



Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up



# ATTACHMENT AND BIOBEHAVIORAL CATCH-UP (ABC) - PARENTING PROGRAM FOR NEWBORNS, INFANTS, AND TODDLERS

**Lindsay Zajac, PhD**  
Managing Director of ABCPI  
Licensed Psychologist





# WHAT IS ABC?

- Parenting program
- 10 1-hour sessions
- Developed at UD
- Delivered in the home or Zoom
- Available to any DE parent or caregiver with a child 4 years and younger
- \$200 gift card

There are three different ABC models.  
The model you receive is based on  
your child's age.



**Newborn**

Prenatal-6 months



**Infancy**

6-24 months



**Early Childhood**

24-48 months



Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up

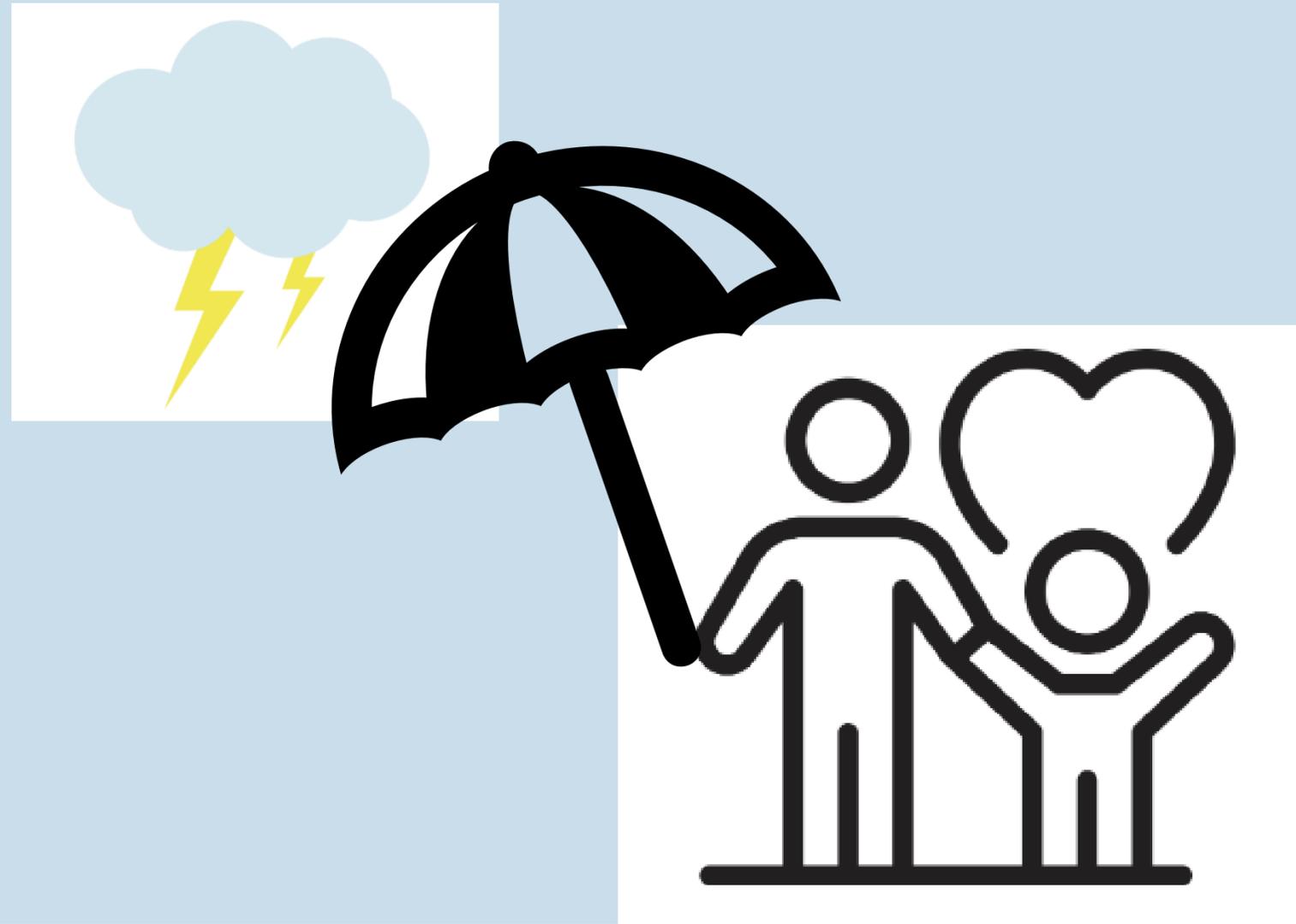
# BABIES AND TODDLERS DON'T COME WITH A MANUAL...

