

Publication

A remote parenting program and parent and staff perspectives: a randomized trial

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OBJECTIVES: To assess impact and implementation of remote delivery of a parenting program following suspension of in-person visits during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. **METHODS:** Impact of remote delivery of the Reach Up parenting program on parenting practices was evaluated by randomized trial in Jamaica. Mothers with children aged 5 to 24 months who met 1 of 7 at-risk criteria were enrolled at health centers. Participants were randomly assigned to intervention or control using random number tables generated by a statistician. Intervention comprised a manual for parents with illustrated play activities, phone calls, and short message service messages. The control group received usual care. Parent practices were measured using an adapted Family Care Indicators telephone-administered questionnaire by interviewers unaware of group assignment. Qualitative interviews were conducted with staff and parents in Jamaica and Brazil and staff in Ecuador to identify facilitators and barriers to remote delivery of Reach Up. **RESULTS:** Two hundred forty-seven participants were assessed at endline (control n = 130; intervention n = 117). Intervention increased parent activities that support child development, effect size 0.34 SD (95% confidence interval 0.03-0.53), and use of praise, odds 2 times higher with intervention. There were no benefits to interactive language or play materials. Qualitative results showed parents appreciated program continuation and felt motivated to help their child, and methods were acceptable to staff. Barriers included poor mobile phone access, difficulty contacting parents, and feedback limitations without in-person contact. **CONCLUSIONS:** Remote delivery methods have potential to contribute to scaling of parenting programs.

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