

**Evaluation of the
Children of Offenders Partnership (CO-OP) Conference
Summary of Findings**



**Jefferson City, Missouri
November 12, 2004**

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**Children's Trust Fund
and
University of Missouri (MU) Extension**

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Evaluation of the Children of Offenders Partnership (CO-OP) Conference

Introduction

The purpose of the report is to describe an evaluation of University of Missouri (MU) Extension's Children of Offenders Partnership (CO-OP) Conference, to identify the impact the conference had on the gaining of new knowledge and information of caregivers raising children of offenders and service providers (e.g., school social workers) and to discern needed areas of future improvement. In order to accomplish this purpose, the reported experiences of conference participants will be examined.

Background

The Children of Offenders Partnership (CO-OP) Conference was held on November 12, 2004. The conference was a result of the MU Extension's Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) Program, an enhanced visitation program that has both family strengthening and 4-H youth development components. The LIFE program has been conducted at the Potosi Correctional Center in Washington County since 1999. Through the program, extension faculty realized the critical need for overburdened caregivers (anyone raising a child of an offender) to meet with other caregivers as well as with service providers. Campus-based extension faculty then went about searching for resources to support such a gathering.

In fall 2004, Tammy Gillespie, project director of the Family and Community Resource Program of MU Extension, wrote a grant to the Children's Trust Fund. The grant proposal requested funds to hold a conference designed to improve the lives of children of offenders by providing better support to the caregivers who raise these children. The Children's Trust Fund approved the request for funds and a conference advisory group was selected, with representation from extension, education, and service providers. A caregiver was also actively involved as a member of the advisory group.

The conference was held at the Rickman Conference Center in Jefferson City. The location was chosen specifically because of the retreat-like setting of the facility and because of its location in the center of the state reducing the driving time. The number of conference participants and presenters was capped at 151, with approximately 10-15 individuals turned away due to the physical size of the conference location. Of the 151 participants, 110 (73%) were service providers and the remaining 41 (27%) were caregivers and/or family members of offenders. Of the 41 caregivers, at least 20 were foster parents. Participation was represented from both rural and urban communities in the state of Missouri.

In order to encourage caregivers to attend the conference, scholarships were provided to caregivers by the following agencies: Children's Trust Fund, MU Extension, Audrain County Area Literacy Council, and the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division. In addition, exhibitors were allowed to register a caregiver at no cost.

Of those participants who attended, approximately 39% (59 individuals) completed the evaluation form. Each of the questions that were answered by the participants is summarized. The evaluation substantiates how beneficial the conference was to participants, and why further support for additional CO-OP Conferences is needed and important for this population.

Conference Format and Workshop Offerings

To keep costs low and accommodate the needs of the caregivers providing for children of offenders, a one-day format was developed for the conference which started at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. For those caregivers who drove in the night before, a Caregiver Welcoming Reception was provided at the Agape House, located approximately 5.5 miles away from the conference center. Those unable to stay at the Rickman Center were lodged at the Agape House. The director of the Agape House reported that the experience of hosting the caregiver welcoming reception and overflow lodging was very positive. One participant wrote, “We would like to thank you for including the Agape House in your caregiver’s workshop. You all are really doing a good thing...look forward to working with you in the future.”

The conference began with opening remarks from Representative Danie Moore, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Corrections; Chair the Appropriations Committee for Corrections; Co-Chair, Sub Committee on Children’s Services Commission, Children of Incarcerated Parents. The next presentation was a Caregiver’s Panel Session with a variety of caregivers sharing their thoughts about what they felt children of offenders need. Veronica Stovall, Program Coordinator with Missouri’s Children’s Services Division, moderated the session. A highly interactive question and answer period then followed.

