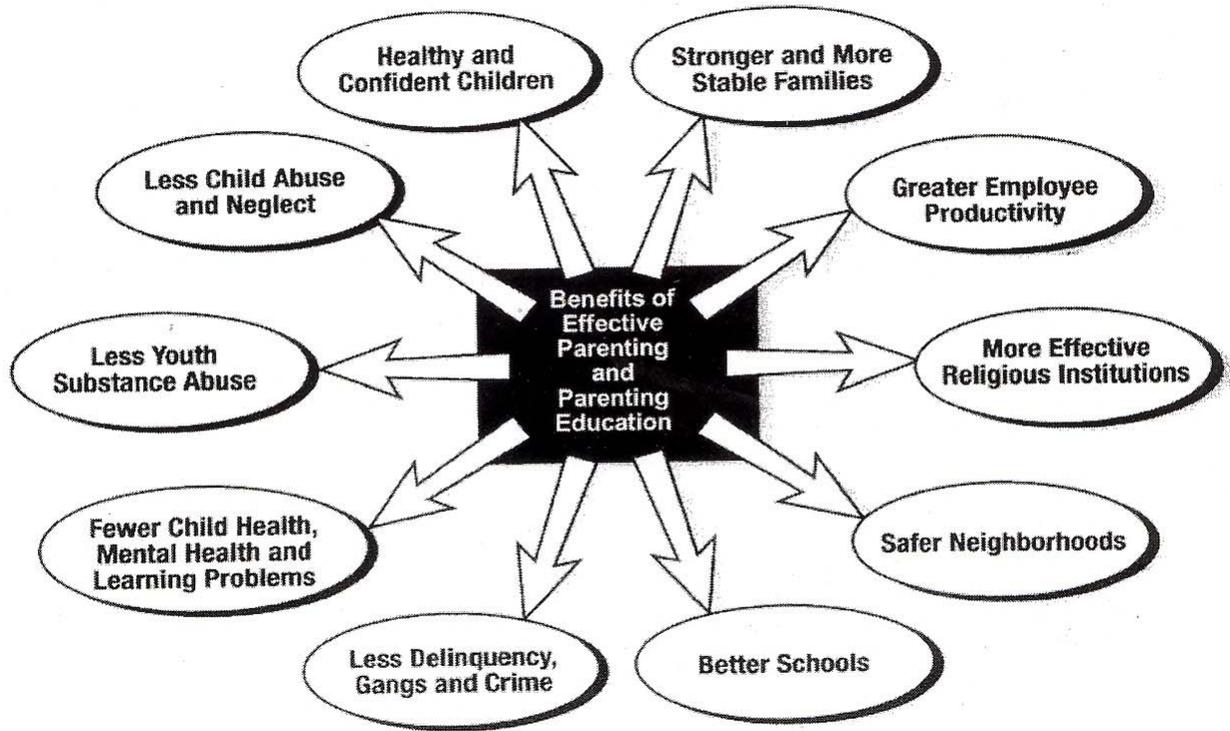


**AN EFFECTIVE PARENTING INITIATIVE**  
**To Make the United States of America a Model**  
**Child and Family-Friendly Nation**



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# Table of Contents

<b><u>Introduction and Summary</u></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><u>The Societal Benefits of Effective Parenting</u></b>	<b>4</b>
• Studies on Effective Parenting	4
• The Costs of Ineffective Parenting	5
<b><u>Education for Parenting</u></b>	<b>6</b>
• Informal Means	6
• Formal Means	6
• Effective Parenting Newsletter and Effective Parenting Programs	7
• Parenting Education and Family Values	9
<b><u>The Effective Parenting Movement</u></b>	<b>10</b>
• Schools	10
• Child Welfare	11
• Delinquency Prevention	11
• Mental Health	11
• Substance Abuse	11
• Health	12
• Child Care	12
• Faith-Based	13
• Corporate and Employer	13
• Philanthropy	13
• Courts and Child Custody	14
• National Organizations	14
• Mass Media	15
• Federal Government	16
• Summary and Status of Movement	16
<b><u>National Effective Parenting Initiative</u></b>	<b>17</b>
• White House Office of Effective Parenting	18
• National Council on Effective Parenting	18
• National Clearinghouse on Effective Parenting	19
• National Parenting Instructor Training Center	20
• National Institute on Effective Parenting	21
• Financing the National Effective Parenting Initiative	23
• Conclusion	24
<b><u>References</u></b>	<b>25</b>
Resume of Dr. Alvy	27

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This proposal is being made directly to the elected leadership of the United States of America to ask them to become the champions of a broad-based initiative to make the effective parenting of the children of the United States a national priority. It also requests that equal prioritization be given to the most direct approach for helping more parents to be as effective as possible in raising the nation's children, and that approach is parenting education.

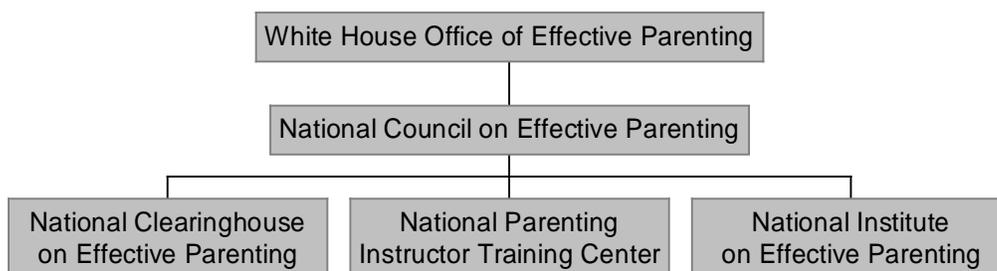
The proposed Effective Parenting Initiative involves and benefits all segments of American society, because effective parenting benefits us all. The proposal begins by bringing attention to these comprehensive societal benefits and to the research that helps to define what is effective parenting. This section also draws attention to the costs of having to deal with problems that emanate from ineffective parenting, such as child abuse, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, gangs and school failure.

Turning to the matter of how parents learn to be parents, the proposal highlights the informal ways that parents have learned to raise children. Then it details how formal parenting education programs are a more modern approach which has proven highly successful with those who have been fortunate enough to participate in modern parenting skill-building programs. It also shows how these programs are excellent vehicles for helping parents to instill in children a wide range of cherished family values.

The proposal then describes the numerous public and private institutions of American society that are already involved in using and promoting this modern approach to improve the quality of parenting in our society. All of the actions of these numerous and diverse groups reflect that an Effective Parenting Movement is actually occurring in our society. But the Movement has yet to reap its full harvest because of its unevenness and because it has yet to be championed and supported by leaders who are in a position to assure its full effectiveness and impact.

The President and members of Congress are leaders who have the necessary clout.

A National Effective Parenting Initiative is then presented. It involves the creation of new structures within our federal government, led through the creation of a Department of Effective Parenting or a White House Office on Effective Parenting, which would be supported by a prestigious National Council on Effective Parenting composed of leaders from all segments of American society. Additional new structures are also proposed to carry out the Initiative. These include a National Clearinghouse on Effective Parenting, a National Parenting Instructor Training Center, and a new research and evaluation agency, a National Institute on Effective Parenting. The functions of each new agency are described and shown how they are all directed at achieving the prioritization of effective parenting and parenting education in American society. The description of the National Institute on Effective Parenting contains an example of the type of research study that shows how billions of dollars can be saved through the types of programs this initiative will bring to every community in the nation.



A variety of ways of financing this Effective Parenting Initiative are recommended, including the reallocation of existing federal tax dollars and the use of private sector corporate and philanthropic dollars, as well as through the financial support of parents themselves.

With the President and the members of Congress championing and embracing the Effective Parenting Initiative, our nation is likely to become the world model of a child and family-friendly society.

## **THE SOCIETAL BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE PARENTING**

Research study after research study confirms that communities benefit greatly when children are raised effectively.

