

# Promoting **FIRST** Relationships<sup>®</sup>

## THE EVIDENCE FOR PROMOTING FIRST RELATIONSHIPS

### What is Promoting First Relationships?

- PFR is an evidence-based curriculum for service providers to help parents and other caregivers meet the social and emotional needs of young children.
- PFR uses a video feedback approach that is grounded in attachment theory and reflective practice principles.
- PFR gives professionals who work with families with young children (0–5) the knowledge, tools, and consultation strategies to help guide and support caregivers in gaining confidence and knowledge, increase parental sensitivity, and improve child outcomes.

### Research Summary of the Randomized Clinical Trial (RCT) Studies

1. Four Randomized Clinical Trials (RCT) have been completed with PFR: two in child welfare populations, Fostering Families Project (FFP [1]:  $N = 210$ ) and Supporting Parents Program (SPP [2]:  $N = 247$ ); one within an American Indian tribe, Beginning Relationships, ( $N = 34$ ) [3]; and one with a perinatal population with Spanish and English-speaking mothers who have a mental health diagnosis, Mom and Baby Program ( $N = 254$ ) [4].
2. PFR significantly improved:
  - Observed parental sensitivity [1, 2, 3, 4], Effect size Cohen's  $d = .21-1.21$
  - Parent knowledge of child social and emotional needs [1, 2, 3, 4], Cohen's  $d = .20-.58$
  - Child behavior [1, 2, 4, 5] and sleep [6, 7], Cohen's  $d = .19-1.18$
  - Prevented foster care placement by 2.5 times, see Figure 1 [2]
  - Improved permanency for children in foster care [8],
  - Improved stress physiology [9, 10] and improved social attention in children at risk for Autism Spectrum Disorders [11].

Two RCT's currently in the field, one within an American Indian Tribe in a rural setting, and the other with reunified birth parents in child welfare.

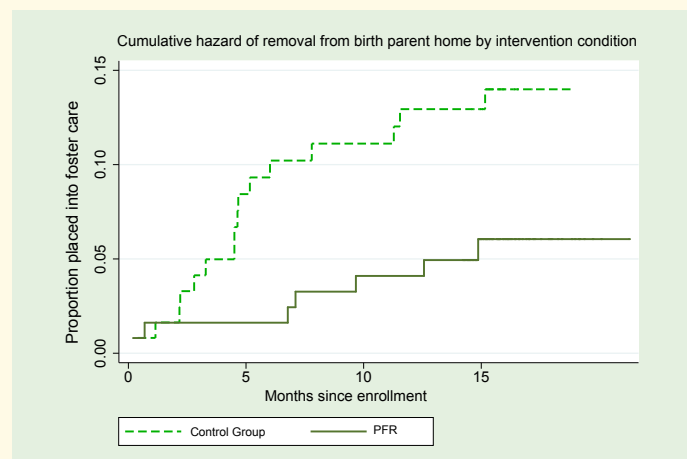


FIGURE 1

*“... it (PFR) helped me understand my son’s cues and needs. I get it now! I get him! I want to think about him in a different way. It helped me to step back, take a breath, evaluate the situation and understand the situation, why is he acting this way? Is he scared? Is he stressed? Does he need me?”*

—REUNIFIED BIRTH PARENT STUDY, 2020

parent-child  
relationship  
programs at the  
Barnard Center

**W** SCHOOL OF NURSING  
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

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## Who should use Promoting First Relationships?

Infant Mental Health Specialists, Public Health Nurses, Early Intervention Providers, Mental Health Therapists, Childcare Providers, Early Childhood Education Teachers, Child Welfare Workers, Pediatricians, Doulas, and other allied professionals.

## Training

PFR offers three levels of training: a 2-day foundational workshop; a Certified Provider level; and an Agency Trainer model. We will work with your organization to help you find the right level of support for your needs. Visit [pfrprograms.org](http://pfrprograms.org) for training opportunities.

