

# **Text to Connect:**

## **Using Text Messaging to Enhance Parents' Engagement in a Parent Training Program**

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# Text to Connect

- Describe methods and findings of the Text To Connect Study
- Identify lessons learned
- Highlight future directions for research

# Parent training programs for the prevention of child maltreatment

- In FFY 2011, there were 681,000 victims of child abuse and neglect (US DHHS, 2012).
- 400,000 child welfare involved parents receive parent training services each year (US DHHS, 2005).
- Parent training programs aim to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors known to promote child safety, permanency and well-being.

# Engaging parents is a challenge

- Parent-training programs typically suffer from high attrition and low completion rates.
  - Lack of transportation, child care
  - Scheduling constraints and demands
  - Lack of cultural competence of facilitators
- **The application of new technologies may offer a solution**

# Engaging parents is a challenge

Do text message session reminders increase attendance and completion in the Positive Parenting Program (PPP)?



The screenshot shows the homepage of The Family Tree website. The header features the organization's name, "THE FAMILY TREE", with the tagline "PROVIDING SOLUTIONS. PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "About Us", "Programs", "Get Involved", "Get Help", "Resources", "Donate Now", "Volunteer", and "Contact Us". The main content area includes a sub-header "Providing Solutions. Preventing Child Abuse." followed by a paragraph describing the organization's mission. Below this are two featured articles: "Raising your voice won't raise their grades." and "Check out our Family Fair pictures!".

**THE FAMILY TREE**  
PROVIDING SOLUTIONS. PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE.

Select Language  Powered by  Search

Sign In Events Shop FAQs Teen Scams En Espa

About Us Programs Get Involved Get Help Resources Donate Now Volunteer Contact Us

## Providing Solutions. Preventing Child Abuse.

The Family Tree is Maryland's leading non-profit organization dedicated to improving our community by providing families with proven solutions to prevent child abuse and neglect. A national affiliate of Parents Anonymous®, Prevent Child Abuse America, and The National Exchange Club Foundation, The Family Tree offers volunteer-supported programs and services that aide and educate individuals, families, and communities.

### Raising your voice won't raise their grades.

Sad but true, bringing home a bad report card can trigger a negative reaction from parents. Click below to read these important tips on handling the stress of report card time. [Learn More](#)

### Check out our Family Fair pictures!

The 4th Annual Brent A. Rosenberg Family Fair & Walk was a great success raising over \$62,000! Check out our pictures here. [Learn More](#)

# Methods

- Study Recruitment (2011 – 2012, 10 cycles)
  - Parents screened at intake or check-in and, if eligible, study described.
  - UM provided informed consent and enrolled parents who agreed into the study.
  - Study incentives: \$10 gift cards at pre-test and at post-test.
  - **50% of parents enrolled in designated PPP study classes consented to participate in the study (N=117 of 234)**
- Randomization into Intervention and Control Groups
  - Enhanced PPP (intervention: PPP class + text message reminder)
  - Standard PPP (control, services as usual: PPP class)

# Methods

- Measurement
  - Attendance & completion: Sign-in sheet, attendance documentation form (includes make-up sessions)
  - Receipt of text messages: Sign-in sheet, text message records
  - Demographic data: intake forms

