

Parent Stress Intervention Project

Parents of children with disabilities who feel stressed can get support from the Parent Stress Intervention Project. This new research study being conducted at Vanderbilt University will investigate two different approaches to lowering stress in parents of children with disabilities. The Parent Stress Intervention Project will work with 400 parents, dads included, in 2 years who will be randomly assigned to either Adapted Mindfulness Practice or to a Positive Parent Support Model for 6 weekly sessions and 3 booster sessions. Some groups will meet on the Vanderbilt campus or at Vanderbilt Health One Hundred Oaks, or at other community locations. Parents of children with disabilities, including adult children, who would like more information or are interested in participating in the study may contact Roxanne Carreon at (615) 875-5080, Roxanne.Carreon@vanderbilt.edu

Complete news release

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Parents who have children with disabilities themselves will provide the stress interventions. This will allow participating parents to receive support from people who have “been there.”

The project principal investigator is Elisabeth Dykens, Ph.D., professor of Psychology & Human Development and director of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. The study is funded by the National Institutes of Health Challenge Grants in Health and Science Research, made possible through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Parenting a child with a disability can cause high levels of stress. Some of the indicators of stress identified by recent research include sadness or distress upon discovery of a child's disability, interacting with multiple professionals, expense, restricted social activities, isolation, daily care of a child with disabilities, stigma from others, lack of support, guilt about not doing enough, and transitioning to adulthood.

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Adapted Mindfulness Practice is the practice of being aware of and focused on the present moment. This is a promising practice to alleviate stress and anxiety in caregivers. Conventional Parent Support groups have helped parents combat stress through information, behavioral and cognitive strategies, advocacy, and emotional support.

The study will compare the stress levels of parents after the two groups have completed their interventions. Study coordinators will follow parents for 6 months after the interventions to see how long the treatment effects continue.

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