

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

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Licensed Psychologist



ABC PARENTING INSTITUTE MISSION

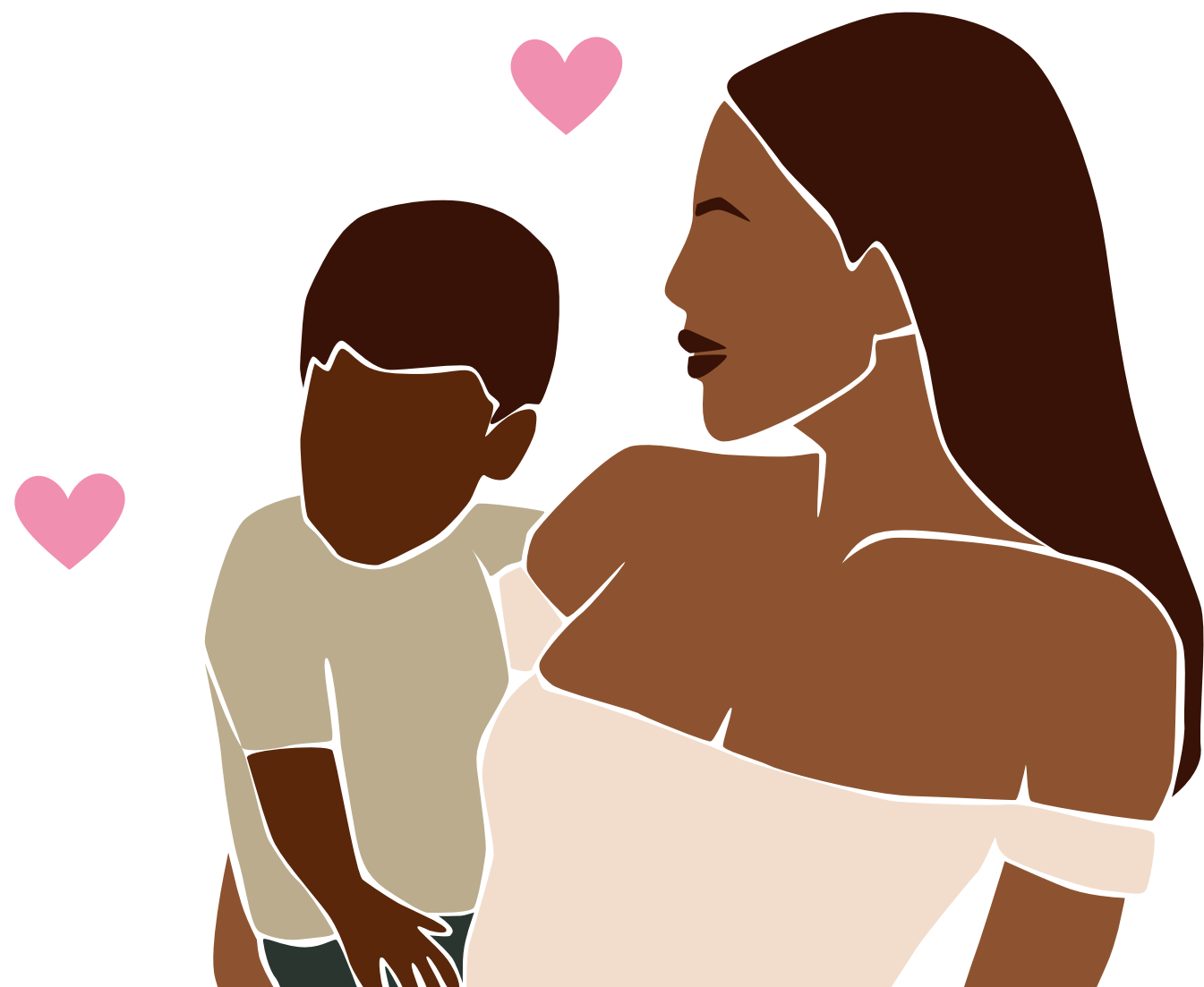
*to nurture parent-child relationships through
Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up
(ABC), an evidence-based parenting program
grounded in science and community
partnership*



