willingness to take action from pretest to posttest.

Highlights:

- The largest change, significant in all three conditions, is from the “*All children are sexual*” statement.
- All groups showed change in willingness to use appropriate technical terms for body parts with children.
- The group condition showed more significant gains in numbers of questions than the individual condition.
- The individual condition scored higher on both pre- and post-test scores than the group and control conditions.
- The individual condition only made significant gains on one question about concerning child behaviors—possibly indicating that this child development information was already covered in their home visits—while the group condition improved on four questions. (The individual condition scored higher on pre- and post-tests in this category on every question.)



Table 1
Comparisons of Fact Items

	Individual Pre/Post	Group Pre/Post	Control Pre/Post
Abuse without touch	2.07/1.78	4.58/3.35*	4.91/3.59*
False reports common	5.04/5.57*	4.30/5.85*	4.21/4.88*
Young touch for pleasure	2.79/2.11*	3.25/2.22*	2.83/2.21*
Children tell again if disbelieved	5.25/5.68*	5.16/5.41	4.31/4.68
Technical terms OK	2.34/1.38*	2.89/1.49*	2.88/1.87*
Knowledgeable child at risk	5.68/5.99	5.45/5.47	4.88/4.57
All children are sexual	4.86/2.46*	4.58/3.35*	4.91/3.59*
Half victims report abuse	4.68/4.76	4.47/4.41	3.86/3.60

Table 2
Comparisons of Identification of Concerning Child Behaviors

	Individual Pre/Post	Group Pre/Post	Control Pre/Post
Self-touch	4.46/4.33	4.63/3.96#	3.98/4.13
Detailed sex talk	2.27/1.75*	3.95/3.00*	3.48/3.06
Imitating intercourse	2.20/2.07	4.18/2.91*	3.44/3.11
Sexual teasing	2.52/2.38	4.02/2.98*	3.51/3.28
Porn in 12 yr. room	3.59/3.40	4.63/3.56#	3.98/4.00
Pressuring another	2.09/1.87	3.86/2.91*	3.36/3.24
Peer exploration	3.29/3.56	4.36/3.50#	3.90/3.84



Table 3
Comparisons of Ability/Willingness to Take Action

	Individual Pre/Post	Group Pre/Post	Control Pre/Post
Comfortable teaching	2.11/1.73	2.34/1.57*	2.64/2.07*
Equipped prevent	2.21/1.56*	2.34/1.43*	1.68/1.85
Discuss CSA with adults	2.23/1.95	2.66/2.06*	2.04/2.09
Understand how protect	2.79/1.71*	2.25/1.49*	2.04/1.78
Understand when concern	2.73/1.80*	2.39/1.55*	1.86/1.71
Willing to report	1.38/1.20	1.32/1.15	1.28/1.25
Know when to report	2.21/1.53*	1.91/1.53	1.50/1.62
Confront family inappropriate	1.91/1.64	1.82/1.53	1.51/1.65
Confront friend inappropriate	1.93/1.71	1.81/1.49	1.61/1.59
Know when seek professional	2.16/1.72	2.07/1.40*	1.77/1.82

*Significant at the $p=.05$ level

#Significant change in the wrong direction