

Washington University

Project Title: Buffering Toxic Stress: Novel Application of Intensive Group-based Parent Training

Principal Investigator: John N. Constantino

Project Funding Years: 2011 – 2016

Project Abstract: The study will determine if a parenting intervention, an adaptation of the Incredible Years Toddler program, can buffer high-risk children in Early Head Start (EHS) from toxic stress and its consequences by fostering supportive and responsive care giving. Specifically the study will determine: (1) the efficacy of the proposed intervention; (2) how a range of variables relate to the occurrence of toxic levels of stress within the EHS population; and (3) whether the intervention buffers children from toxic stress and/or its consequences. Families will be randomly assigned to either a “treatment as usual” control group or an intervention group whereby bi-weekly socialization visits are replaced with an intensive adaptation of The Incredible Years Toddler Program over a period of 6 months. Results are expected to generate implementation data and possible validation of the Incredible Years Toddler program with respect to reducing toxic stress, and to improve the field’s understanding of how toxic stress occurs and how it may be reduced. In addition, if the intervention is effective in reducing toxic stress, the study will offer EHS programs a supplemental means of supporting emotional and cognitive development among at-risk children.

Sample: 165 EHS toddlers, including 110 experimental subjects and 55 control subjects

Proposed Measures (Partial Listing): Risk and Caregiving Measures

- Three-Bag Task Observational Assessment
- Family Interview for Genetic Studies (FIGS)
- Conflict Tactics Scales, Parent-Child Version (CTS-PC)
- Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST)
- Beck Depression Inventory — II (BDI-II)
- Parenting Stress Index — Long Version (PSI-Long)

Child Measures

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Toddler Behavior Assessment Questionnaire (TBAQ-R)
- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
- Cortisol Measures: Serial Hair and Salivary Assays
- State Administrative Data: Official-report child maltreatment (pending)
- Archiving of Biomaterials for Genotypic / Epigenetic Assays