



Trialling a 1-2-3 Magic Parenting Program in a rural Australian Child Protection setting



Rosemaria Flaherty, North Coast Area Health Service, NSW
Rosemaria.Flaherty@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au

The 1-2-3 Magic Parenting Program (1-2-3 Magic) research project commenced in September, 2006 and was finalised in March, 2008. The active research phase was from mid July, 2007 to mid October, 2007.

1-2-3 Magic is a simple parenting program that suggests ways to better manage misbehaviour in children from 3-12 years of age. 1-2-3 Magic aims to:

1. Control unwanted/undesirable behaviour (STOP behaviour)
2. Encourage wanted/desirable behaviour (START behaviour) and,
3. Strengthen the child-parent relationship (bond between parent and child) (Hawton & Martin, 2006).

The results of a large Canadian research study (Bradley et. al., 2003) showed that parents in the treatment group (compared to control group parents) were less stressed, less depressed and less angry after undertaking the program. The difference was sizeable as well as statistically significant ($p=0.001$). A second result showed that children's behaviour had improved significantly three months later indicating sustained impact of the program. The main issue is that there is no Australian research data replicating these results.

This funded research pilot project explored the effectiveness of 1-2-3 Magic specifically for use within the Physical Abuse and Neglect of Children (PANOC) counselling service in the Coffs/Clarence Network of the North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS). Several other parenting programs such as Triple P-Positive Parenting, Parent Effectiveness Training and P5 programs, while commonly used, do not appear to be suitable to use with the population of parents/carers that have abused/neglected children, and who have complex problems coupled with low-socio-economic status and other social issues.

The research study utilised a pre-post design with a wait-list control group. The research tools were four standardised psychological assessment questionnaires used for pre and post testing and the 3-session 1-2-3 Magic intervention program. Participants were 38 parents/carers who commenced the program with 35 carers (providing care for a total of 99 children) completing the project. The particular research question to be answered was: Does the 1-2-3 Magic program result in carers reporting they are less stressed, less depressed, less angry and more satisfied with their parenting role, when applied to a rural PANOC clinical population? Preliminary results suggest that this intervention was effective with significant differences between the intervention and control group obtained on all the test measures.

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'

Rosa Flaherty is a PANOC Psychologist based at Grafton Community Health Centre and is currently Acting Area Coordinator of the PANOC services for the NCAHS.



www.ircst.health.nsw.gov.au