



# Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative

KU School of Social Welfare

**MAY 2021**

Phase 1. May 2017 – April 2020  
Evaluation Report

# Overview of Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative



# Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative: Background

Goal was to **expand** early childhood service capacity in Kansas and **evaluate** replicability and efficacy, at scale, of integrating an evidence-based intervention into the array of early childhood home-visiting programs through **5 sites** in **varying Kansas settings and geographic locations.**



# Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC)

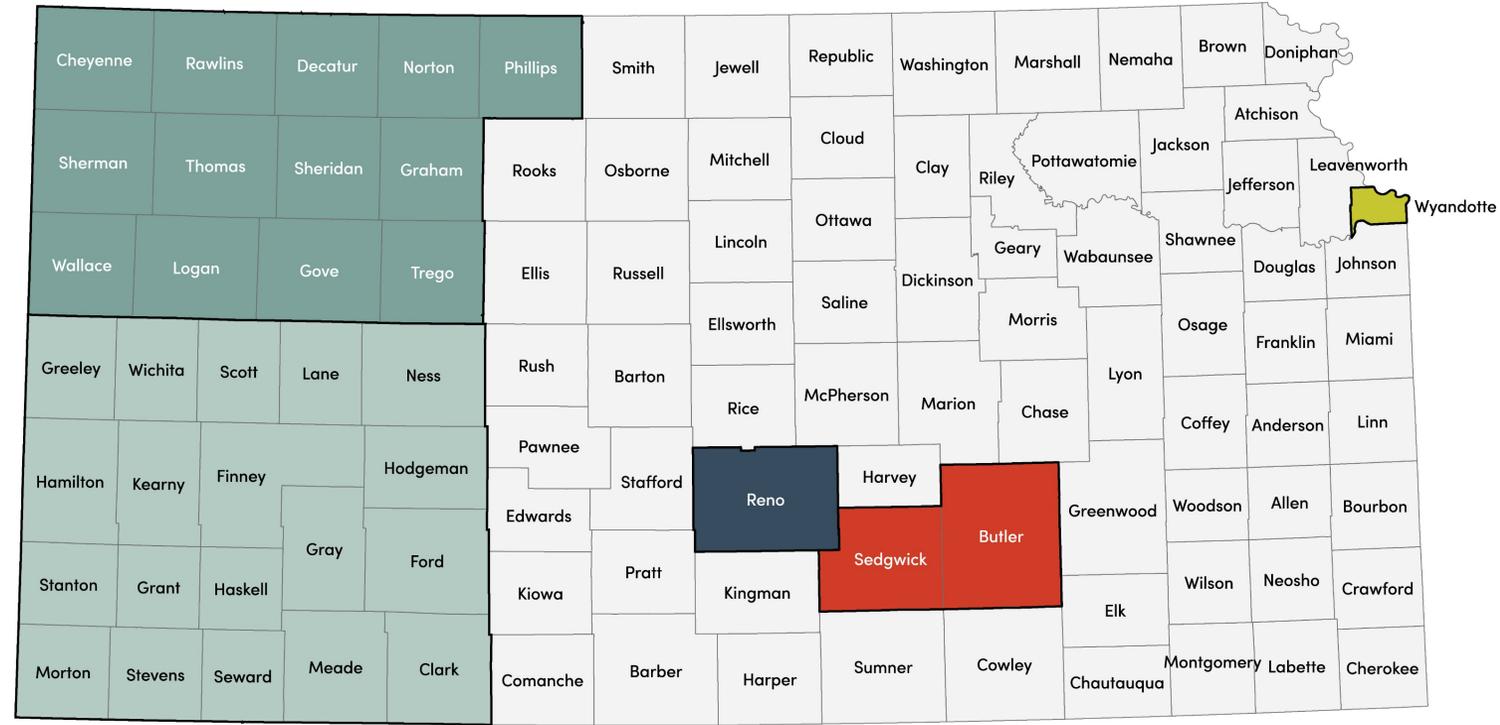


- Brief, evidence-based parenting intervention for caregivers of infants & toddlers who have experienced early adversity
- Developed by Dr. Mary Dozier (University of Delaware)
- 10 sessions
- Focuses on development of secure attachment, nurturance, and positive regard
- Research has shown measurable, long-term positive impacts

# Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative Service Areas

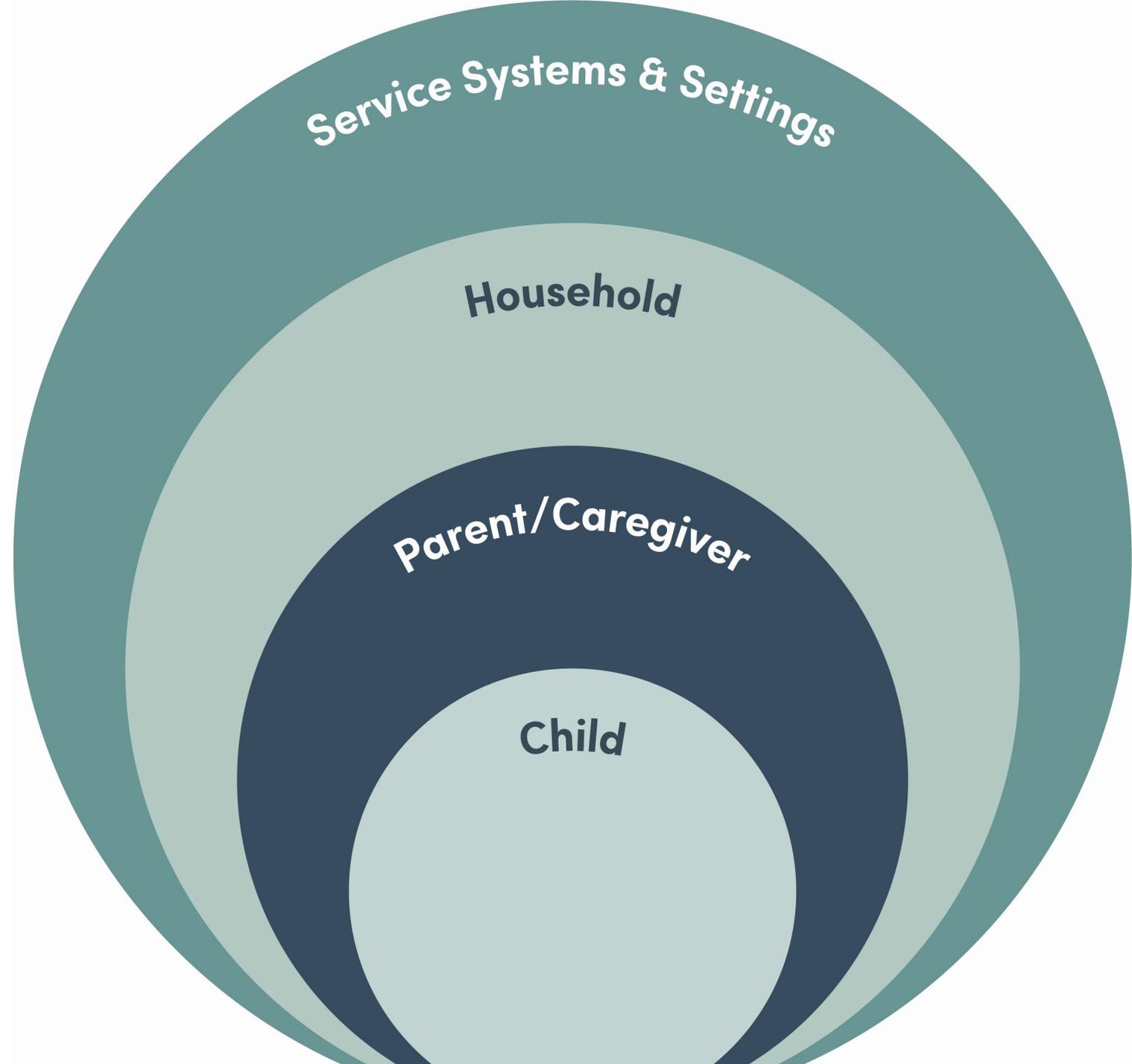
The Initiative supported 2 key activities across settings and geographic locations throughout the state:

- (1) integration of a screening tool (Household Strengths and Strain Inventory) to identify families for referral
- (2) implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up intervention.