- **ABC's goal is to strengthen the parent-child relationship and promote children's regulatory skills**
- **ABC helps parents:**
  - Nurture and calm their child
  - Follow the lead and delight in their child
  - Avoid behaviors that are overwhelming or frightening for young children



# WHY IS ABC IMPORTANT?

- **Sensitive, responsive relationships between children and their parents can buffer a child from the effects of early adversity.**



# WHY IS ABC IMPORTANT?



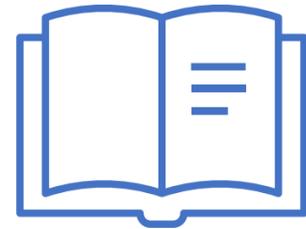
- **Sensitive, responsive relationships between children and their parents can buffer a child from the effects of early adversity.**
- **ABC partners with parents to improve outcomes for children exposed to early adversity.**
- **Attachment and self-regulation are key problems for children experiencing early adversity.**
  - **ABC focuses on foundational skills that have broad, long-lasting impact.**

# WHAT DOES AN ABC SESSION LOOK LIKE?

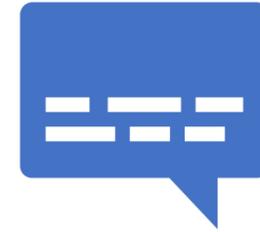
- Weekly sessions
  - Each session has a theme or focus
- Parent learns about parenting behaviors and child development
  - Watch lots of videos!
- Parent and child do activities together
  - Read books, play with blocks, make pudding, create art using stickers or play doh
- Strengths-based
- Parent coach brings any necessary supplies
- No homework assignments
- Video-recorded sessions



