



## BABY U UPDATE

### Program Description:

*"Liked program very much."*

Baby U, modeled on the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Baby College program, targets parents with children pre-natal to age 3. The goal of this strengths-based program is to: increase parents' knowledge on a variety of child-rearing topics, strengthen parent-child relationships, break parental isolation, and connect parents to beneficial community resources. Unlike the 9 week HCZ program, Baby U runs 16 weeks: 10 weeks of workshops followed by 6 weeks of playgroups, all of which is complemented by 16 weeks of home visits. Throughout the 10 weeks of workshops, parents repeatedly hear key messages that are reinforced through home visits and playgroups.

### Program Governance:

*"Thank you to everyone for their time to put this on. Program is life-saving."*

Baby U is funded by the City of Cambridge and is housed in the Department of Human Service Programs. A Steering Committee, made up of members from 10 local organizations, oversees the development and implementation this program. Staffing consists of one 20-hour Baby U Coordinator and two 15-hour Care Workers. All staff provide direct services which includes hosting Saturday programming, home visits, and playgroup facilitation.

### Enrollment:

- Within a four week period, 30 families (4 fathers and 30 mothers) were enrolled in the program.
- In the first week, four families (mothers) dropped out of the program because they started working on Saturdays. This brought enrollment to 26 families and 30 participants.
- Later in the program, three other families dropped out for the following reasons: one moved, one started school, and the other had to care for her sister's children.
- As of week 10, 23 families were enrolled for a total of 25 participants.

### Attendance:

*"Looked forward to every Saturday coming here. Dropped class to be here."*

- Numbers of participants attending each session varies between 17 and 25 each week.
- Seven participants have had perfect attendance (10 out of 10).
- Two participants attended 9 workshops while three attended 8 workshops.
- Thus, 52% of all families attended 80% of all workshops.
- For the most part, families call when they are unable to attend. Reasons for not attending include having a baby, children sick, and funeral.

**Successes:**

- Families are quite happy with the program and do not want to see it end.  
*"Took classes for 5 years and read lots of parenting books, but nothing has affected my mind like Baby U."*
- Parents are more confident and intentional in their actions with their children.  
*"More confident in my parenting skills. Understand my daughter as an individual. I don't compare as much."*
- Families share with and learn from each other during workshops.
  - The workshops gave families a chance to share best practices with each other.
  - Families learned they all struggle with many of the same issues.
  - As a result, families felt less isolated and learned to "relax" a little.*"Listened to every parent's point of view, get to vent, but notice they are going through same things you are so don't feel alone."*
- Families appreciate home visits.
  - Visitors provides one-on-one explanations of the workshop's content or are able to explain the workshop's content if the participant missed a workshop.
  - Families are able to talk about their issues more openly than in front of a larger group.
  - Families receive tailored support around referrals; one family filled out 3 applications for childcare.*"One-on-one explanations about the workshop topic and about referrals."*

**Challenges:**

- Families signed up 49 children for childcare which was more than expected. Number of children actually in childcare varied week to week. The highest number of children needing care was 29.
- The staffing, space requirements, and play material for such a large number of children exceeded expectations/budget.
- Families needed transportation in order to be able to attend, especially during the winter season. While they live in one neighborhood, we still required two vans that start picking up at 8:45 until 9:20 a.m. Providing transportation also required us to invest in car seats.
- Scheduling and then doing home visits is challenging. Families lead incredibly busy lives, have unexpected things crop up (such as going to the doctors), or have difficulty hosting a visitor (they live with others).

**Post-Baby U:**

Most families have said they are sad to see Baby U end and would like it to continue after the 16-week program ends. Many have volunteered to help organize events and obtain donations.  
*"Want to stay connected."*



# Guiding Philosophy

Parenting is hard work. We all try to do our best.

The parent/child relationship is very important to our children's development.

All parents have tools and strategies to help them parent. We can all add tools to our toolbox.

- Taking care of ourselves as parents helps us to have the energy and patience to take care of our children.

- What we do with our children when they are very young makes a difference in their lives later on.

- Children learn through play and being connected to others.

- Parenting is an ongoing learning process.

- There are many resources for parents and children in the Cambridge community.

## Baby U Key Messages

### **Babies Brains: You Make A Difference!**

1. Learning begins at birth
2. What you do with your child matters a great deal

### **Let's Talk: It Makes a Difference!**

1. Talk to your child, while doing everyday activities as much as possible in the language you speak best
2. Engage in conversations, back and forth.  
**Observe, Wait, Listen. [OWL]**

### **Reading Party!**

1. Read Together Every Day.
2. Talk as much as you read  
**Have fun while reading!**

### **Baby Steps: Understanding Your Growing Child**

1. Children grow in many areas during the first years of their life
2. Parents need to respond to these changes by adding new tools to their toolbox  
**Special Time**

### **Babies Cry: Have a Plan!**

1. It is normal for babies and children to cry
2. Having a plan makes a difference.  
**BREATHE!**

### **Love and Limits: Positive Discipline**

1. We were all raised with many different practices around discipline.
2. There are many positive ways to discipline your child.  
**Don't get furious! Get curious!**  
**Connect Before You Correct!**

### **Healthy from the Start**

1. What you do now, sets the stage for your child's future health
2. Children like to move their bodies. Give them opportunities to do that.

### **Healthy Together**

1. When your child gets sick, ask for advice. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
2. Stress can affect your health. Have a plan to manage your stress.



# CALENDAR

## Workshops:

<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Baby's Brains: You Make a Difference!</b>	<b>Let's Talk ... It Makes A Difference!</b>	<b>Reading Party</b>	<b>Baby Steps: Understanding Your Growing Child</b>	<b>Babies Cry. .. Have a Plan!</b>	<b>Love and Limits: Positive Discipline</b>	<b>Healthy From the Start</b>	<b>Healthy Together</b>	<b>Taking Stock</b>
Jan. 30	Feb. 6	Feb. 20	Feb. 27	Mar. 6	Mar. 13	Mar. 20	Mar. 27	April 10	April 24

NO Baby U on February 13, April 3, and April 17

## Playgroups:

<b>All About Me</b>	<b>Making Playdough!</b>	<b>Strike Up the Band</b>	<b>Storytelling - Puppets</b>	<b>Post Office</b>	<b>The Grand Finale!</b>
May 1	May 8	May 15	May 22	June 5	June 12

NO Baby U on May 29

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61