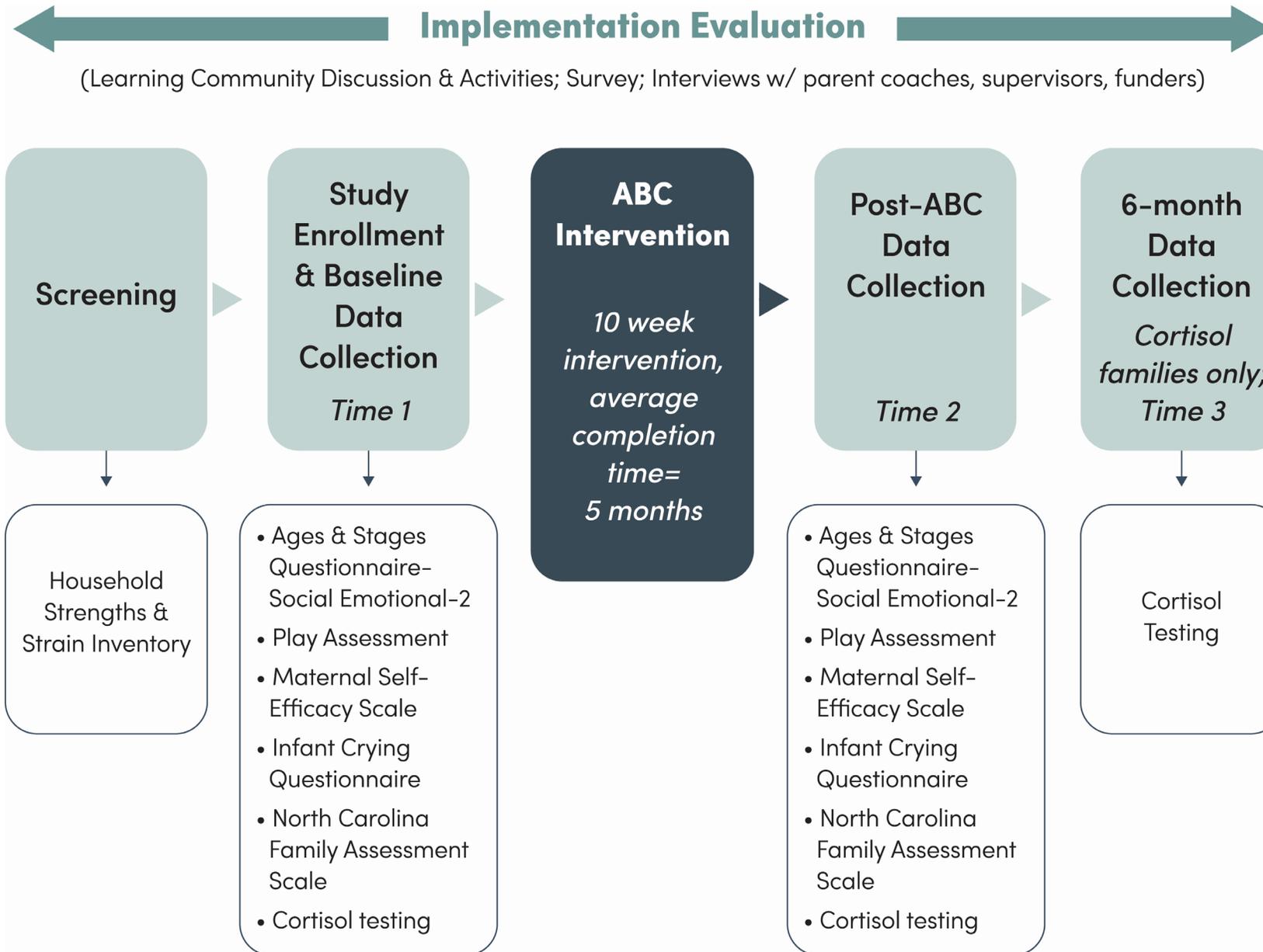


- LiveWell Northwest Kansas
- Russell Child Development Center
- Horizons Mental Health Center
- Rainbows United
- Project Eagle

# Anticipated Areas of Impact of the Kansas Early Childhood Initiative



# Evaluation Activities & Sources of Data



# Evaluating Implementation of the Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative

*When delivering an intervention in new contexts and with different populations, evaluation of not just the outcomes, but also the implementation itself is necessary to ensure fit, successful implementation, and optimal outcomes.*



# Words that Describe ABC Intervention

Words and Quotes from Supervisors and Parent Coaches



*This is a template of how a relationship should look like and you're modeling that and you're the first teacher and this is totally strengthening your relationship with your children and that's going to lead them to have better relationships in their future.*



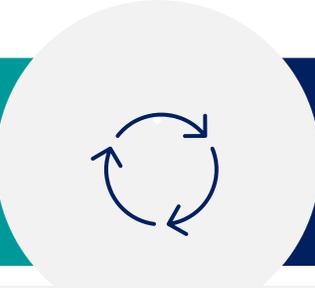
*To see that whole shift change is just amazing to me...some of those first questions...like if I pick her up I am spoiling her...and then you talk about it and you share the research...and they are like ohhh...and then they practice it and then you see you know the next visit how they are doing what we talked about and it's just amazing to me...amazing.*



*I like the word trust and I think I use that a lot...in order for you and your child to hit the next level, your child has to trust in you and get his needs met before you can go on in brain development...and it's really a great program to learn how to build trust.*

# Key Facilitators & Challenges to Implementing ABC in Kansas

## Key Challenges



## Key Facilitators

**1 The Intervention**

- Targeted nature of ABC does not address basic needs
- Families often unable to meet on regular basis, impacting ability to complete in 10 weeks