Mary Dozier, PhD
Executive Director and ABC Developer



Attachment &
Biobehavioral
Catch-up



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



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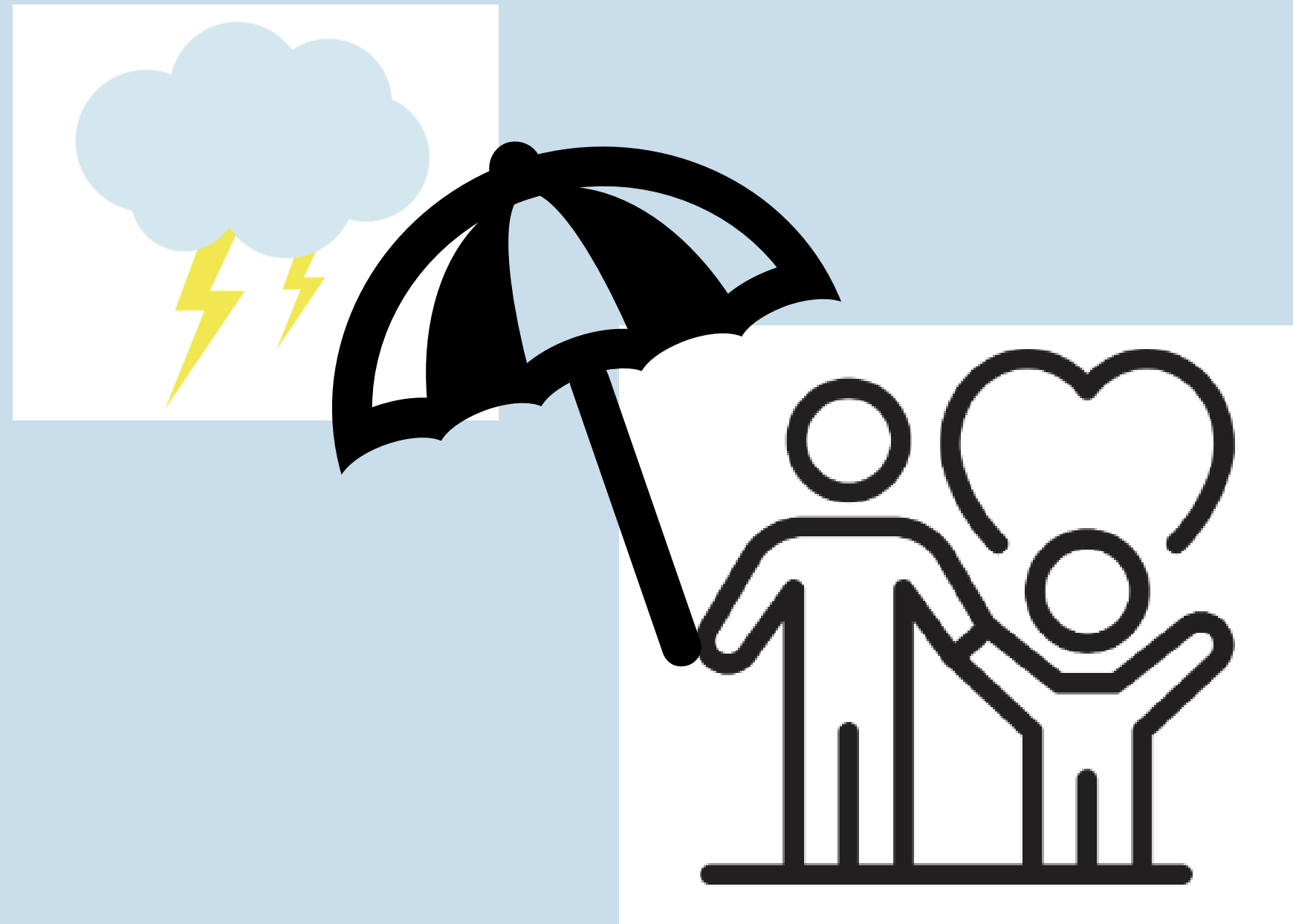
BABIES AND TODDLERS DON'T COME WITH A MANUAL...

- **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?



