

2014-2015

Evaluating the
Choose Your
Partner
Carefully
Campaign

Summary of Findings

*Prevent Child Abuse Nevada
The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy
University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advancing children's issues in Nevada and home to Prevent Child Abuse Nevada (PCA-NV).

As a research center within the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Community Health Sciences, NICRP is dedicated to improving the lives of children through research, advocacy, and other specialized services.

History: NICRP was founded in 1998, based on a vision of First Lady Sandy Miller. She wanted an organization that could bring credible research and rigorous policy analysis to problems that confront Nevada's children. However, her goals did not stop there; she wanted to transform that research into meaningful legislation that would make a real difference in the lives of our children. In 2013, NICRP also became a fully chartered chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America.

Mission: The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP) has a mission to conduct community-based research that will guide the development of programs and services for Nevada's children. NICRP also houses the Nevada chapter for Prevent Child Abuse America, Prevent Child Abuse Nevada (PCA-NV) whose mission is to ensure that Nevada's children thrive in safe, stable, and nurturing environments and relationships. Through providing education, advocacy, and awareness, PCA-NV aims to inspire communities to prevent all forms of child maltreatment.

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“Choose Your Partner Carefully” Campaign

Campaign Background

Too often, child deaths result from abuse or neglect inflicted by a parent’s paramour, relative, or other caretaker, who was not equipped with proper parenting skills yet still entrusted to care for the child because of their relationship with the parent. To combat this problem in Nevada, Prevent Child Abuse Nevada (PCA-NV) at the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy (NICRP) and other community partners, adapted a campaign from Ohio titled, “Choose Your Partner Carefully (CYPC).” The campaign’s existing posters and brochures were modified for use in Nevada. In 2012, funding was received to print and disseminate 20,000 English and 20,000 Spanish informational brochures to agencies that serve families across the state of Nevada. In addition, we were able to use the poster for a bus stop ad and these were displayed at 15 locations across Southern Nevada. Finally, a designated webpage was added to the PCA-NV website where information could be regularly accessed and used on a statewide level.

While the community had a very positive response to the campaign, the campaign materials had not been evaluated. Therefore, in 2013 PCA-NV applied for and received a two-year grant through the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services to conduct an evaluation to measure and improve the effectiveness of the campaign’s materials. Additionally, due to community request, PCA-NV used the campaign materials to develop a one-hour parent training class targeted at single parents. To our knowledge, Nevada is the first state to evaluate the Choose Your Partner Carefully campaign materials.

CYPC Evaluation

In June 2013, PCA-NV began the evaluation of the Choose Your Partner Carefully campaign materials. Overall, the first year of the evaluation was a success. Based on valuable feedback of those that participated in the evaluation of the campaign materials, several modifications were made to the campaign materials. . In June 2014, PCA-NV began the second and final year of the campaign’s evaluation with the newly modified materials. This report is a summary of the second year of the evaluation.

Methods

This evaluation examined the campaign’s printed materials and the one-hour parent training class. The methods used to evaluate both components are described below.

Component One: Evaluation of Printed Materials

Measures: The purpose of the printed materials evaluation was to understand if 1) parents noticed and read the printed materials, 2) what they thought of the printed materials, and 3) if there were any differences in knowledge between individuals who had and had not read the printed materials. To meet these objectives, NICRP developed a control survey that would be administered to parents who had no exposure to the Choose Your Partner Carefully printed materials, and an intervention survey that would be administered to parents who had been exposed to the printed materials. These two surveys shared

the same demographic and knowledge questions, including six true-or-false questions and eight multiple-choice questions. However, the survey for the control group included an additional question to determine if the parents had been previously exposed to the campaign materials, and the survey for the intervention group included a section asking parents if they had seen the campaign materials and for their opinions of those materials.

Additionally, to gain insight on the attitudes and opinions regarding the importance of the messages found within the campaign, the control and intervention survey contained four statements of protective behaviors promoted within the campaign. Participants were asked to indicate the importance of each behavior using a three-point scale of “Yes”, “Somewhat”, or “No”.

