



September 23, 2020

## **THE ATTACHMENT BIOBEHAVIORAL CATCH-UP (ABC) INTERVENTION**

The Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) Intervention program, which is based on attachment theory and stress neurobiology, was developed by Mary Dozier, Ph.D., at the University of Delaware. The program has been part of 29 evidence-based studies over 36 years and is designed to help caregivers provide nurturance to children by creating mutually responsive interactions in which a caregiver follows the child's lead and provides non-frightening care.<sup>1</sup> Parent coaches conduct ten weekly home visits known as sessions, lasting approximately 60 minutes each, and provide immediate feedback to the caregiver's interactions with the child in order to identify targeted behaviors.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)<sup>2</sup>, the ten sessions are designed to help caregivers do the following:

- Sessions 1 and 2 reinterpret a child's behavioral signals, providing nurturance even when it is not elicited;
- Sessions 3 and 4 help caregivers learn to follow their child's lead;
- Sessions 5 and 6 help caregivers recognize their own overwhelming or frightening behaviors and develop alternative responses;
- Sessions 7 and 8 help caregivers overcome automatic responses to their children that are based on their past experiences that could interfere with providing nurturing, sensitive care; and
- Sessions 9 and 10 reinforce knowledge gained during previous sessions.

The ABC Intervention program is divided into sub-programs that focus on age-specific support. The first is focused on children ages 6 to 24 months old, and the second is focused on children ages 24 to 48 months old.

The ABC Intervention program meets HHS's criteria for evidence-based models which can be found on its website.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 ["Implementing Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up \(ABC\) Intervention," HHS.gov.](#)

2 Id.

3 Id.

## Training For ABC Parent Coaches<sup>4</sup>

Training to become an ABC coach begins with a 30-minute screening process designed to determine whether an individual is a viable candidate. The initial training takes two days and is conducted twice a year at the University of Delaware. During this time, coaches will be exposed to the theoretical and practical aspects of the program, practice “In the Moment” commenting and coding, and learn how to review content of a session, how to consult with regard to site-specific implementation, and how to plan for the supervision year. Supervision for parent coach trainees is conducted *via* Zoom twice a week and covers “General Clinical Supervision” and “In the Moment Commenting Supervision.” According to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network<sup>5</sup>, these meetings consist of the following supervision methods:

- Group-Clinical Supervision is one hour per week and conducted in groups of two or three with an advanced-degree supervisor. Supervision includes video review each week; and
- “In the Moment Commenting Supervision” is a 30-minute session per week conducted by trained staff members at the University of Delaware. A five-minute segment from the parent coach’s case is assigned to the parent coach and staff member for coding prior to the supervision session. The supervision is directed at enhancing coding reliability (so that parent coaches will learn to identify triggers for comments and components of comments) and at enhancing comment quality and frequency.

The cost of training and a year of supervision totals \$7,000 plus reimbursement of travel costs. This does not include additional equipment that may need to be purchased for the program. Parent coaches need to have access to a laptop, camera, and video editing software to be able to create individually tailored videos for parents. Upon completing the ABC-Infant certification, a parent coach will be eligible to take part in the toddler intervention program at an additional cost that includes training and supervision time.

According to the organization’s website, as of September 22, 2020, 37 parent coaches were certified for the ABC infant program and 1 individual was certified for the ABC toddler program in Kansas.

## Project NeuroNurture<sup>6</sup>

In 2017, Project NeuroNurture provided a \$2.4 million grant over a 3-year period to implement the ABC Intervention program across 35 Kansas counties. Five site locations were identified and tasked to incorporate the ABC Intervention program into their existing infant and toddler home visit programs:

- Horizons Mental Health Center in Reno County;

---

4 [www.abcintervention.org](http://www.abcintervention.org)

5 [www.nctsn.org/interventions/attachment-and-biobehavioral-catch](http://www.nctsn.org/interventions/attachment-and-biobehavioral-catch)

6 [www.Neuronutureks.org](http://www.Neuronutureks.org)

- Northwest Kansas Council on Substance Abuse in Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Logan, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, Trego, and Wallace counties;
- Project Eagle, University of Kansas Medical Center in Wyandotte County;
- Rainbows United in Sedgwick and Butler counties; and
- Russell Child Development Center (Southwest Kansas) in Clark, Finney, Ford, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Lane, Meade, Morton, Ness, Scott, Seward, Stanton, Stevens, and Wichita counties.

The project targeted disadvantaged families and was underwritten by Hutchinson Community Foundation, Kansas Health Foundation, REACH Healthcare Foundation, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, and Wyandotte Health Foundation. The University of Delaware and Kansas University Endowment Association received grants from Project NeuroNuture for program training and evaluation. The program was slated to end in April 2020.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.neuronutureks.org/press-releases>