



Working with families to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors: Positive improvements in child behavior

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 - Maryland Department of Human Resources
 - Title IVE Education for Child Welfare
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Objectives of this Presentation

- To briefly report on the:
 - Design and implementation of Family Connections, a community based program focused on preventing child neglect and
 - Impact of the program on changes in externalizing and internalizing child behavior among vulnerable African American children.



Why is this important?

- Recent studies using two national probability samples from the National Study of Child Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW) identify high levels of behavior problems among children and youth referred to or served by the child protective services and foster care systems (Burns et al., 2004; Leslie, Hurlburt, Landsverk, Barth, & Slyman, 2004).

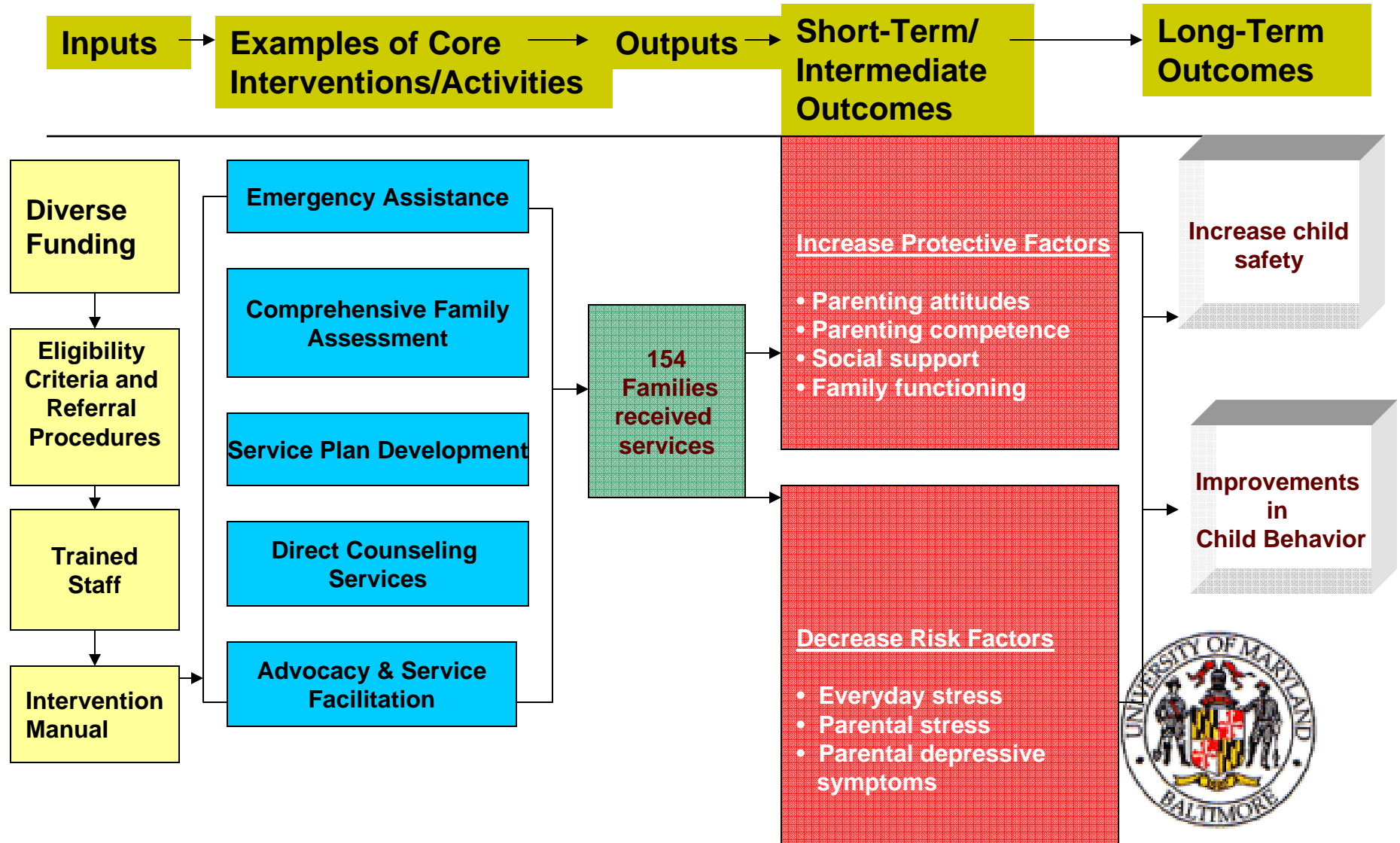


Why is this important?

- Family support as well as child welfare services need to focus on trying to prevent the cross-over of behavior problems among these children to delinquent or other problems among these children over time.



Logic Model: Family Connections



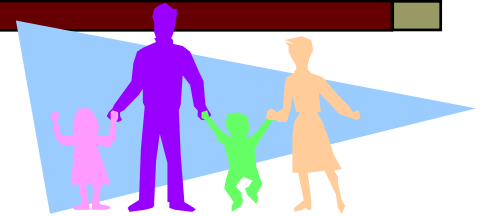
Purpose of Initial Study



- To explore the relationship between length of service and the achievement of intermediate outcomes (risk and protective factors) and final outcomes (child safety and behavior).



Target Population



- **Geographic location**
 - The family lived in the West Baltimore Empowerment Zone
- **Family demographics**
 - Child between 5 and 11 years living in the household
- **Basic needs may have been unmet but not at a level to report to CPS for neglect**
- **Presence of at least 2 risk factors**
- **Voluntary status**
 - There was no current CPS involvement