The societal benefits are evident very early, as effectively parented preschool children are more likely to enter school eager and ready to learn. They are also much more likely to achieve at high levels and to be well liked by their peers and teachers. The research also shows that as teenagers, these effectively parented young people make positive contributions to community life and are of service to others. And as adults they are more likely to have productive careers, healthy and stable marriages, and to become effective parents themselves.

### **Studies on Effective Parenting**

Many of the scientific studies that have captured these benefits have been supported by federal government research grants. A good early example is the study underwritten by the National Institute of Mental Health in the 1960s that explored the family situations of young people who valued themselves as individuals, who were personally effective, poised, competent and capable of independent and creative action, and whose high self-esteem was verified by their teachers.

As was shown in the 1967 book that reported on the results of this classic study, The Antecedents of Self Esteem by Dr. Stanley Coopersmith, parents of the high self-esteem children were themselves high in self-worth. They approached their children with a great deal of warmth and acceptance. They also set very clear limits on the child's behavior and were vigilant about enforcing family rules, thereby establishing the authority of parents and providing standards by which the child could judge his or her competence and progress. They demonstrated a great deal of regard for the personal rights of the child, seeking out the child's views, respecting their opinions and granting concessions where warranted. Because these findings held true regardless of the socioeconomic background of the parents, Coopersmith concluded that the quality of home life and parenting was the most influential in children developing a strong sense of personal worthiness.

Numerous other studies presented in the prestigious Review of Child Development Research (Martin, 1975), studies of both a laboratory and field nature, also pointed in the direction of parents having a great shaping influence on their children's development, as did another extensive review by Doctors Eleanor F. Maccoby and John A. Martin of Stanford University which appeared in the Handbook of Child Psychology (Heatherington, 1983).

The pattern of parenting that was emerging from the hundreds of studies in these reviews as being the most effective gained even greater coherence and support in the work of developmental psychologist, Dr. Diana Baumrind of the University of California. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Baumrind's research uncovered what she referred to as the "authoritative pattern" of parenting, a pattern that combines a great deal of warmth with fair and firm family leadership, just like what was seen in the families of high self-esteem children described above (Baumrind, 1989, 1991). It is this pattern that has consistently been associated with

positive child outcomes. The enduring importance of this pattern continues to be reflected in the latest reviews of research on parent-child relations, including in Parent Training Today: A Social Necessity (Alvy, 1994), and in Dr. Baumrind's chapter in Volume 5 of the Handbook of Parenting (Baumrind D. and Thompson, R.A., 2002).

Additional individual studies and reviews of the latest research in the United States and in other countries continue to demonstrate the power of positive parenting to help produce healthy and competent young people. See, for example, the research reviews on Parent-Teen Relationships and Interactions that was published in 2004 by Child Trends (Moore, Guzman, Hair, Lippman and Garrett, 2004), or the individual research study that was highlighted by the American Psychological Association's Society for Research in Child Development just this year in its Child Development journal, Intergenerational Transmission of Warm-Sensitive-Stimulating Parenting, Belsky, J., Jaffee, S.R., Sligo, J. and Silva, P.A., 2005.

So there is an enormous body of knowledge that helps define what is effective in raising children. And there are very talented people who can continue to conduct research that further defines the contours of what is best in raising today's children.

All of this scientifically-based knowledge, and all of the work of these talented individuals, tells us over and over again that the benefits of effective parenting are numerous, ranging from enhancing the development and futures of the children who are effectively parented, to stabilizing and enhancing family life.

### **The Costs of Ineffective Parenting**

These and other studies also show us the costs of ineffective, abusive and neglectful parenting.

In the classic study by Coopersmith on self-esteem, the children who felt the least worthy and who performed the poorest at school were from homes where their parents provided little warmth and few and poorly defined limits. These parents used harsh and autocratic control measures. They were dictatorial, rejecting and uncompromising in their family leadership.

These parents had much in common with those from Diana Baumrind's studies who she characterized as authoritarian. Parents who approached their children in this manner, or in an extremely permissive manner, were the least likely to have self-confident, achieving and emotionally healthy children.

Authoritarian and extremely permissive parents are among those who are most likely to be reported for abusing, exploiting or neglecting their children. We have as many as three million children from these types of families who are reported each year for being maltreated in these ways (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005, Child Maltreatment 2003).

Abused and neglected children often have learning disabilities and mental health problems, as well as extreme difficulties in getting along with others. They are much more likely to become school drop-outs, to become gang members and delinquents, to be drug abusers and criminals, and to repeat a cycle of abuse when they become parents themselves.

- To help these unfortunate children avoid such negative life outcomes, a wide range of remedial, legal, and foster care services need to be provided. Because of the large numbers of such children, the cost to tax-payers is enormous. Direct costs (judicial, law enforcement and health system responses to child maltreatment) are estimated at \$24 billion each year. The indirect costs (long-term economic consequences of child maltreatment) exceed an estimated \$69 billion annually.

Thus, there are as numerous negative consequences of ineffective parenting as there are positive benefits of effective parenting.

Now, let's look at how people learn to be parents, whether effective or ineffective.

## **EDUCATION FOR PARENTING**

Parenting is learned behavior, and all parents learn how to be parents through a variety of means.

### **Informal Means**

These means include the informal ways that all parents have learned historically; that is, through what they were exposed to in their homes and communities and what they choose to repeat or reject.

Informally, all parents learn from how they were raised by either their biological parents or by whomever else, like adoptive, foster or grandparents, played parental roles throughout their childhood and adolescence. They learn from how they were treated and regarded, and how their siblings were treated and regarded. They learn from the models of human relations and the models of conflict resolution that were available in their homes.

All parents have historically and informally also learned from other family members like aunts and uncles, as well as from how their friends and neighbors raise their children. If they are religious, they learn from what is emphasized at their places of worship.

All parents have also learned their parenting through observing the fictional models of parenting and family life that are depicted on television, in films and through other mass media.

### **Formal Means**

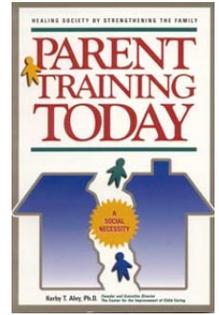
Some parents also learn how to be the best parents they can through formal parent education vehicles that have been carefully designed to help them become as knowledgeable and as effective as possible.

Formal parenting education is usually sponsored and made available through such community institutions as the schools and the government and community agencies that are responsible for preventing and treating the social and health problems mentioned earlier. In addition, some corporations through their work and family programs also make some type of parenting education available, as do some places of worship as part of their services and supports for families.

Indeed, in the United States, some type of formal parenting education has been made available since the 1800s when the first mothers' groups were formed in a few cities (see Education for Child Rearing, Brim 1965; and Learning to Be Parents: Principles, Programs and Methods, Harmon and Brim, 1980).

In the 1960s, a new and much more effective approach to parenting education emerged and began to be used in selected communities, an approach where parents were not only educated about the various facets of child development which are needed to understand children but where they received training in the skills and strategies of effective parenting, i.e., how to praise and encourage positive behaviors, how to effectively resolve conflicts without resorting to violence, and how to conduct family decision-making meetings, etc..

This new how-to-do-it approach is based on research on what is effective in relating to children, and is called the Parenting Skill-Building Approach (see Parent Training Today: A Social Necessity, Alvy, 1994). Since the 1960s, a wide range of such evidenced-based parenting skill-building programs have been created for different populations of parents, most of which were created and tested through research and demonstration grants from federal government agencies. These programs are usually taught in the form of parent effectiveness classes which are led by instructors who have received training in how best to teach such classes. The research on the impact of these classes on the families, parents and children who have been fortunate enough to be in communities where there are instructors who are qualified to deliver them, has consistently showed that these classes significantly improve and enhance family togetherness and cohesion, promote positive parenting practices and reduce negative, abusive parenting, as well as significantly reducing child behavior problems and increasing child competencies.