# HOW IS ABC IMPLEMENTED?



Manualized  
content

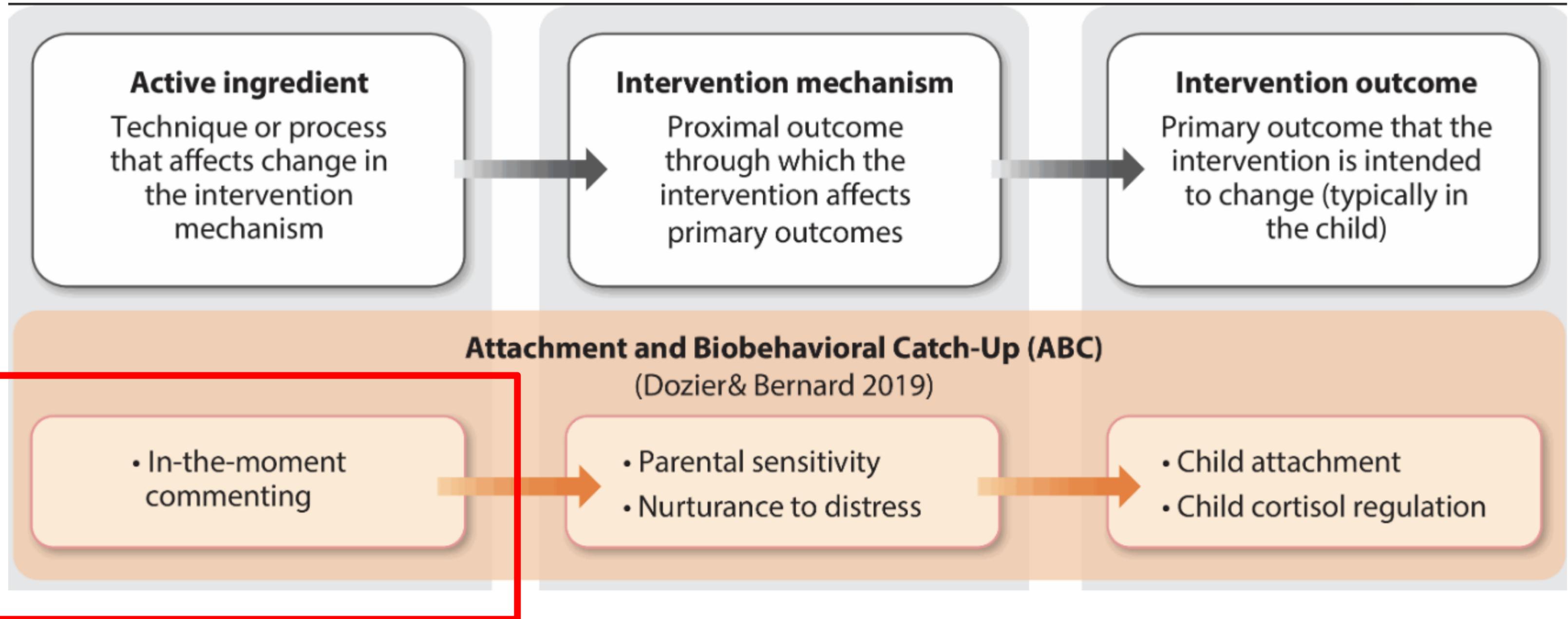


In-the-moment  
comments



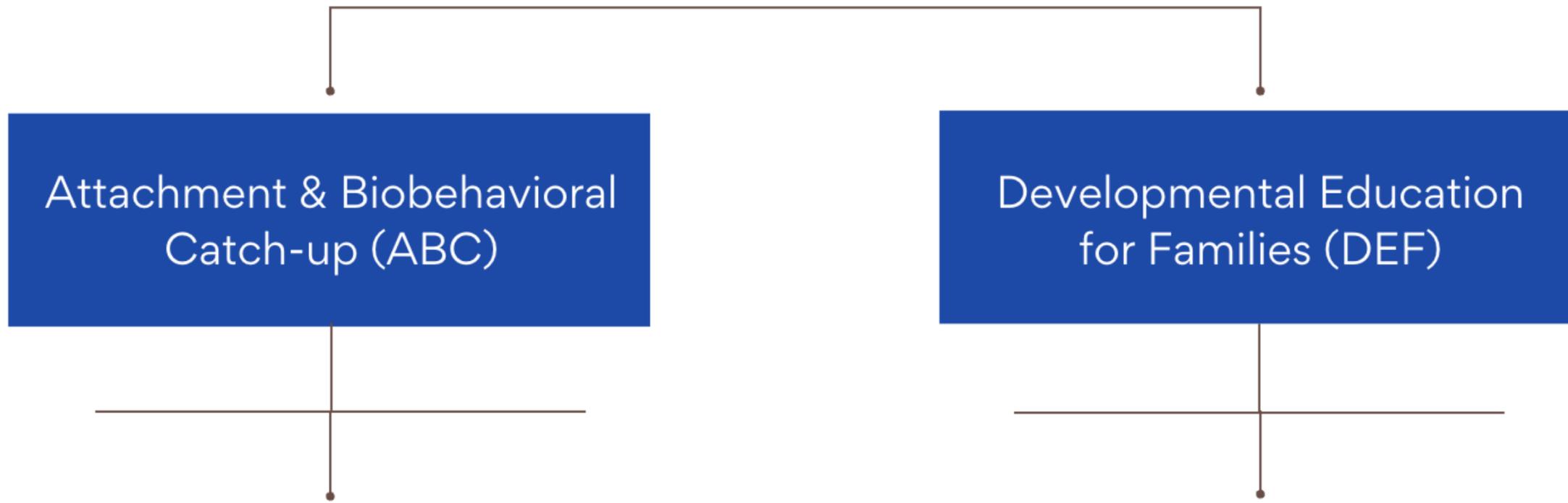
Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up

