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MCH Innovations Database Practice Summary & Implementation Guidance



BOND Program

Lantern's BOND program is a 6-month stream of text messages for parents with a child ages 0-1 that addresses both parent and child wellbeing and mental health.

Cutting-Edge

Emerging

Promising

Best



Location

Colorado



Topic Area

Health Promotion &
Communication; Mental
Health & Substance Use



Setting

Virtual



Population Focus

Women & Maternal



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Section 1: Practice Summary

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Lantern is a nationwide, non-profit organization that sends free text messages to families timed to the age of their child (prenatal through age 10), shares information by location (down to the zip code level), and shares topic-based information that families can opt into if it's something of interest or relevance to them.

In 2023, Lantern created BOND, a program offering extra support to new parents.

Caring for a baby is so many things: tiring, rewarding, challenging, and heart-warming...to name a few. A baby's first year of life can feel like an emotional roller coaster for parents.

While many new parents experience ups and downs, an estimated 15-20% of women (more than 600,000 each year) and up to 10% of men experience more significant symptoms of depression or anxiety in baby's first year. Untreated, these conditions lead to worse outcomes for the parent, baby, and the entire family.

That's why we at Lantern teamed up with a group of experts to help support new parents and babies as they begin their journey together. BOND is a 6-month stream of text messages for parents with a child ages 0-1 that addresses both parent and child wellbeing and mental health.

Participants receive 1 text message per week (in addition to other Lantern messages based on child's age and family's zip code) that focuses on bonding with their baby and keeping both parents and their babies happy and healthy.

Messages focus on self-care, tips on bonding with baby, connecting families to mental health resources, encouragement for new parents, and more. Strong, nurturing relationships from birth—referred to as early relational health—build the foundation for lifelong positive mental health development.

BOND messages were developed in collaboration with: The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health, Insurekidsnow.gov, the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health, Postpartum Support International, and Zero to Three.

Sample BOND messages are below:

- BOND: A baby's healthy mental development starts during infancy. Learn how to build a bond that can set them up for good mental health: (link)
- BOND: Is it the baby blues or more? Depression & anxiety are common in new parents. If you feel this way, you're not alone. Learn more: (link)
- BOND: If being a new parent feels really hard, you're not alone. It will get better. Call or text the PSI helpline anytime: 800-944-4773
- BOND: Having a baby changes other relationships in your life. That doesn't have to be a bad thing. Tips for keeping other bonds strong: (link)



CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

The goal of the BOND program is to support new parents and help them recognize the importance of supporting their own mental health, as well as focus on infant mental health (early relational health). The core components for this program include the content, in this case a set of text messages that link to associated landing pages. Each text message is 140 characters or less, including spaces. Most text messages link to a mobile-friendly landing page with more information on that topic. Some do not, they simply offer encouragement without further info. Next would be our delivery system, which is our homegrown text messaging platform. When a family in our system has a new baby, we send them a text message prompting them to sign up for our BOND program in addition to our regular messages. Those who opt-in then start to receive this 6-month curriculum of messages. Next component is evaluation. Through 3 surveys, we evaluate the perceived knowledge, attitude and behavior changes of those who participate. We then use that information to further improve the program.

Core Components & Practice Activities		
Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Content	We developed the program in collaboration with a group of maternal and infant mental health experts; it consists of 6 months of 1 weekly text message.	The creation process took many months of back and forth review and collaboration.
Text message delivery	We created an automated delivery system, triggered when someone texts the word BOND into our short code.	Once a family opts in, they immediately start to receive the messages once a week.
Evaluation	3 short, mobile-friendly surveys	Surveys are sent to all participants at baseline, midpoint, and upon program completion

COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Text messaging is a universal and low-cost modality that can deliver lifesaving information and resources to birth parents and other caregivers during the critical postpartum period. Minimal personal information is collected in order to contribute to trust and reduce barriers to participation. When a person enrolls into BOND or other Lantern text programs, only language preference (Spanish/English/Arabic), due date or date of birth, and ZIP



code are requested. This ensures appropriate resources and information based on location, the parent's postpartum timeline, and the child's age and stage of development.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

The program launched in March 2023 and to date, more than 8,000 caregivers have opted to receive the messages. This represents approximately 5% of the families we reach with a child ages 0-1.

While BOND messages are designed to be valuable to caregivers without requiring individuals to click on the linked resources, we can identify messages that resonated with caregivers by looking at the rate at which subscribers viewed the linked resources. The three most popular messages addressed infant mental health, trouble bonding with your baby, and handling separations. For example 28% of recipients clicked on the link associated with a message explaining what mental health means during infancy.

