GrOW (Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup) Panel: 
Research Findings on the Efficacy of Support Groups

Presented to the Brookdale Relatives As Parents Program Conference 
Denver, CO 
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Presentation Outline

I. Introduction to GrOW
II. GrOW Support Group Scale
III. Pilot Test Results
IV. Future Considerations

GrOW Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup
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GrOW Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup (GrOW)

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I. Introduction to Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup (GrOW)

“It all started from a conversation....”

– Formed as a result of the Sustaining Your RAPP (Relatives as Parents Program) Roundtable presented by Madelyn Gordon and Sylvie deToledo at the 2009 Denver Brookdale National Conference.

– Several experienced RAPPs continued the discussion after the Roundtable’s conclusion, and have continued to meet regularly via conference call for more than four years.

Support Groups

• Support groups are a useful intervention
  – low cost and overhead expense
  – Widely used
• What evaluation tools help promote support group outcomes?
• What are groups around the country using to evaluate their support groups?
Preliminary Work

1. Reviewed literature on support group outcomes for grandparents and other relatives raising children.
2. Discovered a lack of evaluation to measure their effectiveness.
3. Developed an inventory to capture the variability and common attributes of support groups throughout the country and examine how support groups are evaluated.
4. Used the inventory and literature review to inform the review of measures for support groups.
5. Used this review to develop the GrOW Support Group Scale.
II. GrOW Support Group Scale

1. Literature Review
2. GrOW Support Group Inventory
3. Review of Measures:
   A. Caregiver Self-Efficacy Scale (Boothroyd, 1997)
   B. Parental Stress Index (Abidin, 1995)
   C. Inventory of Family Protective Factors (Gardner, Huber, Steiner, Vazquez, & Savage, 2008)
   D. Group Engagement Measure (MacGowan, 1997)
   E. (Based on) Family Resource Scale (Dunst, 1988)
4. Scale Development
5. Pilot of New Measure
6. Data Analysis and Dissemination
   A. Community Awareness
   B. Education/Advocacy
   C. Publication
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Support Group Activities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Goals</strong></th>
<th><strong>Measures</strong></th>
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</table>
| Information Sharing/Making Community Connections | • Increase knowledge of community resources  
• Share strategies on accessing resources | • Family Resource Scale (Dunst, 1988)  
• Family Support Scale (Dunst, 1988) |
| Social Support | • Reduce social isolation | • Family Support Scale (Dunst, 1988)  
• Caregiver Self-Efficacy Scale: Emotional Support (Boothroyd, 1997) |
| Education on Caregiver health, emotional wellbeing, etc. | • Reduce Caregiver Stress  
• Improve coping  
• Reduce Depression  
• Reduce caregiver burden | • Parental Stress Index: Role Restriction (Abidin, 1995)  
• Inventory of Family Protective Factors (Coping Adaptive Appraisal) (Gardner, Huber, Steiner, Vazquez, & Savage, 2008)  
• Caregiver Self-Efficacy Scale: Behavior Management and Provider Issues (Boothroyd, 1997)  
• Family Protective Factors (Coping Adaptive Appraisal) (Gardner, Huber, Steiner, Vazquez, & Savage, 2008) |
| Education on parenting children, development, behavior, etc. | • Increase knowledge on child development, behavior, etc. | • Group Engagement Measure (GEMS) (MacGowan, 1997). |
| Peer support, relationship building | • Increase peer support  
• Develop relationships within group | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept to Assess</th>
<th>Empirically-based Measure</th>
<th>Item #</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>Manage child behavior</td>
<td>1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caregiver Self-Efficacy Scale Behavior Subscale (Boothroyd, 1997; Strozier, McGrew, Krisman, &amp; Smith, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide safe and stable home for child</td>
<td>Caregiver Self-Efficacy Scale Provider Subscale (Boothroyd, 1997; Strozier, McGrew, Krisman, &amp; Smith, 2005)</td>
<td>7-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional/social support</td>
<td>Caregiver Self-Efficacy Scale Emotional Support Subscale (Boothroyd, 1997; Strozier, McGrew, Krisman, &amp; Smith, 2005)</td>
<td>13-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregiver Stress/Coping</td>
<td>Cope with role restriction Way</td>
<td>19-25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parental Stress Index (Abidin, 1995) Role Restriction Subscale</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Protective Factors/Resilience</td>
<td>Adaptive appraisal coping Way</td>
<td>26-29</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inventory of Family Protective Factors (Gardner, Huber, Steiner, Vazquez, &amp; Savage, 2008) Adaptive Appraisal Coping Items</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support Group Engagement</td>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>30-35</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship building</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Resources</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>36-40</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on work with Family Resource Scale (Dunst, 1988)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
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<td>Utilization</td>
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Supplements to Survey