# PARENTAL SENSITIVITY IS INTERVENTION MECHANISM



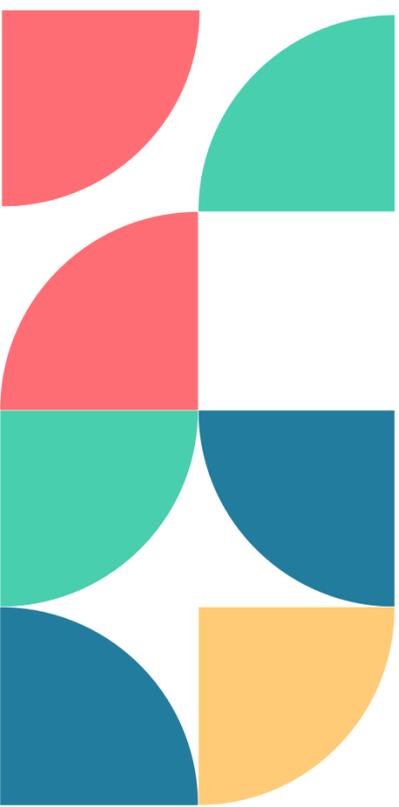
# ABC'S EVIDENCE BASE

Randomly assigned children and parents to



- ABC Intervention:
- 10 weekly in-home sessions
  - Focused on ABC intervention targets

- Control intervention:
- 10 weekly in-home sessions
  - Focused on cognitive and motor development

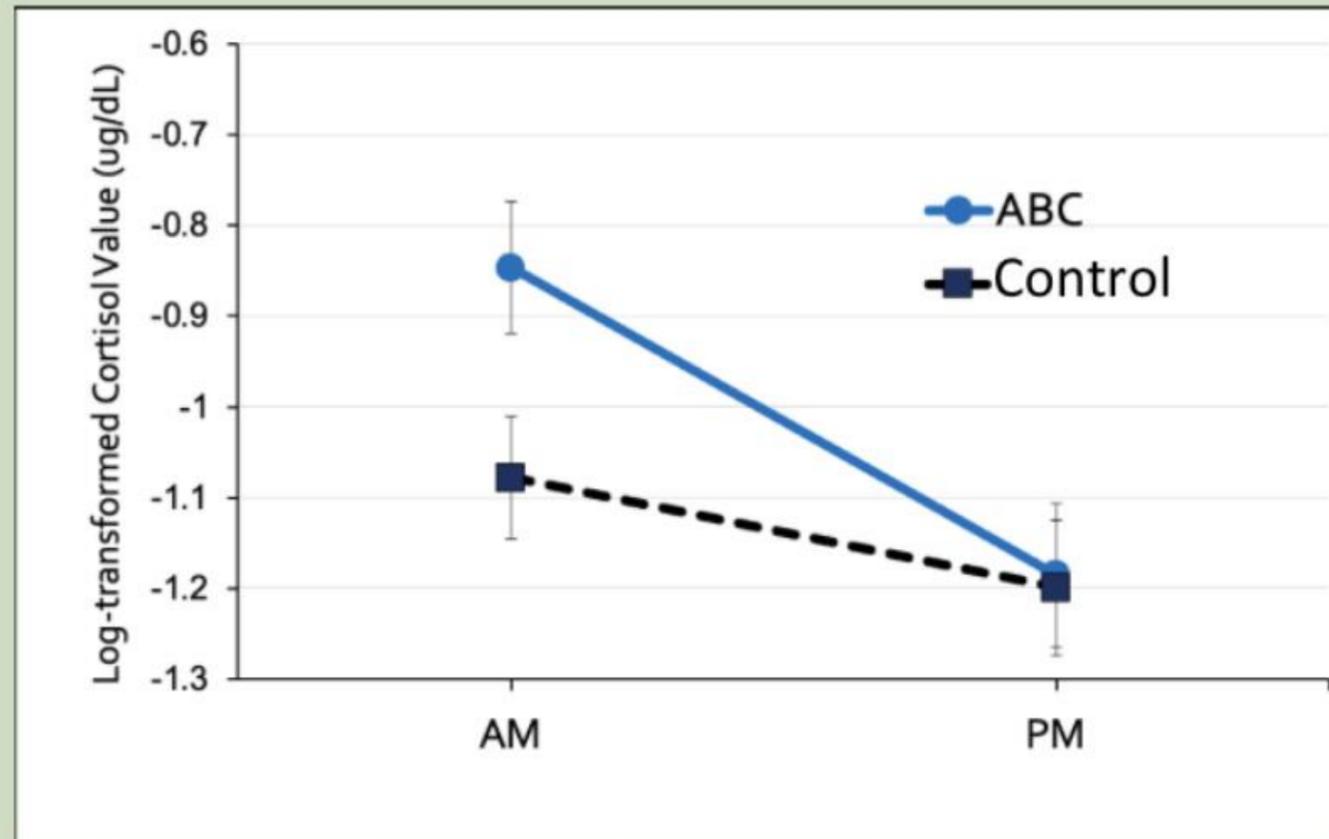


# Intervention Effects on Diurnal Cortisol



Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up

## PHYSIOLOGICAL REGULATION



Children who received ABC also demonstrated **more normative patterns of cortisol** than children who received a control intervention. These effects are present one month post intervention and persist three years later!