Study Sample: Caregiver Demographics

- 154 families
- 86% African American
- Mean age = 39 years old
- 98% female (151 females, 3 males)
- 58% unemployed, 19% employed full-time, 8% employed part-time, 10% in training, 5% retired
- 5% married, 65% never married, 13% separated, 10% divorced, 7% widowed
- 62% had less than high school degree



Study Sample: Child Demographics

- **Average number of children in families = three**
 - 17% have one child
 - 25% have two children
 - 27% have three children
 - 31% have four or more children
- **Mean age = 9 (range 1 month to 21 years)**
- **49% female and 51% male**
- **Relationship to caregiver**
 - 78% are children
 - 14% are grandchildren
 - 8% are other relative



Intervention: Random assignment

□ 3-Month or 9-Month Intervention

- Emergency assistance & concrete services (food, clothing, shelter, etc.)
- Home based counseling services
 - Family Assessment
 - Outcome driven service plans
 - Individual & family counseling
- Service referrals, advocacy, service coordination, and facilitation



Social work interns followed an intervention manual to deliver services to both groups.

Data Collection Methods

- **Self-directed, computer-assisted interview**
 - Standardized self-report measures administered at baseline, case closure, and six-month follow-up

- **Standardized observational measures**
 - Administered at 30 days: three and six months, and closure
 - Intern driven → integrated with intervention



Data Analyses

ANOVA Repeated Measures Analyses

- **Assess change over time**
- **Baseline → Closing → 6-month Follow-up**
- **Comparison of length of service –
3 versus 9 months**



Original findings

- **Analyses indicated changes over time:**
 - **Reducing Risk Factors**
 - depressive symptoms
 - parenting stress
 - life stress
 - **Increasing Protective Factors**
 - parenting attitudes and competence (satisfaction)
 - social support

AND.....

