

KANSAS ABC

7 YEARS OF RESEARCH CONCLUDES

EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

Phase II // Research Overview & Findings

About ABC

Social-emotional development in young children is a critical factor related to later-life outcomes, such as school success, social interactions and mental health.

Healthy early childhood development provides a strong foundation for all future learning and helps children reach their full potential, but risk factors including toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences and other challenges can derail this crucial process with far-reaching consequences.

A growing body of research demonstrates that investing in science-based, short-term early interventions pays off over both the short and long term, delivering lasting results that not only change lives for the better but also produce substantial returns on that investment.

Developed by Dr. Mary Dozier at the University of Delaware, the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) program is a brief, evidence-based parenting intervention for caregivers of infants and toddlers who have experienced early adversity. It is designed to buffer the harmful effects of toxic stress and help restore normal early childhood development. Broadly, ABC focuses on building healthy families through the development of secure attachment, nurturance and positive regard. While the ABC intervention is typically completed over just 10 weeks, research to date has shown measurable, long-term positive impacts lasting at least into middle childhood.

Kansas ABC Early Childhood Initiative

To explore whether ABC would deliver the same results for Kansas children, a collaboration of Kansas foundations first funded the ABC Early Childhood Initiative in 2017. It was

designed to expand early childhood service capacity and evaluate whether the ABC program's desired outcomes could be replicated at scale here in Kansas. The KU School of Social Welfare conducted and evaluated the program.

PHASE I

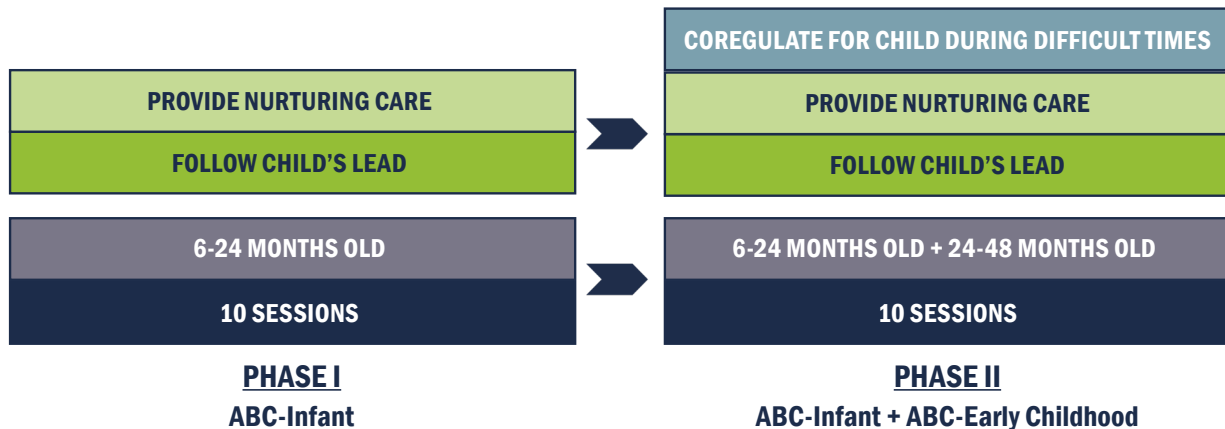
Phase I was implemented in May 2017-April 2020 at five child care sites in Kansas.

Phase I focused on children 6-24 months old. It was funded by the REACH Healthcare Foundation, Wyandotte Health Foundation, Hutchinson Community Foundation, Kansas Health Foundation and the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, who led the effort. Sites included: LiveWell Northwest Kansas, Russell Child Development Center, Rainbows United, Horizons Mental Health Center and Project Eagle.



PHASE II

Phase II was implemented in May 2020-April 2024 at three child care sites. Phase II continued to implement ABC-Infant for children ages 6-24 months old, but it also expanded to implement the ABC-Early Childhood model for toddlers ages 24-48 months old. It was funded by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund with support from the Kansas Health Foundation for the child care sites. Sites included: Rainbows United (ABC-Infant), and LiveWell Northwest Kansas and Russell Child Development Center (ABC-Infant + ABC-Early Childhood).



Phase II Goals

The Phase I evaluation demonstrated positive outcomes in Kansas, including improved caregiver sensitivity, knowledge and beliefs about parenting. Given these established findings, Phase II shifted focus to measure additional outcome areas that had not yet been studied or verified in Kansas.

These new outcome areas included: caregiver stress, family empowerment and preschool readiness.

As with eligibility in Phase I, families in Phase II were screened for the ABC program through use of the Household Strength and Strain Inventory (HSSI) screening tool. The HSSI measures families' economic and familial risk factors, as well as environmental and familial protective factors.

In total, 171 families were served across 33 Kansas counties for Phase II. The majority of families enrolled in ABC-Infant, with approximately 54% of the sample comprising this type of ABC enrollment, while 46% of the sample enrolled in the ABC-Early Childhood intervention.

Phase II Findings

ABC-INFANT MODEL

Phase II results indicated caregivers experience decreased feelings of stress and increased feelings of empowerment after completing the ABC intervention. This suggests that ABC is effective in supporting both the infants' development and caregivers' well-being.

Specifically, the evaluation found that the infant sample showed statistically significant improvements in social and emotional concerns. The consistency of these findings across both phases reinforces the value of the ABC program for Kansas families, highlighting its role in enhancing family dynamics and child development.

This ongoing research underscores the importance of continued investment in programs like ABC to foster healthy and supportive environments for both children and their

caregivers. By validating the results from Phase I and exploring new outcome areas, Phase II has contributed significantly to the understanding and effectiveness of the ABC intervention, ensuring its continued relevance and impact on early childhood development.

ABC-EARLY CHILDHOOD MODEL

This evaluation holds significant implications, particularly concerning the application of the ABC intervention to the toddler population. A main objective for Phase II was to examine additional outcome areas not previously explored, including toddler outcomes. Phase II's results pertaining to the toddler population demonstrate that ABC-Early Childhood produces promising results, as evidenced by improvements in the executive functioning of the sample.

A key performance indicator for Phase II was to enhance school readiness. Phase II's results showed that after receiving the ABC-Early Childhood intervention, toddlers demonstrated improvements in their executive functioning, which is crucial for school readiness. These results indicate that children who participated in the ABC intervention may be better prepared for academic environments.

Additionally, caregivers of these toddlers experienced decreased stress levels and improved feelings of empowerment, underscoring the comprehensive benefits of the ABC model. These outcomes suggest that the ABC intervention not only supports toddlers' cognitive development, but also positively impacts caregiver well-being, thereby fostering a more supportive and nurturing environment for early childhood growth.

The consistency of these findings across different age groups and developmental stages reinforces the ABC program's overall efficacy, highlighting its significant role in enhancing both child development and family dynamics. This comprehensive impact underscores the importance of continued support and investment in the ABC program to ensure that children and their caregivers receive the necessary resources for optimal development and well-being.



View the full findings and evaluation report at:
www.HealthFund.org

CAREGIVERS



INCREASED
feelings of empowerment



DECREASED
feelings of stress



TODDLERS



INCREASED
executive functioning



INCREASED
school readiness