**The Intervention**

- Extensive support, coaching & supervision from ABC developer
  - Peer to peer mentoring & support via Learning Communities

**2 The Internal Setting**

- Staff turnover
- Staff difficulty balancing ABC & other professional responsibilities

**The Internal Setting**

- Parent coaches from all sites passionate about population & believe in ABC
- Support from agency leadership and supervisors

**3 The External Setting**

- Engaging outside partners as champions and referral sources

**The External Setting**

- Responsivity & support from funders and evaluators
- Investment of grant money and support for staffing & resources

Families Served  
through the  
Kansas ABC Early  
Childhood  
Initiative



# ABC Enrollment Numbers by Site

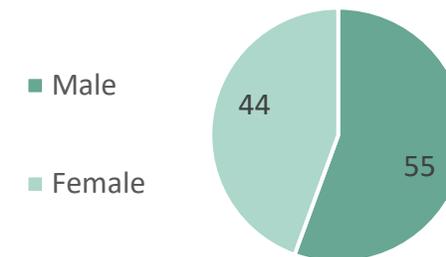
Site	Total # of Enrolled Families	# of Cortisol Families	Families who completed ABC & Time 2 Follow-Up	Families who completed ABC & Time 3 Follow-Up
Horizons	56	30	24	3
NW Kansas	51	22	28	4
Rainbows	104	45	77	30
Project Eagle	129	60	91	19
Russell	62	30	41	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>261</b> (96 cortisol families)	<b>68</b>



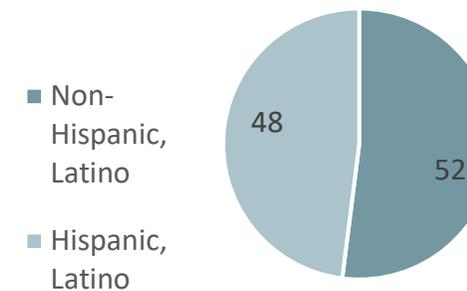
# Characteristics of Families Served: Child Characteristics

Characteristic	$\bar{x}$ or # (%)
<b>Average Child age in Months</b>	$\bar{x}$ : = 16.48 (SD = 7.0)
<b>Child gender</b>	
Female	174 (44%)
Male	221 (55%)
<b>Child race</b>	
White	318 (82%)
Black/African American	37 (10%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	2 (0.5%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	5 (1%)
Other	23 (6%)
<b>Child ethnicity</b>	
Non-Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	193 (52%)
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	181 (48%)
<b>Average number of children in the home</b>	$\bar{x}$ 2.34 (SD = 1.40)