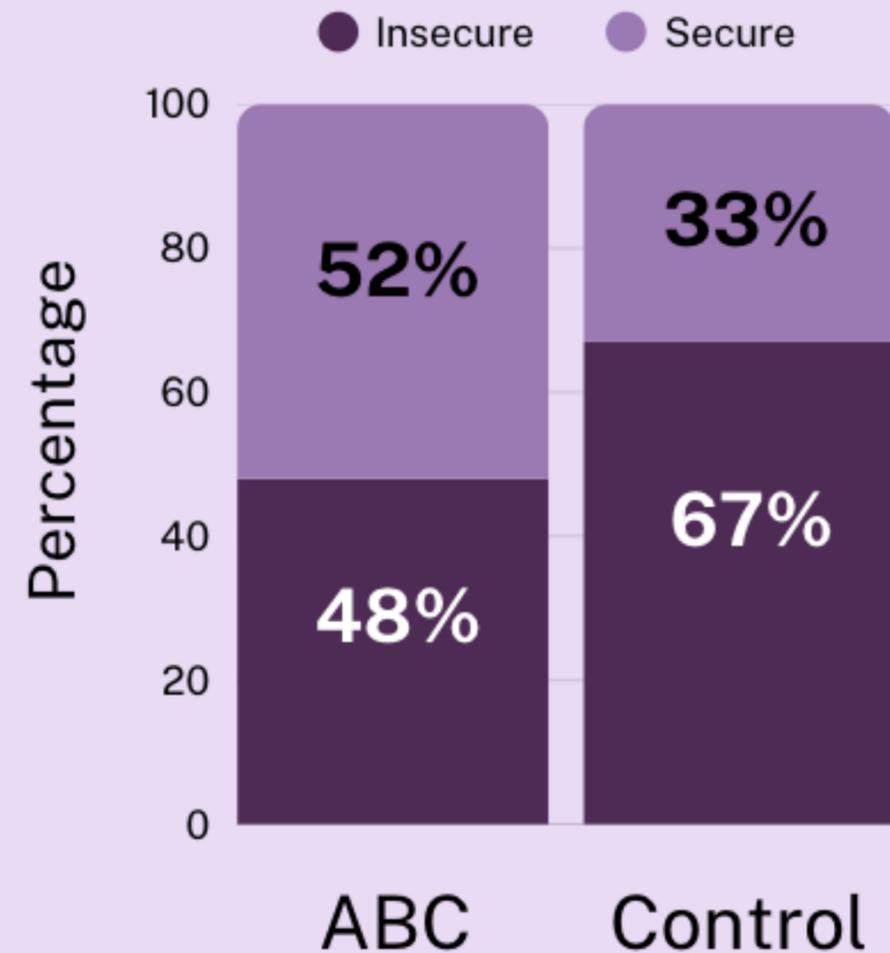
# Intervention Effects on Attachment



Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up

## ATTACHMENT

Children who received ABC demonstrated **lower rates of insecure attachments** than children who received a control intervention.



# HOW DOES ABC HELP THE FAMILY?

Lots of research studies have shown the positive effects of ABC for children *and* parents



**Language Skills:** Children who receive ABC demonstrate higher levels of receptive vocabulary.



**Behavior and Emotion Regulation:** When they are toddlers, children who receive ABC demonstrate better impulse control and control anger when frustrated.



**Strong Relationships:** Children who receive ABC report higher levels of trust in their parents during middle childhood and early adolescence.



**Parenting and Mental Health:** Mothers who receive ABC report lower levels of depression and demonstrate more responsive parenting behaviors.



# ABC IN DELAWARE

- ABC available statewide
  - Expanding in-person ABC in southern DE
  - In-person ABC w/ Spanish speaking coaches in New Castle County
- Daytime availability? Able to start ABC sooner!



