



# Addressing disparities in Learn the Signs. Act Early.



Reaching families at risk for maltreatment



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# Project Goals

- Immediate goal: Assess the impact of ***Learn the signs. Act early.*** (LTS/AE) materials delivered by home visitors (HVs) to families in the child welfare system (CWS)
- Long-term goal: Demonstrate an effective approach to increasing developmental awareness of families and follow-up of children in the CWS with developmental delays

# Background

- Half of the children under age five in the CWS have identifiable delays in development that warrant early intervention or preschool special education services
- More than half of these delays were not identified until children entered the CWS
- Rates of delays were equivalent for children and independent of whether maltreatment was substantiated

# Project Description

- Integrate LTS/AE materials into the SafeCare<sup>®</sup> home visitation program for use with families at risk for child maltreatment
- Assess potential adaptations of LTS/AE to support low-literacy families
- Assess usability of the LTS/AE materials by diverse families
- Conduct a randomized control trial of LTS/AE with SafeCare-trained home visitors

# SafeCare<sup>®</sup>

- SafeCare is an evidence-based, training curriculum for parents reported or at-risk for child maltreatment
- SafeCare home visitors provide in-home training sessions for parents of children ages 0-5 in weekly visits of 1-2 hours over 18-20 weeks
- Safe Care is being implemented in more than ten states in conjunction with the National SafeCare Training and Research Center (NSTRC)

# SafeCare Content

- *Health*: the use of health reference materials in preventing illness, identifying symptoms of childhood illnesses or injuries, and providing or seeking appropriate treatment
- *Home Safety*: how to identify and eliminate safety and health hazards by making them inaccessible to children
- *Parent-Infant/Parent-Child Interaction*: how to provide engaging and stimulating activities, increase positive interactions, and prevent troublesome child behavior
- *Problem Solving and Counseling*: how to plan and implement activities with their children, respond appropriately to child behaviors, and address health and safety issues

# LTS/AE and SafeCare

- LTS/AE content was integrated into the *Parent-Infant/Parent-Child Interaction* module three years ago
- It fits with many aspects of the program, such as the use of structured checklists, coaching on talking to medical professionals, and teaching problem-solving skills
- Concern about LTS/AE literacy level raised by SafeCare trainers/home visitors
- Single-subject pilot project examined *Milestone Moments* text vs. line drawings on knowledge of 24-month milestones by two mothers (Guastaferrero, MPH thesis, 2011)

# Teaching Young Mothers

- Research question: “*Can a combination of line-art drawings and discussion increase a mother’s recognition of developmental milestones?*”
- Multiple-probe, single case design
- Two mothers (ages 20 with a 25-month old daughter, and 17 with a 29-month old daughter) living in a residential program to promote self-sufficiency with their children agreed to participate
- Weekly sessions that focused on mothers’ awareness of child development
  - Baseline – mothers had access to *Milestone Moments* booklet
  - Intervention – mothers had access to picture cards





