

"Tell me about your baby" - Understanding the experiences of refugee and immigrant families receiving Baby TALK home visiting services
~ A qualitative study ~

Funded by: Baby TALK, Inc. & the Illinois State Board of Education

**21 Mothers
Recruited**

Mothers participated in the original RCT involving 200 families

**5 Nationalities
Represented**

*Iraq, Syria, DR Congo,
Burma, Mexico,*

**5 Languages
Spoken**

*Arabic, Burmese, Rohingya,
Spanish, Swahili*



4 Categories of participants based on parent and child needs*

*I. High Parent Need/High Child Need, II. High Parent Need/Low Child Need
III. Low Parent Need/High Child Need, IV. Low Parent Need, Low Child Need*

Emotional support was critical for parents and children with high needs (Category 1: High parent needs/High child needs)

Gains in positive parenting skills and parent goals realized among parents with high needs (Category 2: High parent needs/Low child needs)

The home visitor-parent relationship led to strong parent-child relations in families with children with high needs (Category 3: Low parent need/High child need)

Parents and children with low needs experienced universal gains across Baby TALK home visiting goals (Category 4: Low parent need/Low child need)

**Parent/Child need was determined in the original study and included factors such as developmental concerns for child, health/mental health needs for adults, and family adjustment needs.*

(Category 1: High parent needs/High child needs) Category 1 participants presented with the highest level of need when reviewing the quantitative data coupled with the experiences of being a refugee or immigrant of undocumented status. This directly influenced the parent's ability to absorb child development knowledge or recognize the expanding role of the parent and positive parenting practices embodied in the Baby TALK Home Visiting Program curriculum. Participants continued to focus on concrete needs and understood child development only in terms of survival and meeting basic needs, which was a clear focus for them prior to arriving in the United States. Subsequently, Category 1 families focused instead on the importance of the emotional support gained through the trusting, relational approach of the home visitor – a cornerstone of the Baby TALK approach – as critical to their adjustment in a new country and growth as a family. Research literature and practice experience suggest that this may be a step in a positive direction as a strong professional-parent relationship, founded through this relational approach, may support growth in other areas over time.

(Category 2: High parent needs/Low child needs) Category 2 parents (high need parents) also relied on the emotional support received by their home visitor and the positive professional-parent relationship appeared to support gains for the parent that directly impacted her child and family. With support, parents in this group showed an increased ability to appropriately read cues from their child, identify parent stress that impacts the parent-child relationship and demonstrated increased confidence in their ability to parent and adjust to life in a new country. Additionally, parent goals went beyond wanting basic survival for their children. Instead, Category 2 participants articulated goals for themselves such as finding a job, learning the language, etc. that would ultimately support family wellbeing as a whole.

(Category 3: Low parent need/High child need) Category 3 participants used the home visitor-parent relationship to better understand the needs of their child. In this group, parents articulated a greater understanding of child development knowledge and even a hunger to learn how to read their child's cues so they could support them. They spoke to positive parenting strategies such as learning to be more patient with their children and increased confidence in their problem-solving skills that helped address a range of family needs independent of the home visitor. Moreover and after receiving consistent home visiting services, participants in this group spoke to the need for more support like this and the value of home visiting in helping their child and family.

(Category 4: Low parent need/Low child need) Unlike the other groups, Category 4 participants demonstrated the greatest gains embedded in the Baby TALK Home Visiting Protocol including increased parental mastery in their skills of understanding their child's needs and a self reflective process among parents, increased understanding of child development knowledge, increased ability to navigate social resources independently, and developing a strong home visitor-parent relationship. Parents in this group demonstrated an openness and interest in learning more about child development, increased curiosity about their child even without an explicit need, and strong parent-child connections as a result of the intervention. The hopes of the mothers also went beyond basic survival and spoke to wanting all members of the family, even themselves, to have an opportunity to grow and thrive in this country. Moreover, participants in this group were able to critique the home visiting approach identifying the strengths and opportunities for growth including increasing the number the number of visits so that gains can be sustained.