All survey participants were compensated for their time with a \$10 gift card to Wal-Mart.

Participants: Two hundred parents were recruited: 100 for the control survey, and 100 for the intervention survey. To appropriately represent Nevada, 80% of the surveys were collected from urban residents (Clark and Washoe County) and 20% from rural residents (all other counties in Nevada). To qualify to participate in the survey, individuals had to be at least 18 years old and consider themselves a parent. Recruitment took place at community organizations and agencies that provide services or subsidies to parents (i.e. Women Infants and Children offices and Family Resource Centers) in order to engage parents that might benefit from this information.

Survey Locations: Selection for the survey sites in Clark County began by sending collaboration invitations via email and telephone to area Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program Directors, with the exception of those who had previously served as survey sites. Among those who replied, WIC offices neighboring the previous survey sites were avoided in an effort to engage new participants. Once the survey sites were identified, the printed campaign materials (brochures and posters) were delivered to the intervention survey sites and displayed for at least two weeks prior to surveying.

In Washoe County, the sole WIC Program Manager with the Washoe County Health District was contacted to collaborate with and select which offices would be able to serve as survey sites for this year’s evaluation. The same two survey sites were approved again as the other sites served too few families. To account for parents who may have participated in last year’s evaluation, the intervention and control sites remained the same. The updated printed materials were delivered to the intervention office to display for at least two weeks prior to surveying. Additionally, there was a question added to all surveys that asked if the materials had been previously seen.

During the 2013-2014 evaluation of the campaign materials, survey sites in the rural county of Churchill were included. This year, in an effort to reach more rural Nevadans, rural counties outside of Churchill were considered. Since most of the rural counties do not have enough community resource locations to host both a control and intervention site, two rural counties were selected to participate in the project this year. To maintain consistency within the recruitment population, selection for the rural survey sites began by reaching out to WIC Program Directors and/or the regional Resource Center Directors in two rural communities: the WIC office in Pahrump of Nye County, which was selected as the intervention site, and the WIC office in Carson City, which was selected as the control site.

Component Two: Parent Trainings

Measures: The purpose of the parent training classes was to 1) increase parent knowledge, 2) gain insight on opinions regarding the importance of the messages within the campaign, 3) obtain feedback

on the one-hour parent training class and printed campaign materials, and 4) measure behavior change and knowledge retention one month following the training.

NICRP developed pre- and post- questionnaires to assess for an increase in knowledge as well as attitudes and opinions regarding the importance of the campaign messages. The knowledge questionnaires contained three Yes/No questions, eight multiple-choice questions, and seven true/false questions. All of the questions were tailored specifically around information provided during the one-hour training. To measure attitudes and opinions, the questionnaire also included four statements regarding the protective behaviors promoted within the campaign. Participants would indicate if they believed that the protective behavior was important by using a three point scale of “Yes”, “Somewhat”, or “No”.

To obtain feedback regarding the parent training class, NICRP developed a Satisfaction Survey which asked participants to rank 12 statements on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree”. The statements assessed participant satisfaction with the logistics of the training class, the trainer, and their overall experience. In addition, participants were asked to list three items discussed within the training that they found to be helpful, three items they did not find helpful, and any additional comments or suggestions. Following the parent training, participants engaged in a focus group discussion to solicit additional feedback on the parent training and the printed campaign materials.

Each parent training class began with a welcome message for participants and a brief overview of the agenda. Participants were provided with a hard copy of the informed consent and then listened as it was read out loud. Attendees, who consented to participate, were then requested to complete a demographic form and pre-knowledge test. Afterward, the trainer conducted a one hour training. Directly following the training, participants were asked to complete a post-questionnaire and a satisfaction survey. Next, the trainer began the focus group discussion and asked participants to provide suggestions that would assist in improving the training and the printed materials. Participants were compensated with a meal and a raffle ticket for a chance to win a \$50 gift card to Wal-Mart. The gift card was raffled immediately following the focus group.

