

Section 2:

Conceptual Model and Research Findings

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The Family Spirit conceptual framework is based on G.R. Patterson's model (**Figure 1**, below) that posits parenting as the critical link between parents' personal characteristics and environmental context and children's individual risks and ultimate outcomes⁵. Thus, the Family Spirit Program is designed to promote caregivers' effective parenting, while assisting caregivers in developing coping and problem-solving skills to overcome individual and environmental stressors.

Key components of the intervention include one-on-one home-based parent training to help caregivers: 1) provide consistent, responsive care and monitoring and avoid coercive parenting; 2) avoid drug use, which could interfere with effective parenting; and 3) attain coping and life skills to overcome personal and environmental stressors. In addition, Family Spirit paraprofessionals are trained to establish a strong, consistent interpersonal bond to facilitate caregivers' progress toward goals.

Figure 1:

G.R. Patterson's Model of Parenting as Mediator of Child Outcomes (1989)

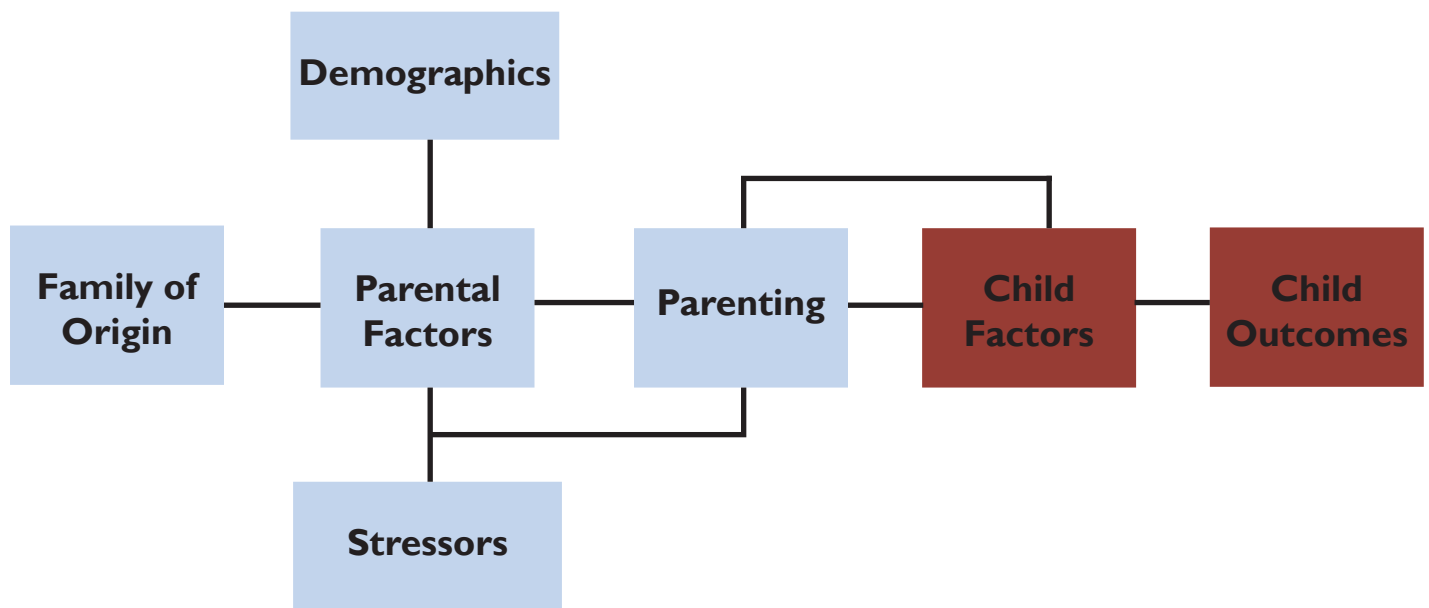
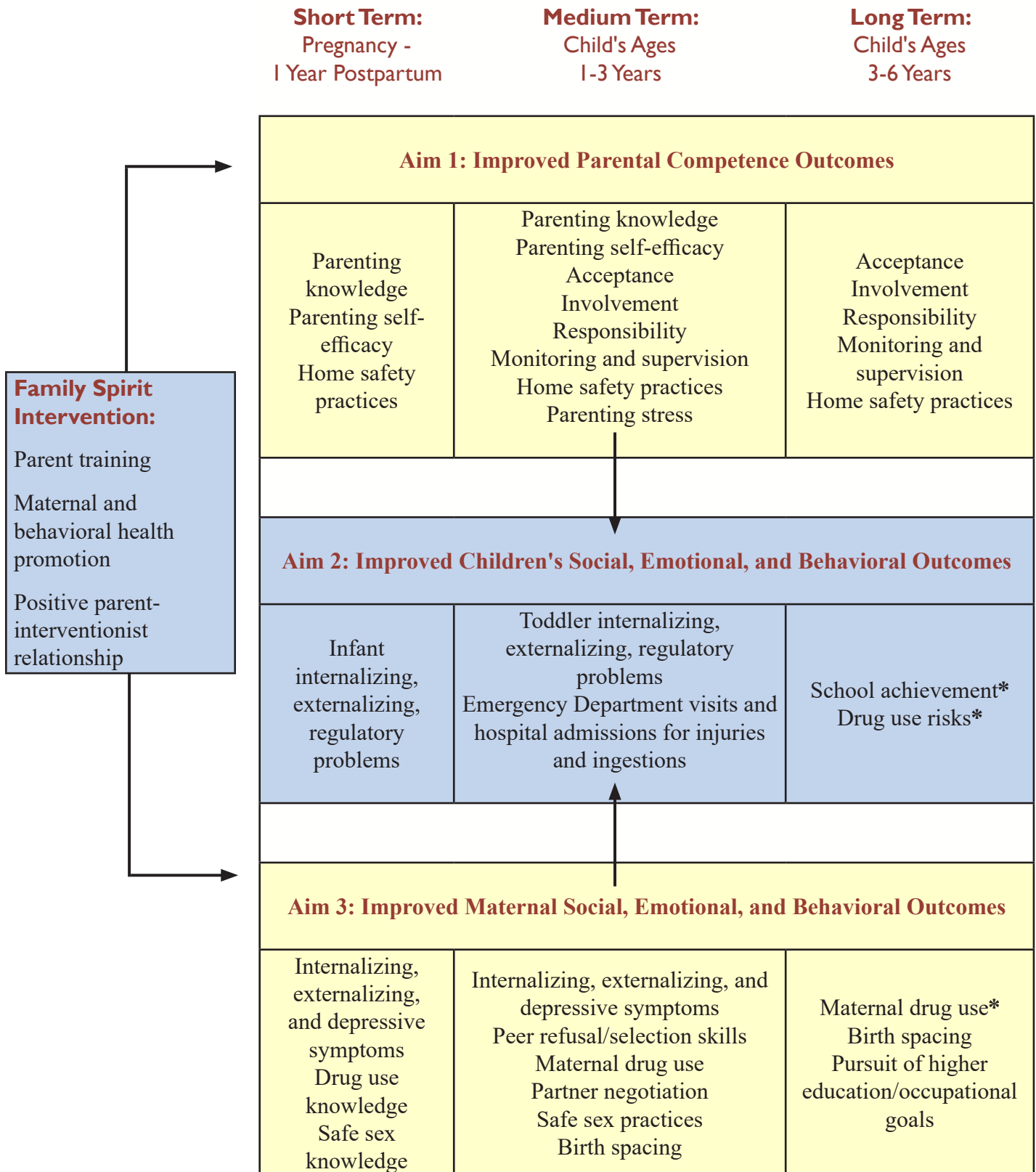


Figure 2 (on the next page) illustrates how the Family Spirit Program is designed to impact short, intermediate, and long-term maternal and child behavioral and emotional outcomes. It hypothesizes that effective, competent parenting and coping and problem-solving skills are the pathway for reducing long-term maternal and child emotional and behavior problems.

This model is supported by a large body of research demonstrating that ineffective parenting practices in early childhood lead to: 1) child behavior problems, academic under-achievement, and peer problems in middle childhood and 2) maladaptive peer group formation, conduct problems and drug use, in adolescence⁶⁻⁸. Parenting knowledge and parental self-efficacy in the earliest phases of parenting are short-term outcomes that become mediators of intermediate and long-term maternal and child behavior outcomes.

Figure 2:

Conceptual Framework for Family Spirit Intervention



*Ideally measured through child's 18th birthday.