

Kentucky Strengthening Families Initiative

AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO
SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND
COMMUNITIES



Overview

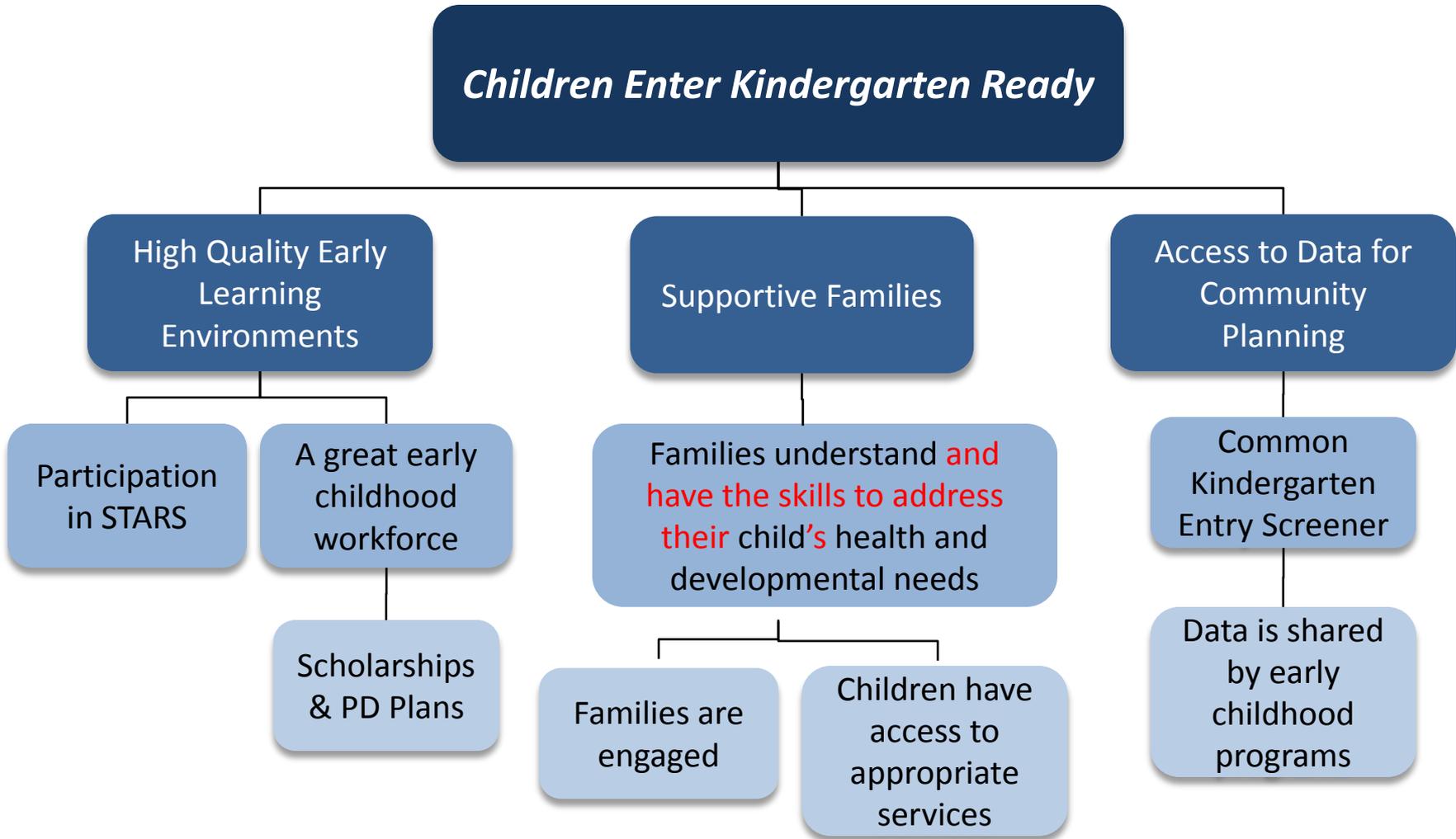
- Brief history of KY Early Childhood Initiatives, ACE Study, Toxic Stress, Risk & Protective Factors
- Overview of Kentucky Strengthening Families Initiative

Kentucky Early Childhood Initiatives

History

- Kentucky Invests in Developing Success = KIDS Now legislation - March 28, 2000: House Bill 706 was unanimously enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly
- Goal: All young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities.
 - Assuring Maternal and Child Health
 - **Strengthening families**
 - Enhancing Early Care and Education
 - Public Awareness
- Funding: 25% of Kentucky's Phase I Tobacco Settlement
- Kidsnow@ky.gov

Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) Business Model



Early Childhood Research

Then

**Where Research has
taken us**

Now

Brain development depends on genes.