As have been implied, not all communities in the United States have local institutions that sponsor and conduct parenting education, let alone institutions with staff that are qualified to teach the parenting skill-building programs. Also in those communities that do have local institutions that provide parenting education, very few of these schools, government departments and community service agencies provide the full range of excellent parenting programs and materials that now exist. Many of these groups are simply unaware of what is available for them to use in helping educate more parents to be effective, and certainly not aware of the full range of evidenced-based skill-building programs that now exist.

### **Effective Parenting Newsletter and Effective Parenting Programs**

This unevenness of knowledge and use of parenting education resources was the main reason why one of the our nation's foremost parenting education groups, the 33 year old, nonprofit Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC), began publishing an online Effective Parenting newsletter in 2004.

This Effective Parenting newsletter provides a wealth of information on the latest research on effective parenting and where to find this foundational information. At the same time, it provides descriptions of the parenting skill-building programs that teach the concepts, values, skills and strategies of the authoritative parenting pattern that the research has consistently shown to be instrumental in raising healthy and competent young people. These include skill-building programs for different populations of parents, i.e., for parents of infants, toddlers, school age and teenage children; for parents from different cultural backgrounds; and for parents with children with disabilities and other special needs.

The Effective Parenting newsletter also orients its readers to how they can bring these programs to their communities, such as where they can obtain the instructional kits and materials, and where they can receive training and certification to qualify them to deliver these important parenting and family life education programs. The readership of this online publication increases daily as more individuals and groups visit CICC's website to subscribe ([www.ciccparenting.org](http://www.ciccparenting.org)). Its readership passed 40,000 in mid-2006 and will grow to be greater than 100,000 as more school districts, child and family serving institutions and their staffs, and all health, social service and educational professionals learn of its existence.

The types of parenting skill-building programs that are featured in the editions of the Effective Parenting newsletter include the nation's and world's most influential and successful programs, including the most honored and revered of such programs, Dr. Thomas Gordon's Parent Effectiveness Training, (P.E.T.) Program (Gordon, 1970, 1975, 2000).

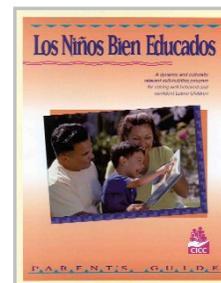
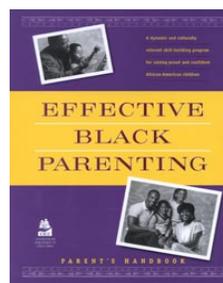
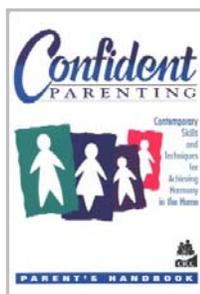
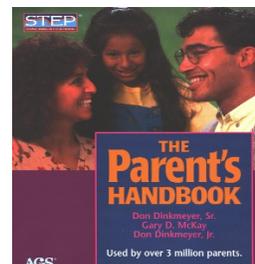
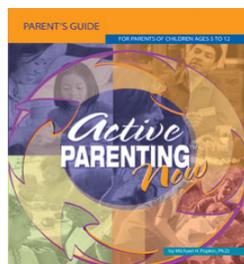
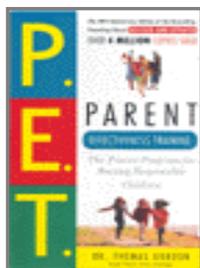
Dr. Gordon created P.E.T. in the early 1960s and it has been in use ever since. P.E.T. has introduced millions of parents in the United States and in numerous other countries to *actively listen* to their children to better understand and appreciate their needs and viewpoints. It has taught, and still teaches, how to deliver *I-Messages* so that children gain a clear understanding of the impact of their own behavior on others. And it continues to provide parents with a *No-Lose* problem-solving approach which brings children into the family decision-making process and generates greater cooperation. The careful use of these P.E.T. skills has helped millions of parents worldwide to bring a greater sense of harmony into their relationships with their children and into their families. It is no wonder, then, that Dr. Gordon was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Nearly all of the parenting skill-building programs, which have come into existence since P.E.T. was first published, owe much to this pioneering program. Many either teach P.E.T. skills as part of what their programs offer or they teach modified versions of these skills.

A variety of such programs now exist and are being used in some communities. All are highlighted in the **Effective Parenting** newsletter. These include the various versions of the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) Program (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976) for parents of preschoolers, for parents of elementary school age children and for parents of teenagers; the Active Parenting Programs for parents of different aged children (Popkin, 1989); the Nurturing Programs for parents of different aged children and a version for teenage parents and their families (Bavolek, Comstock and McLanghlin, 1983); and CICC's Confident Parenting Program and its two culturally specific versions for parents of African and Latino American children, Effective Black Parenting and Los Niños Bien Educados (Alvy, 1994). The latter two programs are the nation's most widely used and well accepted programs in communities with large numbers of children from these cultural backgrounds.

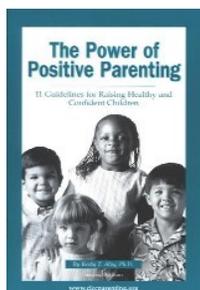
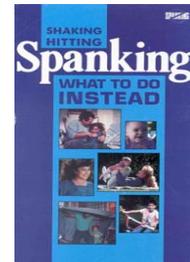
Eventually every excellent and evidence-based parenting skill-building program will be featured in Effective Parenting newsletter editions. All of these editions are being archived on CICC's website so that they can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for years to come.

Today's parents are also able to learn the skills and concepts of effective contemporary parenting over the Internet, as America's parenting program creators learn how to provide their classes over this amazing communication vehicle. The Active Parenting Program creators have already accomplished this and parents can now take their classes online on their website. Other creative groups like Hummingbird Coaching Services Company have also figured out how to provide one-on-one coaching of parents over the Internet, using their approach to parenting, About My Kids.



In addition to these sites which provide this highly valued and research-supported skill-training, the Internet provides many other excellent websites for parents to learn about various facets of child development and parenting, like babycenter.com, parentcenter.com, and the parenting pages on AOL, for example. Parents and service providers can now learn directly from and interact with well known parenting authorities like the founder and executive director of CICC, through such Internet logs or blogs as [Educated Parenting.com](http://Educated Parenting.com).

Modern technology has also made it possible for parents to observe and learn the skills of effective contemporary parenting through such excellent issue-focused video programs like [Spanking, Shaking and Hitting: What To Do Instead](#), and [Yelling, Threatening and Putting Down: What To Do Instead](#). Some parenting programs are also available of CD's, like the [Parenting Wisely](#) program.



Excellent guidebooks that distil and simplify the research on effective parenting are now available that parents can use to determine whether their current functioning is consistent with what is known to be effective, thereby reinforcing and rewarding parents for doing the right things. These succinct guides, like [The Power of Positive Parenting](#) (Alvy, 2004), also alert parents to what they may be doing to harm their children and what they should be doing instead. The Power of Positive Parenting guide has, for example, been termed by parents who have read it a “mini-bible for parents” and the “manual that should come with every child.”

Popular television shows, like Dr. Phil and the Supernanny shows, also provide discussions and examples of effective parenting. Dr. Phil draws upon his personal and professional experiences as a practicing psychologist, and the Supernannies employ the behavior management skills and strategies that are taught in many of the parenting skill-building programs mentioned already.

So there now exists an extraordinary array of parenting skill-building programs that research indicates are highly effective in teaching and reinforcing the authoritative approach to parenting. There are television shows that discuss, exemplify and encourage the use of this approach. There are numerous websites that convey helpful child development information, and a few that even teach effective parenting skills. There are also excellent videos and CDs that convey and reinforce effective parenting, and there are guides and other books that inform parents about what is effective and what is not.

These vehicles for training and educating are unevenly available in communities across our nation, and this is especially true of the most powerful vehicles, the parenting skill-building programs. Even so, America clearly possesses the widest array of programs, materials and outlets through which every parent could potentially be trained and educated to be as effective as possible.

