



# **Strengthening Families for Parents and Youth 12-16**

## **Strengthening Families for Parents and Youth (SFPY): An Evidence-Based Model for Implementation with Families of At-Risk Youth**

Strengthening Families for Parents and Youth (SFPY) was a project supported by Health Canada funds from 2009 – 2011. The project aimed to develop and test a practical, effective program design that would increase resiliency among at risk youth, ages 12-16 through participation in a 9-week skills-building family change program.

The prototype is the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) model developed by Dr. Karol Kumpfer of the University of Utah, for SFPY a 14-week skills-development model providing a one-hour session for parents, a concurrent one-hour session for children or youth, followed by a one hour session for families. Sessions are delivered by trained facilitators and involve an active curriculum of skills-building. SFP has been recommended as a science-based prevention program to reduce family environmental risk factors and improve protective factors with the ultimate objective of increasing personal resilience to drug misuse in high risk youth and reducing risk precursors for mental health disorders. The curriculum focuses on parent-child communication and empathy, consistent parental monitoring and positive discipline and strategies to improve family organization and cohesion. This program has been evaluated extensively and cited as one of the best interventions of its kind, including receiving the designation of “best practice”.

Parent Action on Drugs (PAD), adapted the existing 14-week SFP model to produce a shortened 9-week version that would provide an effective curriculum appropriate for families of at-risk youth, ages 12 – 16, and vulnerable communities in Toronto and throughout Canada.

The project involved implementing and evaluation of the adapted 9-week curriculum in 8 different trials, involving a total of 69 families, with diverse selected audiences, including a school social work program, children’s mental health centre, an adolescent medicine program, a community agency in an at risk neighbourhood and an addiction and mental health facility. These trials were evaluated and data analyzed according to standardized measurements used for international applications of Strengthening Families programs in consultation with the program’s originator, Dr. Kumpfer. Therefore the outcomes have a high degree of reliability and validity and maintain fidelity to the content of the prototype.

The Evaluation Report produced by Dr. Kumpfer et al showed that:

*The results of the PAD SFPY Project were excellent and better than expected given this was a shortened 9 - session program. There were significant positive results for SFP 12-16 Years for 20 of the 21 outcomes (95%) measured by parent, child and family outcome variables. All (100%) of the parenting outcomes were statistically significant and all (100%) of the family outcomes. Seven of eight (87.5%) of the children’s [youth’s] outcomes were significantly improved, namely Overt aggression, Social skills or competencies, Concentration problems or reduced ADD, Depression, Covert aggression , Hyperactivity and Overall Child Cluster. The results for the youth are very impressive.*

From participating in the SFPY program, parents felt they learned to be more positive, improved their communication skills and gained a better understanding of their children. They felt the “whole family approach” helped their family become closer and more respectful. The youth not only enjoyed the activities and being with other teens, but also gained a sense of appreciation of their parents’ feelings and attempts to improve the parent-teen relationship.

With the positive results of the 8 trials of the adapted SFPY program demonstrating outcomes similar to the original evidence-based model, Strengthening Families for Parents and Youth is at a stage to support dissemination and implementation by diverse agencies and coalitions who are interested in a practical, research-based, effective program to increase resiliency among at-risk youth.

## Program Overview

Sessions typically begin in the early evening and are provided on the same day of the week for nine consecutive weeks, unless a holiday is involved and a session needs to be postponed. The following format is adhered to:

- ◆ 1<sup>st</sup> hour - Participation in a family meal
- ◆ 2<sup>nd</sup> hour - (70 minutes) Parents and youth participate in a skills building session separately
- ◆ 3<sup>rd</sup> hour - (50 minutes) Families participate in a session together, building on the topics and skills they have explored separately

