

Parent–Child Interaction Therapy With Physically Abusive Parents: Efficacy for Reducing Future Abuse Reports

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Abstract

A randomized trial was conducted to test the efficacy and sufficiency of parent–child interaction therapy (PCIT) in preventing re-reports of physical abuse among abusive parents. Physically abusive parents (N = 110) were randomly assigned to one of three intervention conditions: (a) PCIT, (b) PCIT plus individualized enhanced services, or (c) a standard community-based parenting group. Participants had multiple past child welfare reports, severe parent-to-child violence, low household income, and significant levels of depression, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior. At a median follow-up of 850 days, 19% of parents assigned to PCIT had a re-report for physical abuse compared with 49% of parents assigned to the standard community group. Additional enhanced services did not improve the efficacy of PCIT. The relative superiority of PCIT was mediated by greater reduction in negative parent–child interactions, consistent with the PCIT change model.