### **Parenting Education and Family Values**

For at least the last two decades, the issue of family values has often taken center stage in debates about what is wrong with American society. Problems such as crime, violence, drug abuse, divorce, teen pregnancy, and welfare dependence have all been discussed as consequences of a diminished respect for family values.

A broad consensus has emerged from one end of the political spectrum to the other, that family values must be upheld and supported if we are to solve these seemingly intractable problems.

While a consensus exists that this needs to be done, no one has come up with a vehicle for how it can be done.

Well, such a vehicle does exist. The key ingredient is effective parenting: parenting that instills in children the values that are needed for them to become responsible, healthy and productive adults.

And, as we have just seen, there now exists a wide range formal parenting education programs and resources for helping parents to instill our cherished values. For example, the parenting skill-building programs that we have just reviewed teach parents the skills of effective contemporary parenting: positive reinforcement, nurturing, communication, disciplining and non-violent conflict resolution skills. In so doing, they provide parents with the tools to instill in their children the important values of mutual respect, empathy, compassion, hard work, responsibility, self-discipline, and non-violence.

With the widespread use of such family life enhancing programs, more families will have the tools for instilling, promoting and reinforcing these values.

Let's see what is currently being done with these family values instilling programs.

## **THE EFFECTIVE PARENTING MOVEMENT**

The availability of all of these wonderful educational vehicles for helping more parents to be as effective as possible, and especially the availability of the parenting skill-building programs, has formed the intervention foundation of what has been termed the Effective Parenting Movement in the United States (see *Blueprint for a Safer and Better American in Parent Training Today: A Social Necessity*, 1994). This growing movement has been taking place in specific spheres of American life and through the various fields and disciplines that address the social and health problems that plague our communities and institutions. All recognize that parental effectiveness is pivotal to the success of our institutions and to the prevention and treatment of social and health problems.

### **Schools as Part of the Movement**

Our schools now recognize more than ever that their success is greatly determined by the quality and quantity of parents' involvement in their children's formal education (see Henderson and Berla, Editors, *The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement: A New Generation of Evidence*, 1996).

Parental involvement activities sponsored by schools and community agencies now include school readiness and family literacy programs, all of which teach basic parenting skills as part of their programmatic thrust.

The current federal government, through its No Child Left Behind school reform initiative, stresses the importance of parental involvement, as do all state, county and city school districts, though very few of them currently use the full spectrum of parent education programs and materials that are now available.

The National PTA recently became a major part of the education-based arm of this movement with its new emphasis on parenting education. It too, however, does not yet use all of the resources that are now available to help more parents to be effective.

Because America's children bring with them to school all of the problems that exist in their homes and communities, such as drug abuse, violence, gangs and child abuse, many schools now see it as their responsibility to provide programs and services to deal with these problems. And because all of these problems are influenced or caused by how children are parented, some schools now provide parenting skill-building programs to combat child abuse, drug abuse and delinquency. Many also see parenting training as

being pivotal in diminishing the drop out rate of students, and provide parenting programs for these critical purposes.

### **Child Welfare Movement Involvement**

In the child welfare field itself, the public social service and child and family service departments in our states, counties and cities, now provide or contract for the provision of parenting skill-building programs. These institutions face the horror and tragedy of child abuse and neglect on an hourly basis and have the official responsibility for treating and preventing these extraordinarily costly problems that impact as many as three million of America's children each year. Here too these often overwhelmed institutions do not use and are not aware of all the excellent programs and materials that are now available to assist them with their life saving, family preservation and family unification efforts.

### **Delinquency Prevention Involvement**

Our youth and delinquency prevention institutions are also part of this movement through their use of parenting skill-building programs and materials. Here again this massive undertaking through probation and youth services departments, does not yet utilize all of the available resources.

### **Mental Health Movement Involvement**

The mental health field, its state and county departments, its psychiatric and child guidance clinics and its community mental health centers, all know that the disorders of childhood they treat can be better managed and their negative effects diminished by parents being trained in how best to cope with childhood disorders. These include autism spectrum disorders, hyperactivity, obsessive compulsive and antisocial disorders.

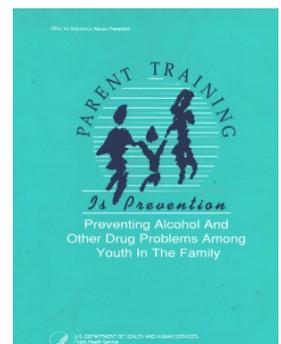
Indeed, many of these disorders may be the direct result of ineffective parenting, and parenting training is the first service that is needed (see research by Beauchoine, Webster-Stratton and Schwartz, 2005, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology). Many of the parenting skill-building programs that are now being used in numerous schools and community agencies nationwide were originally developed as part of treatment efforts for families with behavior problem and disordered children.

However, just because many of these programs were created as treatment interventions within the mental health field, it does not mean that all of our country's mental health agencies and clinics provide the full spectrum of such programs. They too are uneven in their use and knowledge of the full range.

### **Substance Abuse Movement Participation**

Our substance abuse treatment and prevention agencies and institutions are also part of the effective parenting movement, as they recognize that children and youth often turn to alcohol and other drugs when their relations with their parents are strained or abusive, and when their needs are not being met at home.

When the Reagan administration started a War on Drugs and created the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, (now the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention), it established a Parent Training Is Prevention Project, (1991, Department of Health and Human Services), which utilized the program and research expertise of organizations like CICC, Active Parenting, the Family Development Resources group that created the Nurturing Programs, and experts like Dr. Alvy and Dr. Gordon. This project led to nearly all states incorporating parent and family life education into their overall substance abuse prevention plans. Many states like Illinois, Kansas and Washington



began utilizing several of the parenting skill building programs through having local agency personnel trained to deliver the programs. Again, state and county substance abuse prevention departments now make very uneven use of these interventions.

Those in the drug abuse treatment field, such as the institutions that treat drug abusing adults like cocaine addicted mothers, have begun to use a few of these parenting skill-building programs as part of their overall treatment interventions. They too have become part of this effective parenting movement.

The federal government currently brings widespread attention to the fact that parents are pivotal players in the fight against youth drug abuse through its multi-million dollar Parents: The Anti-Drug program as part of its overall National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

### **Health System Involvement**

Health departments and agencies that are responsible for the treatment and prevention of developmental disabilities are also uneven users of parenting education programs. They are part of the movement as they recognize that the health of every child is greatly influenced by their parents' general effectiveness and by their knowledge of health matters. They recognize that families with developmentally disabled or special needs children are especially in need of parenting and family life education to manage the very difficult and challenging behaviors of these vulnerable children and youth.

Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) and health care insurance plans are increasingly more aware that if they provide services and programs to prevent health problems they can reduce the escalating costs of health care.

Parent training is a service that can reduce the health care costs of both children and adults. The parenting skill-building programs that have been mentioned are known to reduce one of the most powerful stressors on adults, the stress that comes from conflicts and problems in raising children. Stress is one of the known major contributors to a wide range of health problems, including cardiovascular and depression problems. With more parents receiving and benefiting from this type of stress-reducing service, it is likely that fewer parents will develop stress-related health problems.

This same parent training service also can reduce the need for some health services for children, as some physical and emotional problems of childhood are the direct result of ineffective parenting and/or are maintained because of ineffective parenting. In addition, there are now parent training programs that are specifically designed to prevent specific child health problems, such as programs that teach nutritional practices to prevent childhood obesity.

