

Section: Family violence prevention

A Home Visiting Program Reduces Attitudes Related to Harsh and Neglectful Parenting
Dylan K. Richards, Thais M. Schwartz, Matthew R. Pearson, Evelyn G. Olmos, & Paul Guerin
Institute for Social Research, University of New Mexico

Abstract

Background: The First Born Program (FBP) delivers preventative and early intervention services via home visits to first-time families in 15 of 33 counties in New Mexico. Although FBP has shown promise, it is unclear whether FBP may prevent family violence. The present study examined the effects of FBP on attitudes related to harsh and neglectful parents, a precursor to family violence. **Method:** Data were collected as part of a larger randomized controlled trial in which families were randomly assigned to one of two groups: FBP ($n = 179$) or treatment-as-usual ($n = 164$). The Children's Power and Independence subscale of the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2, the only subscale to demonstrate unidimensionality, was used to assess attitudes related to harsh and neglectful parenting at birth and 6- and 12-month follow-up. **Results:** The FBP group had higher scores on the AAPI than the control group, indicating weaker attitudes related to harsh or neglectful parenting, at both 6-month ($t(298)=-1.94, p=.053$) and 12-month follow-up ($t(276)=-3.04, p=.003$), although the difference at 6 month did not reach statistical significance. Further, FBP relative to the control resulted in increases in AAPI scores from the birth of the child to 6-month ($B = 0.39, p=.068$) and 12-month follow-up ($B=0.65, p=.003$). Again, however, reductions at 6 month did not reach statistical significance. **Conclusions:** These findings provide preliminary evidence for the potential of FBP to prevent family violence. Future work is needed to test whether FBP reduces family violence via weaker attitudes toward harsh and neglectful parenting.