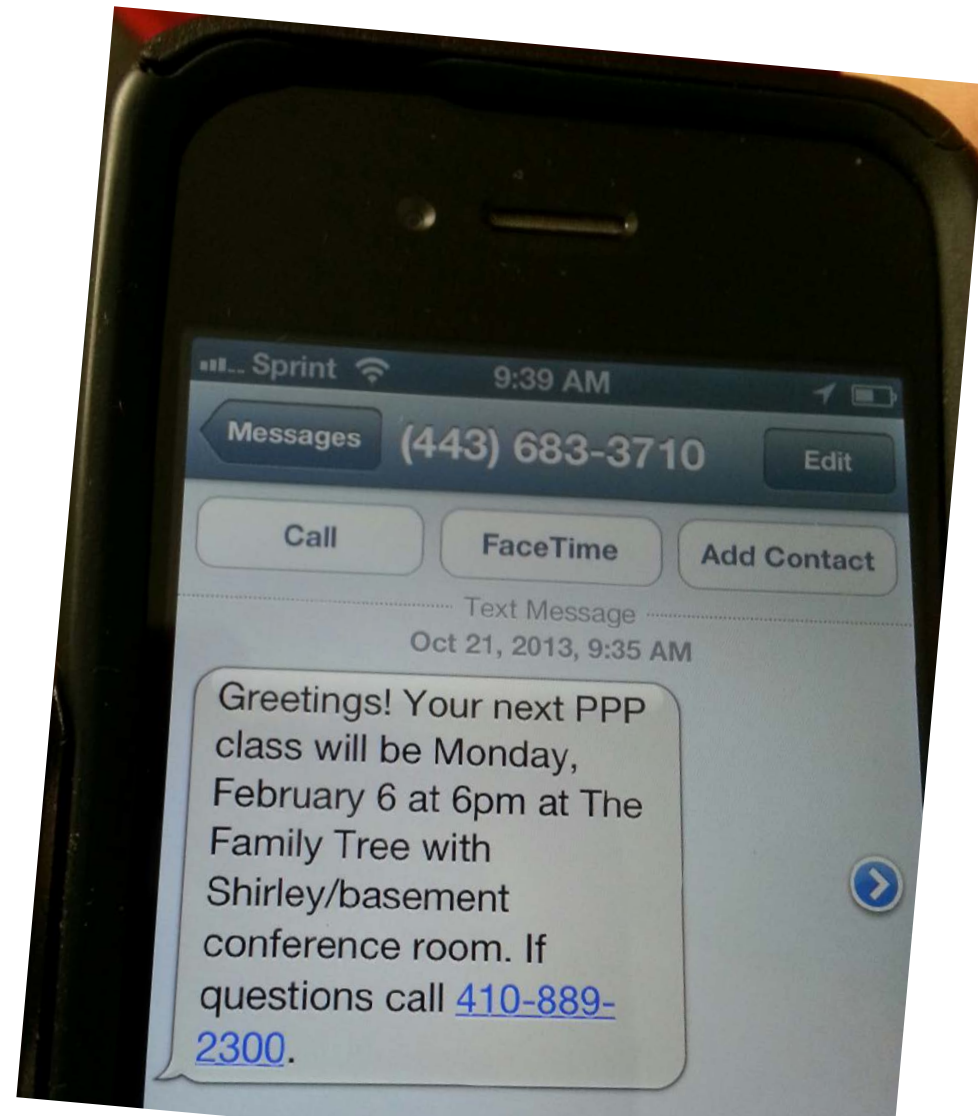
# Methods:

## Text messaging procedures

10 PPP classes  
(1 session per week)

+

Text message  
session reminders  
sent by an Intern  
**(starting week 2)**







# WANT TO SEND FREE MESSAGES?

Refer Your Friends To Group Texting.  
Earn 1000 Additional Credits For Each Referral!

- Send Text Message
- Scheduled & Sent Texts
- Buy More Credits

Inbox

Keywords

- Groups
- Contacts
- Upload Contacts
- Web Widget Creator

Advanced Features

- Refer A Friend
- My Profile
- Support
- Logout

My Plan: Pay&Go  
[Billing Info](#)  
[Change My Plan](#)  
[View My Invoices](#)

Plan Credits: 0  
Anytime Credits: 6 (ADD)

## Send A Group Text Message

[Help?](#)

### Select Your Groups

- Cycle 6 (1)
- Keyword (0)
- Test (0)
- Widget (0)
- Contacts Not In Groups (0) *And/Or Single Number:*

### Compose Your Message

Subject (Optional):

**Message:** This message is being sent to all in cycle 6. Your next PPP class is on x/x/xxxx with person x in the conference room. have a great day!