### **The Child Care System and the Movement**

Our country's current focus on child care and early childhood education, which is fueled by the fact that now more than 60 percent of young children are in some form of out-of-home care while their parents work or continue their educations, provides other major venues through which more parents can learn the ideas and skills of effective parenting. Our nation's early childhood care and education systems, with their public and privately supported child care centers, their privately operated family child care homes, and the federally-sponsored Head Start programs, are excellent venues through which parents can learn about effective parenting. Indeed, many such systems are using or beginning to use some of the latest parenting education materials and programs. There has even been a very successful model effort to bring a wide range of such resources into the diverse groups and homes that compose such local systems (Alvy, et al, Bringing Parenting

Education Into the Early Childhood Care and Education System, 2002). With the growing acceptance and support of the concept of universal preschools, more and more counties and states are likely to utilize their child care systems to also help more parents to be effective, and to begin to utilize the full range of resources that are now available.

### **Faith-Based Movement Participation**

Some faith-based institutions, which have such strong and historic commitments to strengthening family life and helping the poor and disadvantaged, are also members of this important movement.

There are now several parenting skill-building programs that have versions that are designed or adapted for use in different faith-based sectors, like Active Christian Parenting, or the STEP Biblically program for Christian groups, and the Active Parenting version for the Jewish community. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. has utilized some of these programs. The Black Family Ministry Project of this National Council adopted the Effective Black Parenting Program; obtained a private foundation grant; and had clergy and family life educators from numerous historically black churches trained to deliver this program with their congregations. A similar embracing of this culturally-specific parenting skill-building program has taken place in several Catholic archdioceses with sizable African American congregations, such as those in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Houston, and Shreveport where they have sponsored parenting instructor training workshops to prepare school, church and community groups to utilize this program.

### **Corporate and Employer Participation**

Forward-thinking corporations who have wellness and work and family programs to help their employees often have lunch-and-learn parenting seminars, and some have sponsored parenting skill-building classes for their employees. Also, some school district and government departments have started parenting education efforts to support the family lives of their employees.

As was mentioned above in the section on health care system involvement, these types of services also have the potential to reduce employers' health benefit costs because they reduce a source of major stress on employees, the stress of parenting.

Other major benefits to employers for providing parenting services are that they increase employee loyalty because they demonstrate that employers care about their families, and because they reduce the time that parent employees spend discussing problems with their children rather than attending to job tasks. Both of these benefits speak to increased productivity on the part of America's labor force as a result of participation in this movement.

### **Philanthropy Community Participation**

Numerous private, corporate, family and community foundations have been involved in funding the delivery of parenting education programs and services, and some have even funded the development of parenting programs. They usually do this under broader categories of funding priorities like child and family, child welfare, and child services headings. A few foundations currently list parenting education as a specific area of funding.

There are also a few foundations that support research efforts, which could include research to explore the various benefits of effective parenting and parenting education.

So this broad spectrum of private sector funding sources is already involved in the movement but not in any focused, systematic or organized way.

### **Court and Custody Participation**

Many courts that deal with divorces and child custody matters are now aligned with and supportive of programs that teach divorcing parents how to be as effective as possible during these traumatic times, and how to keep their hurt feelings from spilling over into destructive relations with their children that undermines the future growth and happiness of such children. Parenting programs for divorcing parents, like so many other parenting programs mentioned previously, have often been developed through federal government research and demonstration grants.

### **National Organizations and the Movement**

Several nationwide organizations have already and/or are primed to play important roles in this movement. Here are brief descriptions of some of these organizations.

The Center for the Improvement of Child Caring, with its national model parenting skill-building programs, its Effective Parenting Newsletter, and its parenting instructor training workshops through which more than 6,000 parenting instructors nationwide have already been trained, is an acknowledged leadership group.

The National PTA and its new emphasis on parenting education reach into every school in our country.

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education includes many national organizations that promote this type of parental effectiveness.

The United Way of America now has Success by Six programs in all states which help parents of young children to be more effective. The United Way also funds numerous local agencies, many of which provide parenting services themselves.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, which is the professional organization for the personnel who teach and run our nation's early childhood education and care centers and homes, is in an excellent position (as has been suggested) to play an even greater roll in the movement as it now relates to the majority of American families at the earliest and most influential times in the lives of children.

The American Psychological Association (APA), which is the world's largest association for psychologists, has a membership that not only includes the majority of the creative individuals who have developed and evaluated our nation's extraordinary array of parenting skill-building programs. The APA also includes nearly all of the nation's top researchers on parenting and child-parent relations, the people who help us to know what is and is not effective in raising children.

The National Council of Family Relations has been promoting family life education for decades and has a Family Life Educators credentialing process.

The Prevent Child Abuse USA organization, with its chapters in every state and its Healthy Families America program, has been a movement participant for over thirty years.

The Family Support America organization with its emphasis on all communities having viable family resource centers available, which are operated in accordance with principles and policies that respect diversity and which can provide parenting education services, also has a long history of movement participation.

The Parents as Teachers National Center provides home visiting services through its Born to Learn, Professional Development, Meld and Advocacy work.

The American Pediatric Society helps to set important standards of health care for children and families, publish authoritative books and pamphlets for parents, and provide extensive parenting advice over its website.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is the leading national professional medical association dedicated to treating and improving the quality of life for children and adolescents and families who are affected by mental, behavioral and developmental disorders. It participates in the movement through many means, such as through providing fact sheets for parents and other caregivers regarding these disorders and taking positions on such matters as the use of corporal punishment.

The Child Welfare League of America has created its own parenting curriculum and is currently running a nationwide parenting enhancement project, as well as being the organization that supports all public and private child welfare groups in our country.

Parents Action for Children (formerly the I Am Your Child Foundation) emerged under the leadership of child advocate, director and actor Rod Reiner in 1997, and has become a movement participant with its parenting videos and booklets, educational website, and forums for parents to speak directly to elected officials about their and their children's needs.

Several other highly creative groups that have already been mentioned because of their roles in developing parenting skill-building programs are also major movement participants, such as Active Parenting Publishers, American Guidance Services (the STEP Programs), Family Development Resources (the Nurturing Programs), Gordon Training International (the original P.E.T. program and its latest version, Family Effectiveness Training), and Hummingbird Coaching Services with its About My Kids online parenting services.

### **Mass Media Movement Involvement**

Various sectors of the mass media have been involved in the Effective Parenting Movement for years through developing and broadcasting programs that have highlighted the role of parents in such matters as preparing their children for school and for keeping their children off drugs. Some television networks have had national campaigns about everyone working to enhance the development of children, with clear implications about the important roles that parents play.

Programs and tips about "how to parent" are sometimes broadcast as part of local and network news shows. The value of this sort of parenting programming to these media outlets is reflected in the fact that they often schedule these types of shows during the periods when their shows are rated ("the sweeps"). What they charge for advertising time is a function of these ratings. Thus, being seen as a source for helping parents seems to enhance the revenues that support these broadcasts.

The Advertising Council of America, through some of its pro bono campaigns, has been an indirect movement participant through creating campaigns that address such problems as child abuse.

As has already been mentioned, the Internet has become a major participant through the numerous websites that are devoted to providing parents with valuable information and products about children and child rearing.

### **The Federal Government and the Movement**

As has also been mentioned several times, the federal government itself has been a major part of this Effective Parenting Movement, both historically and contemporaneously. In addition to the programs already mentioned that federal government grants helped to create, evaluate, and conduct, the federal government, through its Health and Human Services Department, previously sponsored an Education for Parenthood Program to train youth how to be effective parents. That federal government program no longer exists, but community groups like the Prepare Tomorrow's Parents organization has continued to advocate for this type of education for our youngsters, and there are now several locally developed programs for training our youth for effective parenting, like the Parents Under Construction Program in Houston.

The federal government, through the Department of Agriculture's decades old Cooperative Extension efforts, has been sponsoring a wide range of parenting education services nationwide through local cooperative extension offices. It has also, through the Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau, been sponsoring parenting involvement and education services as part of the nationwide Head Start program, including its own Exploring Parenting curriculum.

Various federal government departments, beginning with Health and Human Service's previously mentioned Parent Training Is Prevention Project, have begun identifying and acknowledging those parenting and family life enhancement programs that have the strongest research to support their effectiveness. In addition to HHS, through its current National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), the Departments of Education and Justice have also been promoting the use of evidenced-based parenting and family life enhancement programs.