Child Gender

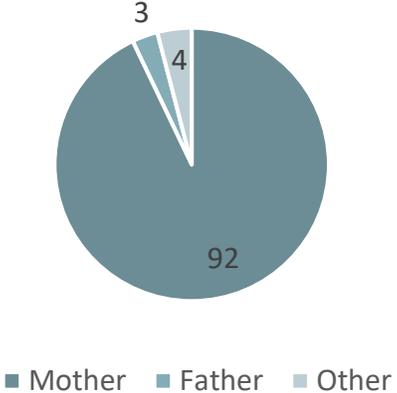


Child Ethnicity

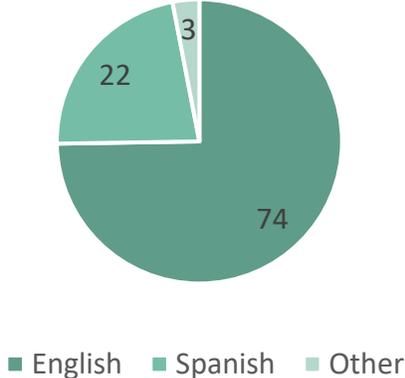


# Characteristics of Families: Caregiver Characteristics

Primary Caregiver Identified for ABC



Primary Language in Home

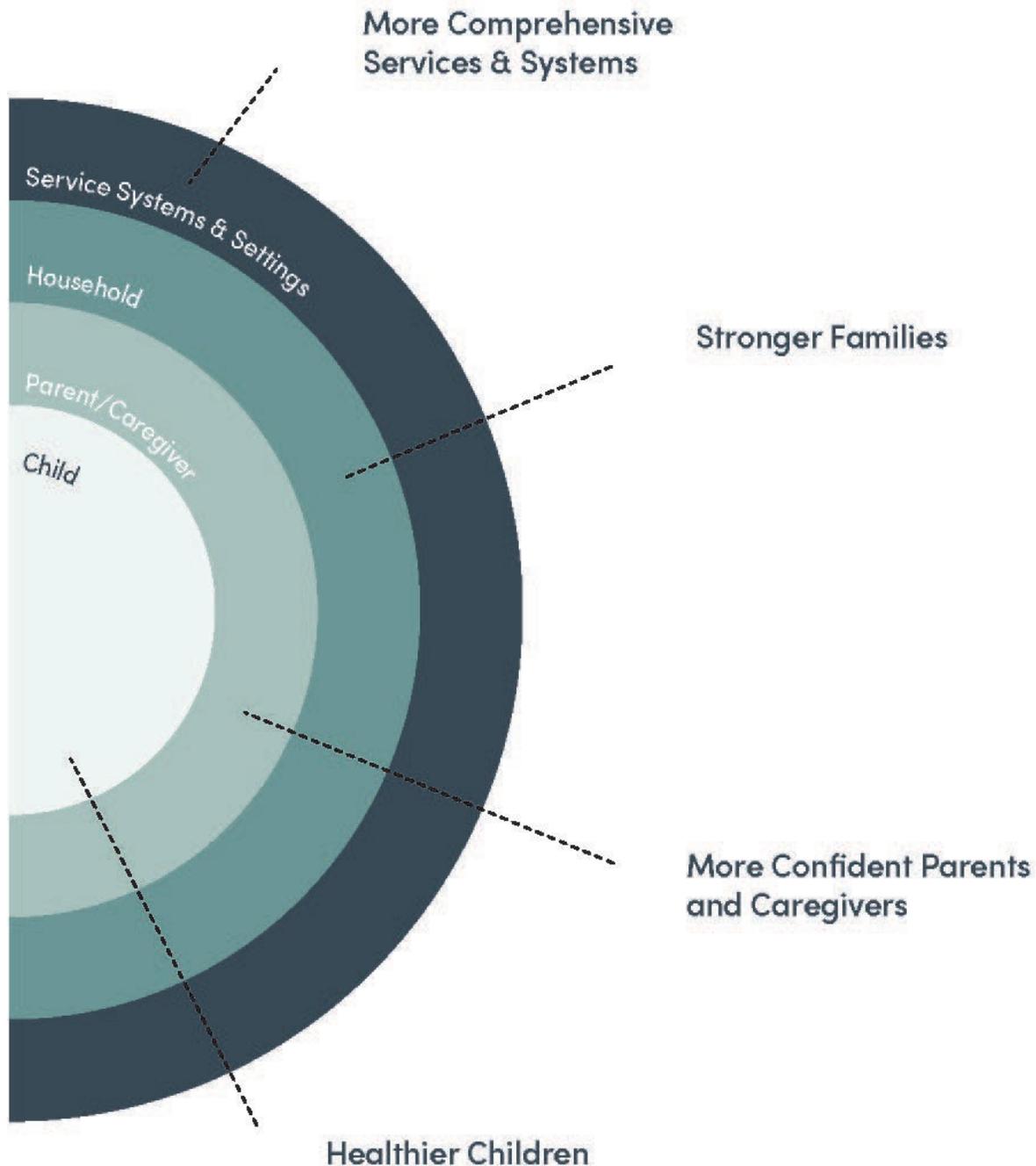


Characteristic	$\bar{x}$ or # (%)
<b>Primary caregiver identified for ABC</b>	
Mother	362 (92%)
Father	11 (3%)
Other	21 (5%)
<b>Number of caregivers in the home</b>	$\bar{x}$ = 1.87 (s.d. = 1.33)
<b>Age of primary caregiver</b>	$\bar{x}$ = 28.6 years old (s.d. = 8.19)
<b>Race of primary caregiver</b>	
White	330 (85%)
Black/African American	29 (8%)
Asian/Pacific Islander	1 (0.3%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	4 (1%)
Other	20 (5%)
<b>Education level of primary caregiver</b>	
Less than a high school diploma	91 (23%)
High school degree or equivalent (GED)	128 (33%)
Some college, no degree	109 (28%)
Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)	27 (7%)
Bachelor's degree or higher (e.g. BA, BS)	35 (9%)
<b>Caregiver Ethnicity</b>	
Non-Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	227 (59%)
Hispanic, Latino, Spanish	155 (41%)
<b>Primary language spoken in the home</b>	
English	287 (74%)
Spanish	87 (22%)
Other	12 (3%)