### What do Providers Say?

***“I gained a whole new outlook on how to approach talking to families about social emotional development.”***

***“Learning PFR has given me so much more insight into my own practice, and even with my own children. What I didn’t prepare for was the profound effect that it has had on me as a human being, the internal insight and the compassion that it has ignited has been empowering.”***

### What do Parents Say?

***“PFR helped me to be more patient, because I felt like she was a real whiny, tantrum kind of girl, but she just wanted my attention—that’s what I realized—that’s what she needed and wanted from me—that’s why she was so whiny.”***

***“The material made more sense and it came alive for me with the videos. Being able to see how I was actually doing the things talked about in the handouts and seeing how my son reacted to me really helped me.”***

1. Spieker, S.J., et al. (2012). Promoting First Relationships: Randomized trial of a relationship-based intervention for toddlers in child welfare. *Child Maltreatment, 17*(4) 271–286.
2. Oxford, M.L., Spieker, S.J., Lohr, M.J., & Fleming, C.B. (2016). Promoting First Relationships®: Randomized trial of a 10-week home visiting program with families referred to child protective services. *Child Maltreatment, 21*(4), 267–277.
3. Booth-LaForce, C., Oxford, M.L., Barbosa-Leiker, C., Burduli, E., & Buchwald, D.S. (2020). Randomized controlled trial of the Promoting First Relationships® preventive intervention for primary caregivers and toddlers in an American Indian community. *Prevention Science, 21*(1), 98–108.
4. Oxford, M.L., Hash, J.B., Lohr, M.J., Bleil, M., Fleming, C.B., Unützer, J., & Spieker, S.J. (2021). Randomized Trial of Promoting First Relationships® for New Mothers who Received Community Mental Health Services in Pregnancy. *Under Review*
5. Pasalich, D.S., Fleming, C.B., Oxford, M.L., Zheng, Y., & Spieker, S.J. (2016). Can parenting intervention prevent cascading effects from placement instability to insecure attachment to externalizing problems in maltreated toddlers? *Child Maltreatment, 21*(1), 175–185.
6. Oxford, M.L., Fleming, C.B., Nelson, E.M., Kelly, J.F., & Spieker, S.J. (2013). Randomized trial of Promoting First Relationships®: Effects on maltreated toddlers’ separation distress and sleep regulation after reunification. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(12), 1988–1992.
7. Hash, J.B., Oxford, M.L., Fleming, C.B., Ward, T.M., Spieker, S.J., & Lohr, M.J. (2019). Impact of a home visiting program on sleep problems among young children experiencing adversity. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 89*, 143–154.
8. Spieker, S.J., Oxford, M.L. and Fleming, C.B. (2014). Permanency outcomes for toddlers in child welfare two years after a randomized trial of a parenting intervention. *Children and Youth Services Review, 44*, 201–206.
9. Nelson, E.M. and Spieker, S.J. (2013). Intervention effects on morning and stimulated cortisol responses among toddlers in foster care. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 34*(3), 211–221.
10. Hastings, P.D., Kahle, S., Fleming, C., Lohr, M.J., Katz, L.F., & Oxford, M.L. (2019). An intervention that increases parental sensitivity in families referred to Child Protective Services also changes toddlers’ parasympathetic regulation. *Developmental Science, 22*(1).
11. Jones, E., Dawson, G., Kelly, J.F., Estes, A., & Webb, S.J. (2017). Parent delivered early intervention in infants at risk for ASD: Effects on electrophysiological and habituation measures of social attention. *Autism Research, 10*(5), 961–972.
12. Oxford, M., Spieker, S., Lohr, M., Fleming, C., Dillon, C. & Rees, J. (2018). Ensuring implementation fidelity of a 10-week home visiting program in two randomized clinical trials. *Maternal and Child Health Journal, 22*(3), 376–383.
13. Oxford, M., Booth-LaForce, C., Echo-Hawk, A., Madesclaire, O., Parrish, L., Widner, M., . . . & CATCH Project Team. (2020). Promoting First Relationships®: Implementing a home visiting research program in two American Indian communities. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research, 52*(2), 149–156. doi:10.1177/0844562120914424.

**NOTE:** These publications and others are available upon request.

### Program Authors

Kelly, J., Zuckerman, T., Sandoval, D., & Buehlman, K. (2003; 2008; 2016). *Promoting First Relationships: A program for service providers to help parents and other caregivers nurture young children’s social and emotional development.* Seattle, Washington: NCAST Programs. (available at [pfrprograms.org](http://pfrprograms.org))