DePanfilis & Dubowitz, 2005



Original findings

- **Results suggested improvement over time in targeted outcomes:**
 - **Child Safety**
 - **Low incidence of CPS reports**
 - **Improved physical care**
 - **Improved psychological care**
 - **Child Behavior**
 - **Decreased externalizing and internalizing behavior**



Original Findings

- Does length of service affect change over time in:
 - risk factors?
 - No difference
 - protective factors?
 - No difference
 - child safety?
 - No difference
 - child well-being?
 - **Child behavior**



Results: Child Behavior

- **CBCL Total Problem raw scores decreased** from baseline (M=44.61, se=2.96) to closing (M=36.80, se=2.59, $p<.0005$) and from baseline to 6-months follow-up (M=34.29, se=2.56, $p<.0005$).
- **Interaction between time and treatment group** suggest 9 month and 3 month groups perform differently across time. The 9 month group had larger decrease in scores from baseline to closing and from closing to 6-month follow-up than did 3 month group.

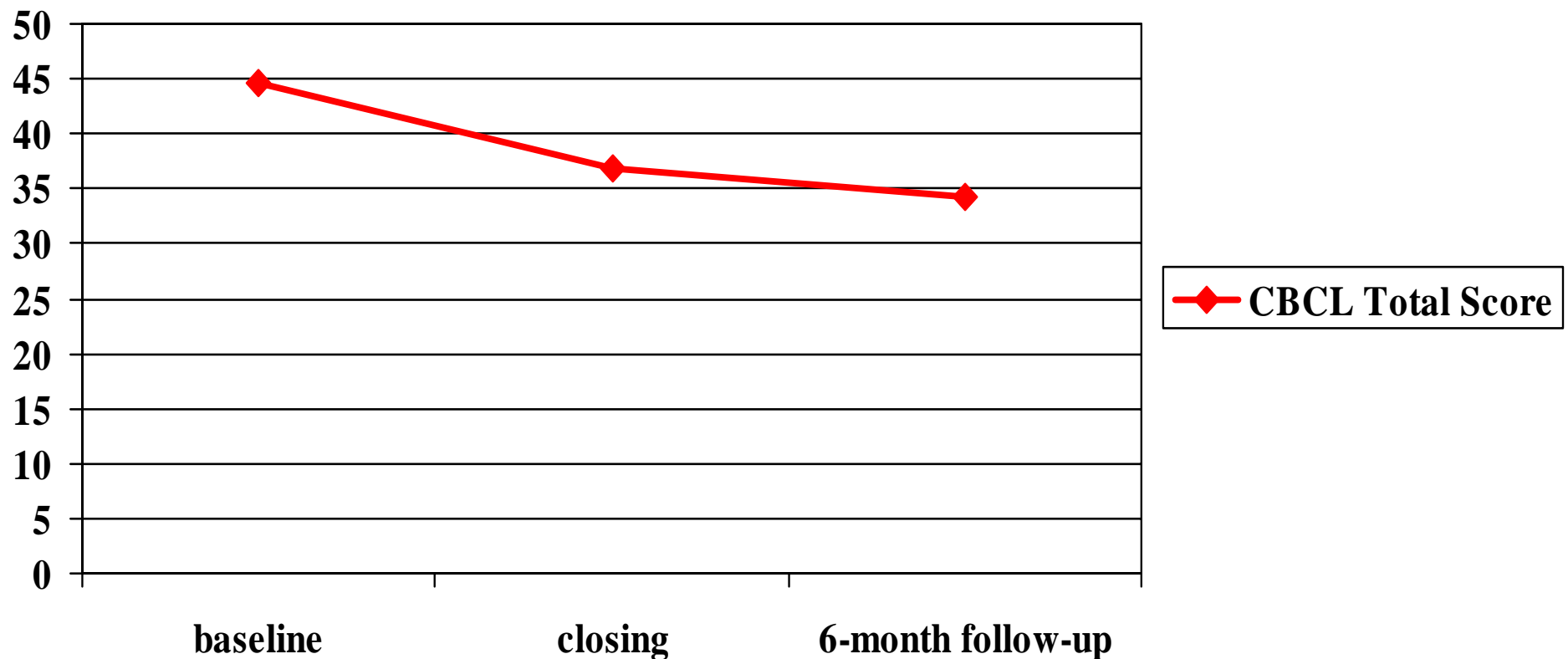


Results: Child Behavior

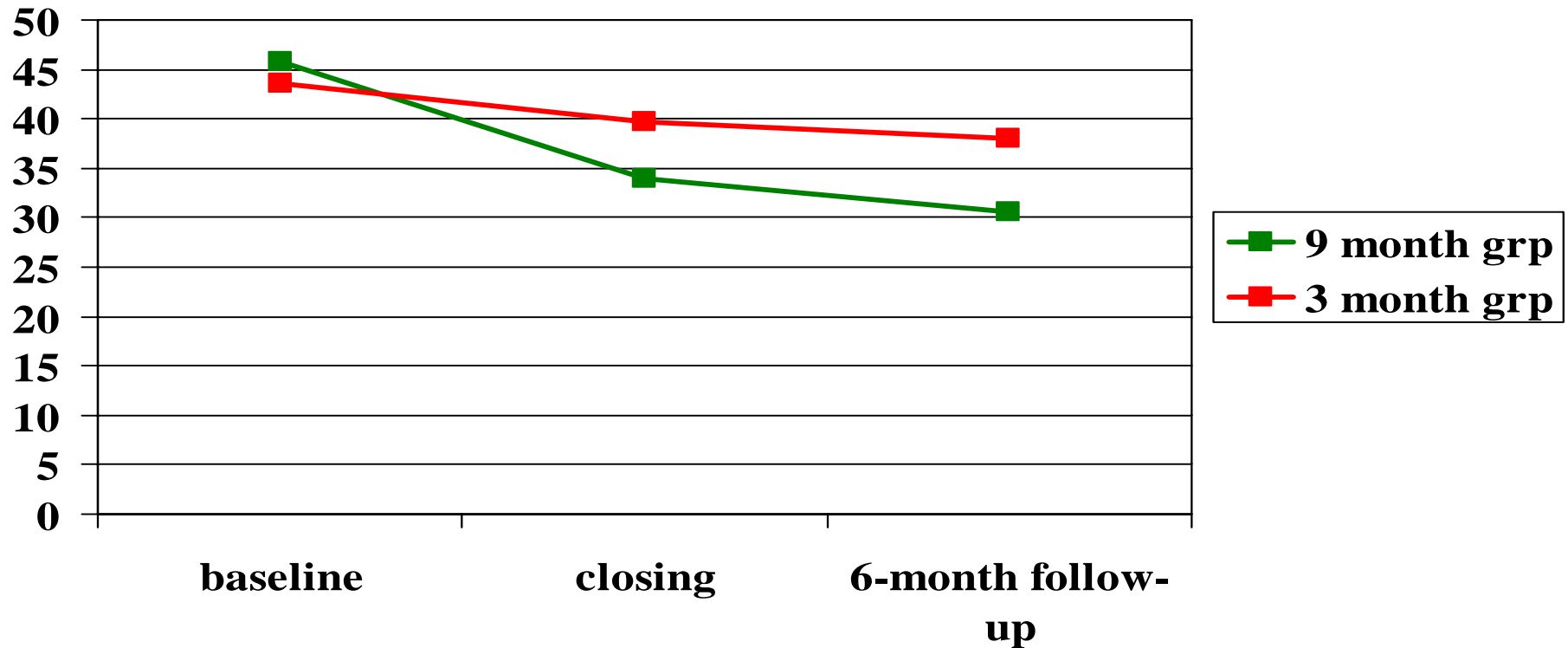
- **Internalizing and externalizing CBCL raw scores significantly decreased** from baseline to closing, and from baseline to 6-month follow-up.
- **Whereas internalizing raw scores of two groups are similar at baseline, 9 month scores are lower at both closing and 6-month follow-up than 3 month scores.**



