

STEP-UP Program building respectful family relationships and helping families to get over the violence toward parents

Violence toward parents or child-to-parent violence has garnered increasing attention due to the high rates of violence and the serious consequences that causes on parents victims of abuse by their children and on the perpetrators. So we can consider that violence toward parents it's starting to be a social and health public problem. In fact, the number of legal demands from parents victimized by this type of abuse in medical clinics, social services and psychological private clinics is growing day after day.

These data highlights the necessity of knowing more about the specific treatments in this area and particular treatments that act with all stakeholders on the problem, teenagers and their parents. In this review we are going to present the Step-Up Program, a recognized and specific intervention in adolescent family violence, which was made in Seattle in 1997 in response to the high number of cases of violence toward parents detected during this year (King County, 1997). The main goals of Step-Up program are: 1) to stop violence and abuse toward parents and 2) to develop respectful family relationships in order to help family members to feel safe at home.

This multicomponent cognitive-behavioural approach is applied in a legal context and provides an integral therapeutic intervention developed in a group format, with children on one side, and parents on the other, and secondly they do a family intervention in order to restore adequate family relationships between members of the family unit. Structured in 21 weekly sessions and 90 minutes estimated duration (Buel, 2002; Routt and Anderson, 2011), the program is completely voluntary and is offered to parents when they go to police office to denounce their sons or after the court appearance.

The First step of the intervention includes the real necessity for developing a safety plan with every family that is created after hazard assessment, mental health, and substances abuse. Afterwards, the intervention is aimed to give parents strategies in order to tackle the abuse perpetrated by their children.

Parental intervention focuses on the review of family history, especially in the detection of other familiar violence and the impact on children behaviour. In addition, parents receives a complete psychoeducation about the particularities of adolescence and the changes in their children during this stage, and the influence of punitive or violent parental styles on children behaviour. So parents are training on the establishment of appropriate rules and limits, and in the use of appropriate strategies such as time off, positive reinforcement, assertive communication and conflict resolution (Anderson & Routt, 2004a). The individual goals with children emphasize the necessity of holding the child responsibility for his/her abusive behaviour and encourage the recognition of the effects of such behaviours on their parents and themselves (Anderson & Routt, 2004b). The intervention includes learning skills aimed to prevent violent behaviour, for which children learn assertion, conflict resolution, empathy, cognitive restructuring and learns to control anger. Finally, in family treatment, parents and their children are taught to detect signals and risk factors associated with violence, practice "time out" and enhance communication by using role-playing (Buel, 2002).

This intervention program has been evaluated three times by independent researchers, found promising results. If you want to know more about Step-Up program you can review following web site

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/documents/stepup/intro/stepupintroduction.html>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/clerk/step-up.aspx>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/courts/Clerk/stepUp/documents/TeenFacilitatorManual.ashx?la=en>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/stepUp/The%20Step%20Up%20Curriculum.aspx>

References:

Anderson, L. y Routt, G. . (2004a). *Step-Up: A consueling program for teens who are violent at home. Parents group.* Retrieved on <http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/stepUp/The%20Step%20Up%20Curriculum.aspx>

Anderson, L y Routt, G. (2004b). *Step-Up: A consueling program for teens who are violent at home. Teen group.* Retrieved on <http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/stepUp/The%20Step%20Up%20Curriculum>.

Buel, S. (2002). Why juvenile courts should address family violence: promising practices to improve intervention outcomes. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 53(2), 1-16.

King County (2012). *About Step-Up.* Retrieved on <http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/step-up/About.aspx>