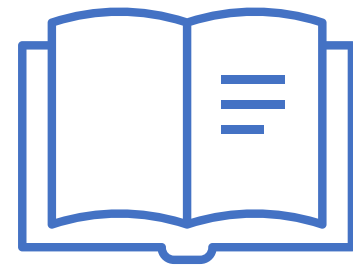
- **Sensitive, responsive relationships between children and their parents can buffer a child from the effects of early adversity.**
- **ABC partners with parents to improve outcomes for children exposed to early adversity.**
- **Attachment and self-regulation are key problems for children experiencing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

WHAT DOES AN ABC SESSION LOOK LIKE?

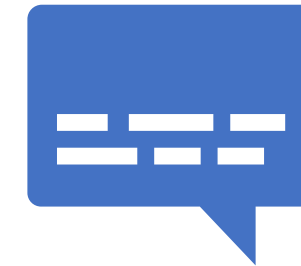
- Weekly sessions
 - Each session has a theme or focus
- Parent learns about parenting behaviors and child development
 - Watch lots of videos!
- Parent and child do activities together
 - Read books, play with blocks, make pudding, create art using stickers or play doh
- Strengths-based
- Parent coach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



HOW IS ABC IMPLEMENTED?

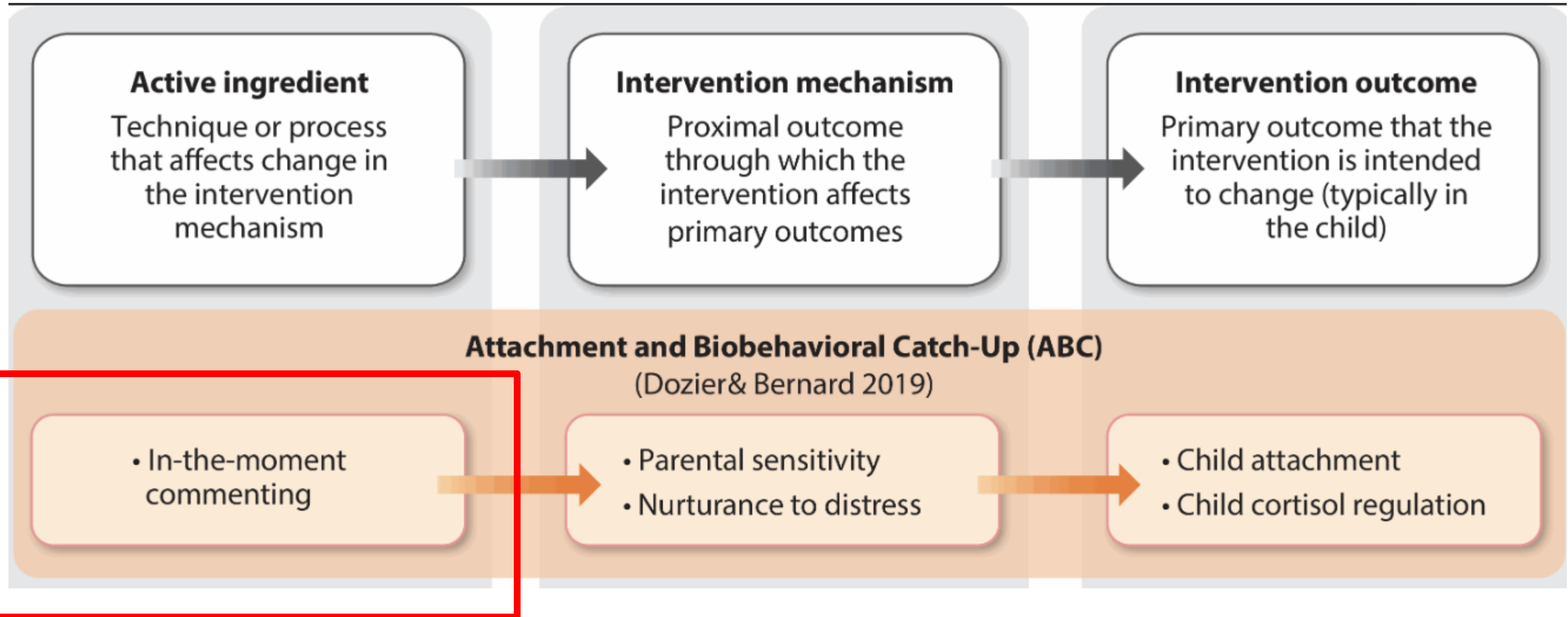


Manualized
content



In-the-moment
comments

PARENTAL SENSITIVITY IS INTERVENTION MECHANISM



ABC'S EVIDENCE BASE

Randomly assigned children and parents to

Attachment & Biobehavioral
Catch-up (ABC)