Please do not copy & paste your message into the box from another application, as certain software adds extra characters that may cause your message to display incorrectly.

22 Remaining Characters

Add To My Message:

Personalize My Message:

Add Picture:  [\(Click For More Info\)](#)

Schedule Delivery:  [Set Time & Date](#)

Current Date & Time: 01-18-2012 3:01 PM

# Sample

- **N=117 participants**
- Age 18-53, 33 years old on average (M=32.6, SD=8.39)
- 76% Female
- 80% African American
- 74% with income under \$10,000/year
- 33% no HS degree or GED

# Random Assignment

*Of the 117 participants:*



- No significant differences between intervention and control groups by age, gender, race, education or income.

# Findings: Implementation process

- Average of 8 text messages ( $M = 8.1$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) sent
- Of the people assigned to Texting Group:
  - 87% to 100% (each week) were sent text messages
  - 61% to 88% (each week) reported receiving the text message, among those reporting on this.
- Cell phone accessibility was high but for some,
  - Access to cell phone, but no text message plan
  - No cell phone, used relative or friend's cell



# Findings: Attendance & Completion

- **Attendance:** Attended class on the specified day.
- **Make-up Class:** Attended make-up class.
- **Completion:** Met the PPP requirement of completing all sessions (up to 2 make-up classes allowed).

# Attendance Findings (N=117)

- Participants attended **6.9 classes** on average (M=6.9, SD=2.75)
- Enhanced and Standard classes had similar attendance, on average. (No statistically significant difference).

Enhanced PPP:  
7.0 classes  
(SD=2.63)



Standard PPP:  
6.7 classes  
(SD=2.90)

# Attendance Findings (N=117)

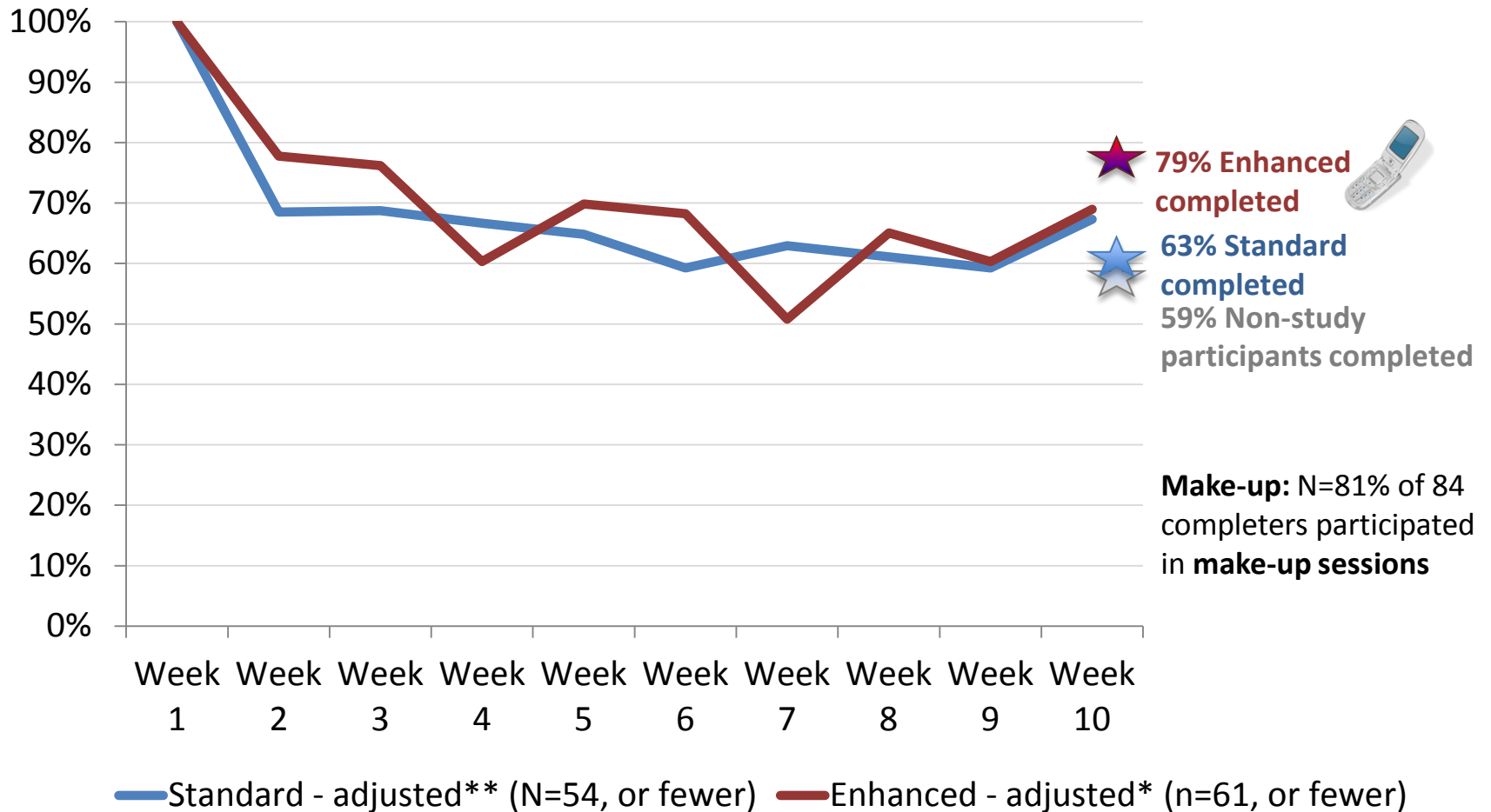
- **59.8%** of participants took **make up classes**.
- 81% of 84 completers participated in make-up sessions.
- Trend toward Enhanced group being more likely to take make-up classes compared to Standard Group ( $\chi^2=2.655$ ,  $p=.103$ )

