



Contact: Diversion Strategies Group, 602-372-7300

Parenting Skills Diversion Program Overview

The Parenting Skills Diversion Program will permit the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO) to respond more effectively to the needs of adult offenders who, when in a parental or guardian role, used excessive force in disciplining a child. There are several benefits to diverting this specific type of offender: teaches parental self-control, builds good family relationships, prevents and corrects misbehavior, allows offenders to gain insight into the harm their behavior caused, reduces the offender's contact with the criminal justice system, and holds the offender accountable for criminal conduct through their participation in an evidenced-based cognitive-behavioral program.

How the Parenting Skills Diversion Program Works:

- Eligibility: will be determined by the Deputy County Attorney (DCA) for specific eligible offenses. Post-file cases only;
- The DCA is solely responsible for referring individuals to the MCAO Parenting Skills Diversion Program. If eligible, the DCA suspends prosecution for two (2) years for completion of diversion;
- Referred individuals will be ¹assessed and receive clinical services, together with a cognitive-behavioral intervention. ²Common Sense Parenting is the curriculum that will be delivered to this population.
- Service delivery will be administered by LaFrontera-EMPACT, a community based, behavioral health organization;
- For offenders who successfully complete the Parenting Skills Diversion Program, the DCA will file a motion to dismiss the charges with prejudice. If unsuccessful the DCA will reinstate prosecution;
- This is an individualized treatment program; therefore, program length will vary.

The Common Sense Parenting Curriculum is:

- An open-group, short-term (minimum six sessions) curriculum, cognitive-behavioral intervention, evidence-based program, released nationally in 2015 by authors: Ray Burke, PhD, Ron Herron, and Bridget A. Barnes;
- Co-facilitated, consisting of 8-10 participants, per group. Curriculum includes a review of the prior session and homework, instruction of the new skill, modeled examples, skill practice/feedback, and a summary.
- Lesson plans:
 1. Parents are Teachers: effective discipline, describing children's behaviors, and using consequences to change behaviors;
 2. Encouraging Good Behavior: giving kids reasons, using effective praise to increase positive behaviors;
 3. Preventing Problems: teaching social skills to children, using preventive teaching to set children up for success;
 4. Correcting Problem Behavior: staying calm; using corrective teaching to stop problem behaviors and teach alternative behaviors;
 5. Teaching Self-Control: safe home plans, using self-control when children are not cooperating or are having an emotional outburst; and
 6. Putting it all Together: holding family meetings, establishing family routines and traditions, developing a parenting plan for using all the Common Sense Parenting skills.

Program Goals:

1. Equip parents/guardians with a logical method for changing their children's behaviors through teaching positive behaviors, social skills, and methods to reduce stress in crisis situations; and
2. Provide parents/guardians with practical strategies for enhancing parent-child communication and building robust family relationships.

¹LaFrontera-EMPACT staff are trained and certified to utilize the ORAS (Ohio Risk Assessment System) Assessment Tool; specifically, the CST to identify criminogenic needs. ²LaFrontera-EMPACT staff are trained to facilitate the *Common Sense Parenting* Program.