Experiences before age 3 have limited impact later in life.

Secure attachment creates favorable context for early development and learning.

Brain development is linear across all knowledge areas and skills.

Toddler's brain less active than adult's, for example busy college student.

Brain development hinges on complex interplay between genes & experiences.

Experiences before age 3 have decisive impact on adult capabilities.

Secure attachment directly effects the way the brain is wired not just an overall context.

Brain development is non-linear including prime times for different knowledge areas & skills.

Toddler's brain is twice as active as adult brain – activity drops during adolescence & doesn't recover.

Life Course Health Development

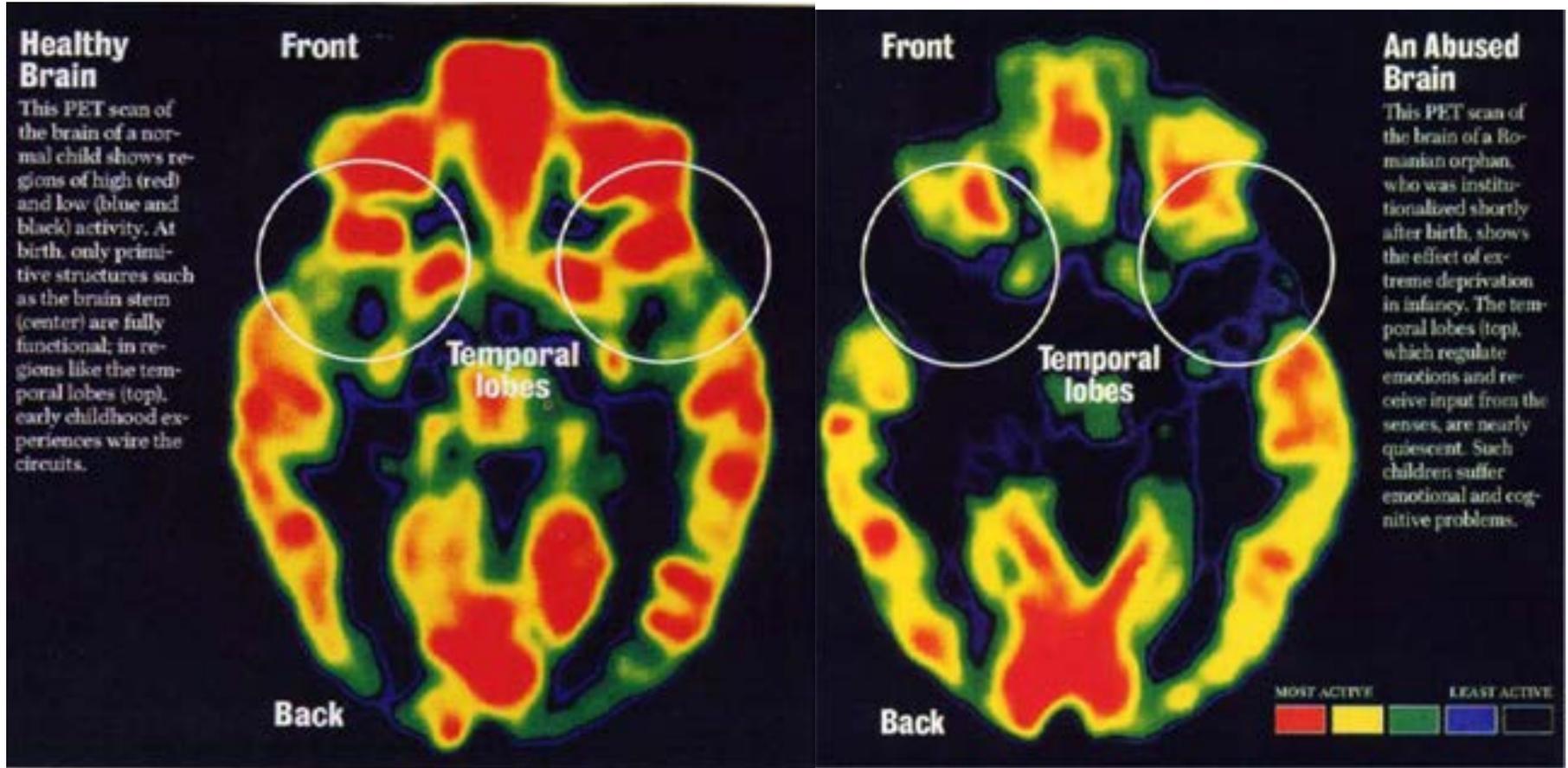
Critical Period of Brain Development

Birth – 2 years; critical window for hardwiring the brain for social-emotional development.



- Social-Emotional development is based on **secure attachment** and becomes the foundation for cognitive development and sense of self-identity.
- Attachment comes from a **nurturing relationship** with a caregiver that is consistent and caring.

Structural Brain Changes due to Early Experiences



Healthy Brain

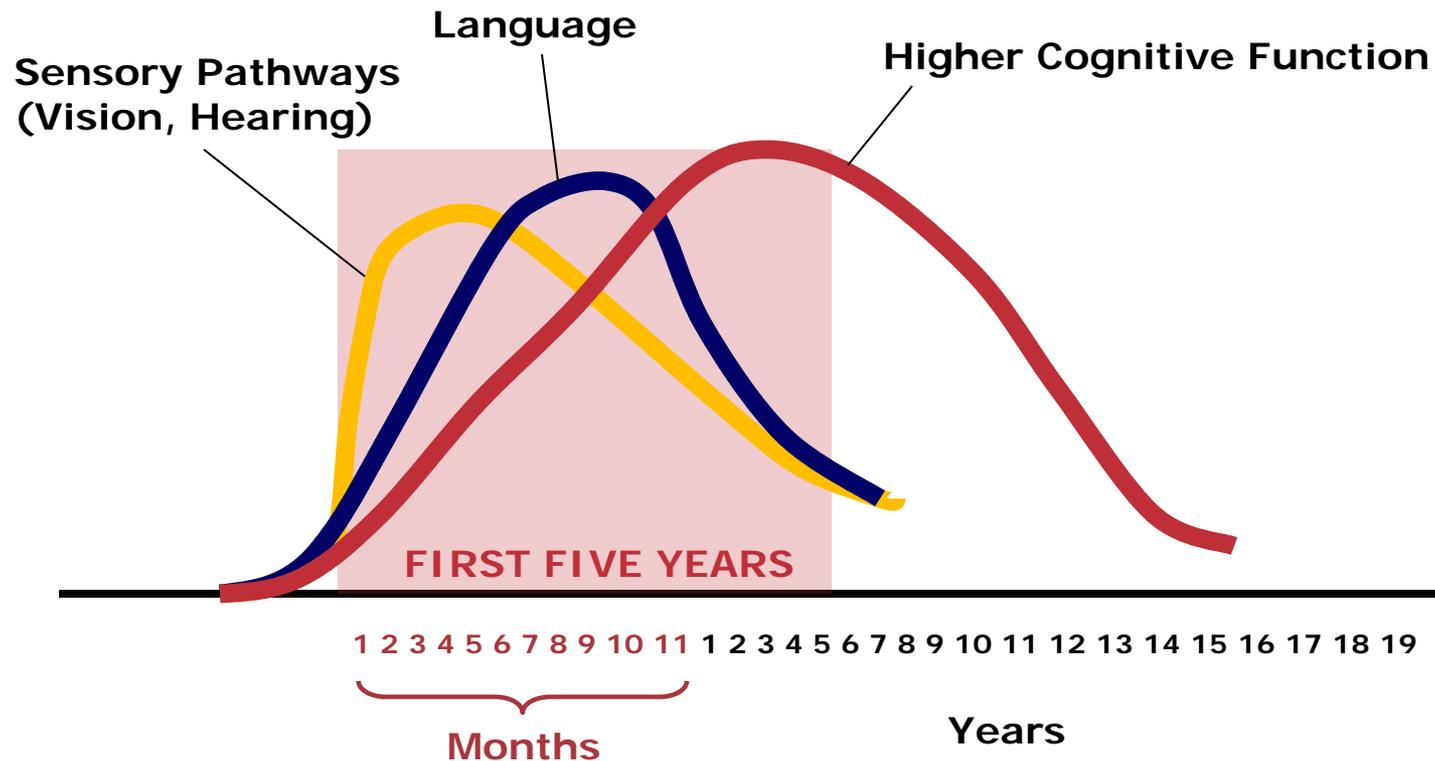
Deprivation

“The Two Year Window”

