

# BABY'S FIRST YEARS NEWS

ISSUE 4, JANUARY 2022

*Shortly after giving birth, you agreed to take part in the Baby's First Years study. You have been joined by nearly 1,000 other mothers in four U.S. cities: New Orleans, LA; New York City, NY; Omaha, NE; and the Twin Cities, MN. On behalf of the entire Baby's First Years' research team, thank you so much for letting us be a part of the amazing journey of your child growing up! By talking to us each year, you are helping us understand how families like yours make ends meet and support children.*

## IN THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER, YOU'LL FIND

- A description about what we've learned so far
- Update on Age 4 plans
- An introduction to local site coordinators

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED SO FAR

The goal of this research study is to gain an understanding of the family experiences and backgrounds of families with new babies, and specifically, how a cash gift impacts children's development and family life.

Thank you for continuing to participate in the Baby's First Years (BFY) Study and 4MyBaby cash gifts:

- BFY moms are given either a larger monthly cash gift or a smaller gift via a 4MyBaby debit card.
- **Originally these cash gifts were scheduled to last until your baby was 40 months old, but because of the pandemic, the 4MyBaby cash gifts will now continue until your child is 52 months old (4 years and 4 months old).**

Before the pandemic started, the University of Michigan interviewers visited moms in their homes to ask questions and collect information about them and their babies.

- During the in-person visits, interviewers collected information about babies' brain activity. Babies' brains are full of brain cells that talk to each other

as babies learn and grow each day. It's not possible to know what babies are thinking, but we can get a sense of how brain cells are talking to each other and how fast or slowly brain cells communicate with each other. The interviewers used special caps to measure this brain activity, similar to how a microphone records sound. It is a totally safe way to learn about a child's brain development.

- Brain activity information from different babies were all combined, so that the babies whose mothers receive the larger cash gift could be compared to the babies whose mothers receive the smaller cash gift.
- All healthy brains are shaped by their environments and experiences, and we saw lots of brain activity from babies in all the sites and in both cash gift groups.
- The babies whose mothers received the larger cash gift tended to have faster brain activity patterns, which may be associated with the development of later cognitive skills. These differences between groups were small.
- The findings do not mean that one group has "better" brains. Differences in the babies' brain

activity might or might not continue over time. These are average differences between the groups, and are not seen in all children in either group.

After the pandemic and stay-at-home orders in March of 2020, interviewers reached out to moms via phone to ask questions:

- Phone interviews were conducted when your child was close to their 2nd birthday, and you have been or will be hearing from us again as your child reaches their 3rd birthday asking you to conduct another phone interview

## UPCOMING 4<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY VISITS

When your child is 4 years old, we will invite the two of you to a local university where staff will play a variety of learning games with your child, and will again ask to measure your child's brain activity. We will stay in touch with you in the upcoming year and tell you more about these visits in the future.

## MEET YOUR LOCAL BFY TEAM

Our four site coordinators are busy planning a fun 4<sup>th</sup> birthday university visit for you and your child. They are excited to meet you!



### Louisiana: Eryn Adams

Eryn works as a site coordinator at the University of New Orleans. She is originally from Arkansas, about an hour outside of Memphis, TN and is a life-long Razorback fan. For the last five years, she lived in Missouri and is now living in and loving Mid-City New Orleans. In her free time, she likes to paint and learn piano.



### Minnesota: Neely Miller

Neely Miller is BFY's MN site coordinator and works at the University of Minnesota's Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain. She has an unlimited supply of bubbles and goldfish crackers at her job, and spends a lot of time sitting on tiny toddler chairs. She grew up in Illinois, but somehow came to believe that Wisconsin has the best football team (Go Pack!).



### Nebraska: Brian Rivera

Brian Rivera works as the BFY site coordinator for Omaha through the University of Nebraska. He graduated from the University of Alabama where he studied how children learn math. Brian grew up in Northern Mexico and went to high school in Los Angeles, California where he unofficially (and unsuccessfully) trained to become a magician.



### New York: Molly Scott

Molly works as the site coordinator at Teachers College, Columbia University. She loves working with young children and their families. Originally from the great state of New Jersey, Molly enjoys being outside, reading, and exploring NYC.



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*For more information about the study, visit [www.babysfirstyears.com](http://www.babysfirstyears.com)*