A follow-up survey was administered to attendees one month after the training, via telephone. NICRP developed and conducted the survey in an effort to measure retention of knowledge gained during the training. The follow up survey utilized the same knowledge and opinion questions from the pre- and post- questionnaires used during the training classes. Additionally, the follow-up survey contained four questions to assess for changes in behaviors regarding child care one month following the training. Participants who completed the follow-up survey were mailed a \$15 gift card to Wal-Mart for their time.

Participants: The goal for the sample size was to enroll 60 participants; 40 participants would be recruited from urban counties and 20 from rural counties, in order to appropriately generalize any findings. Participants had to be over the age of 18 and consider themselves a single parent, since engaging the targeted demographic for the campaign was crucial in this component of the evaluation. Additionally, to participate, parents had to be able to understand, read, and write English since PCA-NV only received enough funding to conduct the evaluation in one language.

Training Locations: NICRP made an effort to conduct these parent trainings in the same cities and during the same day as the office surveying in an effort to conserve funds. Therefore, parent training classes were offered in Las Vegas (Clark County), Pahrump (Nye County), and Washoe County (Reno). However, an additional training class was conducted in Elko (Elko County) after the Carson City class was cancelled due to a lack of enrollment.

To this end, NICRP staff distributed recruitment flyers to agencies that served single parents in Clark, Carson City, Elko, Nye, and Washoe counties and announced the class on social media forums. The flyer included a brief description of the class objectives as well as the details of the focus group discussion, requirements to participate, where and when the class was taking place, the incentives for participating, and how to register for the class. When enrolling, either online or by calling NICRP directly, parents were required to verify their eligibility to participate. At this time potential participants were also asked whether or not they needed to bring their children in order to attend and when possible, NICRP made accommodating arrangements. During enrollment, parents were also instructed to leave their contact information so they could be reminded of the upcoming class.

Parent Training Class: The PowerPoint Presentation utilized within the parent-training classes was initially adapted by PCA-NV from a suggested outline provided by the Public Children Services Association of Ohio in their Choose Your Partner Carefully Toolkit. The PCA-NV adaptation described child abuse statistics for Nevada, warning signs of potentially unsafe partners or caregivers, appropriate disciplinary actions based on the age of children, and recommendations on how to screen for safe caregivers before leaving them alone to care for children. In addition, the presentation included information about relationship violence. The presentation concluded with tips on how to protect themselves and their children if abuse is suspected, statewide resources on where to seek shelter from an abuser, and where to look for and qualify for assistance (if needed) to obtain appropriate child care.

Following the first year of the evaluation, PCA-NV's presentation was modified based on suggestions from program participants. Modifications to the presentation included reorganization of existing materials to increase flow of the presentation, more community news stories and video clips, instructions on how to file for a temporary protection order and search for neighboring sex offenders; and resources to aid in planning for appropriate child care.

Results

Component One: Evaluation of Printed Materials

A total of 203 office surveys were collected from community agencies in Washoe County (Reno), Clark County (Las Vegas), Nye County (Pahrump), and Carson City (Carson City). Approximately half of the surveys were collected from the intervention sites (offices that displayed the printed materials), and half were collected from the control sites (offices that did not display the printed materials). The number of surveys distributed within each county was based on the county population; therefore fewer surveys were collected in the rural counties (Nye and Carson City).

The majority of the sample consisted of females between the ages of 18-40 years old. Approximately 38.1% were White/Non-Hispanic and 35.1% were Hispanic. Further, the majority of the participants indicated English as their primary language.

Major Findings

1.) Engagement and Perceptions of Printed Campaign Materials at Intervention Sites

Of those participants that completed the survey at a location where campaign materials were displayed, less than half stated that they noticed the Choose Your Partner Carefully brochure. Of those who

noticed the brochure, almost three-quarters were handed the brochure by a staff member, as opposed to noticing it on their own. Of those who read the brochure, some were previously unaware of key things to look out for in choosing a caregiver, but most said the brochure increased their knowledge in choosing an appropriate caregiver. More specifically, they stated the brochure increased their knowledge on the characteristics of a child abuser as well as inspired them to take more precautionary steps to ensure their child is left with an appropriate caregiver. Lastly, all readers found the brochure to be helpful and would share the brochure with a friend or family member.