Structural Brain Changes due to Early Experiences

Neural Circuits are Wired in a Bottom-Up Sequence

(700 synapses formed per second in the early years)



New Science → New Paradigm

American Academy of Pediatrics: The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress

PEDIATRICS 2012 129(1):E232-E246

- * The availability of a caring and responsive adult greatly reduces the risk that circumstances will lead to excessive activation of stress response systems that lead to physiologic harm and long-term consequences for health and learning.

- * The context to establish the early roots of physical and mental well-being include:
 - A stable and responsive environment of relationships
 - Safe & supportive physical, chemical, and built environments, &
 - Sound and appropriate nutrition

Three Levels of Stress

Positive

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable

Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.

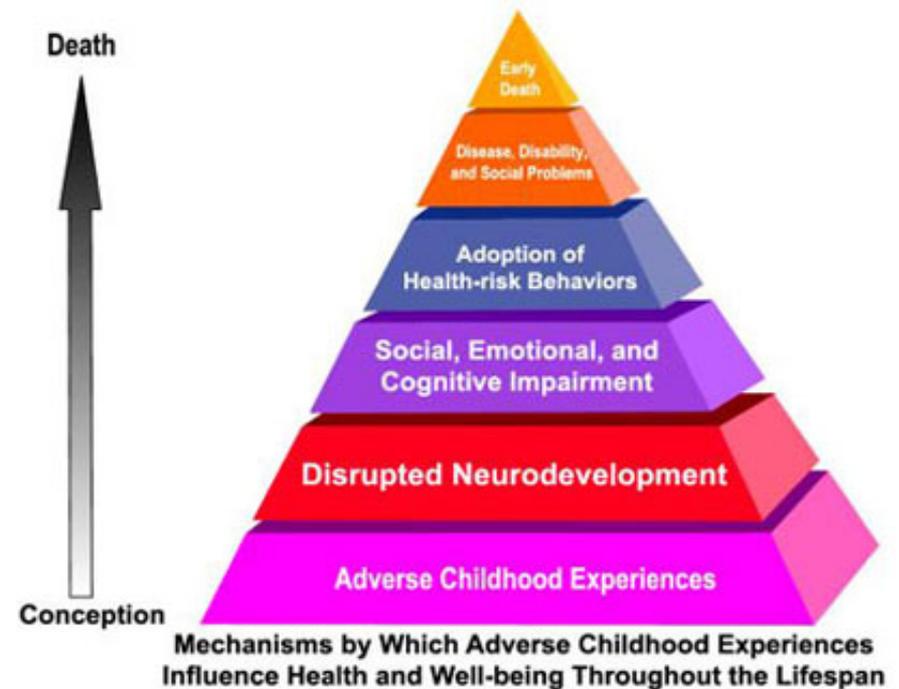
Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems
in the absence of protective relationships.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- Kaiser study
- 18,000 middle class enrollees
- Categories of trauma experienced in childhood such as:
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Domestic violence
 - Substance abuse in home
 - Mental illness in parent
 - Lost parent due to separation or divorce
 - Household member in jail



Study Participants

- ❖ Nearly 18,000 involved
- ❖ Middle class, average age of 57
- ❖ 80% white, 10% black, 10% Asian
- ❖ 74% some college; 44% graduated college
- ❖ 49.5% men

