



# Washington State University

Snohomish County Extension

2018

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## BY THE NUMBERS

- The Snohomish County Human Services Department funded WSU Extension to coordinate and support 18 implementations for SFP 10–14 in Snohomish County in 2018.
- SFP 10–14 reached 304 youth and parents with impactful tools & skills.
- Twenty-three (23) individuals from middle schools and agencies were trained as SFP Facilitators.
- The number of bilingual Spanish facilitators almost doubled to 17 in 2018.



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# Strengthening Families

Program for Parents & Youth ages 10-14 (SFP 10-14)

Reducing risky teen behavior by building family strengths

## ISSUE

Substance abuse is a serious and costly problem in Washington and nationwide. In a 2016 survey by the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 20% of 10th graders in Washington said they had been drunk in the past 30 days, and five percent had driven while drinking. There is also an increase in use of other illegal drugs among 10th Graders.

While there is lots of good information for parents of younger children and for teenagers, there is very little information about parenting children from ages 10–14, who are transitioning from childhood to adolescence. This is a risky period, and it is difficult for parents to accommodate their children's growing need for autonomy while still monitoring their behavior and keeping them safe.

## RESPONSE

Families are important sources of support and guidance for children, and the welfare of children is tied to the strength of their families. Strong family relationships promote healthy development and protect against teen substance use.

The WSU Extension Parenting team did a needs assessment and identified parents of children in this transitional developmental stage as underserved.

The internationally recognized, award-winning Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth ages 10–14 is a parent, youth and family skills-building curriculum that focuses on strengthening parenting skills, building family strengths, and preventing teen substance abuse and other behavioral problems. It also strives to improve parental nurturing and limit-setting skills, improve communication skills for parents and youth, and encourage youth pro-social skills development.

Strengthening Families is a 7-week program for parents and their youth ages 10–14. We offer guided activities and lessons to help parents and their youth transition into their teen years.



## RESPONSE *continued*

The program is seven weeks long. Each weekly session typically includes a group snack or meal, followed by separate workshops for parents and children, then family activities that encourage communication and closeness. Parents learn and rehearse best-practice parenting skills; youth learn peer-resistance skills, and how to understand and empathize with their parents' concerns.

Since the Fall of 2017, when the Strengthening Families program began to be funded by Snohomish County Human Services, fifty-eight (58) individuals have been trained in three 3-day facilitator trainings.

Outcome evaluation reports are created from the analysis of pre/post surveys by the WSU Human Development Department in Pullman, Washington. These reports showed improvements in family and youth protective factors and a reduction of tension in the home of families who graduated from the program.

## IMPACTS

- Extensive research in Iowa on the Strengthening Families Program has shown that it is effective in delaying adolescents' use of alcohol and tobacco, reducing aggression, and improving parents' family management skills.
- More than half of the parents who attended the Strengthening Families Program reported positive improvements on all family protective factors: rules, involvement, harmony, and communication. Similarly, more than half of the youth who attended the program reported improvement on attachment and family management. In just seven weeks, caregivers participating in SFP 10-14 reported an average decrease in family tension of 27% from before and after the program.
- According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2017), SFP 10-14 has produced over \$27.5 million in cost savings to society. The state saves future costs for such things as arrest, incarceration, adjudication, victims' costs, and public assistance costs.
- Benefits include reduced crime, reduced property loss, reduced health care costs, and increased labor market earnings.

## FUNDING

In 2018 Snohomish County Human Services Department contributed funds for facilitator training, series implementation costs, and analysis of data from 15 series offered through middle schools and agencies.



## QUOTES

*"The Spanish speaking parents and youth in our Spring 2018 series at Explorer Middle School were highly engaged. At the graduation ceremony the parents and youth were crying as the parents apologized for not being there for their children. Some of the youth reported later to facilitators at the school that their family was so different now. Their parents were not yelling any more. They feel loved by their parents. The Everett Chief of Police wanted to do a pilot with SFP at Explorer MS, in the Fall, to reach students at highest risk of gang and violence involvement. These youth in our Spring session were very much some of those youth."*

*"Youth at our Lake Stevens Middle School group would never have spoken to each other in the halls, lunchroom, etc. before the SFP series. Now they have bonded and are sitting together at lunch, talking in the hallways, and sticking up for each other if someone is picking on one of them."* This is an outcome that he was not expecting.

-SFP Facilitator & School Counselor