



Additions and Adjustments in the Strengthening Families Program SFP 7-17 Lessons vs. SFP 6-11 and SFP 12-16

1. The parenting skills in SFP6-11 and SFP12-16 were combined into one parenting model so families with children in both age categories could attend the same class. (SFP 7-17 has lessons for Parents, Teens, Children (ages 6-11), and the Family Practice Session.)
2. The order of the Parent lessons was changed so that each skill builds on the previous one. Examples:
 - a) The Communication and Family Meeting was moved from Lesson #5 to Lesson #2 so families could begin quickly speaking nicely to one another, and could use the Family Meeting time to discuss SFP skills earlier in the series.
 - b) The Problem-Solving Lesson #5 was moved so it comes before #6 Anger Management, so parent and youth would have skills to solve problems that made them angry before we ask them to manage their anger.)
 - c) The three discipline lessons (#10, #11, #12) were combined into one Positive Discipline lesson, and moved to Lesson #4. The discipline skills actually work together as a whole; and it is best to learn to implement them the same week. The lesson was moved to #4 so parents would have the skills they needed to correct misbehavior in a more effective way sooner in the lesson series, so they would know how to correct misbehavior without resorting to harsh discipline which harms the parent-child relationship. This move also gives parents more time to work on these skills with their Family Coaches (our new title for group leaders) before the SFP classes end. It also allowed us to shorten the series from 14 weeks to 11 weeks, without affecting outcomes. This lowers the cost of hosting classes, and increases retention.
3. The order of the Youth lessons was changed so the youth are learning the same subject and skills that the parents are learning in each weekly lesson. This facilitates parents and youth discussing and practicing the same skills together in the Family Practice session and at home. *(This differs from SFP6-11 and SFP12-6 where parents and youth occasionally learn different subjects in their weekly class sessions.)*
4. The Family Session was adjusted so it focuses more on parent-child skill practice of the skills they learned in their class lessons, instead of just playing games; as skill practice in class helps ensure they will do it at home.
5. We added songs, stories, and “Power-Moves” (kinesthetic learning technique on each major skill) to the Children’s lessons to increase effectiveness and skill retention. Parents learn them too, to practice at home with their children.
6. The Lesson 5 Problem- Solving lesson has two new components: One on Win-Win Negotiation, and an additional component for the Teen and Child lessons on how to identify and say “no” to “trouble-invitations.” They work with their parents during the



Family Practice Session on how to recognize problem behaviors that could get them in trouble and practicing the “5-C’s of “How to Say ‘No’ and still keep your friends.”

7. New information on Anger Management was added to lesson #6, including ways to track anger triggers and cues, cool “hot-thoughts” that produce rage, and re-program anger habits by “walking through” new prosocial responses to their usual anger triggers.
8. The skill of Monitoring/supervising children and teens' emotional well-being and their social activities to see that they stay in an alcohol and drug free environment was added to the SFP lessons. (Dr. Kumpfer’s research showed that this is one of the three key prevention skills, along with Bonding, and setting clear rules or Boundaries). We added more information in the Teen and Child classes on how to choose (and become) a “good” friend to help their friends stay drug and alcohol-free.
9. More information on how alcohol, marijuana cause youth brain damage was added, including videos of scientists showing the damage in their brain scans. Information on prescription drug abuse and the harms of e-cigarettes and vaping were added, which are missing in previous SFP lessons.
10. Important information on Brain Development was added to the first lesson of SFP, as well as information on how practice changes the brain and increases neuron density to create new habits. This information gives people hope they can change, confidence that skill-practice can make it happen, and a greater willingness to do their home practice assignment. We also teach families how to have a healthy brain in this lesson, including having a healthy diet, exercise, adequate sleep, and avoiding automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) through Mindfulness. Better brain health means better behavior.
11. Mindfulness (which we describe as a “brain-training skill), was added to SFP 7-17, as it has been shown to increase neural density in the brain’s pre-frontal cortex, which increases emotional regulation and the ability to focus, and reduces anxiety and stress. Families learn how to recognize Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)and dismiss them. We added a mini-mindfulness activity to the beginning of each SFP lesson.
12. We updated the SFP Handouts and added many new ones.
13. We created a Home-Use 11-session video series that parallels the SFP 7-17 lessons, for families to watch at home for a review, or if they have to miss a lesson.
14. We added video clips from the SFP Home-Use videos to the lessons to show the SFP skills they discuss in class in action.
15. PowerPoints were added to the SFP lessons, to better keep attention focused during in-person lessons, and also to teach SFP 7-17 effectively online via Zoom.