The George W. Bush administration has initiated several parenting education and parenting enhancement projects during its tenure. These include the already mentioned parent involvement emphasis in its No Child Left Behind school reform initiative. Also included is its related parent educating initiative to help parents learn to read regularly to their children. A Promoting Responsible Fatherhood program is also a Bush Administration undertaking to promote more parents being effective, as is its initiative to encourage Healthy Marriages, because the research shows that children who are raised within healthy marriages are more effectively parented.

Another federal government undertaking that speaks to its participation in the Effective Parenting Movement is the fact that in 1994 a National Parent's Day law was passed that established the fourth Sunday of every July as a recurring, perennial day of commemoration. The law indicates that "all private citizens, organizations, and government and legislative bodies at the local, State and Federal level are encouraged to recognize Parents' Day through proclamations, activities and educational efforts in furtherance of recognizing, uplifting and supporting the role of parents in the rearing of their children."

### **Summary and Status of the Movement**

So our country has a movement with participants from nearly all segments of American life, and its purpose is to better prepare parents to carry out the awesome responsibilities of guiding the development of the next generation of adults, workers, parents and leaders. We also have a national holiday to celebrate the work of America's parents.

But the movement is not an organized and officially acknowledged undertaking. The holiday that could bring it visibility is only sporadically celebrated and basically unknown to the average person.

In addition, the movement in its current state is itself far from being as effective as it could be, as is reflected in the millions of children who continue to be abused by parents, who drop out of school, who become drug abusers, join gangs, and become criminals and abusers of their own children.

While some groups and individuals from nearly all segments of society are involved and committed to this movement, only a fraction of American families have benefited from those elements of the movement that are known to create significant improvements in the quality of parenting that America's children receive. For example, it is estimated that less than 10 percent of parents have ever enrolled in a parenting skill-building program.

What this important movement needs – what America needs – are champions to bring its benefits to the attention of everyone in our society, and to strengthen the movement so that every parent can receive the best possible education, training and support.

Only persons with high status and stature in our country can be effective in such a championing role.

The best person for this championing role is the person who has the overall responsibility in our nation for insuring life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the President of the United States. Other excellent candidates to be champions are the members of Congress from every state.

Therefore, it is herein proposed that the President and the members of Congress become the champions of The Effective Parenting Movement in the United States, with the goal of making effective parenting and parenting education viable and visible national priorities.

A plan for such high level championing follows -- a plan that involves organizing the participation of every sector of our society with leadership from our highest elected officials.

## **NATIONAL EFFECTIVE PARENTING INITIATIVE**

Because of the many benefits that effective parenting brings to communities, and because of the costly and tragic problems that effective parenting helps to prevent, it is herein proposed that the President of the United States and members of Congress become the champions of an Effective Parenting Initiative.

The four interrelated purposes of the Effective Parenting Initiative will be to:

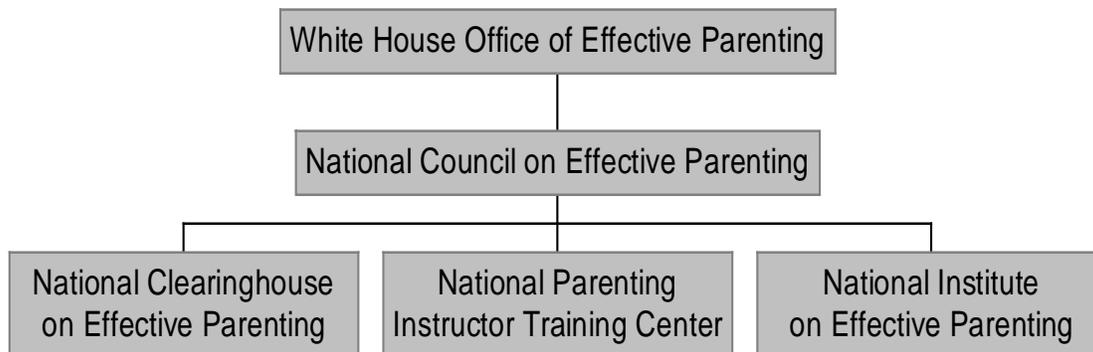
1. Acknowledge and celebrate the importance of effective parenting and parenting education,
2. Increase the awareness and use of effective parenting programs and resources,
3. Increase the availability of the full spectrum of effective parenting programs and resources, and
4. Increase the effectiveness of current programs and resources, as well as develop new programs and resources as needed.

These objectives are to be achieved through the creation of new federal government entities that would work closely with both the current federal government departments that are involved in the effective parenting movement and with all of the previously mentioned private sector institutions that compose this unorganized but critically important movement. As has been indicated, these societal institutions include faith-based, education, mass media, philanthropic, business, health, mental health, social service, child care, legal, and child welfare institutions, as well as the organizations that create and disseminate effective parenting programs and resources, and the professions and groups who conduct the research on parent effectiveness and on the effectiveness of parenting programs.

All of these government and private sector institutions would be systematically brought together to work on achieving the four major objectives through a new Department of Effective Parenting with cabinet level status and with a Secretary of Effective Parenting. If this highest level structure is not possible to create right now for political and other considerations, a White House Office of Effective Parenting could be created with a presidential appointee heading it up.

### **Department of Effective Parenting/White House Office of Effective Parenting**

The Department of Effective Parenting/White House Office of Effective Parenting would oversee a prestigious National Council on Effective Parenting composed of leaders from all of the government and non-government groups mentioned above. The National Council representatives would be organized into Task Forces to address the four objectives, and would relate to three new federal government agencies that would be created to ensure that the objectives are met (a National Clearinghouse on Effective Parenting, a National Parenting Instructor Training Center, and a National Institute on Effective Parenting). A diagram below illustrates these new entities.



One of the first actions of the Department of Parenting/Office of Effective Parenting would be to create and convene the National Council on Effective Parenting.

### **National Council on Effective Parenting**

As has been mentioned, this prestigious Council would be composed of representatives from all of the federal departments and agencies who are already movement participants, and all of the major private sector institutions.

Each member of this oversight Council will have the responsibility for ensuring that effective parenting and parenting education are and continue to be priorities within their institutions and that their institutions will work toward achieving the four interrelated objectives. A concrete manifestation of this prioritization and

commitment would be the designation within each institution or group of a Director of Effective Parenting and Parenting Education.

At the federal government level, each federal agency already involved in the movement would appoint its own Director of Effective Parenting and Parenting Education. There is precedent for this type of issue-focused directorship at the federal level, such as the departmental personnel who have been designated to maintain and ensure a focus on the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives during the current Bush administration.

From the private sector institutions, similar directors would be appointed, such as the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. having all of its member denominations appoint their own Directors of Effective Parenting and Parenting Education, and media institutions like television networks and the National Association of Broadcasters appoint Directors of Effective Parenting and Parenting Education Programming.

In so doing, all of the members of the National Council will begin to have internal structures through which they can carry out the actions of the Council.

The Council itself would be organized into Task Forces that address the various objectives and which relate to three new government entities that will need to be created to achieve these objectives.

### **National Clearinghouse on Effective Parenting**

This information sharing and achievement-acknowledging clearinghouse will have three main purposes:

1. To share information on what constitutes effective parenting, with an emphasis on sharing the results of research studies on effective parenting. Also, because being knowledgeable about child development is such an important facet of being an effective parent, the clearinghouse will also collect and share the latest research on child development, such as research on social and emotional development, research on cognitive and intellectual development, etc.

These types of information will be obtained and updated from the various government and private sector research groups and institutes that conduct and support research on parenting and child development, as well as from the allied professional associations such as the American Psychological Association's Society for Research in Child Development. These research groups will be mentioned later when we discuss another new entity that needs to be created, a National Institute on Effective Parenting. Back to the Clearinghouse and its second major function:

2. To share information on parent effectiveness programs and resources, such as information on the various parenting skill-building programs. This information will be obtained and updated from the various federal government departments who are involved in identifying and acknowledging those parenting and family life education programs that have the strongest research to support their effectiveness, and from private sector national organizations like the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring who are already involved in collecting and disseminating information about high quality parent effectiveness programs.