Afterward the opening session, there were 20 possible workshops from which conference participants could choose with a variance in the workshops that each participant attended. As a result, for some, questions 2 – 4 of the evaluation were not covered and, as a result, participants did not show an increase in their knowledge about one of the topics. For example, it is very possible that a participant only attended workshops that dealt with children of offenders, rather than attending any workshops focused on the needs and programs for caregivers. A detailed list of workshop topics and presenters is included in the appendices. In general, the following topics were among the most highly attended:

- Building a Youth Team (presented by a group of eight St. Louis teens)
- Coping with Stress (presenter by Dr. Virginia Barnes)
- Caregivers on Caregiving (presented by Caregivers & Sis. Jackie Toben)

One participant wrote, “I loved the speakers – a good variety yet relative to the conference topic.” Another wrote, “...knowledgeable presenters with specific information, timeliness of sessions appropriate...I liked the one day forum.”

What Participants Wanted to Gain at the Conference

The first question on the survey asked participants to write down their top two expectations of the conference. They were then asked to rate how well the conference met their expectations. Sample expectations of information, resources, and networking were included in the question. It is possible that the examples given skewed the accuracy of the question since 82% of the evaluations reiterated these three examples as their top expectations: information (33%), resources (25%), and networking (23%). The remaining 19% of evaluations reported an original expectation (something different than the examples). Those expectations included: grandparents raising grandchildren, legal rights and problem children, caregivers sharing, etc. Overall, the participant’s reported expectations of the conference were met very well. See Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1

Expectation	# Reporting Expectations were met Pretty-Very Well	%	Related Comments
Information	31	94%	I enjoyed the set up of being able to choose the workshops I wished to attend. Lots of useful information; presenters were great, the information was great, I recommend this workshop to all community leaders, agencies, schools, etc.; Great informational conference
Resources	24	92%	The program had excellent presentations; however, I could not get to all of them. Also, your resources were excellent. CD disc <u>good idea!</u> Thanks for all your work!
Networking	23	100%	Able to do a lot of networking; good source of information and networking; It was good to see other people who deal with children of offenders

Knowledge of Needs of Children of Offenders Before and After the Conference

Since the topic of parental incarceration is a fairly new “public” issue, one of the first survey questions inquired about the participant’s knowledge of the needs of children of offenders prior to the conference. Out of the 59 respondents, 53 answered this question. Of those who answered, 33 (62%) reported they had some to a lot of knowledge about the needs of children of offenders *prior* to the conference.

Fifty-two out of 53 (98%) respondents reported some to a lot of knowledge about the children’s needs *after* the conference. For those that reported some knowledge gains about the children, the type of responses reflected a desire to share the information with other educators and to focus more on education-related needs of children of offenders. One participant wrote, “I hope to go back and talk to my department chair about education to KCMO’s District Counselor and perhaps reach out better to all of our kids.” Another wrote, “I wish it was more geared towards educators (head start children).”

Knowledge of Programs for Children of Offenders Before and After the Conference

There were 55 respondents out of 59 who answered this question. Of those, 19 (35%) reported they had some to a lot of knowledge about *programs for* children of offenders prior to the conference.

Ninety-one percent out of 55 respondents (91%) respondents reported some to a lot of knowledge about programs for children *after* the conference. For those that reported some knowledge gains about programs for children, the type of responses reflected a desire for others to learn about the programs. One participant wrote, “Wish we could get the word out to more parents so more could be here.” Another wrote, “It was good to see other people who deal with children of offenders.”

Knowledge of Programs for Caregivers Before and After the Conference

Increasing support for caregivers was a primary goal of the CO-OP Conference, therefore, the next survey question asked about participant's knowledge about programs (and services) for the caregivers. Out of the 59 respondents, 55 answered this question. Of those respondents, 17 (31%) reported having some to a lot of knowledge about programs for caregivers prior to the conference.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents reported having some to a lot of knowledge about programs for caregivers *after* the conference. For those that reported these gains, the ability to connect with others on a personal basis seemed to be paramount. One Kansas City parent educator wrote, "Thanks again for the opportunity to attend the conference. I feel it was beneficial. It was great to meet and talk with Pam who has obviously overcome some great obstacles...I felt I got other helpful information and will have an opportunity to connect with some local resources."

