



Free Papers Presentation

Healthy Start Volunteer Home Visitation Project

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Introduction:

Caring for infants is a crucial time for both children and new parents. Overseas studies (Olds, D. L. & Kitzman, H., 1990; Krugman, R. D., 1993) have proven home visitation programs have positive impact on strengthening family and preventing child abuse. Against Child Abuse (ACA) piloted the Healthy Start Volunteer Home Visitation Project in 1997. Two studies (1997-2000 and 2000-2002) had been conducted to examine the effectiveness of the project by Dr Chan Yuk Chung and Dr Gladys Lam, Associate Professors of Kong Hong Polytechnic University. Since then, a mixed professional-volunteer model to provide home visitation support to new born families and risky families has been adopted to other projects such as the Good Parenting Project in collaboration with UCH (2007-2010) and the Joy at Home Project in collaboration with CAC (2008-2010).

Purpose of the Project:

1. To provide support and to reduce stress and anxiety of families with new born;
2. To acquire positive parenting knowledge and skills;
3. To prevent child abuse and neglect at an earliest stage.

Material & Methods:

1st Study: UCLA-Loneliness Scale, Chinese Depressive Symptom Scale, Index of Marital Satisfaction and Index of Parent Attitude were used. A total of 117 mothers in the project and 41 mothers in control group completed the pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Six mothers and six volunteers participated in the semi-structured interview.

2nd Study: Child Abuse Potential (CAP) Inventory was used to measure the direct effect of the project on reducing child abuse potential. 29 respondents completed the Inventory before and after the project.

Results:

1st Study: Results show that volunteer home visitation is effective in alleviating lonely feeling and depressive symptom. Marital satisfaction and availability are crucial factors affecting mothers' emotions and well-being during pregnancy and child birth. The mothers appreciated the volunteers' support.

2nd Study: Result shows significant decrease in child abuse potential score upon project completion.

Conclusions:

Home visitation is proven to be an effective strategy of child protection in local context. Volunteers in a pure lay model of home visitation cannot solve complicated personal and family relationship problem. However, volunteer home visitation is appreciated by families as a non-stigmatizing service. A mixed model incorporating professional social workers and lay volunteers is recommended in the local context.