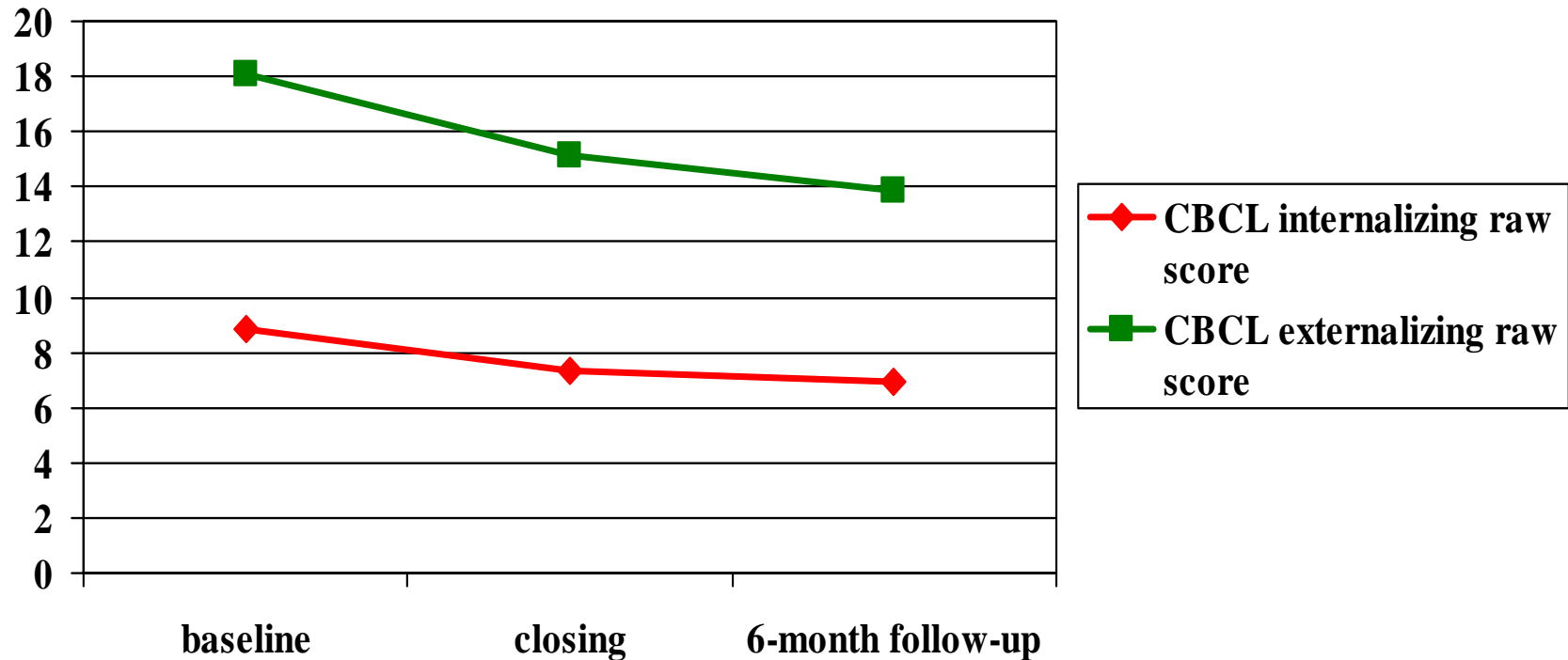
Results: Child Behavior CBCL Total Score (N=111)