How Participants Liked the Conference Location

While there were no specific questions on the survey regarding the conference location, respondents did share their thoughts in the comment section of the survey. Feedback on the conference location was both positive and negative. One participant wrote, "Well run – organized, nice facility." The only negative comments about the conference dealt with *getting to* the conference. For example, one participant wrote, "The only real concern was directions to this center. I took directions from the Rickman (Conference Center) website 2 weeks ago. Did the street names change in 2 weeks?" Another participant wrote, "Location was just awful, when we finally found it!"

What Participants Said about Conference Workshops and Presenters

While there were no workshop-specific questions, several participants commented about the different workshops and presenters. In addition, several presenters have received positive follow-up communications from conference participants, which certainly was one of the intermediate goals of the conference; to connect service providers and caregivers to one another from throughout the state. One presenter wrote, "Thanks again for the opportunity to serve. I really enjoyed your conference and have had many emails from participants."

Summary of Findings

Of the three major conference topics, rank order shows that participants made the most significant gains in these topics:

1. Programs for children of offenders (Before 35%, After 91%)
2. Programs for caregivers raising children of offenders (Before 31%, After 71%)
3. Needs of children of offenders (Before 62%, After 98%)

The knowledge gained at the first of its kind Children of Offenders Partnership (CO-OP) Conference indicates a positive affect on the participants' individual lives and on their careers, including foster parents. It would be beneficial to continue the CO-OP Conference for knowledge and networking that is critical for the participants as they support the children of offenders in Missouri.

Recommendations for Future Evaluation Efforts

In terms of evaluation outcomes, future evaluations of the CO-OP Conference should sample a greater number of attendees. Attention should be given to documenting the workshops attended. For example, it is very realistic to assume that a CO-OP Conference participant would attend workshops that dealt only with caregiver issues. As a result, that individual would mark their knowledge gains on children of offenders as somewhat low, given the current evaluation form. Asking the participants what workshops they attended would be helpful for correlating learned topics more directly.

Overall, this was an excellent start to creating a long-term plan of improving the lives of children of offenders by providing better support to those caregivers raising them. One participant reported, "Excellent! Thank you. Finally a conference that was not a waste of time/money!" A service provider attending the conference stated, "Many more educators (teachers, counselors, administrators) should know about the next conference. This was great."

Appendix

CO-OP Conference Workshop Descriptions and Contact Information

1. Welcoming Remarks

Representative Danie Moore - Chair of the Joint Committee on Corrections, Chair of the Appropriations Committee for Corrections, Co-Chair of the Sub Committee on Children's Services Commission, Children of Incarcerated Parents

PO Box 713
Fulton, MO. 65251
573-642-7413
Danielle.Moore@house.mo.gov

2. What Do Children of Offenders Need to Succeed?

Panelists

Veronica Stovall - Program Development Specialist, Department of Social Services -Children's Division, Co-Chair for Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force - Children's Service Commission

615 Howerton Court
Jefferson City, MO 65103
(573) 522-5060
veronica.e.stovall@dss.mo.gov

3. Coping with Stress

Dr. Virginia Barnes, Ed.D. - Special Projects Coordinator, University of Missouri Extension

MU Extension
Whitten Hall Room 109
Columbia, MO 65211
573-701-7772
573-884-0248
barnesv@missouri.edu

In this workshop, participants will learn the three major reasons people have stress, what the major stressors are, what they can DO to deal with stress, and how they can ACTIVATE that plan IMMEDIATELY with aid of themselves and others.

4. Overview of the Children's Connection: An Afterschool Program for Children with Incarcerated Parents

Marjorie Fonza RN, DNSC - Director of Children's Connection

2220 Holmes
Kansas City, MO 64108
816-358 - 9036
fonzam@umkc.edu

Jaimie Peterson-Mills - Assistant Director of Children's Connection

606 Layton Dr.
Olathe, KS 66061
913-782-1241
childresconn@yahoo.com

This workshop will provide participants with an overview of the Children's Connection program, an after-school program for Kansas City children who have an incarcerated parent.