LONGWOOD *foundation*



Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up

# MEET OUR PARENT COACHES

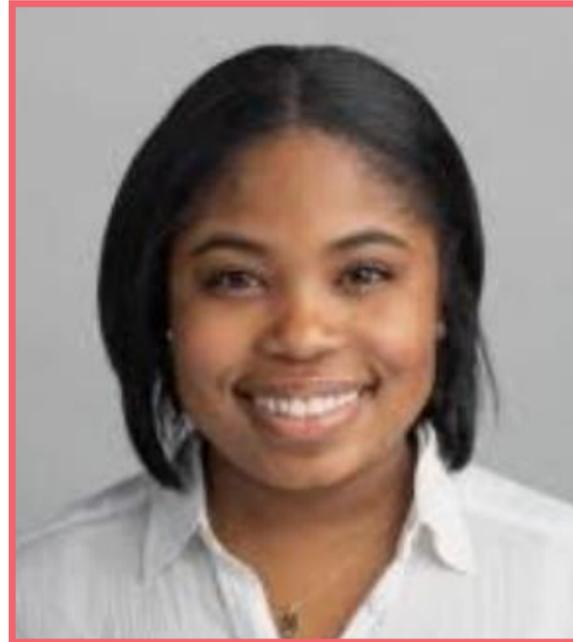
**SYDNEY**



**CIANA**



**KIRA**



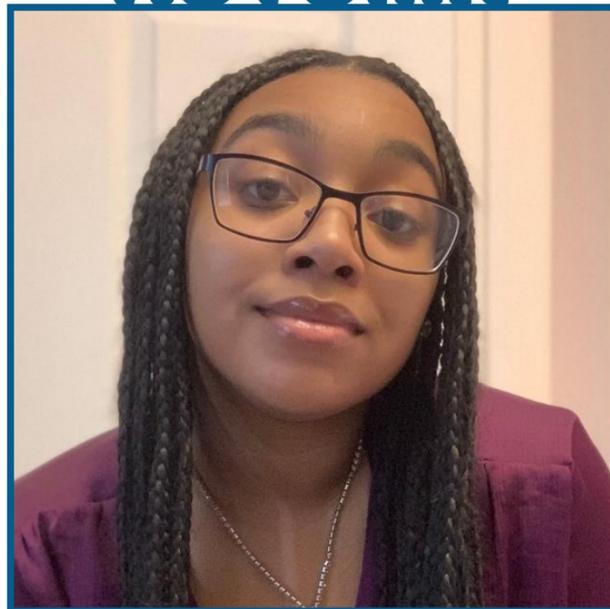
**MICAEELA**



**KATIE**



**AUTUMN**



**KRYSTAL**



**KADISHA**



**CHRIS**



# Who should I refer to ABC?

- **Child age: birth through 4 years**
- ABC is a helpful program for all parents (birth, foster, adoptive, kin caregivers)
- No income requirements
- Receiving ABC does NOT impact:
  - MIECHV program participation (e.g., NFP, PAT)
  - Early intervention
- We are happy to refer to other programs!

# Who should I refer to ABC?

- ABC would be especially helpful for:
  - Children who have experienced early adversity
  - Children with socioemotional or behavior concerns at school or home
  - Children who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic
  - Parents with mental health concerns (e.g., postpartum depression, high levels of anxiety)
  - Parents who want more support
- Not sure if it's an appropriate referral? Email me!  
([lzajac@abcparenting.org](mailto:lzajac@abcparenting.org))



Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-up

EARN A \$200 GIFT CARD!



**EVIDENCE-BASED HOME VISITING PROGRAM**

Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) is a parenting program that was developed at the **University of Delaware (UD)**.

Research shows that ABC enhances the parent-child attachment relationship and promotes children's regulatory skills, brain development, and language development. **ABC is only 10 sessions but has been shown to have effects on children's development through adolescence!**

**ABOUT ABC**

ABC is a parenting program that consists of **ten 1-hour weekly sessions**. During ABC sessions, parent coaches help parents nurture their child and follow their child's lead.

**ABC MODELS**

There are three different ABC models. The model you receive is based on your child's age.

