



The Baby Elmo Project:

Examining Parent-Infant Interactions Within the Juvenile Justice Facilities

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Introduction

- Children with incarcerated parents are one of the most underserved, at-risk populations. They are at higher risk of engaging in delinquent behavior, failing to graduate high school, and exhibiting emotional problems (Murray & Farrington, 2005).
- Children who maintain contact with their parent during incarceration exhibit fewer behavioral problems (Sack, Seidler & Thomas, 1976) and have overall improved outcomes (e.g., Edin, Nelson & Paranal, 2004).
- Thirty percent of incarcerated teen males are fathers (Nurse, 2002) and these parents rarely visit with their infants and/or receive parent training despite the potential for reduced recidivism (Hughes, 1998) and long lasting benefits for their children.

Research Question

- Can the quality of interactions between teen parents and their infants be improved within the context of the juvenile detention facilities by using a media based parent-training program?



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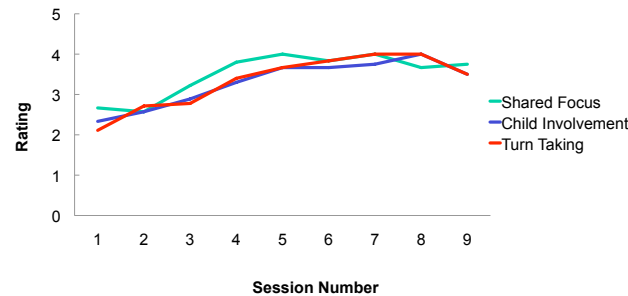
Method

Participants: Preliminary data from 10 parent-infant dyads from Fresno County California who have completed at least 4 parent training sessions and visits.

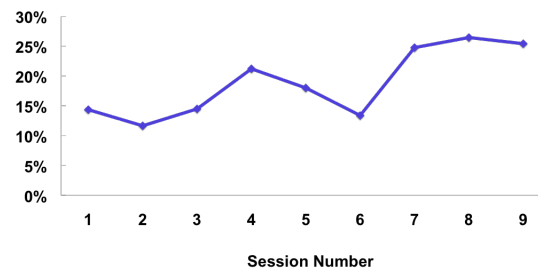
Procedure: The intervention consists of 10 group sessions and 10 structured parent-infant visits focused on communication and socio-emotional enhancing techniques. Sesame Street Beginnings DVDs were incorporated into the training sessions as a cost-effective way to teach positive parent-child interactions through modeling.

Measures:

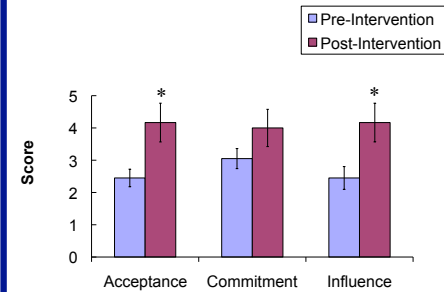
- **Emotional Responsiveness:** Each visit was scored on the basis of 5 dimensions (shared focus, emotional engagement, parent involvement, infant involvement and turn taking) and for each dimension, dyads were rated on a 5-point scale, (5=high quality, 1 = low quality).



- **Parent-Infant Interactions:** Each visit was coded for quantity and quality of interactions. Parent behaviors and vocalizations, child behaviors and vocalizations, and parent-infant interactions were coded to assess the change in play and language across sessions. The average proportion of time spent in high quality positive interactions per session is shown below.



- **“This Is My Baby” (TIMB):** Semi-structured interview developed by Bates and Dozier (1998). Measures parental commitment, acceptance, and awareness of influence upon the child before and after intervention.



Discussion

- The preliminary findings show promising changes in both the quantity and quality of interactions between incarcerated teen parents and their infants from a low cost, short-term, staff delivered intervention.
- We are replicating this study at other juvenile justice facilities and continuing to collect and analyze data.

References

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