5. The Role of the Guardian ad Litem and the Court-Appointed Special Advocate in Juvenile Court Matters

Amy Markel - Attorney at Law

503 East Nifong Blvd #279
Columbia, MO 65201-3717
573-443-2588
markellawoffices@yahoo.com

Elizabeth Magee - Attorney at Law

1001 Cherry Street Suite 202
Columbia, MO. 65201
573-256-2600
emageelaw@aol.com

This workshop will serve as a basic tutorial on the roles and responsibilities of the guardian ad litem or court-appointed special advocate with an emphasis on addressing questions posed by workshop attendees.

6. Parenting Pointers

Glenda Moore - Registered Dietitian, Licensed Dietitian

406 North High
Bowling Green, MO 63334
573-324-6151

Leanne Spengler - Regional Human Development Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

MU Extension Pike County Courthouse
115 West Main
Bowling Green, MO 63334
573-324-5464
spenglerl@missouri.edu

Parenting Pointers are mini-lessons taught in conjunction with Women, Infant and Children Nutrition Program (WIC) monthly voucher clinics. The lessons are based on one of six parenting practices: caring for self, understanding, guiding, nurturing, motivating and advocating for your child. The topics are coordinated with the dietitian and nurse case manager to better meet the needs of the parents and their families. Each lesson includes a discussion of the day's topic and take-home materials.

**7. Missouri Department of Corrections:
Strategies to Address the Needs of Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Julie Boehm - Re-entry Manager, Missouri Department of Corrections

2909 Sue Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109
573-522-1206
julie.boehm@doc.mo.gov

This workshop will share a new approach from the Department of Corrections relative to children of incarcerated parents. With reentry being a major focus of the Department of Corrections, the importance of family ties and keeping children and their families united, when possible, is recognized.

8. Food for Thought: You've Got a New Attitude!!

Dr. Virginia Barnes, Ed.D. - Special Projects Coordinator, University of Missouri Extension

MU Extension
Whitten Hall Room 109
Columbia, MO 65211
573-884-0248
barnesv@umsl.edu

During lunch time, nibble on some "Food for Thought" about creating a positive attitude in the midst of challenging times...and get a formula for staying positive! After all...you CAN BE in charge of your own emotions and attitude. Laugh at yourself and take home a few hints for understanding yourself better and getting that NEW Attitude.

9. Volunteer in Corrections (VIC) Roundtable

Gordon Howard - VIC Coordinator, Missouri Department of Corrections

2729 Plaza Drive
PO Box 236
Jefferson City, MO 65102
573-526-6491
Gordon.Howard@doc.mo.gov

Workshop participants will hear a brief overview of the Missouri Volunteer in Corrections (VIC) program. The workshop will be a fun and interactive as participants move around the room to talk to VIC program representatives: Parents as Teachers, 4-H Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE) Program.

10. Giving Care: Helps for Caregivers

Sister Rose Rita Huelsmann, SSND MA - Coordinator of Volunteers Criminal Justice Ministry

1408 South 10th Street
St. Louis, MO 63104
314-241-8062
rhuelmannssnd@yahoo.com

There will be a five-minute overview on the purpose and format. After that, participants will be asked to reflect on and share the experience of being the caregivers for children whose custodial parent is incarcerated. We will then share on resources caregivers have found to be helpful in particular situations. The present will then give information on Kairos Outside Respite Program.

11. ABC's of Missouri Citizens United to Rehabilitate Errants (CURE)

Angela Adams, Vice Chairperson
825 Jefferson Street
Park Hills, MO 63601
573-431-4530
angelanicoleadams@sbcglobal.net

Irma Miller, Treasurer
4006 Mabel's Lane
DeSoto, MO 63020
636-586-8640

A-Advocacy, B-Bringing families together, C-Citizens united. The focus of Missourians United to Rehabilitate Errants (CURE) is to educate, inform, advocate, and provide forums.

12. School Issues, Challenges and Success Stories

Janet Shepard - Training Coordinator, Practical Parenting Partnerships

2412 C Hyde Park Road
Jefferson City, MO 65109
573-761-7767
jshepard@pppctr.org

Let's talk about what schools need to know about children experiencing parental incarceration. Participants will help create a Tip Sheet for teachers. We'll also talk about the importance of caregivers being involved in education and share tips with you.

