FAMILIES: THE VITAL LINK

HIPPY USA
FLORIDA

SPRING 2004

The Florida HIPPY Research Agenda

RESEARCH: The Measure of Our Success

By Mary Lindsey, Ph.D., HIPPY State Director

This edition of our newsletter is a follow up on the theme used for the 2004 HIPPY National Conference, Research: The Measure of Our Success. It was quite evident during the conference and comments following the workshops that HIPPY USA had just touched the tip of the research iceberg on the relevance and importance of evaluation as it relates to program improvement, quality of training and accountability. Throughout the home visiting field, we are all pondering the same questions, how do we know that our programs are indeed effective and making a difference in the lives of families and children enrolled in our programs.

We are not the only ones seeking answers to this very important question. Funders, policymakers, and supporters expect and are demanding that programs conduct research studies that produce significant evidence that differences are being made in the lives of children that participate in parent involvement and school readiness programs such as HIPPY.

It is understood that research on home visiting programs like HIPPY are questionable and very difficult to measure, but in spite of these challenges, the research team at the University of South Florida in collaboration with HIPPY USA have initiated several research projects that will be presented in this issue. It is the expectation that through these studies we will be able to ascertain how well does HIPPY measure up and what impact does it have on the families involved in its many diversified programs.

HIPPY USA—USF Research Collaboration
By Diane Powell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor & Program Director

Over the past several years, the HIPPY Research Group at the University of South Florida has played an increasing role in supporting HIPPY research and evaluation activities at the national level. USF's HIPPY Research Group is composed of Mary Lindsey and Dabaram Rampersad from the Florida HIPPY State Office and Diane Powell, Marsha Black and Kirsten Cuenca, researchers in USF's Division of Applied Research and Educational Support (DARES). In August of 2002 our group entered into an informal relationship with HIPPY USA as their "research arm." Since then we have undertaken a number of activities to strengthen HIPPY research capacity at the national and local levels. These include both conducting and planning for research studies and providing training, consultation and materials on evaluation to HIPPY USA and local programs.

- We have completed one national study of HIPPY that looked at ways in which program and provider factors contribute to engagement and retention of families. This study took place at ten HIPPY programs across the country and used surveys and interviews with coordinators and home visitors to gather information on the similarities and

HIPPY Brightens Futures

differences in the way HIPPY is implemented.

• Recognizing the pressure from funders to produce evidence that HIPPY is an effective program, HIPPY USA staff, HIPPY USA's Research Advisory Group, and the USF HIPPY Research Group have been working together to develop a national research agenda for HIPPY. Activities to date have included the development of a working paper examining the pros and cons of different designs for a national study. Just last week the Research Advisory Group participated in a phone conference to discuss these alternatives and reach consensus on a research agenda, so more information on this should be forthcoming very soon! The next steps will be to more fully develop the proposed studies and secure funding to conduct them.

• We have produced several modules for the HIPPY "Evaluation Toolkit." Already disseminated to local programs has been the "Compendium of Assessment and Screening Instruments" which provides information about child and parent assessment instruments and their usefulness for evaluation of HIPPY. Topics of other modules include the basics of research design, research ethics, and issues in pre-post testing. Other supports for evaluation activities at the local program level include presentations at the national conference and phone consultation to local programs undertaking evaluation activities.

We look forward to continuing activities that will help to demonstrate through research and evaluation what the HIPPY community already know from first hand experience—that HIPPY does indeed have lasting benefits that improve the lives of parents and children.
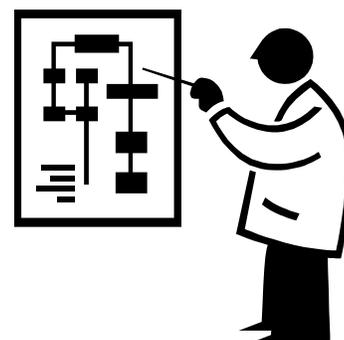
The HIPPY Logic Model
By Kirsten Cuenca, Coordinator of Research Programs

The Florida State HIPPY office and researchers at the University of South Florida have been developing what is known as a logical model to demonstrate HIPPY's theory of change—that is, how and why HIPPY accomplishes its goals through the program's elements and activities. This article will briefly explain what a logic model is and how we have proceeded in developing one for HIPPY.

What is a logic model? Logic models are concise, visual depictions of how a program is designed and how it impacts its participants and the community. A logic model summarizes the key elements of a program, revealing the rationale behind its approach, the intended outcomes, and demonstrates the cause--effect relationships between program activities and intended outcomes. Logic models are ideal tools for designing and planning the way a program will operate. They are also useful for program management and improvement, communication about a program's process and approach, and for designing evaluation of a program.

Why a logic model for HIPPY? HIPPY USA became interested in developing a logic model in order to better show how the HIPPY program brings about changes in participants. Additionally, HIPPY USA is participating in a forum of six national home visit programs that seeks to improve the quality of home visiting and to create a better understanding of the role that home visitation can play in helping young children and their families. All of the partners in the Home Visit Forum are creating logic models of their programs in order to discover similarities and differences among programs, and to identify ways that they might better work together.