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Score

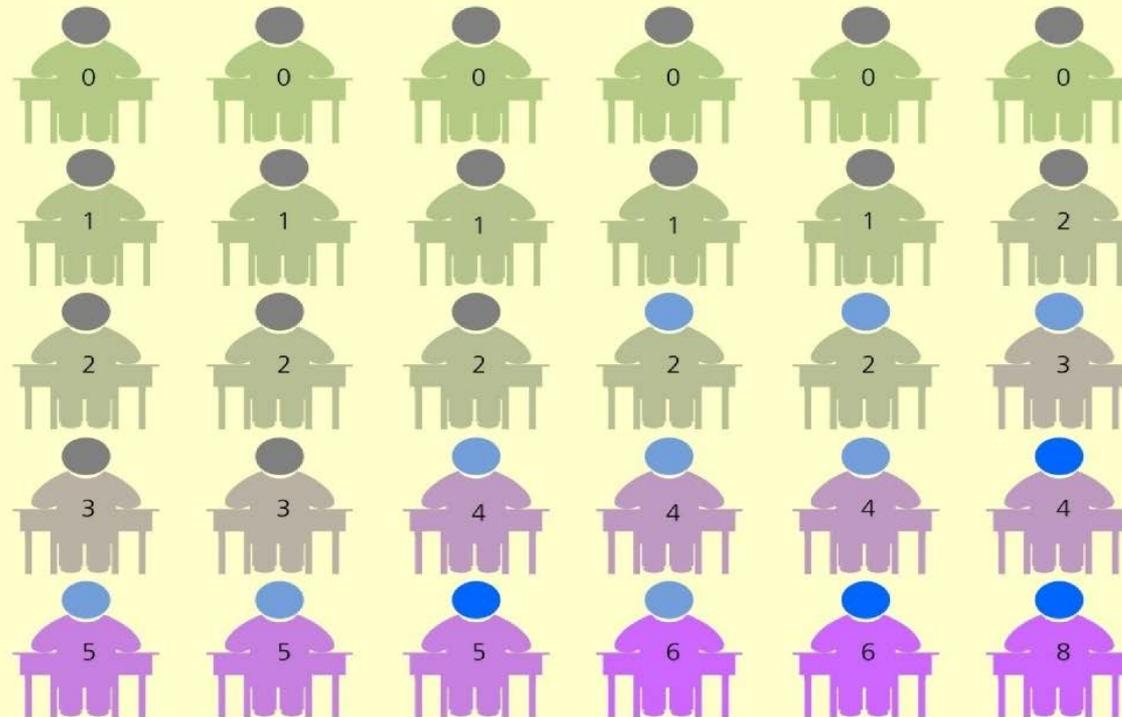
ACE Score	Women	Men	Total
0	34.5%	38	36.1%
1	24.5%	27.9%	26.0%
2	15.5%	16.4	15.9%
3	10.3%	8.6%	9.5%
4 or more	15.2%	9.2%	12.5%

- ❖ Adverse Childhood Experiences are common
- ❖ Almost 2/3 at least one
- ❖ 64% participants had experienced one or more ACE's
- ❖ More than 1 in 5 report 3 or more ACE's
- ❖ 1 in 4 exposed to at least two categories of abuse
- ❖ 1 in 16 experienced 4 or more

ACEs and High School Sophomores and Seniors

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

6 students with no ACE
5 students with 1 ACE
6 students with 2 ACEs
3 students with 3 ACEs
7 students with 4 or 5 ACEs
3 students with 6 or more ACEs



Population
Average

ACEs AND ADULT DISEASE:

54% of depression

58% of suicide attempts

39% of ever smoking

26% of current smoking

65% of alcoholism

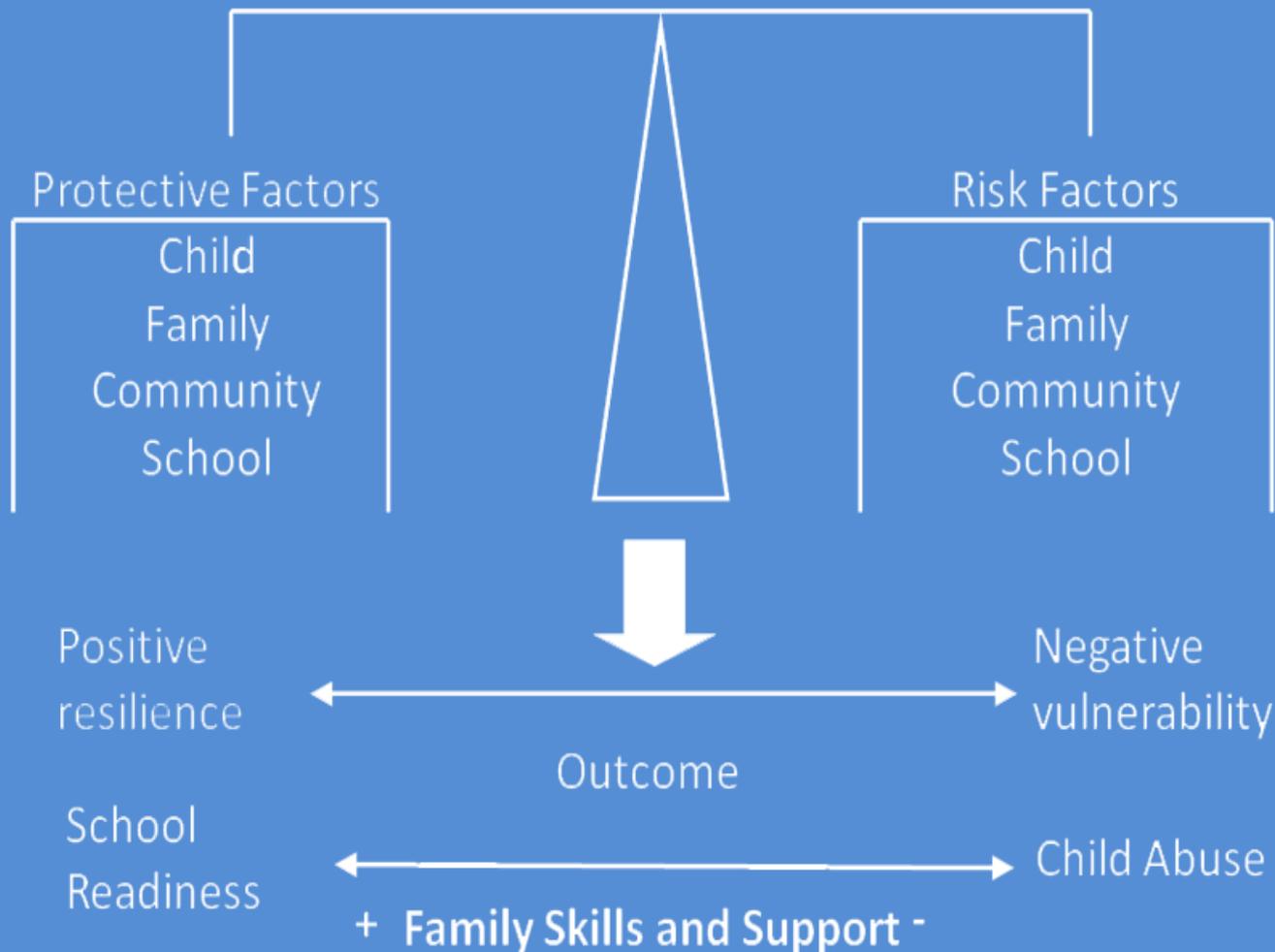
50% of drug abuse

78% of IV drug abuse

48% of promiscuity (>50 partners)

are attributable to ACE's.