# The Multi-Level Impact of the Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative

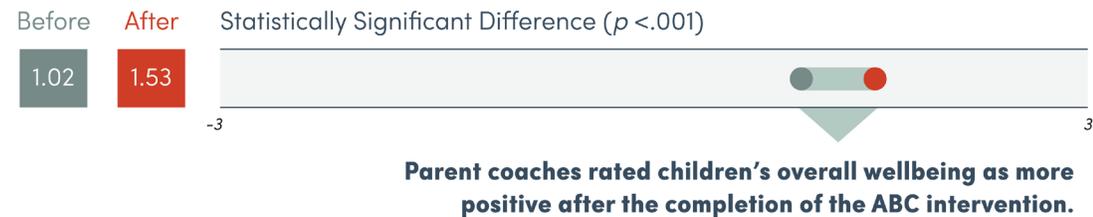
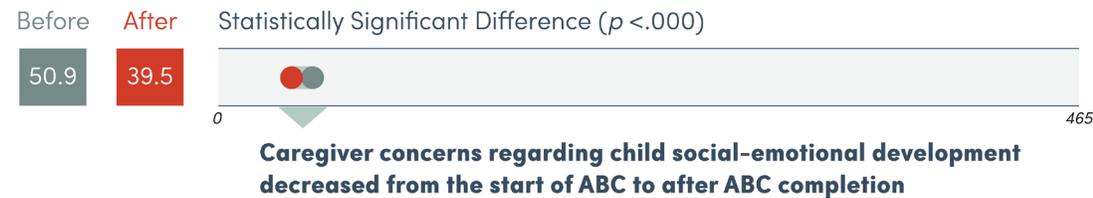
A Closer Look at Outcomes





- Caregiver concerns regarding child **social-emotional functioning** decreased.
- Children's **cortisol levels**, an indicator of stress, became more normalized.
- Parent coaches rated children's **overall wellbeing** as more positive.
- Caregivers' **knowledge and beliefs** in their caregiving abilities increased.
- In interactions with their children, **caregiver intrusiveness** went down, while **sensitivity and delight** went up
- **Caregiver capabilities** significantly improved.
- **Expanded capacity** for early childhood services across the state.

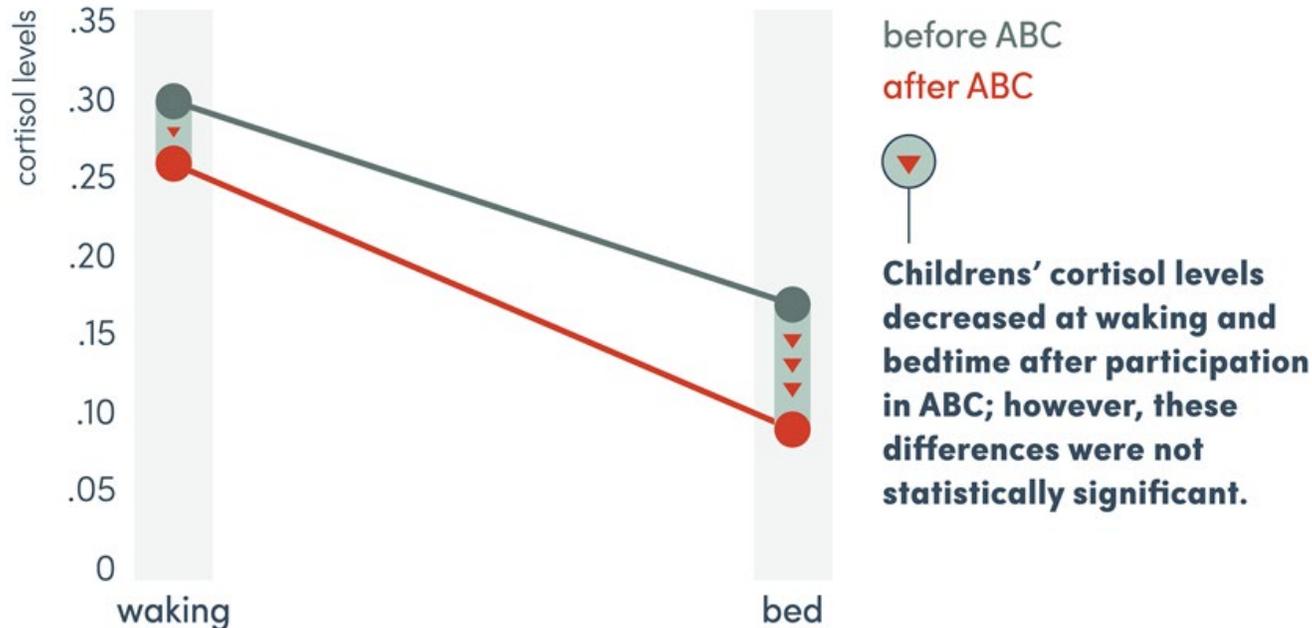
# Healthier Children: Child Outcomes



*The child's language and words have just exploded with mom following the lead more. The child has language delays, but each week he has tons of new words!*

-Parent Coach

# Child Outcomes: Toxic Stress & Cortisol



- Children's cortisol levels, an indicator of stress, became **more normalized**, especially for children with the highest cortisol levels (though the change was not statistically significant for the entire sample).
- Toxic stress screening (via HSSI and cortisol) indicated majority of families had low to moderate levels of risk of toxic stress and more normative patterns of cortisol prior to the intervention, and therefore, had less room for improvement in this measure afterwards.

