USING INFANT BEHAVIOR AS LANGUAGE: FOSTERING PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND ENHANCING PARENT-INFANT AND PROVIDER-PARENT RELATIONSHIP

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The period covering the first 3 months of life consists of a series of pivotal, life-changing transitions for the infant, the parents, and for the emerging parent-child relationship. It is also a period of time that presents clinicians with a unique opportunity for preventive intervention. The Newborn Behavioral Observations (NBO) System is a relationship-based tool that offers individualized information to parents about their baby’s communication strategies and overall development, in order to strengthen the relationship between infants and parents.

With this tool, we place the baby at the center of intervention and support for families at this particularly sensitive time in the parents’ transition to parenthood. By sensitizing parents to their baby’s strengths, communication cues, and challenges, the NBO makes possible revealing the baby’s very personhood and individuality, providing a powerful motive for positive change in the parents themselves, and strengthening the emerging parent-infant bond.

We will introduce the content and process of the NBO and with video examples will demonstrate its effect on parents’ engagement with the infant and the provider. Then we will facilitate the participants’ applying the demonstrated NBO content and processes to other video examples of newborn-parent-provider interactions.

We will discuss the content and uses of the NBO, the theoretical framework on which it is based, and the growing evidence for its effectiveness as a form of support for parents, families, and providers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Participants will
1. learn how to engage parents by sharing observation and description of the infant’s behavioral repertoire.
2. learn how to engage in mutual meaning and decision making about an infant’s care with parents.