

## Mooseheart Child City and School Study

**1-2-3 Magic made parenting easier and more flexible, while at the same time it significantly reduced problem behavior in the children.**

New research from a residential child care facility in the Chicago suburbs has once again shown the **1-2-3 Magic** program to be both effective in changing children's behavior as well as very appealing to the adults who apply it. Over two hundred children reside at the *Mooseheart Child City and School, Inc.* near Batavia, Illinois and about thirty miles from Chicago. At this complex, house parents, called Family Teachers, have the daunting task of raising from 4 to 10 children in each residential home. Many of these children will remain at *Mooseheart* until they are eighteen.

*Mooseheart's Family Teaching Program* utilizes behavior modification and token economy approaches. These methods, however, were designed for use with children over age eight, so they had to be modified in residential homes where the children were younger. The question arose as to whether or not **1-2-3 Magic** would be a more effective system to employ with these younger children in terms of both staff satisfaction as well as child behavior.

A Pretest-Posttest Control Group design was used to test the hypothesis that **1-2-3 Magic** would increase staff satisfaction levels. Nine of *Mooseheart's* residential group homes were selected to participate in the study based on the criteria that all or most of the youth residing in the home were under 12 years of age. Four homes (n = 18 youth, 15 staff) were assigned to the experimental condition, which would implement the 1-2-3 Magic system as a pilot program. The remaining five homes (n = 33 youth, 11 staff) were designated as the control group, which continued to use the current behavior modification and token economy system. Quantified staff satisfaction surveys were created internally. These were administered before the **1-2-3 Magic** training, and then again nine weeks after the implementation of the experimental program. The control group of Family Teachers also completed the same pre- and posttests.

The results were quite encouraging. First of all, on a five-item Likert scale which measured the satisfaction of the house parents with the behavior of their children, the Family Teachers using **1-2-3 Magic** went from an average score of 3.13 before the **1-2-3** to an average score of 3.8 after (significant at  $p = .01$ ). The control group went from 3.55 to 3.73--not a significant change.

Second, Family Teachers were also asked their level of satisfaction with the behavior management program they were currently using. Family Teachers in the experimental houses went from a rating of 2.86 (old program) to a rating of 4.8 (1-2-3). This dramatic and significant ( $p = .001$ ) change indicated a distinct preference for **1-2-3 Magic**. In explaining

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their ratings, the house parents said the **1-2-3** was "easier to use," "simple for the kids to understand," and "got the problem over with quickly."

Third, Family Teachers were asked how effective the program they were using was in reducing obnoxious behavior. Initial satisfaction levels (both rating the old program) were 2.87 for the experimental group and 3.36 for the control group. **1-2-3 Magic** house parents after nine weeks had raised their ratings to 4.40, another dramatic and significant increase. Control ratings dropped slightly to 3.18.

In summary, the house parents in this residential home setting found the **1-2-3 Magic** method to be a practical and easy-to-use discipline program. The adults liked the **1-2-3** and even the children liked the **1-2-3**. According to their reports, the program made parenting easier and more flexible, while at the same time it significantly reduced problem behavior in the children.

Page 2 of 2