

# Parent-infant learning programs need to be tailored for at-risk families

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To more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of at-risk families, a Georgia State University study suggests the introduction of a technological enhancement to improve acquisition of skills developed during parent-infant sessions.

The researchers' study has been published in the journal *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*.

The National SafeCare Training and Research Center at Georgia State implements the SafeCare model, a parent training program that reduces child maltreatment and risk in high-risk families through structured behavioral skills training during weekly home visits with families who have children up to age 5.

The parent-infant interaction module of SafeCare, the focus of the research in this study, teaches mothers to engage with and stimulate their infants in developmentally appropriate ways with the goal to increase positive bonding behaviors such as looking, talking, touching and smiling.

Researchers explored the effect of a technological enhancement, a digital picture frame, on parenting outcomes across a spectrum of at-risk mothers.

"Our goal is to increase positive, affective expressions from parent to infant, as research has found this to be integral to optimal infant

development," said John R. Lutzker, co-author on the study, Distinguished University Professor and director of the Mark Chaffin Center for Healthy Development at Georgia State. "The incorporation of a technological enhancement to intervention is a potential way to improve mastery of skills and we hypothesized that a digital picture frame would support skills learned within parent-infant sessions."

The researchers presented four single-case research-design studies examining if the use of digital frames enhances parent-infant interactions with a diverse range of mothers with varied levels of risk for maltreatment.

"The parent-infant interaction module of SafeCare has increased mother-infant interactions when the home-visitor provided written prompts and positive-corrective feedback to the mother during home visiting sessions," Lutzker said. "We found that the use of didactic or picture-based materials increases the use of bonding [skills](#), including touching, looking, talking and smiling."

The researchers say digital picture frames may be a cost-effective means of improving parent-infant interactions and address the risk for child maltreatment, high or low, and potentially reduce intervention costs in the United States for evidence-based practices.

Provided by Georgia State University

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