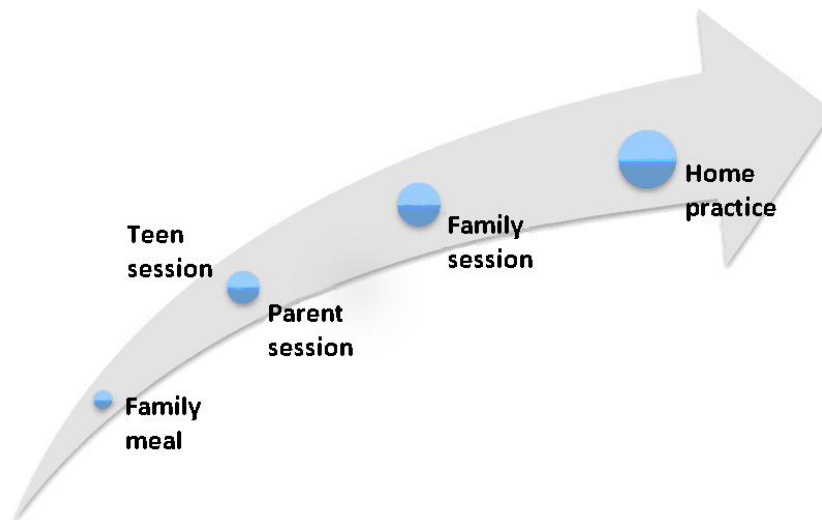
Parents and teens must commit to attending the sessions together as both must participate in the sessions to gain from the program. All teens within the age group (12 – 16) from a family are welcome to participate. Parents include any primary caregiver for the teen, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives as well as guardians.

Providing a meal for the family makes it easier for families to participate in the program. It also provides an important chance for families to spend time together and practice the skills they have learned as well as an opportunity to meet informally with facilitators and build a communal experience for all members of the SFPY group.

The Family Session not only allows parent and teen to work on skills together but also provides a meaningful opportunity for parents and teens to communicate outside of their immediate family, thereby presenting the opportunity for intergenerational dialogue in a safe and accepting environment through enjoyable activities.

Childcare is provided for children less than 12 years of age, to allow parents to commit to the program without concern for the care of younger siblings.

Parents are asked to practice the skills they have learned and the routines that have been introduced at home with their teen and other family members.





*"I found I can look at issues from a different angle now and we have a calmer home."*

(SFPY Parent)

*"I liked the program activities – and I actually learned stuff!"*

(SFPY Teen)

*"This program helped me build my confidence in myself".*

(SFPY Teen)

*"It was fun!"*

(SFPY Teen)

*"This program let my family start to treat each other with respect."*

(SFPY Parent)

## SFPY 9-Week Curriculum

### PARENT SESSIONS

**Establish the foundation of positive parent-teen interaction and build a tool kit for effective family functioning**

- ♦ Adolescent Development
- ♦ Parent and Teen: Roles and Responsibilities
- ♦ Positive Behaviour Change
- ♦ Positive Attention
- ♦ Introduction to Teen Time
- ♦ Communication – Teens and Respectful Dialogue
- ♦ Family Meetings
- ♦ Clear Expectations and Supporting Goals and Dreams
- ♦ Fair Limits, Appropriate Consequences
- ♦ Handling Stress and Anger
- ♦ Substance Use
- ♦ Risk and Protective Factors
- ♦ Problem solving and putting it all together
- ♦ Building Resiliency

### YOUTH SESSIONS

**Activities that engage, explain, explore, experience and empower**

- ♦ Teens and Parents: Roles and Responsibilities
- ♦ Praise
- ♦ Introduction to Teen Time
- ♦ Communication
- ♦ Setting and achieving goals
- ♦ Behaviour, choices and consequences
- ♦ Stress and Anger
- ♦ Substance use
- ♦ Review
- ♦ Getting Support
- ♦ Being Resilient

### FAMILY SESSIONS

**Opportunities for active, positive parent-teen exchange**

- ♦ Parent and Teen Interaction Game
- ♦ Teen Time Activity
- ♦ Communication Activity
- ♦ Family Meetings
- ♦ Supporting Youths' Goals and Dreams
- ♦ Group Dialogue on Limits and Consequences
- ♦ Stress and Anger
- ♦ Group Dialogue on Substance Use and Teens
- ♦ Family Strengths