Impact

Lantern evaluated the BOND program by issuing three short, mobile-friendly surveys at the beginning, middle, and end of the program. The baseline survey had a 29% response rate, midpoint survey 5%, and final survey 5%. Many parents expressed that being a new parent was more difficult than they anticipated, and:

- Over 95% of respondents reported that the BOND messages were helpful and helped them feel seen and understood as they navigated early parenthood.
- Knowledge of who to ask for help about their baby's social-emotional development increased, with survey 3 responses 32% higher than baseline.
- Knowledge of who to turn to for help if a parent was having a difficult time also increased, with survey 3 responses 26% higher than baseline.
- Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that the BOND messages inspired them to take at least 1 action, including:
 - snuggling or spending quality time with their baby (86%)
 - taking time for self-care (72%)
 - sharing the BOND program with friends or family (55%)
 - talking to friends or family about their needs as a caregiver (52%)
 - contacting baby's healthcare provider (50%)
 - talking to friends or family about their baby's needs (50%)
 - contacting their own healthcare provider (30%)
 - contacting one of the helplines or resources shared in the BOND messages (28%)

What Makes BOND Effective

- Focuses on **bonding, self-care, and emotional wellbeing** for both parent and baby
- Normalizes the emotional ups and downs of early parenthood
- Connects families to **trusted mental health resources and helplines**
- Designed to be helpful even without clicking links
- Accessible, low-burden, and scalable



Section 2: Implementation Guidance

COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

Lantern worked with a number of partners and collaborators on the BOND program, including:

Practice Collaborators and Partners			
Partner/ Collaborator	How are they involved in decision- making throughout practice processes?	How are you partnering with this group?	Does this collaborator have lived experience/come from a community impacted by the practice?
Content partners (The Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health, Insurekidsnow.gov, the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health, Postpartum Support International, and Zero to Three.)	These partners helped create and review all content created for this program.	They were instrumental in reviewing each message before we finalized it.	Yes, these organizations are leading experts in maternal and infant mental health, as well as early relational health.
Evaluation team	We worked with an outside organization, Corona Insights, to create an evaluation plan including 3 surveys.	They reviewed and helped us finalize our surveys for this program and helped report results.	No, they are eval experts
Program participants	We read every survey and response to the program to continuously improve	Participants respond to surveys, and we also monitor any inbound text	Yes, these are all parents with a baby ages 0-12 months



messages,
comments on our
landing pages, or
tap-back
responses to text
messages

REPLICATION

Because our scope is national in nature, we did not replicate the BOND program itself in other locations. However, we did go on to create many other topic-based opt-in programs for other audiences. These have included TALK, a program for parents whose child has a speech or language delay; ASD, a program for parents with a child with autism; HEAR, a program for parents whose child may be deaf or hard of hearing; and several others. This type of program is easily accessible and scalable, due to the ubiquity of text messaging.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

To support creation of this program, Lantern team members included our Chief Content Officer as well as our Content Specialist. Those 2 individuals worked with our team of expert collaborators to 1) identify the group of experts and 2) guide discussions to come up with topics to include. Once we had a topic map, the 2 Lantern team members worked together to draft all messages and then coordinate expert reviews. Two staff created and implemented the program over a period of several months. Skills needed included relationship/team building, organization of meetings and timelines, as well as writing and reviewing of materials. The 2 team members both have advanced degrees in public health and one is also a pediatrician.

PRACTICE TIMELINE

From start to finish, the creation of this project took approximately 1 year. For more information on this practice's timeline and specific practice activities, please contact Jodie Fishman directly at jodie@mylantern.org.

PRACTICE COST

As the program is already established and we used our own home-grown texting platform, replication and/or future costs may vary. For more information on this practice startup costs and budgets, please contact Jodie Fishman directly at jodie@mylantern.org.



LESSONS LEARNED

Text messaging is an easy way to reach many, many families with timely reminders and information. Parents can shy away from “mental health” language—so we promoted BOND as a program for new parents to bond with their baby and make time for self-care. This seemed to work as a way to get parents to opt into this program, rather than saying it was explicitly about maternal mental health or infant mental health—something many parents may choose not to opt into.

NEXT STEPS

This program is ongoing! We hope to continue to serve thousands of families across the country with this useful and actionable information. We also hope to be able to localize this program, so that we can send messages based on a parent’s zip code with events and resources applicable to them in addition to the general national messages.

RESOURCES PROVIDED

- [Lantern's BOND Program - Lantern](#)