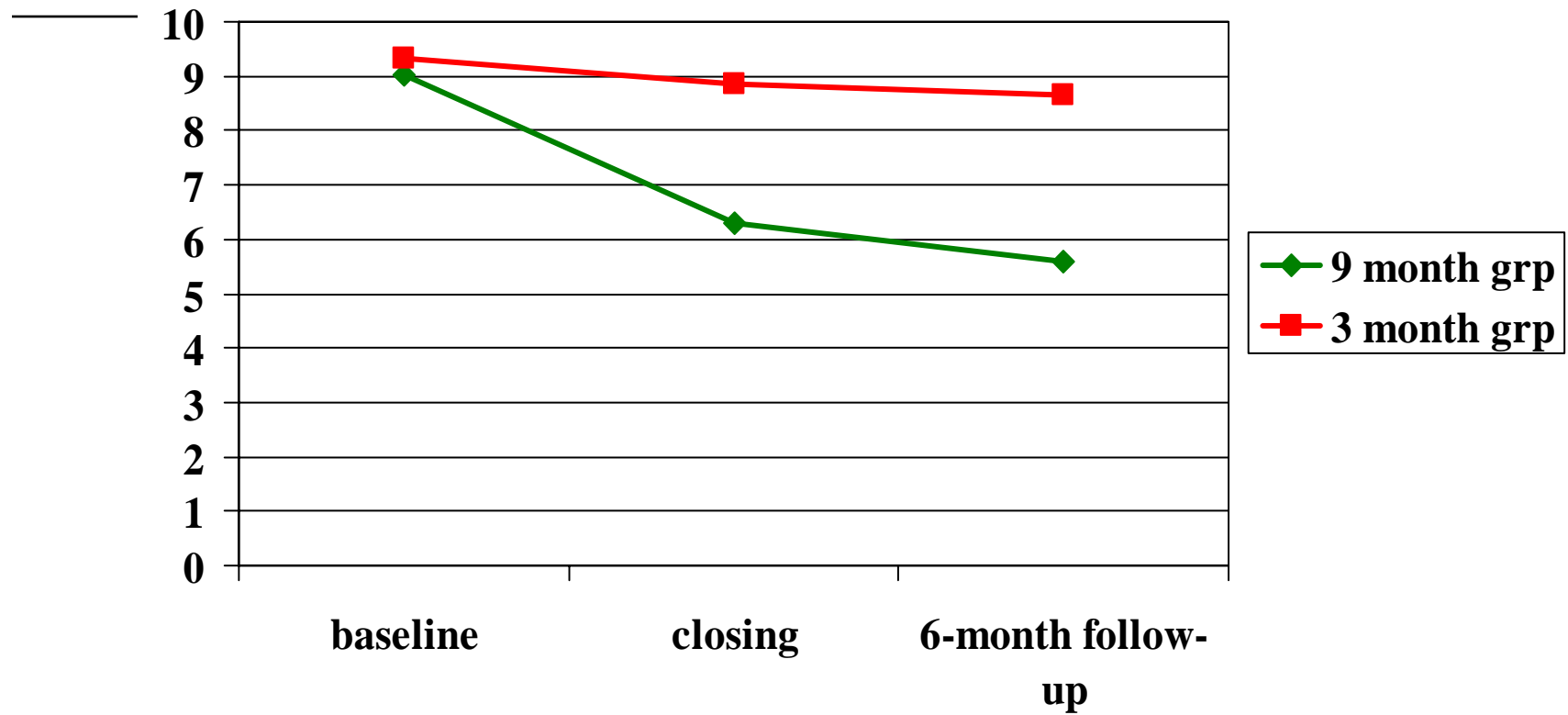
Child Behavior: CBCL Total Score (N=111)