About one-third of participants at the intervention sites stated that they noticed the Choose Your Partner Carefully poster. Of those who noticed and read the poster, most were already aware of key things to look for in a caregiver, but all of them found the poster to be helpful. Additionally, they all stated that the poster made them want to be more careful in selecting with whom to leave their child(ren) and would share the information from the poster with a friend or family member.

Finally, no suggestions or recommendations for improving the brochure or poster were offered during the office surveying, but several participants commented on how important and needed the materials were within the community.

3.) Differences in Attitudes on Protective Measures between the Intervention and Control Sites

When comparing the attitudes towards the importance of the protective measures described within the campaign, participants from the intervention and control sites were very similar. Specifically, there were no differences between the two groups with regard to beliefs about the importance of obtaining a background check and observing the interactions of partners, friends, and caregivers with the child prior to leaving them alone together. Additionally, there was not a significant difference in the belief of the importance of creating a back-up plan to ensure appropriate childcare or the belief towards the importance of discussing proper punishment guidelines with new partners and caregivers.

2.) Knowledge from Printed Materials

Last year, it became clear during the evaluation that the questions used to determine if knowledge increased after exposure to the printed materials were too easy; most participants answered all of the questions correctly without exposure to any of the campaign materials and therefore differences were not detected. This year, in an effort to increase the level of difficulty, more questions were included and were more specific to details found in the brochure. Despite these efforts, there was not a statistically significant difference in knowledge between those who had been exposed to the campaign materials and those who had not been exposed.

Component Two: Parent Trainings

Six parent training classes were held this project year in both urban and rural areas of the state. Two training classes were held in Clark County (Las Vegas), and two were held in Washoe County (Reno), one training class was held in Nye County (Pahrump), and one class was held in Elko (Elko). A total of 54 single parents participated in the parent trainings with 83% of attendees being female. Approximately 42.6% of the sample participated in Clark County (Las Vegas), 29.6% participated in Washoe County (Reno), 18.5% participated in Nye County (Pahrump), and 9.3% participated in Elko County (Elko). The participants varied in age and ethnicity, but almost all indicated English as their primary language.

1.) Knowledge

This year, in an effort to better assess an increase in knowledge as a result of the parent training class, the knowledge questions on the pre-, post-, and follow-up questionnaires were modified to include more detailed information from the presentation. Like the questions from the office surveys, consistent changes were made to increase the difficulty level and conceal the correct answers. The results indicate that there was a significant increase in knowledge immediately following the parent training class and this knowledge was retained one month following the training.

2.) Opinions and Attitudes on Protective Behaviors

This year several questions were added to determine if there were changes in the participants self-reported opinions of protective behaviors and their likelihood to engage in behaviors to help identify appropriate caregivers that were discussed in the campaign's brochure and training class. At the conclusion of the training, more participants reported that:

- It was important to conduct a background check on new potential caregivers.
- It was important to observe the interactions of a potential caregiver with their child before leaving them alone together.

Further, all participants indicated that:

- It was important to create a back-up plan for appropriate childcare.
- It was important to discuss proper punishment guidelines and standards of care before leaving their child with their partner or caregiver.

Also following the training, all participants indicated that they intended to take more precautionary steps to ensure their children are left with appropriate caregivers and almost all of the participants agreed that the presentation increased their knowledge on the characteristics of a child abuser as well as their knowledge in choosing an appropriate caregiver for their children.

3.) Behavior Changes at One-Month Follow Up

A total of 40 participants completed the one-month follow up survey. Detailed below are the responses to the four behavior-modification questions from the survey.

The majority of parents (89.5%) noted a change in behavior regarding their choice in a caregiver for their children over the past month. Many parents indicated they had become more cautious and routinely observed the interactions of other adults and friends with their children as well as looked into the backgrounds of potential caregivers before leaving their children with them. Additionally, a few participants confided that they removed their children from their current caregivers or changed their plans for childcare, because after taking the class they realized that their child might have been at risk.

