Project Title: The effects of online decision making support (the MOD) for home visitors using an RTI approach to promoting the language development of at-risk infants and toddlers

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Brief Description of Project:
Purpose: Children who lack key early language and literacy experiences prior to kindergarten face significant challenges learning to read. Because of impoverished early language experiences, many children are not adequately prepared to benefit from the reading instruction they receive when they reach school. Home visitation is a viable model for improving the home language experiences that are known to promote children's growth in language and early communication. However, home visitors face challenges in promoting these outcomes including how to (a) identify children who are on a path toward language delay, and (b) provide the needed supports to parents/caregivers for changing that trajectory. The long-term goal of this research is to reduce the number of children who are not ready for school because of delays and disabilities in language and early communication skills that have antecedents prior to preschool. The aim of this project is to test the efficacy of a web-based intervention decision support system for home visitors, MOD: Making Online Decisions. This intervention (a) identifies children at risk for early language delay in a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach, and (b) assists home visitors in the design, delivery, and maintenance of a parent-implemented intervention for promoting their child's early language development.

Project Activities: The researchers will conduct a waitlist randomized controlled trial to investigate the effects of the web-based MOD support system on home visitors' intervention decision making and children's communication outcomes. Home visitors serving infants and toddlers at risk for language delay will be randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Condition A consists of didactic training on data-based decision making, access to evidence-based language intervention, and use of the Early Communication Indicator (ECI) for progress monitoring. Condition B includes Condition A plus MOD decision-making support. The research team will recruit 80 home visitors and 160 children aged 6–34 months who are at risk for language delays. Children's early communication skills will be assessed before, during, and after the intervention to document intervention effectiveness.