- List of concepts to measure for support groups in survey were not exhaustive.
- Did not want to overburden caregivers when they completed survey.
- Wanted to include outcomes that could be used to help support groups solicit their own funding.
- These supplements could be used to help with sustainability.
Survey Supplements

1. Family Safety and Security
2. Psychoeducation and Wellness
3. Drugs and Alcohol
4. Medication Utilization
5. School
6. Crisis Checklist
III. Results of Pilot Test

- 240 Completed Surveys from Florida, Connecticut and California
- All participants were relative caregivers who participate in support groups in one of these three states
Demographics

- Age: 56 years
- Household income: $26,000
- Most living in homes with two adults
- 240 caregivers raising 401 relative children
- 216 siblings living outside of home
- 120 caregivers providing care for 6 or more years
- 42% indicating the children have health problems
Age of Caregivers (Mean = 56 years)
Number of Adults in Home

Number of Adults in Home

Frequency

Number of Adults in Home

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

0 20 40 60 80 100 120
Number of Relative Children: 401 relative children in care
Number of Siblings Living Outside of Home: Total 216 siblings living outside of home
Household Income:
Mean $26,000
Length of Time Caregiving

The bar chart shows the frequency of caregiving lengths for Child1. The categories are:
- Less than six months
- 7-11 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 or more years

The highest frequency is for caregiving that lasts 6 or more years.
Children with Health Problems

![Bar chart showing frequency of Child1 Health Problems]

- Frequency of "No": 125
- Frequency of "YES": 100
GrOW Items 1-4 Caregiver Self-Efficacy
How comfortable are you with your ability to...

- Praise your child for good behavior.
- Discipline your child when necessary.
- Set limits with your child.
- Say "no" to your child

Frequency

GrOW Item

- Not Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Very
GrOW Items 5-8 Caregiver Self Efficacy

How comfortable are you with your ability to...

- Control your child’s behavior.
- Get your child to act the way you want him/her to act.
- Provide a safe home environment for your child.
- Provide food, clothing and shelter for your child.

Frequency

GrOW Items

- Not Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Very
GrOW Items 9-13 Caregiver Self Efficacy

How comfortable are you with your ability to:

- Take your child somewhere just for fun.
- Spend time with your child.
- Take care of your child.
- Meet your child's medical needs.
- Cope with frustrations about your child's problems.

Frequency

- Not Very
- Somewhat
- Slightly
- Very
Caregiver Self-Efficacy

- Caregivers feel competent providing safety, stability, basic needs and love for children.
- Caregivers feel less competent dealing with behavioral management, especially stress relating to discipline and problem behaviors.
- Caregivers feel less comfortable asking for help from close friends and family and have a hard time identifying community resources to help.
**GrOW Items 22-25 Challenges and Benefits of Caregiving**

- **My faith has been a source of strength and comfort for me while caring for this child.**
- **I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.**
- **Caring for this child gives me a sense of satisfaction, because I am able to return some of the love that he/she has given me.**
- **I often feel that this child’s needs control my life.**

**GrOW Items**

- **Strongly Disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Not Sure**
- **Agree**
- **Strongly Agree**
GrOW Items 26-28 Challenges and Benefits of Caregiving

- I'm a better person as a result of caring for this child.
- Since having this child, I have been unable to do new and different things.
- I've learned a lot by caring for this child.

Frequency

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Not Sure
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
GrOW Items 29-32 Challenges and Benefits of Caregiving

![Bar chart showing frequency of responses to different caregiving items.

- Since having this child, I feel that I am almost never able to do things that I like to do.
- Sharing the duties of caring for this child has brought our family closer together.
- It is hard to find a place in our home where I can go to be by myself.
- I admire this child for the way he/she is handling this situation.

Frequency scales range from 0 to 120, with colors indicating responses: strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree.]
Benefits of Caregiving

• Caregivers recognize personal growth as a result of caregiving.
• Caregivers proud and extremely close to children.
• Caregivers notice continual learning in their role.
• Faith and spirituality identified as source of strength for caregiver.
Challenges of Caregiving

- Restricted role means making sacrifices and sometimes feeling trapped and controlled by child’s needs.
- These sacrifices are more than the caregiver expected.
- Caregivers have a hard time doing things they used to enjoy or things they want to do.
- Caregivers have a hard time finding time for themselves.
GrOW Items 33-36 Family Life

- Our family is optimistic and concentrates on the positives in most situations.
- Our family is creative, resourceful and self-reliant.
- Most people think our family is friendly and others like to be around us.
- Our family has pride.