13. Aha, I Think I've Got It!: Tackling the Tough Skill – A Program that Works

Rosilee A. Trotta, LCSW - Urban Youth and Family Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

121 South Meramec Ste 501
Clayton, MO 63105
314-615-2911
trottar@missouri.edu

No matter how much we want to change people, we can't. Sometimes, though, when we change ourselves, others around us change too. That's the basic principle that runs throughout *Tackling the Tough Skills: A Curriculum Building Skills for Work and Life*. Used successfully across the world with audiences including offenders, ex-offenders, teens, welfare recipients, and others. Tough Skills seeks to develop potential through "aha" experiences. This interactive workshop will discuss and demonstrate techniques used.

14. Caregiver Sharing on Being a Caregiver

Sister Jackie Toben, facilitator - Let's Start Program

Panelists: Lessie Street, Helen Rhone, Emma Johnson, Margarite Morrow

Sister Jackie Toben
2837 Victor
St. Louis, MO 63104
314-241-2324
jtoben@swbell.net

After introductions of panel and workshop participants, a brief description of the "Let's Start Caregivers Group" will be given. Then, each panelist will share the challenges and the blessings of being a caregiver. Each will discuss the support systems they have as well as the resources in the community that they have utilized. A discussion with the audience participants will then be held. To conclude, a handout will be given to those present summarizing some practical guidelines for caregivers.

15. Child Support Issues

Laura O'Mara - Assistant Deputy Director, Family Support Division, Missouri Department of Social Services

615 Howerton Court
PO Box 2320
Jefferson City, MO 65102-2320
573-526-3716
Laura.J.O'Mara@dss.mo.gov

The workshop will begin with a 5-10 minute overview of the purpose and format and a request for the participants to share what they hope to learn or gain from the workshop. The presenter will give a 20-25 minute presentation regarding the child support program: discussion of the issues raised by the participants, when possible. The last 10-15 minutes of the workshop will be used for a group discussion of the direct and indirect benefits associated with the receipt of child support services.

16. Mentoring Children & Families Separated By Incarcerated Parents

Rebecca Gordon - Director of Development and Public Relations, Big Brothers Big Sisters

800 Providence Road North
Columbia, MO 65203
573-875-3679
rebecca@bbbsboone.com

The workshop will explore how to develop community wide responses that can provide holistic interventions, from prearrest and preincarceration through aftercare. Discussion will be aimed around identifying existing resources in the community and using those resources more effectively. We will also examine the shared responsibility of identifying and meeting the needs of these children and their families.

17. Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network

Elizabeth Reinsch, LCSW/ACSW - Human Development Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

121 S Meramec Ste 501
Clayton, MO 63105
reinsche@missouri.edu
(314) 615 - 7605
(314) 615 - 2911

This workshop will describe the efforts in the St. Louis metro area on the issues of relative caregivers, including those who are in that capacity due to incarceration. Information will be shared to educate and link relative caregivers to community, state and national organizations who are working on these issues. An assortment of resource guide pamphlets will be offered. Support group development will be discussed, as well as the efforts of the University of Missouri Extension that is active in developing community task forces across the state on this issue.

18. Building a Successful Team of Youth

Kelli Hill - Youth Development Program Assistant, University of Missouri Extension

Stay to Learn (STL) Educators: Ambria Barnch, Precious Davis, Mirandria Glasper, Carletta McNair, Ellen Moore, Jay Spann, Eric Thomas

Kelli Hill
724 North Union
St. Louis, MO 63108
314-367-7594
hillkx@missouri.edu

This interactive workshop will be led by seven urban youth who are members of the Stay to Learn (STL) Educators program. These teens will share their views on what it takes to be an effective teen in the city. They will outline the steps they use on a daily basis as members of STL.