When asked if they had experienced any problems in finding the right person to care for their children, 79.5% of participants indicated they had not had any problems. However, among those that did have difficulties, the problems varied. The most common problem was the inability to find trustworthy caregivers as well as cover the costs associated with conducting background checks to ensure that an appropriate caregiver had been found. A few other participants expressed difficulty in finding childcare that would accommodate their work hours.

Participants were also asked if they had used any information learned in the class in other ways over the past month, to which 75% of the participants indicated they had. Several participants disclosed that after the class, they increased communication with their children to learn how they felt and about their experiences while in childcare. Participants also stated they had used the information given in the class to search for neighboring registered sex offenders, create a back-up childcare plan, and ensure their children were in safe environments when invited to friends' homes for slumber parties. Additionally, the class helped one participant in her dealings with her current partner and another participant in establishing more appropriate punishment guidelines for her child.

Finally, 87.5% of the participants disclosed that they had talked to other people about the information they had learned in the class. Participants most commonly shared the information with family members and friends as well as peers in domestic violence shelters and groups or rehabilitation homes. Several participants disclosed they had discussed the information from the class with new moms or single moms that they knew well or not at all, but believed could benefit from the information. Further, two of these participants sought out parents whose children they believed were at-risk to share the information from the class with them.

4.) Satisfaction

Following the parent training class, the attendees were asked to complete a Satisfaction Survey. A total of 52 attendees participated in the survey. Overall, the results indicate that participants had positive opinions of the class. The majority of attendees agreed that the trainer provided information that would be useful in choosing a caregiver and that the trainer provided at least one action item that could be used in determining who would be an adequate caregiver for their children). Further, most attendees indicated they would recommend the training to a friend or family member.

Also, in response to the three opened-ended questions on the satisfaction survey, the majority of participants felt that all of the information presented in the training was valuable. Specifically, several participants stated that they were previously unaware of the statistics of child abuse and fatalities in Nevada, common signs of child abuse and neglect, and where to find background information on a potential partner or caregiver. Consequently, these participants found the characteristics of child abuse and potential abusers given in the training to be helpful as well as the discussion on the vast resources available to them in Nevada. Overall, participants felt more inspired to observe their children's interactions and behaviors and be more hesitant about with whom they leave their children. Finally, while there were very few suggestions to improve the training, a resounding suggestion was to lengthen the training to include more group discussion.

5.) Focus Group Feedback Results

After the parent training class, participants were asked to engage in a discussion regarding the training and the printed materials to allow for a better understanding of the public's perception of the campaign. Several valuable insights were offered. The comments were consolidated to create a list of recommendations to improve the presentation. These recommendations were then organized into overarching categories. The main recommendations for the parent training class are provided in Table 1 and the main recommendations for the brochure and poster are provided in Table 2. The main suggestions for the training were to 1) stress that abuse by a parent's paramour can result in severe injuries and not just fatalities; 2) define what a risk factor is and how it works so that the information can be interpreted and used correctly, and 3) increase the length of the presentation time to allow for more discussion among the participants and the trainer. The main suggestions for the print materials were to brighten the materials and include additional resources on the back panel of the brochure.

Table 1 Recommendations for Improvement for the Parent-Training

PARENT TRAINING PRESENTATION
Length: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase class, so participants can engage more with each other and the trainer
Logistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider revising the title as participants did not want to come as they are not concerned about choosing a partner, but still helpful in choosing caregiver
Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back-up Plan forms would be more helpful with suggestions on where to get those components • Include simple resources: church or community center; neighbors; meeting other parents & potential helpers through volunteering and getting to know the parents of your child’s friends • Invite people from the recommended community resources to discuss sliding scale fees, etc., or spend more time going over the resources
Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize what risk factors mean • Discuss overcoming potential risk factors through thorough communication with new partners; tips for navigating that conversation • Present overall abuse statistics from partner/caregiver instead of just fatality statistics; some children survive near-fatal attacks (i.e. Pahrump case) • Emphasis age-appropriate discipline and switch it with the term “punishment” due to negative connotation • Give more examples of nonverbal cues of abuse (i.e. clingy child) • Include “What if...?” and/or “What would you do...?” scenarios & practical examples as many people and teens do not watch the news • Encourage parents to follow intuition as background checks are not fool proof or if they are not as bad as their background seems
Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring this class to teen moms; go to high schools, homeless teen shelters • Important class for married people