*Copies Others*



*Points to Ear*



*Knows Familiar People*



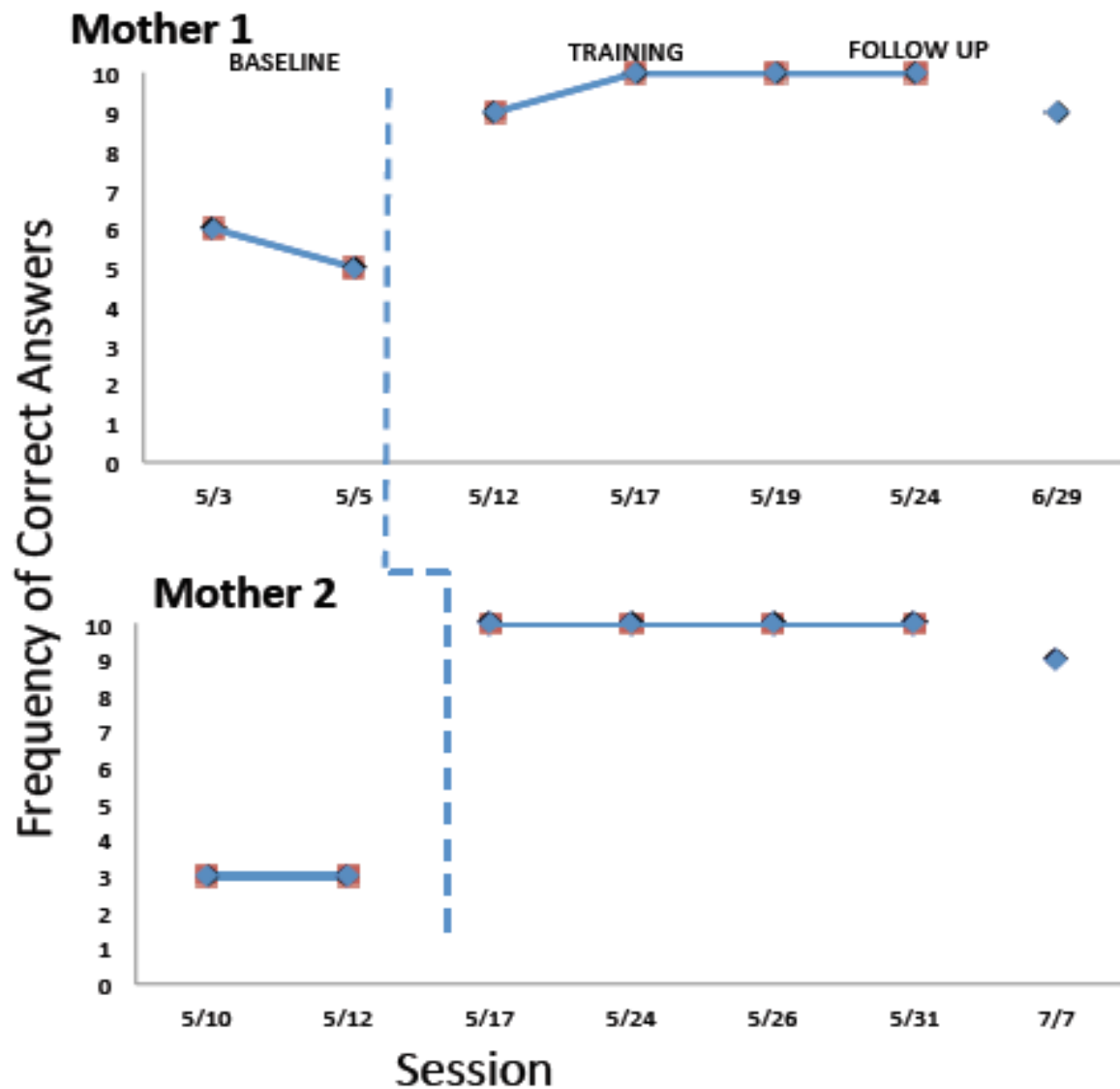
*Finds Things*



*Follows Instructions*



*Stands on Tip-Toes*



# Sheltering Arms Evaluation

- Sheltering Arms (SA) provides child care, family support, and coordinated health care to more than 200 children in one of their Atlanta sites
- Members of the CDC LTS/AE team provided training on child development to SA teachers and parent educators, using the *Milestone Moments* booklet
- Parent educators, in turn, distributed 109 copies of the *Milestone Moments* booklet to the families they work with and had a brief discussion of how it might be used
- A 10-item satisfaction survey was constructed on the usability and usefulness of the booklet
- Surveys were given to parents two weeks later; 89 surveys were returned
- Surveys were also distributed to the parent educators ; five were returned
- We are seeking IRB approval to analyze these survey responses

# Conducting the RCT

- An exercise in frustration in times of shifting public policies
- Proposed RCT has three arms –
  - Families receive *Milestone Moments* booklet with no additional instruction (Control)
  - Home visitation staff review the *Milestone Moments* booklet with the parent(s) of a child younger than five as a component of parent training
  - Home visitation staff review *Milestone Moments* booklet , PLUS provide coaching on structured problem solving training to communicate with their doctors and early intervention (EI) specialists

# False Starts

- A case study of futility and shifting policy priorities
- False start #1 – Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)
- False start #2 – Oklahoma
- False start #3 – State of Washington

# Finally!

- Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) has contracted with NSTRC to train 40 home visitors in the SafeCare Parent Infant/Parent Child Interaction module (which includes the LTS/AE milestones)
- Trainings in Savannah, Macon, and metro-Atlanta
- Administered through Children 1<sup>st</sup> program
  - Identifies children at-risk for “poor health and developmental outcomes”
  - Provides preventive program for children at-risk for maltreatment, where cases are unsubstantiated

# Current Status

- Negotiating data sharing agreement
  - Aggregate state data for families who enroll
  - Seeking client level data including individual case records
  - Potential for a matched control sample of families who do not enroll
- Preparing IRB application for DPH

# Conducting the RCT

- Home visitors will ask assigned families if they are willing to be contacted by research staff who will enroll them in the study
- Families whose children are receiving services for developmental delays will be excluded from the study
- Enroll three to five families for each home visitor, with a goal of recruiting 108 families
- Conduct SafeCare as usual, *Milestone Moments* review, or *Milestone Moments* review PLUS problem solving
- Administer short questionnaires at baseline and three months (completed by parents AND home visitors)



# Measures

- Parent outcomes:
  - Awareness of child development
  - Rates of identification of potential developmental delays
  - Rates of follow-up of the potential delays
  - Satisfaction with the *Milestone Moments* booklet
  - Perceptions of home visitors
- Home visitor outcomes:
  - Satisfaction with the *Milestone Moments* booklet
  - Fidelity to *Milestone Moments* booklet, during teaching and coaching
  - Perceptions about the utility of *Milestone Moments* booklet
- Coach (HV fidelity monitor) outcomes:
  - Perspectives on the usefulness of *Milestone Moments* booklet

# Hypothesized Findings

- A high percentage of potential families will have children already known to EI or preschool special education systems
- Some children will display with concerns that were known, but not acted upon; others will have previously unknown concerns
- Families in the intervention arms will identify potential developmental delays more frequently
- Families in the intervention arms will seek follow-up at low rates initially, but increase over time
- Families in the problem-solving arm will obtain follow-up screening, diagnosis, and treatment more frequently
- Home visitors will rate the material as engaging, practical, and useful in their work with parents





# Questions??