Enhanced PPP:  
**67%** make up  
classes



Standard PPP:  
**52%** make up  
classes

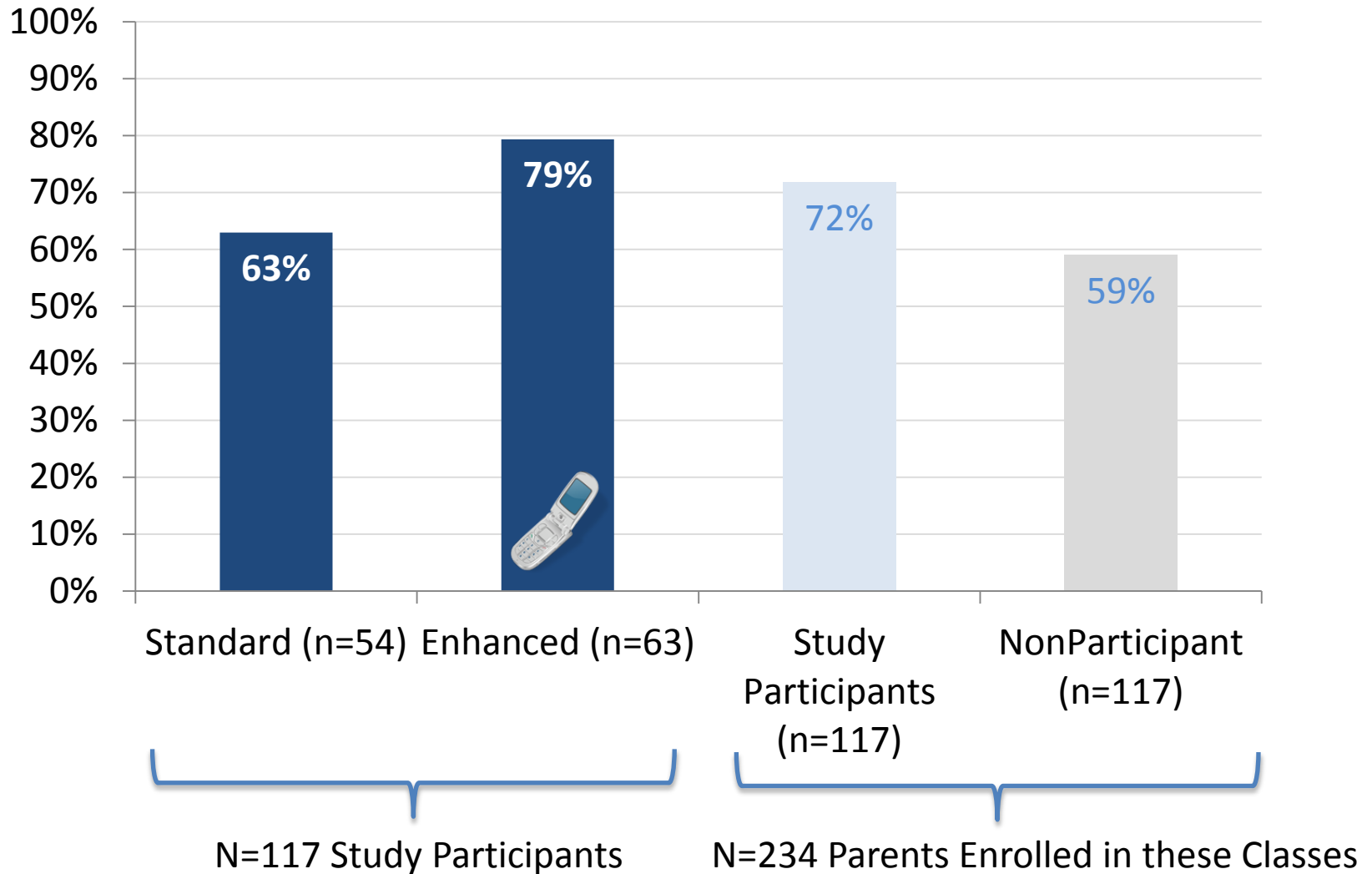
# Weekly PPP Attendance by Study Group (N=117)



\*The denominator was adjusted in Week 3 and Week 10 to reflect the N with the opportunity to attend, subtracting the number of people for whom class was cancelled. Class cancellation occurred during two cycles in Standard classes. The adjustment also effects the Enhanced denominator, as some of this group received text messages but attended the standard class.



# PPP Completion Rates



\*Statistically significant difference between Enhanced and Standard ( $\chi^2=3.863$ ,  $p=.049$ )

# Does Intervention Group Predict Completion Controlling for other Factors?

- Logistic regression using PASW 18 (SPSS, Inc.)
- Modeling PPP Completion(N=115), tested for:
  - Gender
  - Race (African American vs. White)
  - Make-up session(s) completed (yes/no)
  - Group (Enhanced/Texting vs. Standard)
- **Model was significant** ( $\chi^2=62.331$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.0005$ )
- **Make-up session** predicted completion (Wald=27.486,  $p<.0005$ )
- Group (Enhanced/Texting), gender, and race did not predict completion.

# Discussion:

## Attendance and Completion

- Higher proportion of Texting group completed PPP (but did not increase actual attendance).
- Taking Make-up Class predicted completion.
- Findings suggest that text message reminders keep the class on the participant's radar/engaged, and combined with the make up classes, facilitated greater completion.

