



PennState

PACT: Parents & Children Together

What We've Learned



SIESTA Family Foundations

Dr. Doug Teti

This project focuses on co-parenting (how well parents work together as a team) and sleep in first-time parents who live together. We meet with our families at five timepoints, from before the baby is born to the baby's first birthday, looking at co-parenting and parents' and baby's sleep data across the year. Two-thirds of our parents complete parenting classes, free of charge, before and after the baby is born, focusing on parenting skills, resolving conflicts, infant development, and sleep. We are primarily recruiting from Hershey Medical Center and Facebook. We have recruited about 100 families, with 92 families having finished their first/prenatal visit with us. We will continue to recruit until we hit our goal of 216 families.



TEENS

Dr. Kristin Buss

The TEENS project is interested in understanding what makes teenagers anxious. This study examines how emotions and behaviors associated with anxiety change across the teen years. The project involves four annual waves of visits to the PACT center starting at 13 to 14 years of age. During these visits, youth and one caregiver are able to tell us about their emotions, behaviors, and their experiences. They also get to see how their brain activity changes as they watch and respond to computer 'games.' The project just started this spring, and we have seen 17 youth so far.

CARE Study

Dr. Susan S. Woodhouse

Results from CARE show that babies have different patterns of regulating changes in their heart rate, depending on how sensitive their mothers are with them. Most of the babies had more sensitive mothers and these babies were more relaxed. This was true even if mothers turned away from them in the middle of playing with them (just like a mom might do to answer a phone call). The smaller group of babies with less sensitive mothers was more fussy. We are grateful to our many Community Partners.



TIES

Dr. Mayra Bámaca-Colbert & Dr. Dawn Witherspoon

TIES is a small study of 20 Latino teens and their parents. Families used cell phones provided by our team to answer questions for 14 days about daily experiences. We found that about 30% of youth experienced discrimination at school from other kids, which they felt was due to their English language ability. About 50% of parents reported discrimination experiences from neighbors, which they felt was due to English language ability or skin color. All of the teens who reported discrimination experiences had parents who were discriminated against. Both parents and teens who reported experiencing discrimination also felt fewer positive emotions.

BaSICS

Dr. Martha Wadsworth

We have currently recruited over 80 families for this study. Our community partners include Steelton-Highspire School District, Harrisburg School District, Tri-CAC, and Steel High Garden. We rely heavily on support from the school board, principals, secretaries, teachers, and staff in the schools we work with. The children in our program have completed some amazing community projects including cleaning up an abandoned lot, holding a town hall with the local police department, and planting a garden at Camp Curtin Academy.



For more information, please contact Carmen Henry-Harris, PACT Community Liaison, chenryharris@psu.edu



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FAN-C, Latino FAN-C, PLACES, & PARADE

Dr. Dawn Witherspoon

In the FAN-C, Latino FAN-C, and PLACES projects, we asked Latino and African American families about living in Harrisburg and their family life. We thank our community partners and everyone who participated in these projects – we learned a lot! For example, when parents talked more about their Latino or African American culture, their teens felt better about being who they are. We also learned that the neighborhoods families live in affect how parents talk to their teens about school, their activities, and their race and culture. Using map information, we learned about the places where parents and teens go. In the PARADE project, we are asking Latino and African American families about their daily experiences in Harrisburg. We hope to understand more about how teens and parents interact with their environment and how they feel about the places they go.



Talk, Touch, and Listen Study

Dr. Susan S. Woodhouse

Partnering with Healthy Start at Hamilton Health Center, Harrisburg mothers and fathers took part in a parenting group that focused on using the time parents spend doing their child's hair to build a better relationship with their child. Parents shared their stories of doing their children's hair, and learned about how to help a tender-headed child. Parents also had a chance to share their own hair stories with one another. The study showed that parents found the parenting group enjoyable and satisfying.



BRAVE Transitions to Kindergarten

Dr. Kristin Buss

BRAVE is an ongoing community-engaged intervention to help pre-K children have a good start to kindergarten. This project is focused on healthy emotion and social behaviors that help support learning. Capital Area Head Start directors, teachers and parents have partnered with us to create a program that will improve child self-control, reduce child stress & worry, and help parents learn how best to support their child as they move from pre-K to kindergarten. We are waiting to hear about a grant application and hope to begin this project in Fall, 2020.



Improving Outcomes for Teenagers Involved in the Juvenile Justice System **Dr. Diana Fishbein**

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) is a widely used family-focused program that has been shown to significantly improve outcomes for adolescents, many of whom have had involvement in the juvenile justice system. In this pilot study, we are recruiting 30 youth who have completed the MST program and asking them to complete thinking tasks and surveys. The goal of this study is to determine how well the MST program works and understand why some youth do better than others so we can refine the program to benefit more participants.



LAnT

Dr. Kristin Buss

We are interested in why some children have trouble with extreme shyness or anxiety. The causes take root very early, in infancy. This study examines the way attention may be linked to emotions and attention across the first years of life, because we know that attention can shape the development of anxiety. The project involves 5 visits to the PACT center when babies are 4-, 8-, 12-, 18- and 24-months of age. To date, over 80 Harrisburg families have participated with their babies.



For more information, please contact Carmen Henry-Harris, PACT Community Liaison, chenryharris@psu.edu