Table 2 Recommendations for Improvement of the Printed Materials

BROCHURE
Colors or Graphics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarge the print; brighten • Title detracts those who are not concerned about choosing a partner or having a love interest while raising kids
Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background check s costs money; encourage searching on social media, references & hangouts, online newspaper • AlertID phone application is a free download to update on neighboring predators and hazard conditions
POSTER
Colors/Graphics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix the colors up; feels stressful due to the red, black, and grey • Lighten/whiten the background but keep the child; focus on the distressed child; enlarge hand • Consider neon background color; everyone is used to black and red posters • Use same title from brochure to connect information: “Is your child at risk?”

Discussion

The goals of the evaluation were to measure the campaign's effectiveness by evaluating its related campaign materials and utilize the information gained to improve the campaign overall. Below is an summary of the major findings from this report.

1.) Dissemination of Print Materials

The purpose of the evaluation was to understand the effectiveness of the delivery methods the campaign had previously been undertaking by displaying printed materials in offices which served families with young children. This year we attempted to engage more parents by asking office workers at the intervention sites to present the brochures to parents who might benefit from the information therein rather than only displaying them in the office. In total, as compared to last year, fewer parents at the intervention sites noticed the brochure (39.4%) and the poster (37%), however, more parents read the brochure (69.4%) and poster (62.2%). Still, given that such a low percentage of individuals noticed the print materials, this does not seem to be the most effective way to disseminate information. A more active approach may be more effective.

2.) Parent Training Class and Knowledge of Materials

This study also sought to increase parental knowledge about selecting safe caregivers for their children by conducting one hour parent training classes. The results from the knowledge questionnaires indicated an increase in parental knowledge immediately following the class which was maintained one month following the class. The parent training class seems like an appropriate method to increase knowledge on this topic and one way to help prevent related child injuries and fatalities in Nevada. However, it is important to note that many parents may still not be able to find safe and appropriate caregivers for their children, especially in situations where there is minimal notice; therefore Nevada should build resources to help fulfil this community need.

3.) Parent Opinions and Behaviors Related to Choosing a Caregiver

The results from the attitude and opinion items administered to the participants who took the parent training class demonstrate that the class was effective in increasing positive attitudes toward engaging in protective behaviors as well as the likelihood of parents to engage in those behaviors to help identify appropriate caregivers. In addition, those exposed to the campaign materials displayed a desire to share the information with others who might benefit from it, which can be interpreted as an important preventative measure to help ensure the safety of children.

The feedback gathered from the participants in the parent training class demonstrate that the campaign is well received and believed to convey important information. Additionally, the participants expressed a belief that single parents as well as parents who are married or in a committed relationship could benefit from the campaign materials, as many parents are likely to leave their children with another adult at some point during childrearing.

4.) Content of Campaign Materials

Our final goal for the project was to revise the campaign materials to be user friendly. There were very few suggestions for improvement to the campaign materials which suggests that the content within the brochure, poster, and parent training class is effective. However, there were a few suggestions for improvement.

Next Steps

The NICRP staff took this year's suggestions to brighten the campaign's brochure, increase its listed resources, and enlarge its print. The final redesigned brochure has been translated into Spanish and copies in both English and Spanish are currently being disseminated across Nevada. The parent training presentation is also in its last stages of modification and will be available statewide by the end of the year for community agencies who wish to utilize the information therein. Prevent Child Abuse Nevada is planning a train the trainer event to help other agencies implement this training with their clients.