

Short and Long Term Effects of an Attachment-Based Intervention on Child Behaviors

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Abstract : Over the last fifty years, maternal sensitivity and child development among vulnerable families have been a priority for researchers. For this reason, attachment-based interventions have been implemented and been shown to be effective in enhancing child development. Most of the time, child outcomes are measured shortly after the intervention. Objectives: The goal of the study was to investigate the effects of an attachment-based intervention on child development shortly after the intervention ended and one-year post-intervention. Methods: Over the seventy-two mother-child dyads referred by Child Protective Services in the province of Québec, Canada, forty-two were included in this study: 24 dyads who received 6 to 8 intervention sessions and 18 dyads who did not. Intervention and none intervention dyads were matched for the following variables: duration of child protective services, the reason for involvement with child protection, age, sex, and family status. Internalizing and externalizing behaviors were measured 3 and 12 months after the end of the intervention when the average age of children were respectively 45 and 54 months old. Findings: Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to compare scores between the two groups and the two data collection times. In general, on differences observed between the two groups three months after the intervention ended, just a few of them were still present nine months later. Conclusions: This first set of analyses suggests that the effects of attachment-based intervention observed three months following the intervention are not lasting for most of them. Those results inform us of the importance of considering the possibility to offer more attachment-based intervention sessions for those highly vulnerable families.

Keywords : attachment-based intervention, child behaviors, child protective services, highly vulnerable families

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