16. We changed the name of a SFP facilitator from a “Group Leader” to a “Family Coach” to help families feel more connected to them, and be more willing to take his/her advice and practice the SFP skills.
17. We re-structured the SFP 7-17 Family Coaches’ training be held online if needed; and we added a teacher-training module we call the “SFP 12-Step Teaching Model” as the best method to teach SFP classes, because that method helps the family members better absorb the SFP concepts; and also helps them to “bond” with their coaches. This, in turn, motivates families to practice the skills at home, and master the SFP skills faster.
(In brief, this method requires that the Coach follows this pattern with each major concept taught: Review past skills; praise efforts; teach new skill; ask questions about the skill; show video clip of skill; give live skill-demonstration; tell a success story using the skill, ask for situations in their lives where the skill would be useful; have families practice the skill using their situations; praise their efforts; resolve concerns; commit them to practice and use the skill at home).
18. We added the “12 Essential Qualities of an Effective SFP Family Coach” to the SFP 7-17 training, so Coaches learn how to connect with families and motivate them to adopt and practice the SFP skills.

How have these “adjustments” in SFP content and lesson order improved outcomes?

Dr. Karol Kumpfer, the original creator of all SFP programs, did an evaluation of outcomes comparing SFP 7-17 classes to the SFP Home-Use Video and SFP 6-11 and SFP12-16 class lessons. Here is the abstract from her published paper:

Effectiveness of the *Strengthening Families Program 7 to 17 Years* in Group Class and Home Use DVD Versions Compared to the Evidence-based SFP 12-16 Years

ABSTRACT

“Significance. After 12 years of continuous decreases, adolescent substance abuse has increased since 2008 in the U.S. particularly in 30-day binge drinking and marijuana and prescription drug use (SAMHSA, 2015). This upswing could lead to increased social and health care costs, including mortalities from traffic crashes, which had dropped by a third. According to comparative effectiveness reviews including the Cochrane Reviews (Foxcroft, et al., 2003; Foxcroft & Tsertsvadze, 2012) and CSAP’s cost-benefit analysis (Miller & Hendrie, 2008), the most successful evidence-based program (EBP) to prevent youth substance use is the *Strengthening Families Program* (SFP). Like other effective family interventions, SFP changes the family environment to produce immediate and long-term results. The group classes, which parents and youth attend together, teach research-based parenting, family relationship, and youth social skills. SFP is cost effective (\$9.60 to 11 saved/dollar spent), yet costly to administer—\$880 to \$1400/family for a 7 or 14 week course.

Methods. The aim of this pilot study was to determine if a newly created and much lower cost 11-session Home Use SFP DVD for parents and youth aged 7-17 years was as effective as its new 11-session group class version for parents and youth aged 7-17 years which included video clips from the SFP DVDs. About 244 parents and youth from 61 families watched the SFP DVD at home; and 144 parents and children from 36 families of 6th and 8th graders attended SFP 7-17 parent and youth group classes which were held in the evening at four inner city schools. Valid data on the same SFP standardized instrument was collected from 55 families completing the Home Use DVD and 29 families completing the SFP 7-17 group classes. Using a quasi-experimental 2 group x 2 repeated measures (pre-and post-test) design, both within and between group results were analyzed using 2 x 2 ANOVAs. This analysis included Cohen's d effect sizes to compare the Home Use DVD condition to the SFP 7-17 group classes condition. Results of both new experimental conditions were also compared to the existing evidence-based 14-session SFP 12-16 year norms, but using only the same aged youth.

Results. The outcomes revealed the 11-session SFP7-17 group class outcomes were significantly better than the 14-session SFP norms particularly in larger positive youth improvements. All seven youth outcomes had larger effect sizes with a mean of $d = .54$ vs. $.48$ than the much longer and more expensive 14-session SFP 12-16 Years.

Major protective factors in the youth increased significantly including improved social skills and concentration and reduced depression, overt and covert aggression and also attention deficit. The **Home Use DVD** had almost as large Cohen's d effect sizes for the mean of the five family outcomes ($d = .69$ vs. $.70$), but not the five parenting outcomes ($d = .48$ vs. $.65$). The results are presented with implications of the use of computer technology increasing dissemination by reducing cost.

Conclusions. The results of this pilot study suggest that the new Home Use SFP 7- 17 DVD has the potential to be a very cost-effective way to reduce risk factors for adolescent substance abuse. If proven effective in larger scale RCTs in improving risk and protective factors plus reducing substance use, the new SFP DVDs and a planned interactive web version will be widely disseminated at minimal cost (\$5). A more cost-beneficial SFP has the potential to create a dramatic breakthrough in low-cost dissemination of EBPs to create major public health impact in reducing adolescent substance use and associated mental, physical, and social costs."