READi Lab E-Newsletter

Research in **E**arly **A**utism **D**etection and **I**ntervention

Greetings from Wendy Stone's READi Lab!

You are receiving this e-newsletter because you are one of the generous families who has participated in Dr. Stone's research over the past three years. We are deeply grateful for your willingness to help us learn more about early development in infants and toddlers – those who are at elevated risk for autism as well as those who are not. We will use this newsletter to share information with you about our lab activities, our current research findings, and other tidbits that might be of interest.

We hope you like our new name— **READi Lab.** We changed our name to capture the full extent of the work we are doing, here at UW as well as in communities across the state. You will probably recognize some familiar faces in our lab photo below.

New name, but same friendly faces: Colleen Harker, Thanh Nguyen, Katrina Mares, Wendy Stone, Lisa Ibanez, Sarah Edmunds, and Laura Baker.

ASAP! Training & Outreach Program

In February 2013, Dr. Stone received a WA State grant called ASAP!, which was designed to improve early detection and intervention for autism across the state. Through this program, the READi Lab offers training workshops for service providers on: (1) an interactive screening tool (the STAT) to identify young children at risk for autism; and (2) a play-based behavioral intervention (Reciprocal Imitation Training). So far we have conducted 5 trainings across 4 counties and trained over 100 providers!

Current Research Findings: Learning from 6-Month Olds

In April 2013, the READi Lab participated in six presentations at the meeting of the **Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD).** In one presentation, Lisa Ibanez discussed preliminary results from the SED study that examined the relation between infants' initiating joint attention (IJA) at 6 months and later autism symptoms at 24 months. IJA is a social-communicative behavior that involves directing the attention of a social partner to an object or event of interest. We measure IJA in 6-month olds by seeing how often the infant shifts his or her gaze between the examiner and a wind-up toy moving on the table.

Across the three sites of the SED study (UW, Vanderbilt, and University of Miami), we enrolled 64 high-risk infants (i.e., those with an older sibling with autism) and 50 low-risk infants (i.e., those with an older sibling with typical development). Our results so far suggest that **high-risk infants who demonstrate more IJA behaviors at 6 months have lower levels of autism symptoms at 24 months.** We are still collecting data to see whether 6 month IJA will predict autism symptoms and diagnostic outcomes at 36 months, and how we can use this information to optimize outcomes for high-risk infants. Stay tuned!

In the Spotlight:

Parents, this newsletter is for <u>YOU</u>! Please let us know if there is any topic you'd like us to cover, or any questions we can answer for you. Also feel free to send us photos of your children for the newsletter – as you know, *we love kids*! You can contact us at <u>READiLab@uw.edu</u>.