How is the HIPPY logic model being developed? To construct a model for HIPPY, we began by identifying the main goals of HIPPY and generating flow charts that illustrated how HIPPY activities accomplished these goals. We then began structuring the information in the flow charts into logic models that explained the chain of events: activities, intermediate outcomes, long term outcomes, and the impacts. The core components of HIPPY, those elements that are most rigidly monitored and implemented, were used as the core of the model. These were home visiting to conduct role play, parent

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teaching to child, and group meetings. Program elements that may be added or modified by the implementing agency were highlighted to indicate the variability of these components. The HIPPY logic model was organized to demonstrate the flow of activities and outcomes from the major components of the HIPPY program (home visiting, parent teaching, and group meetings), but a second format was also created to demonstrate how HIPPY activities respond to HIPPY's identified goals.

What is the status of HIPPY's logic model? We are still refining and finalizing the HIPPY logic model. At this point HIPPY USA is reviewing the components for accuracy and comparing it with HIPPY's required and recommended practices for stellar programs. Our next steps will be to finalize the model and then develop a written description of its characteristics and the program's theory. It is anticipated that the logic model will be available for use by HIPPY programs later this year.

The Florida HIPPY Parent Study II
By Marsha Black, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Program sustainability for many preschool programs including HIPPY is increasingly being linked to the degree the program successfully prepares children for entering school. The importance of children's preparedness to enter school is supported by published findings from longitudinal studies of children's academic performance that document the relation-

ship between a child's skills and knowledge at kindergarten and his/her future success in school. In addition, early literacy research suggests that family participation in literacy activities provides valuable developmental experiences for young children. Engaging young children in literacy activities at home enables parents and other family members to become active participants in their children's education at an early age. In addition to developing an interest in reading, activities such as telling stories and singing songs also encourages the acquisition of literacy skills.

To determine the degree that HIPPY contributes to the development of children's preacademic skills and involvement in different types of home literacy activities, in January, 2004, in partnership with the Florida HIPPY Training and Technical Assistance Center, the University of South Florida HIPPY research team launched the second HIPPY parent research study. The Florida HIPPY Parent Study II employs a quasi-experimental design. Three hundred child records from HIPPY programs were randomly selected proportionally according to program size and number of children enrolled in each curriculum year. HIPPY parents of selected children were given a recruitment letter in either Span-

ish or English by their home visitor, parent educator, CIS, or paraprofessional. Interested HIPPY parents were asked to supply a telephone number and days and times when study personnel could contact them about the study. Interviews with HIPPY parents were conducted by an interviewer who spoke their primary language (English or Spanish). Children whose HIPPY Parents speak languages other than English or Spanish or are under 18 years of age were excluded from the study.

Results from this study will be compared with publicly available comparison data from the National Household Education Survey, National Center for Education Statistics, to assess how HIPPY parents compare with a national sample of parents with preschool aged children. This information will be useful for HIPPY program funders as well as help researchers understand the impact of early childhood programs like HIPPY on children's preacademic development and the role of home involvement.

A special thanks to the Florida HIPPY coordinators and their staff of home visitors, parent educators, CIS, and paraprofessionals. Their effort and dedication in assisting with the evaluation activities were integral to the success of this study. Working with the Florida HIPPY State office and the University of South Florida researchers, HIPPY program staff gathered child and parent information for the database and conducted the parent recruitment activities.

Home Visitors Corner

(This section can include success stories of home visitors, or any issues that may relate to home visitors. Therefore, if you would like to submit a story or relevant issue, please feel free to forward it to the HIPPY T&TA Center.)

Resources for HIPPY Research
By Dabaram Rampersad, Assistant State Director

As agencies seek funding to sustain their family support programs to continue services to their families, funders and legislators are more frequently asking to see research evidence that support these programs. HIPPY programs are no exception to this increasing request. A team of researchers at the University of South Florida has been working with the Florida state HIPPY office and the HIPPY USA national office to conduct studies and compile research and evaluation evidence that support HIPPY. Some of these research studies may be obtained in summary format at the Florida HIPPY website "Research and Evaluation" page at the following web address:

http://floridahippy.fmhi.usf.edu/evalresear.htm

Some resources (among others) available to HIPPY programs include the following:

- *HIPPY USA Research Summary* (soon to be updated by HIPPY USA)
- *"Parents Making A Difference"* book edited by Miriam Westheirmer
- *"The Impact of the Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on School Performance in 3rd and 6th Grades"* by Robert H. Bradley and Barbara Gilkey
- *"The Effects of the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on Children's School Performance at the End of the Program and One Year Later"* by Amy J.L. Baker, Chaya S. Piotrkowski and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn
- *"Commonly Used Assessment and Screening Instruments"* prepared for HIPPY USA by Marsha Black et. al., USF, and mailed by HIPPY USA to HIPPY programs earlier this program year
- *"Florida HIPPY Research Briefs 1 to 5"* that include such topics as "Positive Changes in HIPPY Families", "Employability Skills that Matter", "Overcoming Challenges to Engaging HIPPY Families" etc.

Additionallly, all HIPPY programs will soon receive **research modules** from HIPPY USA for compiling a HIPPY research and evaluation toolkit.

Additional studies have been conducted in other states and at local sites. HIPPY USA and the USF researchers are continuously seeking copies of these documents along with success stories which programs have compiled that can become part of the pool of evidence that shows that HIPPY works!

To Learn More About the

HIPPYUSA
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
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HIPPY Training & Technical Assistance Center
visit our website at:

http://floridahippy.fmhi.usf.edu