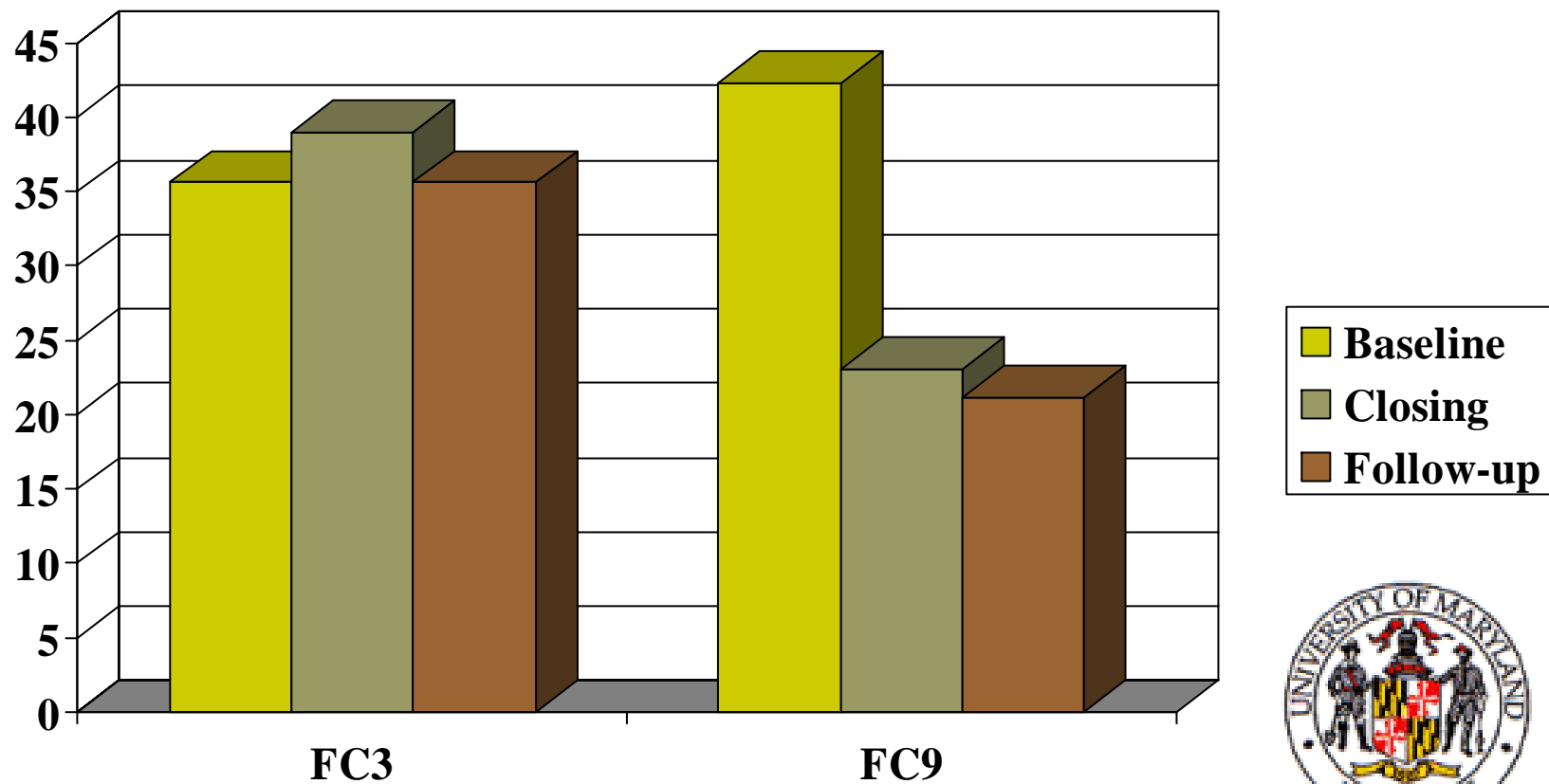
Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior – Main Effects of Time (N=111)



Internalizing Behavior (N=111)



Significance: % Clinical T-Scores



Implications

- There were no differences in risk and protective factors and child safety outcomes between families assigned to three months versus nine months of intervention.
- There were significant differences for child behavior over time.



Limitations of Initial Evaluation

- ❑ Relatively small sample
- ❑ Some questions about fidelity of intervention (despite intervention manual)
- ❑ Short follow-up (only 6 months)
- ❑ No control group



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