



Mailman Center for Child Development's *Families First* Program: The Impact of a Community-Based Program on Parenting

The University of Miami's Families First Program, funded by The Children's Trust since 2004, delivers free parenting services to at-risk families with children ages birth to 3 throughout Miami-Dade County. Goals include building resources for parents, strengthening families, promoting optimal child health and development and reducing parental stress. Families First partners with over 20 community organizations including childcare facilities, places of worship and healthcare sites to offer two evidence-based/best practice parenting groups in English and Spanish at times and locations convenient to families.

Baby & Me, developed by the University of Miami's Perinatal C.A.R.E. Program, is a ten-session curriculum for parents and their infants ages birth to 12 months. Derived from attachment theory, Baby & Me encourages parents to use responsive techniques during routine interactions with their infants. Parents and their infants meet once a week for two hours and each session includes group process activities, structured parent-child interactive play, practical discussion topics, and craft time focused on creating an individualized baby book.

The Incredible Years Toddler Basic Parenting program is an evidence-based program developed by Dr. Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington, for parents of children ages one to three to reduce challenging behaviors in children and increase their social emotional learning and self-control skills. Families meet once a week for two hours and are taught skills to improve the parent-child relationship, use play and coaching to facilitate their children's development and social-emotional competence, as well as to promote school readiness. Video clips of real-life situations are used to stimulate group discussions and problem-solving practices.

Pre- and post-test measures for 239 families in Baby & Me and 394 families in the Incredible Years Toddler program enrolled between 12/2017 and 3/2021 were analyzed to assess the impact of our parenting groups on knowledge of appropriate parenting behaviors and child development and on parental stress.

Participants were primarily White, Hispanic and over 25 years of age. Parents in Baby & Me were administered the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) and a curriculum-specific outcome measure. Those who participated in the Incredible Years Toddler curriculum were administered the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory – version 2 (AAPI-2) form A and the PSS. Measures were administered at the start of groups and then again after completion of the curricula.

Results indicate a significant decrease in PSS scores from pre to post session (31.1 ± 8.9 vs 28.0 ± 7.7 , $p < 0.001$ for Baby & Me and 31.8 ± 9.5 vs 28.5 ± 8.4 , $p < 0.001$ for Incredible Years). There were also significant increases in the Baby and Me curriculum-specific total scores and sub-scale scores: Total correct (32.7 ± 4.2 vs 35.9 ± 2.4 , $p < 0.0001$); Knowledge of effective parenting skills (17.1 ± 2.2 vs 18.5 ± 1.2 , $p < 0.0001$); and Knowledge of appropriate milestones (15.6 ± 2.5 vs 17.4 ± 1.7 , $p < 0.0001$). Additionally, scores on all five AAPI-2 constructs significantly increased among Incredible Years group participants; Expectations of children (23.1 ± 5.4 vs 26.6 ± 5.3 , $p < 0.0001$); Parental empathy toward children (40.9 ± 5.6 vs 44.0 ± 4.5 , $p < 0.0001$); Alternatives to corporal punishment (43.2 ± 6.6 vs 47.1 ± 5.9 , $p < 0.0001$); Parent-child family roles (27.6 ± 5.0 vs 30.6 ± 4.1 , $p < 0.0001$); Children's power and independence (21.4 ± 2.4 vs 22.4 ± 2.3 , $p < 0.0001$).

Findings highlight the positive impact of community-based parenting programs, such as Families First, on parental knowledge and parenting stress which are important for supporting healthy social and emotional development in young children.