**ABC-Newborn:** Pregnancy through infant age of 6 months

**ABC-Infant:** 6-24 months

**ABC-Early Childhood:** 2-4 years

**ELIGIBILITY**

Any parent, primary caregiver, or legal guardian who lives with a child (0 through 4 years of age) is eligible to receive ABC.

**SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH**

ABC was developed at UD and has been shown to have positive effects on parents *and* children.

ABC is currently available (free of charge) to families in DE and southeastern PA. There are financial incentives available for participating in the ABC program.

*Interested in receiving ABC or learning more?*

Scan the QR code or contact Lindsay Zajac at [lzajac@abcparenting.org](mailto:lzajac@abcparenting.org).



Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-up

¡Gana una tarjeta de regalo de \$200!



**PROGRAMA DE VISITAS A DOMICILIOS BASADO EN EVIDENCIA**

Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) es un programa para padres que fue desarrollado en la Universidad de Delaware (UD). Las investigaciones muestran que ABC mejora la relación de apego entre padres e hijos y promueve las habilidades regulatorias, el desarrollo del cerebro y el desarrollo del lenguaje de los niños. **¡ABC es sólo 10 sesiones, pero se ha demostrado que tiene efectos en el desarrollo de los niños a través de la adolescencia!**

**ACERCA DE ABC**

ABC es un programa de visitas domiciliarias que consta de **diez sesiones semanales de 1 hora**. Durante las sesiones de ABC, los parent coaches ayudan a los padres a dar cariño a sus hijos y seguir su iniciativa. También los parent coaches ayudan a los padres a evitar asustar a sus hijos.

**MODELOS DE ABC**

Hay tres modelos ABC diferentes. El modelo que recibe se basa en la edad de su hijo.

**ABC-Infancia:** Embarazo hasta la edad de 6 meses

**ABC-Infantil:** 6-24 meses

**ABC-Primera Infancia:** 2-4 años

**ELEGIBILIDAD**

Cualquier padre, cuidador principal o tutor legal que viva con un niño (de 0 a 4 años de edad) es elegible para recibir ABC. **¡Actualmente podemos ofrecer ABC a familias en DE de forma totalmente gratuita!**

**APOYADO POR LA INVESTIGACIÓN**

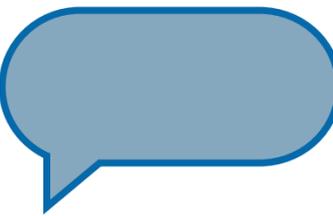
ABC fue desarrollado en la UD y se ha demostrado que tiene efectos positivos en padres e hijos. ABC está aprobado como un programa de visitas domiciliarias con respaldo empírico en múltiples listas, incluidas MIECHV, HomVEE, CEBC y SAMSHA.

**PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN SOBRE CÓMO CONVERTIRSE EN PADRE DE ABC O PARA APRENDER CÓMO CONVERTIRSE EN UN PARENT COACH DE ABC EN DE, CONTÁCTENOS.**

# How can I refer to ABC?

- Provide ABC flyer to parent – they can complete the survey (access via QR code) to enroll
- Provider can complete enrollment survey on behalf of parent
- Email [abcdelaware@abcparenting.org](mailto:abcdelaware@abcparenting.org)
  - Parent name, contact info, child DOB most essential
- Call 302-405-5022
- Provide my contact information ([lzajac@abcparenting.org](mailto:lzajac@abcparenting.org)) to family

# WHAT ARE PARENTS SAYING?



*I was referred to ABC when my daughter was 1 year old. I had real concerns about whether I could meet my daughter's emotional needs on my own. **From the very beginning, our Parent Coach had been an incredible source of support...Her guidance came at a time when parenting felt overwhelming, and my daughter's tantrums felt hard to manage.** Our Parent Coach's encouragement **gave me the confidence I needed to navigate the challenges, follow the lead with delight, and nurture my daughter.** ABC has been **life-changing** for me and my daughter... The sessions **helped me truly connect with my daughter in a deeper, more meaningful way.** I highly recommend this program to all families.*

-Natalie, participated in ABC-Infant during summer 2025



Attachment &  
Biobehavioral  
Catch-up



# THANK YOU

[abcparenting.org](http://abcparenting.org)

**Questions?**

[lzajac@abcparenting.org](mailto:lzajac@abcparenting.org)

