

Parent Infant Interaction Project (PIIP): Field Initiated Research

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Purpose: The right to marry and raise children, long recognized as a fundamental human right, is often denied to individuals with intellectual disabilities (The ARC, 2002). Even as their numbers grow, parents with intellectual disabilities continue to be an "invisible and underserved population" (Booth & Booth, 1993, p. 459). Parents with intellectual disabilities are frequently under close scrutiny and may lose custody of their child due to suspicions of abuse or neglect (The ARC, 2002). They often lack the individualized supports necessary for successful parenting. While individualized supports can enhance interaction between parents and their child and improve the child's development (i.e., attachment, social-emotional, communication, cognitive), few models and materials are available for providing these supports to parents with intellectual disabilities. The Parent-Infant Interaction Project (PIIP) will develop an evidence-based curriculum for implementation by parents with intellectual disabilities and their professional or paraprofessional coach within natural environments to enhance parent-infant interaction and child development.

Goals of PIIP include:

1. Develop a research-based curriculum, coaching model, and training materials for use by parents with intellectual disabilities and their coach in a collaborative process to enhance the parent-infant relationship and nurture child development.
2. Conduct single subject studies of the effects of PIIP coaching model, curriculum, and training materials, including multiple-baseline design studies across goals and the collection of additional qualitative data.
3. Field-test and evaluate the coaching model, curriculum and training materials through a multi-method study across three different types of early childhood/parent support programs.

Method: Partners in PIIP include Early Head Start and Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, as well as a program providing supports for parents with intellectual disabilities. PIIP responds to the long-range plan of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) to provide "interventions that will enhance participation and integration of parents with disabilities (OSERS, 2006, p. 8184)."

The PIIP Coaching Model incorporates innovative strategies and applies technology that is accessible to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Innovative strategies include a model for

coaching that focuses on self-determination and empowerment of parents as advocates and decision-makers for themselves and their child. The Infant-Caregiver Interaction Scale (Munson & Odom, 2004, rev.) will provide a tool to guide collaborative observation, goal-setting, and continuous feedback for parents and their coach. Accessible technology, including a DVD of examples of interaction activities with video modeling, will be developed for use in coaching parents as they learn strategies to enhance parent-infant interaction within daily play activities. Strategies for planning individualized accommodations, such as easy-reading/picture activity schedules and menus, audio prompts, social stories, and self-management systems, to address parent-child needs will be included in the PIIP curriculum and training materials.

Outcomes of PIIP include the curriculum and training materials in print and online at an accessible website; materials to prepare parents with intellectual disabilities and their coaches for implementation of PIIP; examples of interaction activities DVD; single subject, multiple baseline data investigating the effects of PIIP; and field test data investigating the usefulness and feasibility of PIIP. The PIIP website, national presentations, and refereed publications will provide dissemination. A well known publisher has expressed interest in the publication of The PIIP curriculum and training materials, if these studies present evidence to support publication.