

# Early Promotion and Intervention Research Consortium (E-PIRC), Research Partners

## Tulane University

*Project Title:*

High-Risk Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: Comparing Two Preventive Interventions

*Principal Investigator:*

Neil Boris, M.D.

*Project Funding Years:*

2002-2006

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*Project Abstract:*

Tulane University has partnered with the Early Head Start (EHS) Program at the YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge. Our original goal was to compare two interventions that use a relationship focus to increase attachment organization between high-risk adolescent mothers and their 12- to 48-month-old children. In the first year of the project, we sought to gain the acceptance of EHS staff and clients, determine how to best introduce parenting interventions for this high-risk group, develop measures capturing the complexity of grandmother and father involvement, and investigate the perceptions of African American adolescent mothers regarding the violence in their communities and the impact of this violence on their parenting strategies. In Years 2-4 of the project, we had planned to conduct a randomized, controlled trial comparing the Circle of Security (COS) protocol, a group reflective therapy model, to the Nurturing Program, a group education and support model. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, however, we were forced to reshape our partnership. Since the Fall of 2005, we have focused on using the data and experiences from Years 1, 2 and 3 of the partnership to help the programs manage rapid expansion and create sustainable parenting interventions. Additionally, we are studying both the

partnership process qualitatively and the process of implementing reflective practice at all organizational levels.

*Sample:*

N=90 African American mother-child dyads

## **University of Maryland**

*Project Title:*

Project HAPPI: Healthy Attachment Promotion for Parents and Infants (An Early Head Start Infant Mental Health Initiative)

*Principal Investigator:*

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*Project Funding Years:*

2002-2006

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*Project Abstract:*

Project HAPPI, Healthy Attachment Promotion for Parents and Infants, is a collaboration between the University of Maryland and the United Planning Organization (an organization that administers several comprehensive, center-based child development programs for infants and toddlers in Washington, DC) designed to implement and evaluate an Early Head Start (EHS) infant mental health intervention. Participants will include 250 mother-child dyads deemed to be at risk for at least one of three risk factors: maternal depression, maternal substance abuse, and/or child maltreatment. Each mother-child dyad will be randomly assigned to one of the following groups, where they will receive either a) traditional EHS services only, or b) traditional EHS services in addition to the infant mental health intervention. The one-year infant mental health intervention will consist of biweekly home visitation, biweekly parent-child groups (i.e., group socialization), and monthly training and consultation with center caregivers. Home visiting staff and center-based caregivers/teachers will receive training on infant mental health prior to the intervention, and home visiting staff will receive ongoing training and support throughout the intervention period. Assessment of the two groups will be performed via multiple data

collection methods, including videotaped sessions and direct child assessment. The researchers hypothesize that the intervention will improve parental functioning, enhance parent-child relationships, and promote child emotional well-being.

*Sample:*

N=250 mother-child dyads

## **University of Miami**

*Project Title:*

Infusing Infant Mental Health Services in Early Head Start Through a Research-Based Collaborative Partnership

*Principal Investigator:*

Neena M. Malik, Ph.D.

*Project Funding Years:*

2002-2006

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*Project Abstract:*

The current project is a multi-agency collaborative effort designed to enhance an existing infrastructure of infant mental health services within Early Head Start. As part of the effort, intervention services and data collection will be carried out by teams of Early Head Start social workers, community-based early intervention specialists, and university-based clinical and academic staff. The goals of this project are to provide effective and culturally competent mental health services to high risk families with young children, including families struggling with poverty, violence, and potential delays in children's development; test hypotheses related to transactional theories of child development in high-risk families across cultural groups; and contribute to the empirical literature on the efficacy of parent-infant psychotherapy in improving family and child functioning and development. The project will target 128 high-risk children and families in Miami-Dade County, for whom screening, including observations of parent-child interactions and children in their classrooms, will be conducted. Following

the screening, intensive parent-infant psychotherapy will be implemented with 30 families observed to be at risk for relationship difficulties and developmental delays. Assessments will include the quality of the parent-child relationship, multiple domains of child development, exposure to violence in the community and at home, parenting stress, and children's adaptive functioning. The project is designed to be longitudinal in nature, assessing both short- and long-term effects of parent-infant therapy on family and child functioning across multiple cultural groups.

*Sample:*

N=128 Early Head Start children and their families

## **University of North Carolina**

*Project Title:*

EHS Latina Mothers: Reducing Depression and Improving Infant/Toddler Mental Health

*Principal Investigator:*

Linda S. Beeber, Ph.D., R.N.

*Project Funding Years:*

2002-2006

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*Project Abstract:*

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, working collaboratively with three Early Head Start programs in North Carolina, is testing a home-based, manual-guided intervention for depressive symptoms with Latina Early Head Start (EHS) mothers. A masters-prepared psychiatric-mental health nurse and an EHS bilingual home visitor are working with mothers who have depressive symptoms to help develop self-efficacy, so that the mother can function in the face of symptoms, solve difficult life issues, increase her use of social support and improve parenting interactions with her infant or toddler. The 5-month intervention is taking interpersonal and skill-focused. With the help of EHS parents, staff, and community advisory boards, the intervention content and materials have been tailored to the language

capabilities, needs, and cultural contexts of these mothers. The study will take place in three Early Head Start programs in North Carolina that serve Latina mothers. The 80 mothers are being randomized to treatment and usual care groups and the effects are being measured over four collection points (baseline, 14 weeks, 22 weeks, and 26 weeks). The two groups are being compared on maternal reduction of depressive symptoms, increased self-efficacy, improved parenting interactions, and infant/toddler mental health outcomes of developmental maturity and social-emotional competence. Researchers expect the intervention to increase mothers' use of EHS services and therefore enhance infant mental health benefits beyond the duration of the intervention.

*Sample:*

N=80 Latina Early Head Start mothers

## **University of Oregon**

*Project Title:*

Early Head Start-University Partnerships: Improving Mental Health in Children Served by Early Head Start

*Principal Investigator:*

Jane Squires, Ph.D.

*Project Funding Years:*

2002-2006

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*Project Abstract:*

The University of Oregon Early Intervention Program, in partnership with the Southern Oregon Early Head Start Program the Mid-Columbia Children's Center Early Head Start Program, and Mt. Hood Community College Early Head Start will implement and evaluate a preventative mental health intervention program aimed at enhancing developmental growth, social emotional competence in children, home visitors' knowledge and skills regarding mental health issues, and healthy caregiver-child relationships. In Phase One of the project, two theoretically based interventions will be

compared with a non-treatment comparison group. While both proposed interventions include a mental health mentor/supervisor to provide training and support to EHS staff, Intervention A (termed Intervention Mentor) will focus on infant mental health and parent-child interactions, whereas Intervention B (termed Intervention Mentor Plus) will focus on infant mental health and parent-child interactions as well as a structured social-emotional curriculum. Phase Two of the project will serve as a replication in which the original comparison group will receive either Intervention Mentor or Mentor Plus (whichever is found to be most effective), while a new program serves as a comparison group. Three hundred and fifteen parent-child dyads will ultimately participate over the four-year project, in a combination research approach that will include correlational, descriptive, experimental, and case study methodologies.

*Sample:*

N=315 Early Head Start parent-child dyads