

My name is Katharine Bensinger. I am the Program Director of Parenting Fundamentals at Metropolitan Family Services and a member of the Cook County Parenting to Prevent Violence Task Force. Parenting Fundamentals provides Parenting Education and Support Services that promote the social and emotional development of children, prevent child abuse, strengthen families and improve school readiness and achievement.

Over the past 20 years, having served over 8,000 families raising over 21, 000, children, we can say with confidence that researched- based parenting education programs enhance children's resilience in the face of adversity and significantly impact children's mental and physical health, as well as their educational outcomes. A young child who feels secure within her home environment more readily explores language, learns how to express emotions constructively and is more prepared to learn. On the other hand, if a child is exposed to a stressful and traumatic home environment in which parents or caregivers are not nurturing and not responsive to their needs, that child will lack the basic emotional and physical support needed to foster healthy development.

Promoting children's emotional and cognitive health through parenting education is a promising science-based strategy to address many of the most persistent and costly issues facing contemporary society including: **limited educational achievement diminished economic productivity, criminality and disparities in health.**

Tragically, children are exhibiting troubling and violent behavior, resulting in increases in children being expelled from pre-school, elementary, and high school and more and more involvement with the criminal justice system.

Approximately 30% of CPS children drop out of high school. To change this dynamic, **parents must be involved in their children's education; effectively communicate with their children and know why and how to provide unconditional love.** Children are not born with an instruction manual and parenting skills are learned not inherited. I have spoken to thousands of parents over the years who have told me they have learned a new language in the parenting classes, a language that was not spoken to them growing up and their children are doing so much better.

One seven year old child talked about how his father significantly changed after completing a Parenting Fundamentals course. The child said, "I used to be afraid of my father, and I never wanted to talk to him. Now I feel better with my dad, and I tell him what I do in school.

On behalf of the Parenting to Prevent Violence Task Force we would like to request that a percentage of President Preckwinkle's increased investment in the Justice Advisory Council be allocated for Parenting Education.