GrOW Items
Family Life and Group Engagement

- Although these concepts seemed important in survey development, the responses did not yield very much variation.

- This could be attributable to a number of things:
  - Questions weren't specific enough or worded in a way that would elicit thoughtful responses.
  - Questions weren't important to caregivers.
Community Supports and Resources

- Although most caregivers have attended their support group for over FIVE years, it is troubling to note the number of “NOT SURE” responses regarding available community resources and support for their caregiving.

- Most caregivers are “NOT SURE” if resources are difficult to access. Is this due to not knowing about them or not trying to access them and why?
Psychoeducational and Wellness

- In support groups, caregivers would like to learn more about anger management and “parenting in this day and age.”
- Some caregivers note that their groups never embrace spirituality as a source of strength or help them identify and use positive support. These could be helpful tools for caregivers.
Educational Supplement

Percentage (%) of Caregivers Who Answered "YES"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think my child has a learning disability.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think my child has a parent with some kind of learning disability</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child has been diagnosed with a learning disability by a helping</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child has been enrolled in a special education class.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concerned about my child's inappropriate behavior in school.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I talk with teachers about my child's inappropriate behavior in school</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need help managing my child's inappropriate behavior</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Supplement

• Large number of caregivers whose own children struggled with learning disabilities or challenges---also---- the children in their care are also experiences similar struggles.

• Caregivers note they need help meeting the educational needs of their children and have also discussed this with the children’s teacher.
Number of Caregivers Indicating Crisis

- Incarceration issues
- Legal status
- Parent abandoned child
- Recently notified that child has been...
- Teenage difficulties
- Visitation Issues
- Family Violence
- Immigration/Deportation Issue

Item

Number of Caregivers
Crisis Checklist

- Financial troubles, emotional difficulties (child) and teenage difficulties are the crises caregivers indicate needing immediate help with on the survey.
- Health, housing, legal and visitation issues are also very important.
- How can we efficiently meet these needs in support groups?
Research to Practice

Linking our results to current programs who are implementing innovations to meet the needs addressed in this report.
Innovations for Teens

• The Teen Leadership Institutes
  • Cornell Cooperative Extension, Orange County, NY Denyse Variano, Linda Coleman and Brenda Reynolds
  • helps teens explore a variety of positive youth development topics such as nutrition, financial management, problem solving, peer pressure, coping skills, safe technology, goal setting, communication skills and healthy relationships.
Children of Incarcerated Parents

- Arkansas Voices for the Children Left Behind
  - www.arkansasvoices.org (1994)
  - A statewide coalition, Arkansas Kinship Caregiver Network comprised of relative caregivers for the children of incarcerated and reentering parents.
  - An annual conference
  - published many outcomes, recommendations, and, using a dosage evaluation, the caregivers determined from a menu of services, they preferred the support groups for both themselves and the children.
Access to Services for Families in Rural Areas

- University of Maine Center on Aging
- Lenard Kaye, DSW/PhD, Director and Jennifer Crittenden, MSW, Assistant Director

DEVELOPING RURAL RELATIVES AS PARENTS PROGRAMMING: PROMISING PRACTICES
A COLLECTION OF PRACTICE WISDOM FROM ACROSS RURAL AMERICA

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE CENTER ON AGING &
THE BROOKDALE FOUNDATION GROUP

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Innovation for Children in School

- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee
- Edna Eickman, Manager Grandparents as Parents Program (GAPP)
- Assist grandparents with trained Volunteer Advocates and help them, when needed, to address school issues of the children.
Innovation in Intergenerational Programming

- The **Penn State Intergenerational Program**: Rooted in Penn State Extension but inclusive of a broader base of scholars and practitioners interested in studying and employing intergenerational approaches in diverse settings.
- Matt Kaplan, Ph.D.,
- Emphasis on developing new models and curricular resources for enriching people's lives and helping to address vital social and community issues.

[http://extension.psu.edu/youth/intergenerational]
Future

- What does it mean for families?
- Working with other experts in the field to promote GRoW Support Group survey as a replicable national tool.
- Sustainability of programs with funders, policy makers, and communities.
- Promoting evidence based practice.
- Writing up results
  - First manuscript to new Grandfamilies Journal (in review)
  - Second on pilot results
  - Third on reliability and validity analyses
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