The Protective Factors Framework

Hartford Care Coordination Collaborative
Hartford Care Coordination Collaborative Meeting
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Children’s Optimal Healthy Development

A critical window of opportunity:

- 1990-1999 = “Decade of the Brain”
- “Toxic stress” and ACEs
- The role of experience and the importance of nurturing relationships
- Heckman: The greatest return on investment is incurred when interventions occur during early childhood as compared to later in life
The Challenge…

Measuring the impact of child health interventions:

– Long-term (life course) outcomes are difficult to measure
– Investments in one sector will have returns in other sectors
– No common language for measuring success
The Critical Need for System Building

- Neighborhood Health & Safety
- Transportation
- Child Health Services
- Family Support
- Early Care & Education
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development & Employment
- Housing
- Food & Nutrition
- Child Welfare

Children's Optimal Healthy Development
Programs and services must be comprehensive and address the multiple factors that facilitate and hinder healthy development.

We must engage a broad array of partners in the context of cross-sector collaboration and **collective impact**

**Collective impact**: the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.

Meaningful cross-sector collaboration must include aligned outcomes and a **common platform for measuring impact**

- *Proximate measures?*
A deficit model, like one based simply on reducing risk, is not sufficient.
The Protective Factors Framework

*Strengthening Families Initiative, Center for the Study of Social Policy*

- The Protective Factors Framework summarizes scientific research and outlines a course of action to help families reduce stress, address risk factors and promote healthy development.
  - An intuitive explanation of what families need to thrive and what programs can do to support them
  - A common framework and a shared set of results for families
  - A broad range of concrete, low- and no-cost actions that many types of programs can implement

- More than 30 states have developed interdisciplinary leadership teams to implement Strengthening Families.

- Currently in use in Early Care and Education, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Home Visiting, and Child Welfare
The Protective Factors Framework

*Strengthening Families Initiative, Center for the Study of Social Policy*

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children
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• Parental Resilience
  Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma
  – Resilience to general life stress
    • Hope, optimism, self confidence
    • Problem solving skills
    • Self care and willingness to ask for help
    • Ability to manage negative emotions
  – Resilience in parenting
    • Not allowing stress to interfere with nurturing
    • Positive attitude about parenting and child
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- **Parental Resilience**
  - Everyday actions:
  - Demonstrate in multiple ways that parents are valued
  - Honor each family’s race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting
  - Encourage parents to manage stress effectively
  - Support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills
  - Help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times
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• **Social Connections**
  Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support

  • Multiple friendships and supportive relationships with others
  • Feeling respected and appreciated
  • Accepting help from others, and giving help to others
  • Skills for establishing and maintaining connections
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• **Social Connections**
  Everyday actions:
  • Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections
  • Create an inclusive environment
  • Facilitate mutual support
  • Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities
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- Concrete Support in Times of Need
  Access to concrete support and services that address a family’s needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges
  - Seeking and receiving support when needed
  - Knowing what services are available and how to access them
  - Adequate financial security; basic needs being met
  - Persistence
  - Advocating effectively for self and child to receive necessary help
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• Concrete Support in Times of Need

  Everyday actions:
  • Respond immediately when families are in crisis
  • Provide information and connections to services in the community
  • Help families to develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports
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- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
  Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development
  - Nurturing parenting behavior
  - Appropriate developmental expectations
  - Ability to create a developmentally supportive environment for child
  - Positive discipline techniques; ability to effectively manage child behavior
  - Recognizing and responding to your child’s specific needs
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• **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development**

  Everyday actions:
  • Model developmentally appropriate interactions with children
  • Provide information and resources on parenting and child development
  • Encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies
  • Address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective
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• **Social and Emotional Competence of Children**  
  Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships

  – For the parent  
    • Warm and consistent responses that foster a strong and secure attachment with the child  
    • Encouraging and reinforcing social skills; setting limits

  – For the child  
    • Age appropriate self-regulation  
    • Ability to form and maintain relationships with others  
    • Positive interactions with others  
    • Effective communication
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Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Everyday actions:
- Help parents foster their child’s social emotional development
- Model nurturing care to children
- Include children’s social and emotional development activities in programming
- Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society
- Respond proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support
Pilot Application of the Framework in Program Evaluation

- Data from *Help Me Grow Connecticut*
  - Families rated the ways in which their contact with *HMG* resulted in changes in their ability to help their children develop along a healthy trajectory
  - As a result of calling *HMG*, parents reported that they learned how to find and access resources, gained a better understanding of child development and parenting skills, felt supported in new and better ways, and became more confident in their own abilities to cope with stressful situations
## Pilot Application of the Framework in Program Evaluation (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to Survey Questions</th>
<th>Parent Responses (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a result of my call to Child Development Infoline and the information and services I received:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of my child’s development.</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to better understand and meet my child’s needs.</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a better understanding of services for me and/or my child.</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to access services if I need it.</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are people who can provide me with assistance when I need it.</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have people I can talk to for advice and emotional support.</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is improvement in my family’s day-to-day circumstances.</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relationship with my child has improved.</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s behavior has improved (e.g., mood, attitude, play, relationships with other children).</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Conclusion: Protective Factors as a Tool for System Building

- Exploring the feasibility of operationalizing the Framework in program design and evaluation
  - Protective factors as *proximate measures* of developmental outcomes
  - The Protective Factors Framework could provide *a common language for measuring impact*