

## **Record, rewind and pause: Supporting sensitive caregiving with homeless parents and infants**

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Disrupted lives, distressed parents, no place to call 'home': this is daily life for homeless infants and children. To complicate things further, homeless young mothers can endure domestic violence, mental illness and financial hardship. All this happens when infants need their caregivers attuned state of mind most of all.

That's why Together For Kids (T4K) puts a strong focus on infants when working with clients who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness. T4K offers brief early intervention over 10 weeks to increase parenting capacity and support organised infant attachment. We frame our work through infant mental health and public health lenses. Specifically, T4K sees sensitive caregiving and secure attachment as anchors for infants and children in the perfect storm of homelessness. Given our intervention window is brief, the quality of our assessments must be excellent, and point practitioners to the specific aspects of the dyad's interaction that need support.

Here we report on the findings of a clinical-research partnership between T4K and Deakin University (Professor Jennifer McIntosh and Dr. Evelyn Tan). Through the expertise of the Deakin team in caregiving observation, T4K staff are re-crafting front end assessment with this highly vulnerable population. We summarise findings from the first dyads to benefit from additional formal caregiver assessment with the Maternal Behaviour Q-Sort and other standardised assessment tools developed at Deakin. We describe how video observation of T4K clients, with guidance by the Deakin team, has provided new insights to the T4K clinical team in their work with parent-infant dyads. We describe change in our therapists' capacity to record, rewind and pause their work with clients. Finally we weigh the pragmatics of video work in non-standardised settings like homes and DV shelters against the rights of this highly vulnerable group to expert depth assessment and clinical guidance.