Developmental Education
for Families (DEF)

ABC Intervention:

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

Control intervention:

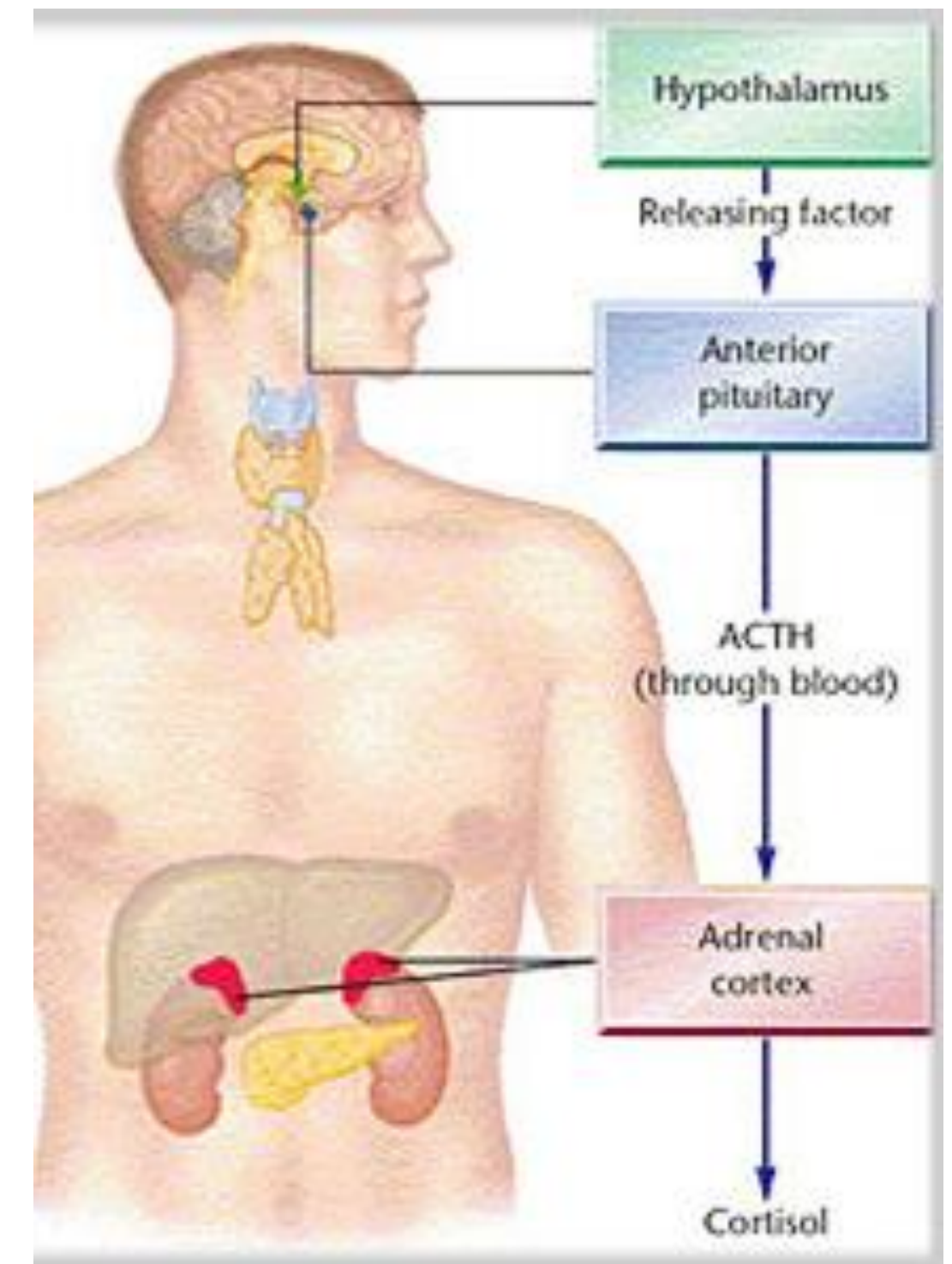
- 10 weekly in-home sessions
- Focused on cognitive and motor development