19. Caregivers: Strengthening the Ties That Bind

Veronica Stovall - Program Development Specialist, Department of Social Services-Children's Division, Co-Chair for Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force-Children's Service Commission

615 Howerton Court
Jefferson City, MO 65109
573-522-5060
Veronica.E.Stovall@dss.mo.gov

The workshop will begin with a five minute small group exercise in which the caregivers will identify the demographics of children whose parents are incarcerated. A five minute group participation in identifying the needs of the children and the caregivers will follow. Next, a five minute PowerPoint presentation on Missouri's Task Force on what caregivers and stakeholders identify as their needs will be shared. There will be a 10-15 minute report identifying both federal and state resources. The last 15 minutes will be self-help exercises for the caregiver.

20. Program Impact

Dr. Elizabeth G. Dunn - Lead Project Evaluator - Children, Youth and Families at Risk Project, University of Missouri Extension

9627 SW 40th Lane
Gainesville, FL 32608
352-333-0089
dunne@missouri.edu

21. Closing Remarks

Tammy Gillespie - Project Director, Family and Community Resource Program (FCRP), University of Missouri Extension

205 Whitten Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
573-882-3316
gillespiet@missouri.edu

Children of Offenders Partnership (CO-OP) Conference Feedback Form

Please complete this conference survey. Do not put your name on it. It should take 2 minutes. Thanks!
Complete & tear off the bottom of this sheet if you would like to attend conference follow up meetings.

1. Please list your top two expectations (e.g., information, networking, resources, other) for this conference and rate how well each one was met.

a. _____
Very Well___ Pretty Well___ Not Well___ Not at All___

b. _____
Very Well___ Pretty Well___ Not Well___ Not at All___

2. How much did you/do you know about the *needs* of children of offenders and/or their family members?

Before the conference.....A lot___ Some___ A Little___ Nothing___
After the conference.....A lot___ Some___ A Little___ Nothing___

3. How much did you/do you know about programs for children of offenders and/or their family members?

Before the conference.....A lot___ Some___ A Little___ Nothing___
After the conference.....A lot___ Some___ A Little___ Nothing___

4. How much did you/do you know about the programs for caregivers?

Before the conference.....A lot___ Some___ A Little___ Nothing___
After the conference.....A lot___ Some___ A Little___ Nothing___

5. Overall, how would you rate the usefulness of this conference? (Check one.)

- a. ___Very useful
- b. ___Somewhat useful
- c. ___Not very useful
- d. ___Not at all useful
- e. ___No response

6. Comments:

Tear here ->-----

Yes, I would like information about conference follow up meetings that will take place in 2005.

Name:

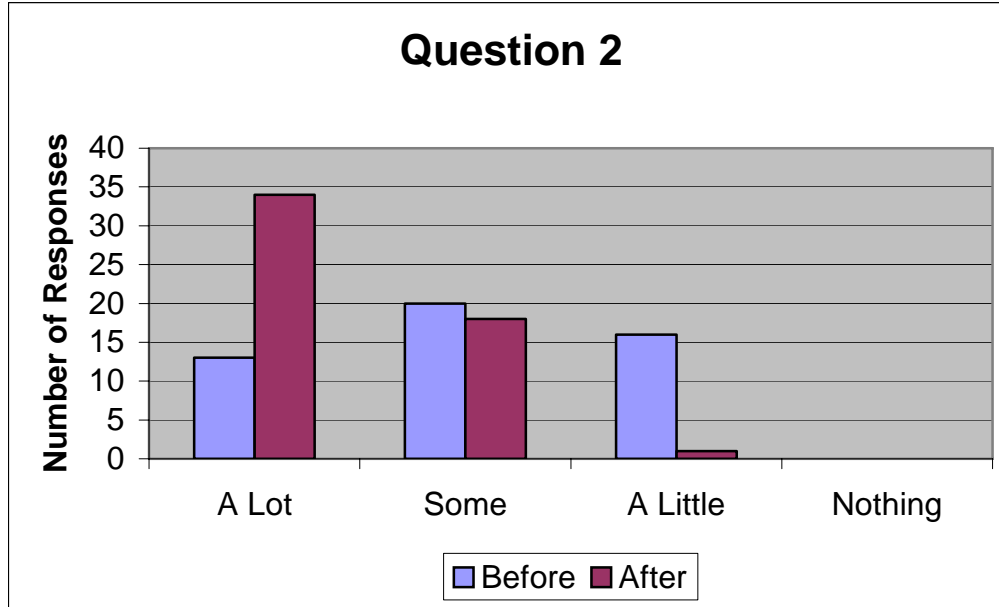
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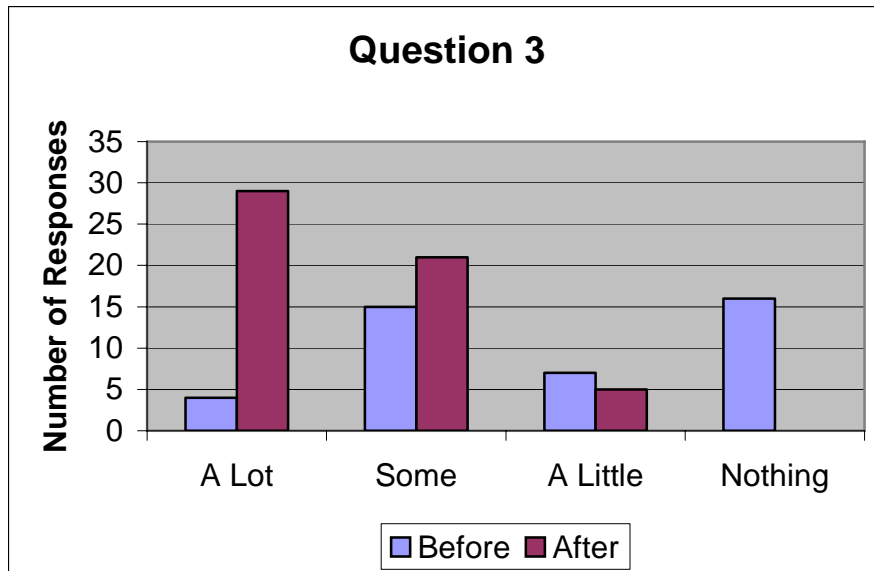
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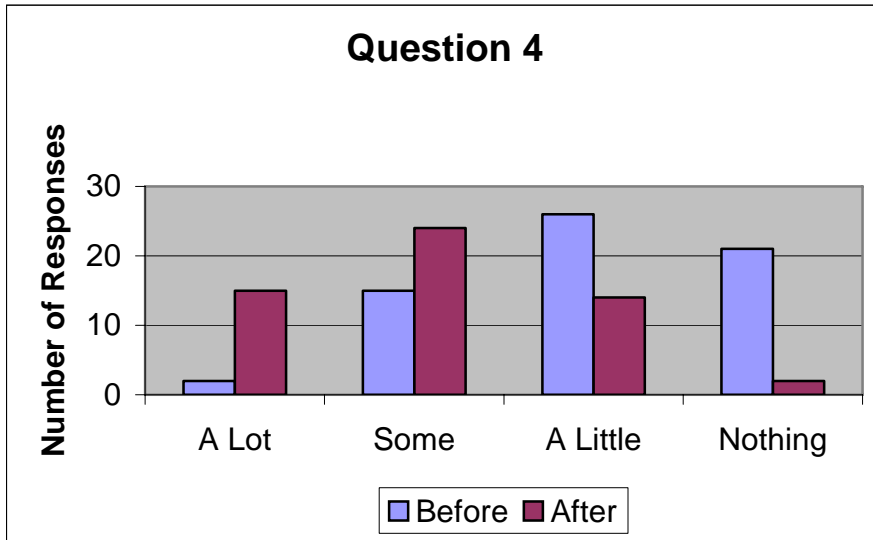
2. How much did you/do you know about the *needs* of **children of offenders and/or their family members**?



3. How much did you/do you know about **programs for children of offenders**?



4. How much did you/do know about the **programs for caregivers?**



5. Overall, how would you rate the usefulness of this meeting? (Check one.)

