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Welcome to Parenthood – Alberta: Preliminary insight into mentorship of first-time mothers during transition from pregnancy to early parenthood

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BACKGROUND

Responsive parent-child relationships build a strong foundation in the early development of an infant's brain, increasing the chance of positive outcomes later in life ^{1,2}.

Mentorship may provide valuable support to families during the transition from pregnancy to early parenthood.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this project was to explore the experiences of mentors of first-time mothers in the Welcome to Parenthood-Alberta (W2P-AB) study.

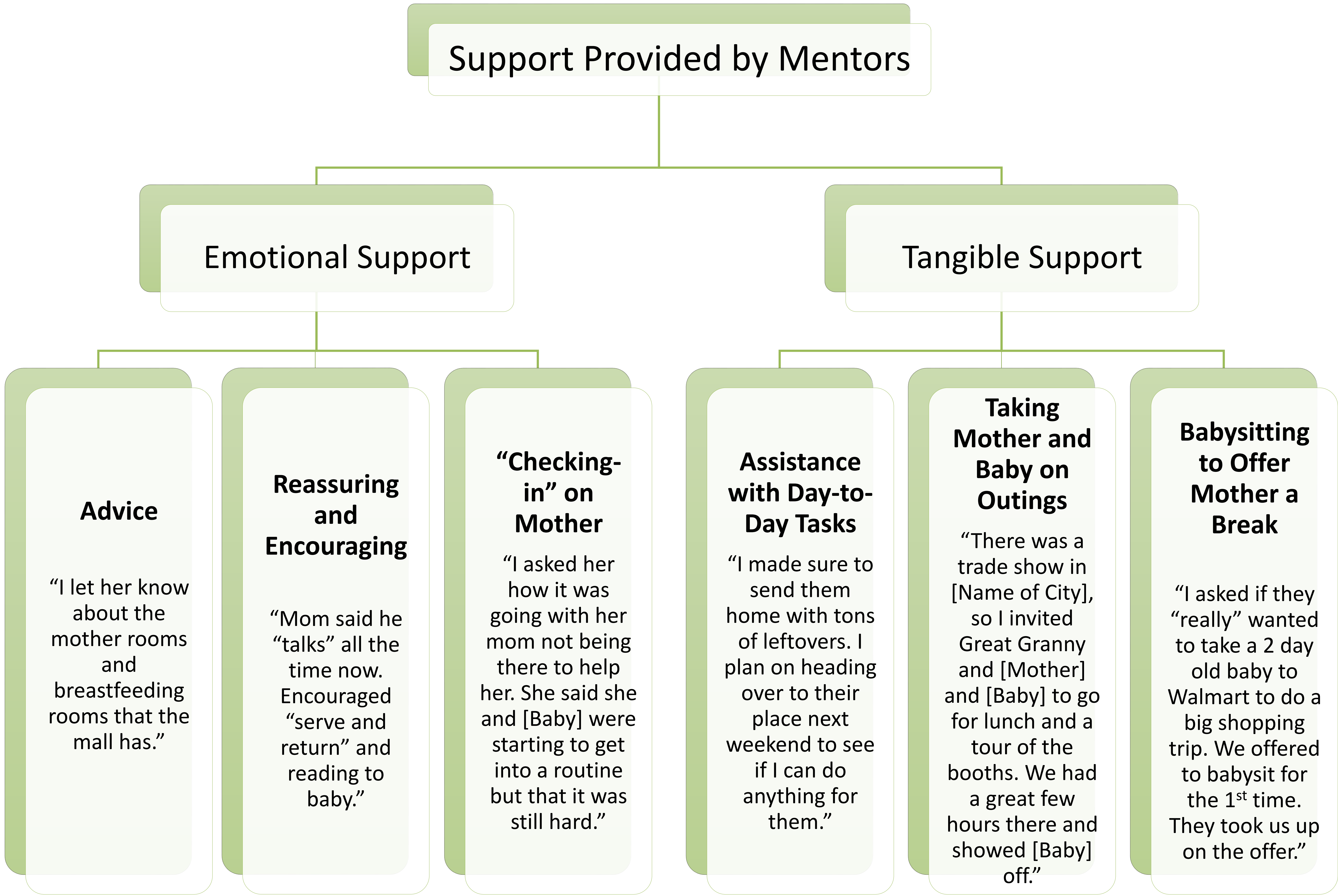
METHODS

This project is part of the larger W2P-AB study, implemented in 11 Parent Link Centres across Alberta as a three-component strategy, including: (a) parenting education; (b) a baby-kit; and (c) a mentor from the family's own social network.

- W2P-AB includes first-time mothers between 30 and 34 weeks' gestation, and their mentors who will support and learn with the mother.
- Mentorship begins at recruitment and continues until the baby is 6 months old, with the mentor writing observations and experiences in a Mentor Journal after each of approximately 20 contacts with the mother.
- Qualitative data from 13 available Mentor Journals underwent preliminary thematic analysis.



RESULTS



FUTURE IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Preliminary analysis suggests mentorship may play a role in providing emotional and tangible support to first-time mothers.

Next steps in determining the feasibility and sustainability of the intervention include further investigating: (1) mentors’ motivation for providing mentorship; (2) mothers’ feelings towards having a mentor; (3) significance of mentors belonging to mothers’ own social network; and (4) the cost-effectiveness of W2P-AB.

CONCLUSION

Provision of parenting education and connection with mentors may provide emotional and tangible support, potentially increasing family capacity to promote early childhood development.

W2P-AB, and the mentorship component that it includes, has the potential to inform public health policy and practice to support the healthy development of future Albertans.

References:
1. Shonkoff, J.P., *Leveraging the biology of adversity to address the roots of disparities in health and development*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2012. 109(Supplement 2): p. 17302-17307.
2. Kolb, B., *Brain and behavioural plasticity in the developing brain: Neuroscience and public policy*. Paediatrics & Child Health, 2009. 14 (10): p. 651.