The Clearinghouse will be responsible for summarizing the research on effective parenting and child development, and the descriptions of the parent effectiveness programs and other resources, into easily understood and easily conveyed language. It will use a variety of vehicles for sharing this information with the public and with the professional groups who work with children and parents. Such vehicles will include electronic newsletters like CICC's Effective Parenting newsletter, and television advertising campaigns like the current Parents: The Anti-Drug campaign.

3. The Clearinghouse will also be responsible for organizing and implementing Parents' Day celebrations on a national basis each year and thereby help to make this holiday more visible and meaningful. In addition, it will have the charge of creating a system for acknowledging parents who are taking concrete steps to become as effective as possible, such as creating a Presidential Certificate of Appreciation to be awarded every parent who successfully completes a parent effectiveness training class.

The Task Force from the National Council on Effective Parenting that will work particularly closely with the Clearinghouse will have to have members that represent the institutions that are in the best positions for facilitating the sharing of this information with the general public, such as members that represent media institutions.

### **National Parenting Instructor Training Center**

This second new federal government level entity, and its related Task Force from the National Council on Effective Parenting, is needed to address certain problems that have been mentioned regarding the uneven availability of parenting skill-building programs.

These programs, and the classes for parents where their skills and ideas are taught, have been shown to be the most effective in teaching parents the authoritative orientation to raising children. There are now several excellent parenting skill-building programs designed for many different parent populations.

Bringing these programs into communities requires that communities have personnel who are trained and qualified to deliver them. This is usually accomplished through the professional training of educators, counselors, social workers, nurses and psychologists from each community to be instructors of the specific programs. Here these personnel are trained through intensive workshops designed and conducted by the organizations and companies who created the programs.

To address the dual facts that (1) many communities do not have even one parenting skill-building program available for its parents to enroll in, and (2) that no community has the full spectrum of parenting skill-building programs available, a National Parenting Instructor Training Center needs to be created.

This Training Center would have the responsibility for providing and facilitating the training of a wide spectrum of appropriate personnel in every community to deliver the full range of parenting skill-building programs. The Training Center can accomplish this by providing and sponsoring instructor training workshops itself and/or by facilitating the sponsorship of such workshops through other government and private sector institutions. For example, training for social service, child welfare and child protective service personnel is currently supported by the Department of Health and Human Services, as is the training of various categories of health and mental health personnel. So too is the training of educational personnel supported through the Department of Education. The new Training Center could facilitate the training of parenting instructors by working closely with these already existing federal government-supported professional training efforts and seeing to it that they provide parenting instructor training workshops themselves.

With assistance and support of the National Parenting Instructor Training Center, and its Task Force from the National Council on Effective Parenting, these departmental training efforts would reach every community in the nation, as every community has school districts, social service, health and mental health institutions. These state, county and city entities could be the local sponsors of parenting instructor training workshops.

Another way that the National Parenting Instructor Training Center could facilitate the preparation of instructors is to work closely with the colleges and universities where educators, social workers, counselors

and psychologists receive their degrees. These departments could offer training workshops to prepare their students to deliver parenting skill-building programs, with technical assistance from the National Training Center.

The National Parenting Instructor Training Center would also address such related issues as whether there should be generic training and preparation of parenting instructors, in addition to training in learning how to deliver specific programs. Several colleges like Wheelock College in Massachusetts with its specialty in parenting education and organizations like the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring have developed generic training programs, with or without training to deliver specific programs. The National Council on Family Relations has been involved in certifying family life educators. All of these groups could be involved in the National Parenting Instructor Training Center's deliberations and decisions on this matter.

The Task Force from the National Council of Effective Parenting that would work with the National Parenting Instructor Training Center would obviously have to include representatives from the organizations who created the parenting skill-building programs and representatives from the federal government departments already involved in supporting the training of local education, health and social service personnel.

### **National Institute on Effective Parenting**

This research and program evaluation entity will have at least five interrelated purposes. It will be responsible for:

1. Supporting and stimulating research on child-parent relations to ensure that the American public is well-informed about what constitutes effective parenting in our society.
2. Supporting and stimulating research on child development to ensure that the American public is well-informed about how children develop in the various areas of child development and what learning processes are involved.

In its work in supporting and facilitating these types of research, this new National Institute will establish working relationships with similar federal government research institutes that have in the past or are currently conducting research in these or related areas, like the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development. It will also work closely with private sector foundations that support these types of research and with private sector research institutes who focus on children and families.

As has already been mentioned, the National Institute on Effective Parenting will have primary responsibility for getting these types of scientific findings to the National Clearinghouse on Effective Parenting so the Clearinghouse can distil and disseminate them to the general public.

3. Supporting and stimulating research on the effectiveness of different parenting skill-building programs and the different ways of educating parents about effective parenting and child development.

A variety of such studies need to be done, such as studies (1) comparing the effectiveness of different parenting skill-building programs with the same parent population, (2) comparing the effectiveness of one particular skill-building program with different parent populations, (3) comparing the effectiveness and costs of parenting skill-building classes versus parenting videos, CDs or written guides, (4) comparing the effectiveness of programs that have more than one intervention component (a parent training component, a child social skills component, a therapy or counseling component, etc.) with single component programs,

and (5) studies which examine the benefits of the advice and information that parents receive over the Internet and through television programming.

4. Supporting and stimulating research to create new parenting skill-building programs and new parenting education resources to address gaps in the current array of programs and to address emerging needs. Here, for example, the Institute would support the development of skill-building programs for such parent populations as Asian Americans who do not currently have programs that address their unique needs and histories.
5. Supporting and stimulating studies of the cost effectiveness of providing various parent effectiveness interventions, and studies on the broader societal benefits of training and educating parents to be as effective as possible, including cost offset studies. The latter should include longitudinal studies where communities that provide extensive training for the majority of its parents are compared to communities with fewer trained parents in terms of child abuse, drug abuse, delinquency and child health indicators, and noting the amount of money that is saved by communities that invest in broadbased parenting education. Similar studies of corporations and health maintenance organizations that invest in parenting education also need to be done, so that such expected outcomes as increases in employee productivity and decreases in use of medical benefits can be better documented and the allied cost savings expressed in actual dollar figures.

For example, researchers who have compared the costs of high quality early intervention programs for children who are at high risk for having disabilities and other special needs have been able to determine that such programs (which always include parent education or parent counseling components) result in substantial savings (Barett, in Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention, 2000). The researchers first calculate the costs of providing high quality early intervention programs. Then they look at the long term results of such programs in terms of how much more productive the children become in terms of being able to work and live independently. They also look at the treatment, special education and legal services that did not have to be provided because the early intervention programs were successful in helping to mainstream the children. Then they calculate the taxes that these youngsters pay as adults, and the money that is saved from their not having to live in institutions and receive extensive remedial and legal services. A dollar amount per child in terms of taxes paid and treatment costs saved is then calculated. This figure is then subtracted from the costs of providing the early intervention programs.

This type of cost offset study has resulted in showing that there is an overall societal savings of at least \$30,000 per high risk child who is helped through quality early intervention programs that include parenting education and support. When that \$30,000 is multiplied by the number of such children who could but are not being helped by such thoughtful programming (1.6 million high risk children under five years of age), it is possible to determine what the total savings would be to our society and economy if we did assure that all such children receive the valued program assistance. That total figure is 48.3 billion dollars! That total represents what we are paying for not providing such programming for every high risk child and what we could be saving in tax-payer dollars if we did provide these programs for every such child and his or her family.

These are the types of cost offset studies that the National Institute on Effective Parenting would design and conduct, as part of its broad research and evaluation agenda. This Institute would have the responsibility for conducting and funding some of these studies, and for stimulating other government and private sector groups to conduct and fund some of the studies.