ABC EFFECTS ON DIURNAL CORTISOL

Compared with children in control condition:

ABC children have better regulation of their physiology

- Cortisol
- Autonomic nervous system regulation

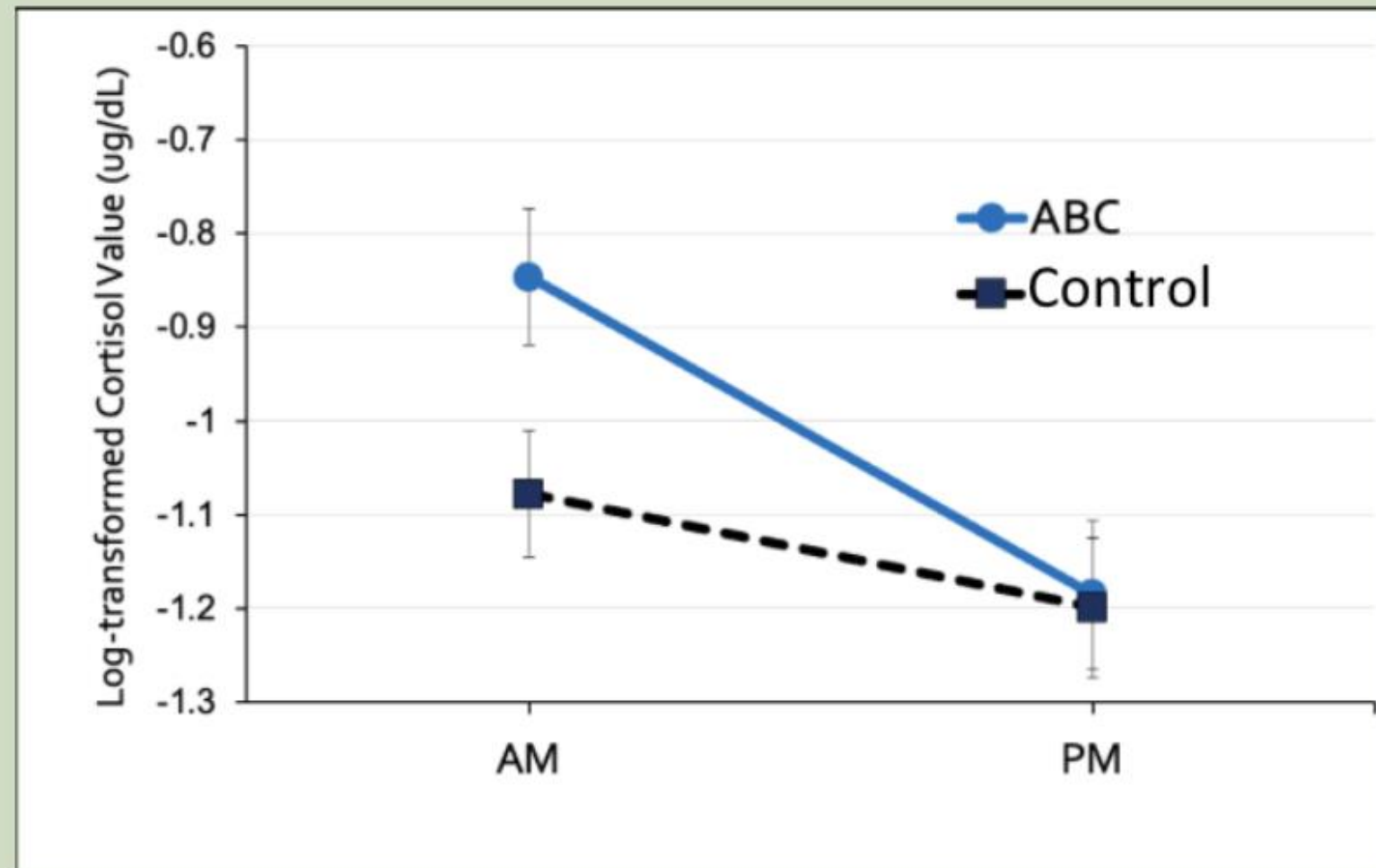


Intervention Effects on Diurnal Cortisol



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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!