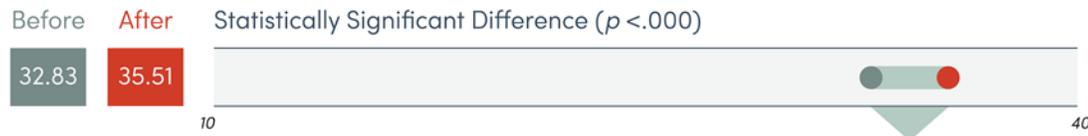
# More Confident Parents & Caregivers: Caregiver Outcomes



After ABC completion, attachment and communication beliefs improved while minimization and spoiling beliefs decreased, revealing positive caregiver outcomes.

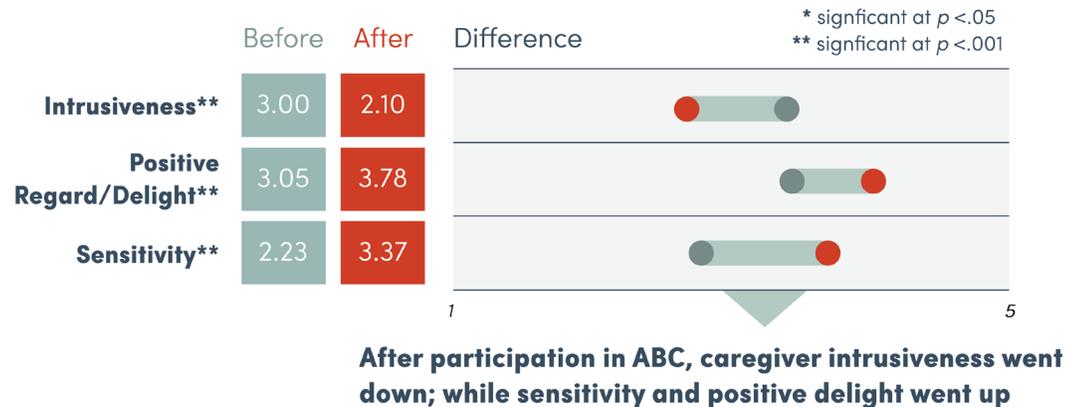
*So I'm a first-time mom and I really didn't have a clue what I was doing. So it was very helpful to see different ways of interacting with her and then finding out that she was her own person.*

-Mother who participated in ABC



Caregivers rated themselves significantly higher with stronger beliefs in their caregiving abilities after participating in ABC.

# More Confident Parents & Caregivers: Caregiver Outcomes



*I would recommend it because it's a very good program. Like it helps you understand more and it helps you relieve that stress you have. Because you can't go to another parent and be like, 'Oh, well, I have this problem and this problem with my child,'...you know they're going to judge you. And ABC will not judge you, they will help you. Instead of judging you, they're going to help you fix that problem or show you how to fix that problem.*

-Mother who participated in ABC

# Stronger Families: Family & Household Outcomes



**Parent coaches rated family environment, interactions, safety, social life, self-sufficiency, and health all as more positive after completion of ABC.**

*She's able to sooth herself better. So that way she enjoys more of her dad, him coming home, and then telling him what she wants and then throws a tantrum, and then that's it. Now she gets home and she can sort of kind of tell him what she wants and we can both understand, and then they have more time together.*