The overall research and evaluation agenda of this new National Institute would be shared with every college and university in the country. The purpose would be to stimulate the research faculty and their

students to conduct research in these areas as faculty research projects and as student thesis and dissertation projects. In this way, a new generation of qualified researchers in these socially important areas would be cultivated and trained.

### **Financing the National Effective Parenting Initiative**

Creating new federal government agencies like the Effective Parenting Clearinghouse, Instructor Training Center and the National Institute will require an expenditure of tax dollars. However, the funds needed to run these agencies do not have to be all new tax dollars. Some of the funding can be through re-allocating existing federal funding. For example, the federal agencies that fund training for social service, education and health personnel could allocate a percentage of their training budget to support the budget of the National Parenting Instructor Training Center. Current federal funding for foster care and other out-of-home placement for abused and neglected children can be allocated for parent training purposes. Thus, a careful analysis of all current federal government spending and a commitment to make effective parenting and parenting education national priorities could result in very few new tax dollars being needed to support the proposed new federal government agencies.

Even if new tax dollars are needed they should be monies well worth expending, given that it seems likely that any such funds allocated today will be offset by monetary savings tomorrow, to say nothing of the human suffering that is likely to be avoided and the immediate benefits of healthier and more achieving children that are likely to be observed.

The various private sector groups who will be represented on the National Council on Effective Parenting can also be funders of different facets of this Initiative. Media groups, and groups like the Advertising Council of America, can help to fund the dissemination of information on effective parenting and parenting education working closely with the Clearinghouse. Private foundations can make parenting education services, programs and research priorities for their funding. So can the United Way of America. The various employee giving programs, including federal and corporate employee programs, could make the funding of organizations that provide parenting education services a priority.

Private sector health groups could be looked to for funding of the research on the anticipated reduction in health care costs through providing parent effectiveness programs and services. Corporate foundations could be similarly inspired to fund studies on the anticipated productivity increases and health care cost reductions for providing employees with helpful parenting services. Funding for the overall Initiative could be sought from Foundations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that are known to take on issues of broad scope.

All of these funding and supporting activities are very likely to occur with leadership of this Initiative by the President and the members of Congress, as such leadership and support signals the national importance of this effort, and makes it one's civic responsibility to participate.

This leadership should also inspire state governments to create similar initiatives, using its own tax dollars and creativity. Some states like California that have the proposition option available could fund and support their Effective Parenting Initiative through this type of vehicle.

And every parent in America could support and fund this Initiative by budgeting each year to pay for its own parenting education. Indeed, if every parent who could afford \$200 a year for paying the enrollment fee for a parenting skill-building class set aside that minimal amount, free market forces would be set in motion that would help fund the delivery of parenting skill-building programs. For example, more professionals and more local organizations are likely to pay themselves for their becoming certified to deliver parenting skill-building programs if they knew that the programs can be offered on a fee-for-service basis and that numerous parents

are prepared to enroll and pay the enrollment cost. In a situation like that, an abundance of a variety of programs and classes are likely to be made available.

So, one of the many things that the President and members of Congress could do to lead this Initiative is to orient America's parents to take more responsibility for funding their own education for parenting. For, indeed, if a person chooses to be a parent, it is that person's responsibility to be the best parent he or she can be. And part of being the best possible parent involves seeking out and paying for one's own parenting education.

### **Conclusion**

Embracing and actualizing the proposed Effective Parenting Initiative has the potential to make America the model of the world in terms of being a child and family-friendly nation. At a juncture in history when the United States of America is seen as being a particularly aggressive nation, it would be timely to offset that view with strong evidence of compassion and competence in carrying out the most basic responsibility of any society, the raising of its young.

Championing the proposed Effective Parenting Initiative would be totally consistent with the current President's own words in a proclamation on Parents' Day:

"Parents are role models for their children. With patience, sacrifice, and love, they teach their children life lessons and prepare them for the future. We honor parents for their dedication to providing our Nation's children with the love and support they need." Actualizing a National Effective Parenting Initiative would be honoring parents for becoming as effective and as humane as possible in loving and supporting the children of America.

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## KERBY T. ALVY, PH.D.



Dr. Alvy is a nationally and internationally respected authority on parenting and parent training. He is the Executive Director and Founder of the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring, which has received worldwide acclaim for creating, delivering and disseminating model parent training programs. All of the activities and projects of the Center are designed to bring coherence and strength to the nationwide Effective Parenting Movement to improve the overall quality of parenting in the United States.

Dr. Alvy is a prolific author of books and articles on parenting, child development, and child abuse, as well as authoring and co-authoring parenting education programs and seminars. His books include [Parent Training Today: A Social Necessity](#), one of the most comprehensive and authoritative books ever written on parent training, [Black Parenting: Strategies for Training](#), a groundbreaking book of research on African American parenting and implications for culturally-specific parent training, [The Power of Positive Parenting](#), a guidebook for parents that many consider to be the “manual” that should come with every child, [The CICC Discovery Tool](#) about educating parents about child development and identifying and helping young children with special needs, and [Bringing Parenting Education Into the Early Childhood Care and Education System](#) about a model approach for making this nationwide system responsive to the education and training needs of parents. Other publications by Dr. Alvy have appeared on the editorial pages of metropolitan newspapers and in such professional journals as the *American Psychologist* and the *Journal of Community Psychology*. He is also the designer and author of [The National Effective Parenting Initiative to Make the United States of America a Model Child and Family-Friendly Nation](#).

The parenting education programs and seminars that Dr. Alvy has authored and co-authored include [the Center’s trio of national model programs](#): Confident Parenting: Survival Skill Training, Effective Black Parenting and Los Niños Bien Educados. The latter two programs have become the most widely used culturally-specific parenting skill-building programs in the United States.

His expertise as a researcher and scientist has been acknowledged through research and demonstration grants from a variety of federal government agencies and from his being selected to serve on scientific review committees. Dr. Alvy has been a Principal Investigator on research projects sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, as well as being Principal Investigator on the research project funded by the First 5 LA Proposition 10 Commission to further validate The CICC Discovery Tool.

Dr. Alvy has also distinguished himself as a creator and director of numerous community service projects to increase parental effectiveness and reduce child abuse, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, school failure and gang involvement. Projects that he has designed and directed have gained the support of various state and local funding bodies, and the support of over 75 private foundations and corporations, including the Ford Foundation, AT&T, Xerox, Annenberg, Mattel and Hearst.

Dr. Alvy was previously affiliated with Kedren Community Mental Health Center in South Central Los Angeles for seven years where he served as Director of Children's Services, and with the California School of Professional Psychology for 17 years where he was a Professor and Dean for Academic Affairs. He has also taught at other institutions, including UCLA and the California State University at Los Angeles.

Dr. Alvy has received numerous awards for his and CICC's accomplishments in improving the quality of child rearing in America, including being honored in the White House in 1995 as part of the First National Parent's Day Celebration, receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award in 1997 from the State University of New York at Albany, where he received his doctorate in Psychology, and earning the "Illuminating the Way to the New Millennium Award" from the Parenting Coalition International and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention in 1999.

Dr. Alvy continues to be an advocate for children's rights before government and civic bodies, and to appear on television and radio programs on child, family and parent training issues. He also continues to serve as a consultant and speaker/guest on these matters to community groups, governmental agencies, corporations, news departments and film and television companies. He draws inspiration and support from his wife, a special education and kindergarten teacher, and their two daughters, Lisa and Brittany. Dr. Alvy now has his own website to facilitate his consulting and speaking (<http://www.drалvy.com>) and his own Web Log (<http://www.educatedparenting.com>)



Alvy Family Photo: Lisa, Dr. Alvy, wife Mary and Brittany, 2005.



President Clinton congratulating Dr. Alvy for CICC's Award for Enhancing the Status of Parents, National Parents Day, Oval Office, Washington, DC, 1995.