# Limitations

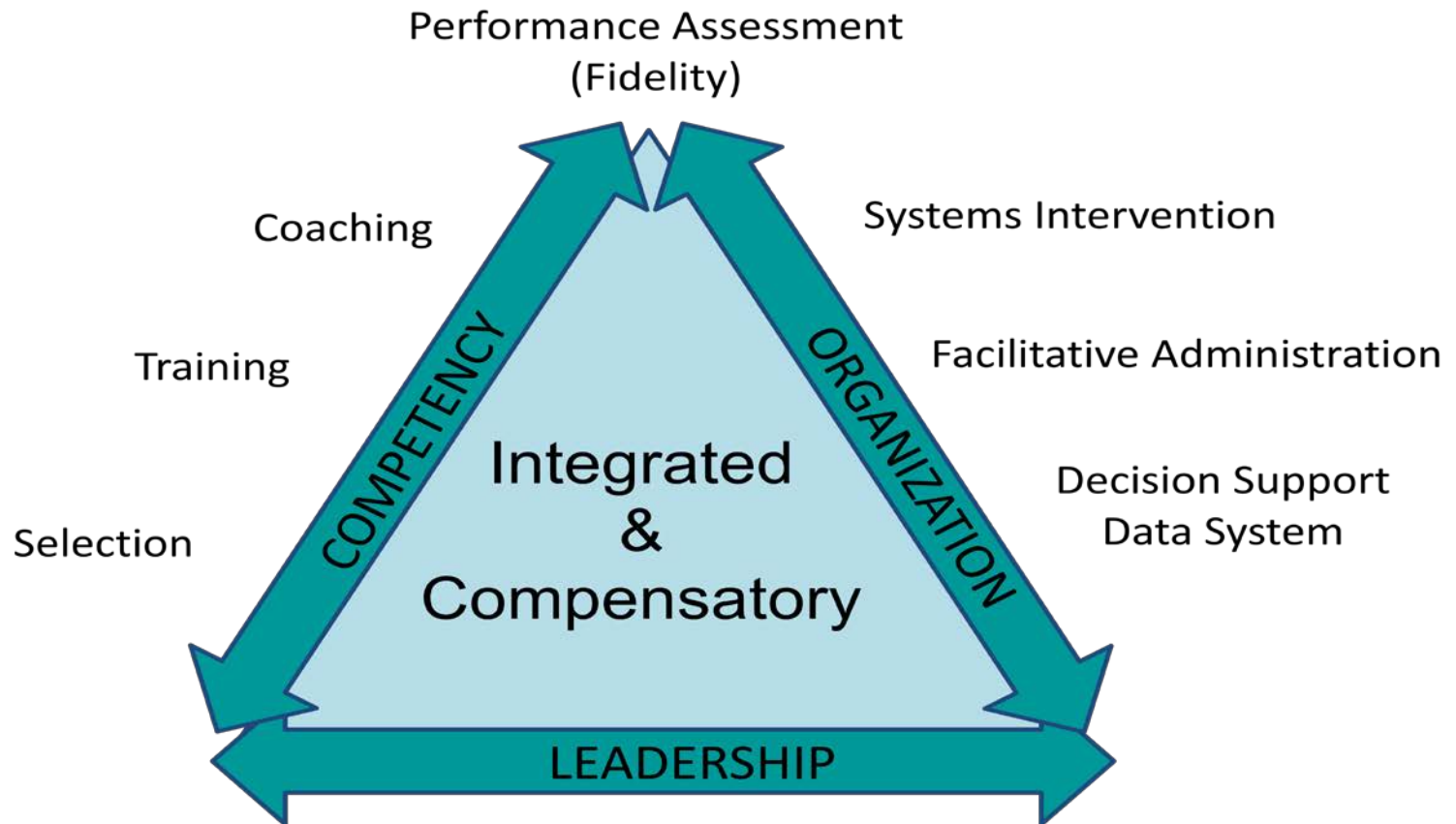
- Lack of fidelity to texting protocol.
- Facilitators were not blind to which classes were involved in the research.
- Variables not available for analyses, such as
  - Obstacles to attendance cited in literature include: single, more children, chaotic stressors; could not test for these, not available in our data set.
  - Previous involvement with child welfare service
  - Whether or not these are mandated clients

# Implications

- Future Considerations for Implementation
  - Which staff person/intern is available to send text messages consistently?
  - Could text message be sent only for select sessions?
  - How will cell phone numbers be collected and updated?
  - How will people without cell phones/text messaging be engaged?
  - Cost of sending texts
    - 5 cents per text, plus cost of maintaining cell phone

# Implementation Drivers

## National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)



Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).