-Mother who participated in ABC

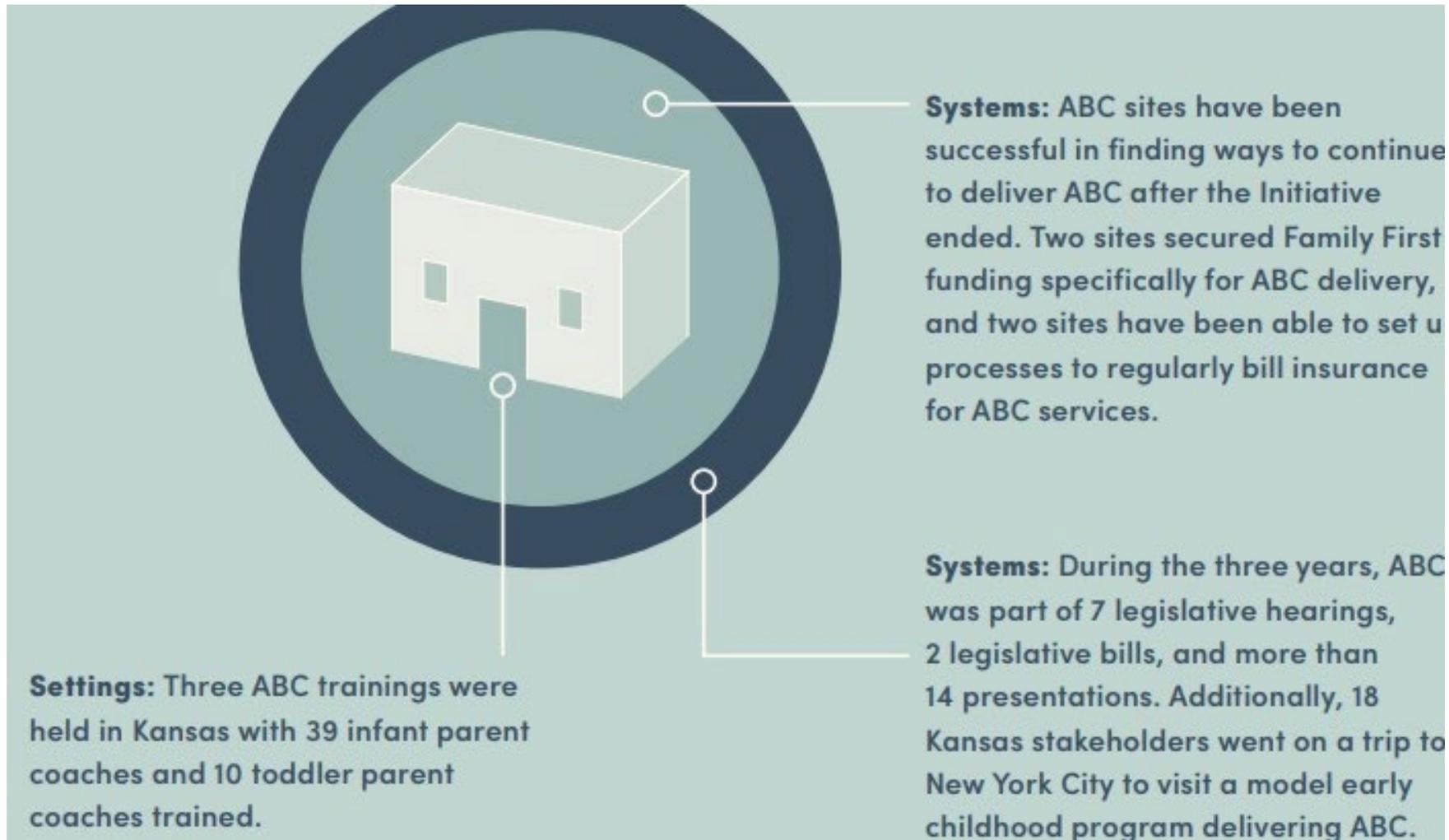
## Implementation & Outcomes with Families who Received ABC in Spanish

- **41%** of families served were Hispanic or Latinx
- **22%** primarily spoke Spanish in the home
- Child and caregiver **outcomes were similar** for families who received ABC in Spanish as those who received it in English.
- Interviews with parent coaches who delivered ABC in Spanish show **positive experiences** as well as an **opportunity for more to be done** with families from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

*I think the one thing that I remember the most is just the constant reminder that I am a good mom and, it is okay to sometimes get a little frustrated as long as you're understanding how the child feels and not just kind of pushing their feelings aside.*

*That's one thing that I remember the most, is always making sure that you're communicating well with your child and knowing that you're understanding well with them, and figuring out their need and not just kind of guessing at it. And not fully putting into consideration that just because they're a baby or they're so young that they wouldn't have feelings when they do.*

# More Comprehensive Systems & Services: Systems Outcomes



# Conclusions



# Concluding Thoughts

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Overall, the \$2.4 million initiative successfully increased early childhood capacity & awareness across Kansas, made a difference in the lives of 682 caregivers & 907 children, provided valuable learnings for how challenges in implementation can be creatively overcome, & further demonstrated early childhood interventions, like ABC, not only make good economic sense but more importantly empower individual families to raise happy, healthy kids – providing strong foundations helping them to reach their full potential.

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As policymakers, foundations, & other stakeholders explore evidence-based strategies to prevent utilization of the child welfare system, keep children with their parents in their homes, improve health, build parenting skills, & address equitable attainment of education, this report detailing the Kansas experience with ABC, & experience from other ABC projects nationally, highlights the potential of ABC as a worthy, evidence-based investment.

# Thank You!

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