



PennState

PACT: Parents & Children Together



What We've Learned

SIESTA Family Foundations

Dr. Doug Teti

This project focuses on co-parenting, or how well parents work together as a team, beginning before their infants' birth and continuing across their infants' first year of life. The goals of this project are (a) to promote good coparenting, especially around parent and infant sleep decisions; (b) improve the quality of parent and infant sleep; and (c) promote good parent-infant relationships. We meet with our families at five different times, from before the baby is born to the baby's first birthdate. Two-thirds of our parents are offered parenting classes, free of charge, before and after the baby is born. We are currently recruiting from Hershey Medical Center and Facebook. We recruited 16 families in our first group and are finishing up recruiting the second group, which has 18 families at the moment. So far, 9 families were selected and are participating in our parenting classes.



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.



CARE Study

Dr. Susan S. Woodhouse

Results from the 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 were more fussy. We are grateful to our many Community Partners.



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 the 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.





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FAN-C, Latino FAN-C, and PLACES

Dr. Dawn Witherspoon & Dr. Mayra Bámaca

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 would like to thank our community partners for their support, as well as everyone that participated in these projects – we learned a lot! For example, when parents know more about their teens' lives, teens are less likely to do things like skip school or pick on other people. Also, when parents talked more about their Latino or African American culture, their teens felt better about being who they are. We also learned that families who talked with their teens about the “good and bad” in their neighborhoods often had happier kids. Using map information, we learned more about the places where parents and teens go. Both parents and teens tend to stay close to home but also go to parts of the city that are far away from home. Sometimes they go to these places together. Our next steps include learning more about how these different places matter for teens and families.



PRISM

Dr. Erika Lunkenheimer



In this new project with mothers and their 3-year-olds, we aim to understand how parents discipline children's misbehavior and how it relates to children's self-control. Our related work shows that when parents and children repair moments of conflict, persist at learning tasks together, and respond to each other more consistently, children show better self-control and fewer behavior problems. We have also found that when parents were more willing to discuss children's feelings with them, children understood and controlled their emotions better.

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.



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 50 Harrisburg families have participated with their babies.