# Implementation Drivers

- *Leadership*: Is there sufficient administrator buy-in? How frequently will leaders communicate about the practice change?
- *Facilitative Administration*: What policies and procedures should be in place to support practice change?
- *Selection*: Who should send the text messages?
- *Training*: What is the content? Who will be trained and how often?

# Future directions for research

## Instructions:

Do **Not** Write Your Name on This Survey.  
Mark all answers with a check mark.

True

False



If you make a mistake, cross out the answer that is wrong .

1. Do you currently use a cell phone?

Yes

No, go to question #8

2. If you answered yes to #1, what kind of cell phone contract do you have?

Month to month contract

Long-term contract

I don't have a contract, I have prepaid minutes

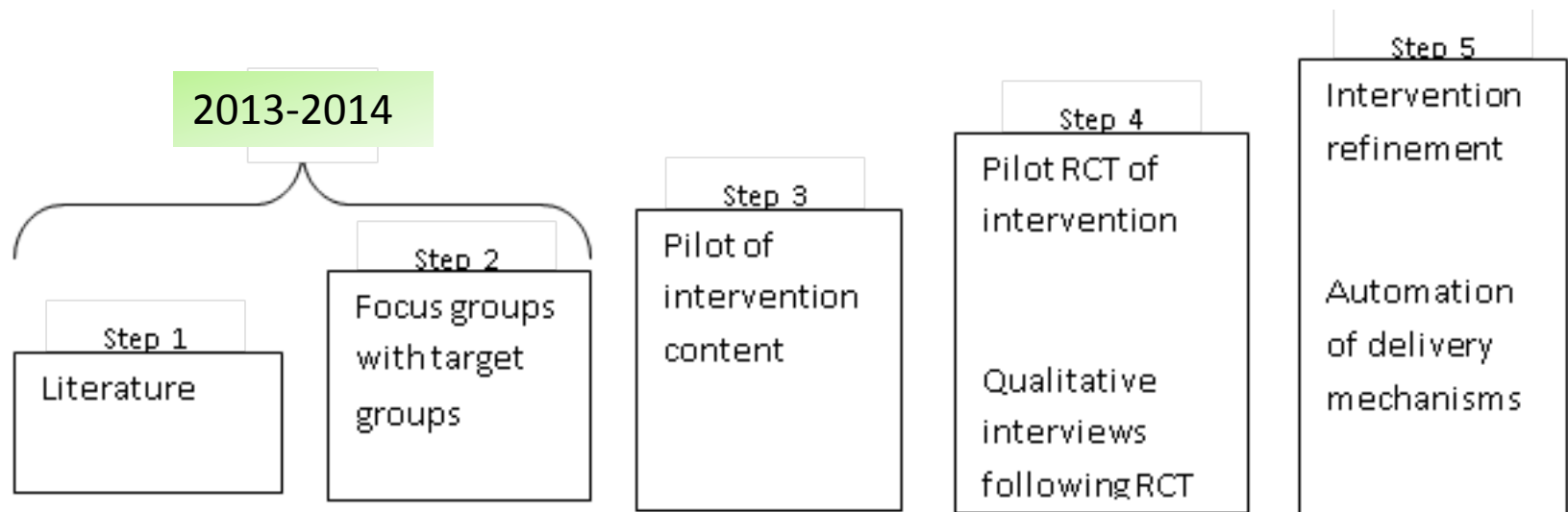
I don't have a contract, I have free cell phone service through a special program (for example, LifeLine, Assurance Wireless)

I don't have a contract, I use someone else's cell phone right now

Don't know



# Future directions for research



**Application of the mHealth Development and Evaluation framework (Whitaker, Merry, Dorey, & Maddison, 2012)**

Parents and caregivers who  
participated in the Text to  
Connect Study

Administrators, Family Education  
staff, and TFT Research Interns

Kristen Woodruff  
Catherine Moon  
Philip Osteen



**Ruth H. Young Center  
for Families and  
Children**

Thank you!