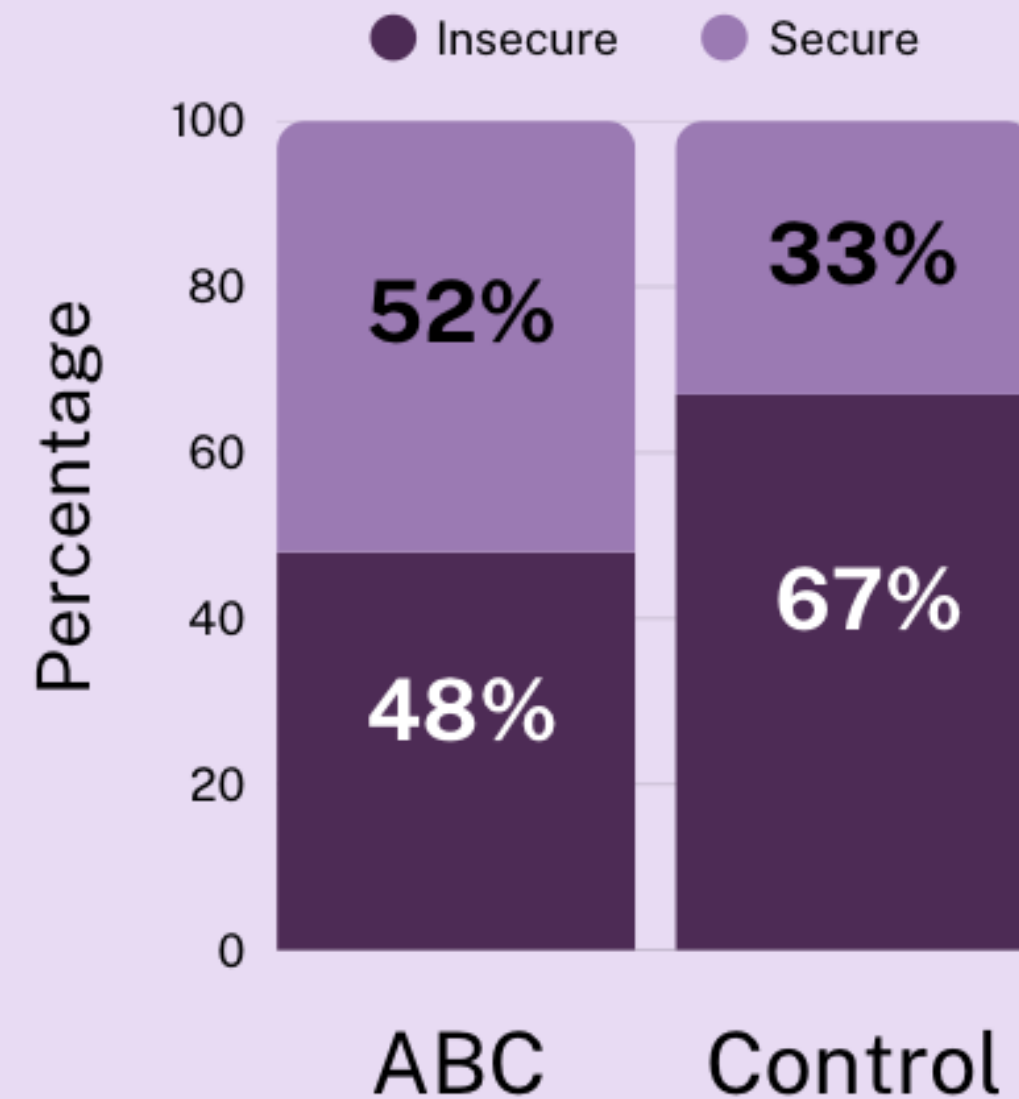
Intervention Effects on Attachment



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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**



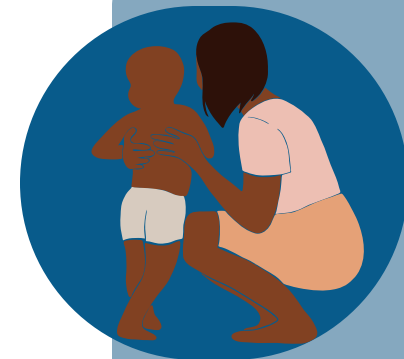
Language Skills: Children who receive ABC demonstrate higher levels of receptive vocabulary.



