

Baby TALK (Teaching Activities for Learning and Knowledge) is a community model which serves every family with a child birth to age three, providing information, encouragement, children's books and activities. Our mission is to positively impact child development and nurture healthy parent-child relationships during the critical early years. Baby TALK comes alongside parents during this critical time to empower and encourage them as parents, providing direct and innovative services to all families, with more intensive services dedicated to families who may be at-risk because of parents' income, age or education.

Established in 1986 by Founding Executive Director Claudia Quigg, Baby TALK, Inc. is an Illinois 501 (c)3 non-profit committed to a collaborative model, working together with our community hospitals, schools, libraries, health clinics and literacy programs to deliver programs which are accessible and meaningful to families' needs. This includes going where parents and children already are: healthcare providers, human service agencies, neighborhoods and homes.

Affiliated with the Harvard Medical School's Touchpoints model and Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Baby TALK works on a national basis for increased professionalism among providers dealing with young families and toward policies more supportive of young families. Baby TALK conducts research on the effectiveness of programs and trains professionals from across the U.S. and Canada. Baby TALK materials are used by schools, libraries, hospitals and families throughout the country.

Baby TALK is now represented in more than 36 states nationally and has over 65,000 contacts per year with parents and children. To date, Baby TALK has served families in more than 298 Illinois cities. Because of research findings supporting Baby TALK's effectiveness, the State of Illinois has designated Baby TALK as one of three models for communities to use with young children if they are to receive state funds.

Though Baby TALK provides programming for every family in Macon County with children ages zero-three, our most comprehensive, direct services are inclusive and designed to serve at-risk families, families with children with disabilities, and children who are at risk for developmental failure.

Baby TALK services to families include:

Hospital Obstetric Units: Baby TALK meets every family with a baby born in a Macon County hospital immediately following the births of their babies. We spend time discovering families' needs, sharing the celebration of the birth, giving information about services available and talking about typical newborn behavior and issues. We give each family a number of materials, including a board book, an original CD, a book for parents, a handout about newborns and flyers about programs.

Baby TALK Times: Baby TALK Times are small parent-child groups designed for families with children birth to three to share parenting questions and concerns, to celebrate babies' achievements and to have fun with books, songs and fingerplays.

Come Sign with Me: Baby TALK offers sign language classes for babies 6 months to 24 months where the babies learn to utilize "sign language" to communicate with their parents or caregivers before they are able to communicate through verbal speech. Families receive a book and weekly handouts of simple signs, songs and fingerplays.

Developmental Newsletters: Parents receive newsletters which address development and parenting issues focused on the age of their child. These come at the following ages: 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24, 30 and 36 months.

Kindermusik: Baby TALK offers parent-child music and movement classes using the Kindermusik curriculum.

STEPS: Baby TALK STEPS (Success Together Experiencing Play and Stimulation) is a program which provides family-centered service designed to meet individual needs of the children whose families are enrolled in the early intervention and/or the Macon County Family Literacy program. STEPS provides a blend of educational and therapy services within the context of a developmentally appropriate curriculum as families are supported in building nurturing relationships with their young children. This program includes physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy (provided by a local hospital) as well as developmental therapy and parenting provided by Baby TALK.

Prenatal Clinics: Baby TALK teaches low-income parents receiving services at 4 prenatal clinics each week at St. Mary's and Decatur Memorial Hospital. Each clinic lasts a half-day. Baby TALK interacts with parents throughout pregnancy, assisting them in making homemade toys for their babies and discussing parenting and family issue concerns.

CHIC Read-Aloud: Baby TALK staff read aloud in the waiting room of the Community Health Improvement Center. Paperback books are given to children who participate and parents receive parenting information and support. Parents are also given appropriate anticipatory guidance handouts.

ESL: (English as a Second Language) Parents and children whose native language is other than English receive English instruction.

Family Literacy: programs for parents who didn't finish high school. Four key components are provided to every family: Adult Education, Early Childhood education, parenting and parent-child interaction. Mental health services and transportation are provided as needed.

Head Start Family Fun Night: Once each month, Baby TALK staff leads a family literacy activity at Head Start's locations. These events are based on a theme suggested by a give-away book and include parenting instruction as well as parent-child activities.

Lapsits: Six times each month, BT staff holds Lapsits at the Decatur Public Library. At these programs, parents and children interact with each other around a theme, including books and activities. The focus is on parent-child interaction.

Macon County Health Dept. (MCHD) Immunization Clinic: Each week, when immunizations are offered to young children, Baby TALK staff are set up to read aloud to children waiting in the waiting area. Paperback books are distributed to children who participate.

MCHD Well Child Clinics: Three days each week, Baby TALK staff meet families during their Well Child Appointments. We ask how they're doing, comment on changes and growth since the last appt. and discuss issues typical to the age. We follow our own protocol of distributing an anticipatory guidance handout about the child's age as well as referrals to other appropriate services.

Teen Parenting Alternative Education: Decatur Public Schools and Baby TALK's Phoenix 2 Teen Parent Program provides a multi-support program for high school students who are pregnant or parenting. Baby TALK provides a daily parenting class for parents and child education for their baby birth to four years in child education classes while the parent attends their academic classes. Additional support for teen parents is provided by a pediatrician, home visitor, parent educator and a social worker.

Warmline: Every family is given a magnet with the Warmline phone number (475-BABY) during the Hospital OB visit, and encouraged to call with questions, concerns or the need for referrals.

WIC: Five days each week, Baby TALK teachers meet families in the WIC waiting room while they are waiting to see their nurse. Baby TALK staff read to the children, lead finger plays and songs. Parents receive parenting information and support and appropriate anticipatory guidance handouts.