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.

Multiple randomized controlled trials of ABC demonstrate short- and long-term effects

Infancy

- Attachment (Bernard et al., *Child Development*, 2012)
- Cortisol production (Bernard et al., *Development and Psychopathology*, 2015)
- DNA methylation (Hoye, *Development and Psychopathology*, 2020)

Early childhood

- Inhibitory control (Lind et al., *Child Development*, 2020)
- Set-shifting (Lewis-Morrarty et al., *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2012)
- Emotion expression (Lind et al., *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 2014)
- Cortisol production (Bernard et al., *Development and Psychopathology*, 2015)
- Language development (Raby et al., *Developmental Science*, 2020; Bernard et al., *Child Maltreatment*, 2017)

Middle childhood

- Cortisol production (Garnett et al., 2020)
- Brain activation (Valadez et al., *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 2020)
- Neural activity (Bick et al., *Biological Psychiatry*, 2019)
- ANS regulation (Tabachnick et al., *Biological Psychology*, 2020)
- Security (9-years-old) (Zajac et al., *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 2020)

Adolescence

- Brain structure (Korom et al., in prep)
- Brain function (Korom et al., in prep)
- Trust in parent (Miller et al., *Development and Psychopathology*, 2024)

ABC IN DELAWARE

- Virtual ABC available statewide
- In-person ABC guaranteed in New Castle County
- Beginning this fall:
 - Will expand in-person ABC in southern DE
 - Expand partnerships with agencies that provide substance use treatment to parents



LONGWOOD *foundation*



MEET OUR PARENT COACHES

SYDNEY



CIANA



KIRA



MICAELA



KATIE



AUTUMN



KRYSTAL



BEATRIZ



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
 - 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!
(ljajac@abcparenting.org)



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EARN A \$200
GIFT CARD!

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.

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!**

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.



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¡Gana una
tarjeta de regalo
de \$200!

ASOCIARSE CON FAMILIAS PARA MEJORAR LOS RESULTADOS PARA LOS NIÑOS

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.



www.abcparenting.org

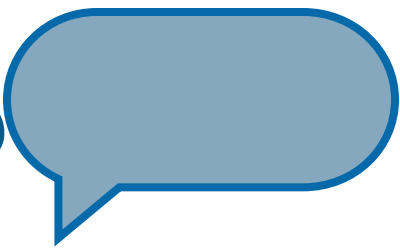


info@abcparenting.org

How can I refer to ABC?

- Provide ABC flyer to parent – they can complete the survey (access via QR code) to enroll
- Provide my contact information (lzajac@abcparenting.org) to family
- Send me referral information (parent name, contact info, & DOB) are most essential (if parent has signed necessary waiver on your end)
- Provider can complete enrollment survey with family during the session (access via QR code on flyer)

WHAT ARE PARENTS SAYING?

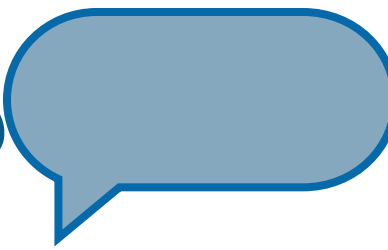


*I was referred to ABC when my daughter was 1 year old. I had real concerns about whether I could meet my daughter's emotional needs on my own. **From the very beginning, our Parent Coach had been an incredible source of support...Her guidance came at a time when parenting felt overwhelming, and my daughter's 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



WHAT ARE PARENTS SAYING?



It was the best uninterrupted time needed for both my child and myself to enjoy each other. I felt like this time was the only time we had these amazing moments without being distracted by the outside world...these moments paused the negatives and focused only on happy times. I am so thankful to this program and our loyal and most amazing coach for such a great adventure we wish never ended.

As first time parents, we were uncertain about many aspects of our parenting. Working with our coach gave us so much reassurance and confidence. It helped us tap into our most nurturing selves and foster deeper connections with our baby.

This is such a great program! I gained some helpful tips to help regulate my toddler and also realized that I am doing OK as a parent. Parenting can be so isolating sometimes, and it was just really nice to hear that I was doing something right.



THANK YOU

abcparenting.org

Questions?

lzajac@abcparenting.org