Life Course Trajectory: A Balance of Risk and Protective Factors



Strengthening Families Framework

The Protective Factors provide a common framework for collaboration that is

- strengths-based
- intentional
- purposeful
- focused

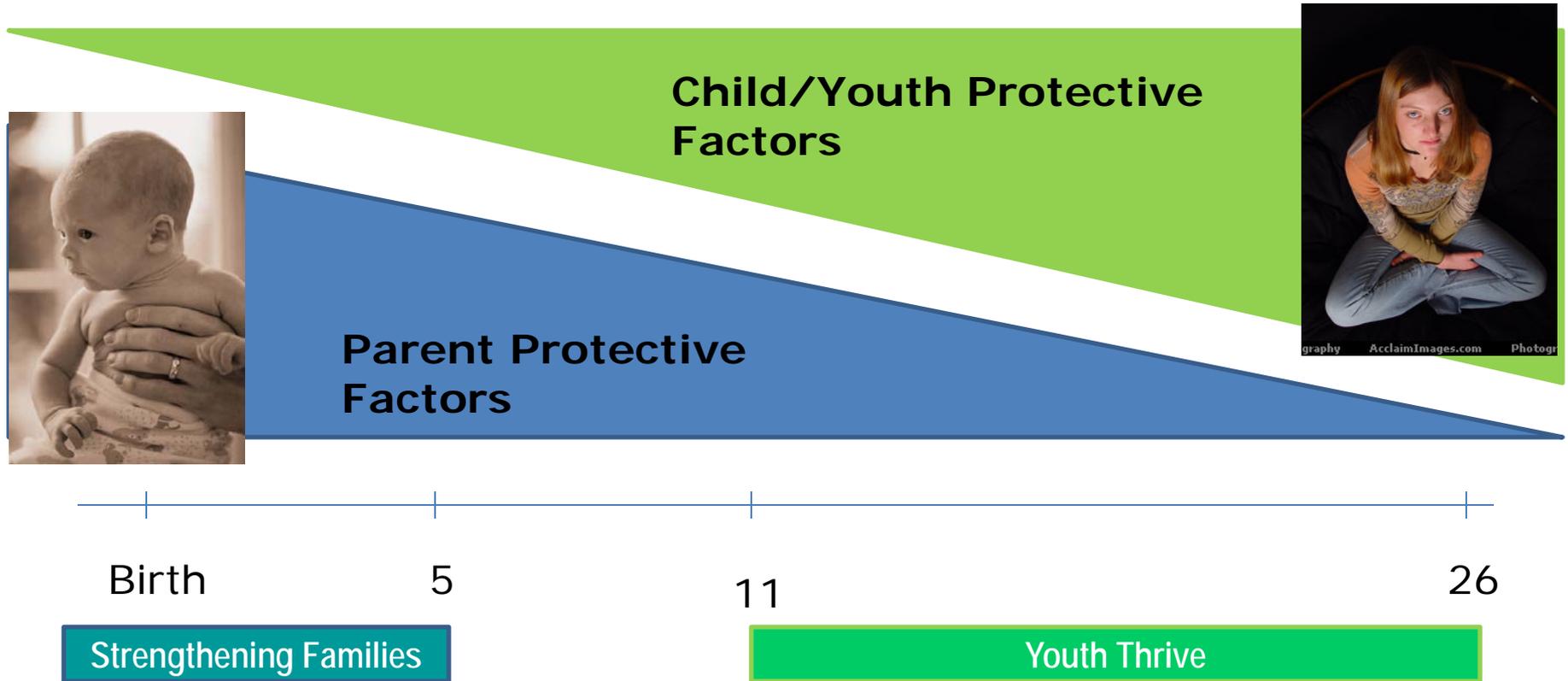
and promotes optimal development of young children by strengthening their families.

SF Framework

The Strengthening Families Approach

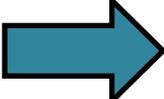
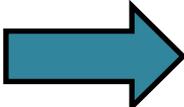
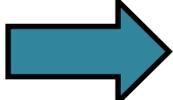
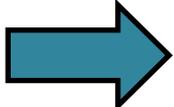
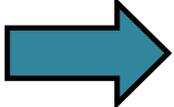
- Benefits ALL families
- Builds on family strengths, buffers risk, and promotes better outcomes
- Builds on and can be integrated into existing
 - **programs,**
 - **strategies,**
 - **systems and**
 - **community opportunities.**

Applying a Protective/Promotive Factors Frame Across Development



From Center For the Study Of Social Policy (CSSP)

THE PARADIGM SHIFT FOR FAMILY SUPPORT

- “At risk” families  **All** families
- Risk factors  **Protective factors/**
buffers for toxic stress
- Deficit based  **Strengths Based**
- Family inadequacies  **Skill building**
- Prevention  promoting **strong families**
and healthy development

PURPOSE: REDUCE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT STARTING WITH CHILDREN 0-5



- The very highest rates of abuse and neglect occur for children under 4. This age group is a third of all children entering foster care and who are likely to stay the longest.
- The brain's primary architecture is developing in years 0-5, when family stability, skills and knowledge have the greatest impact on development.
- Adverse experiences at an early age create lifelong risk for multiple problems; mitigating these traumas early is most effective.

Core Functions

State, system, agency, program and community leaders work across systems to:

- Build parent partnerships
- Deepen knowledge and understanding
- Shift practice, policy and systems
- Ensure accountability



Program Practice

Programs that serve children and families:

- Shift organization culture to value and build upon families' strengths
- Make policy changes to support changes in worker practice
- Implement everyday actions that support families in building protective factors

Worker Practice

Individual workers:

- Have knowledge of protective factors and skills to help families build them
- Change their approach to relationships with parents
- Implement everyday actions that support families in building protective factors



Protective Factors

Families are supported to build:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children
- Nurturing and Attachment



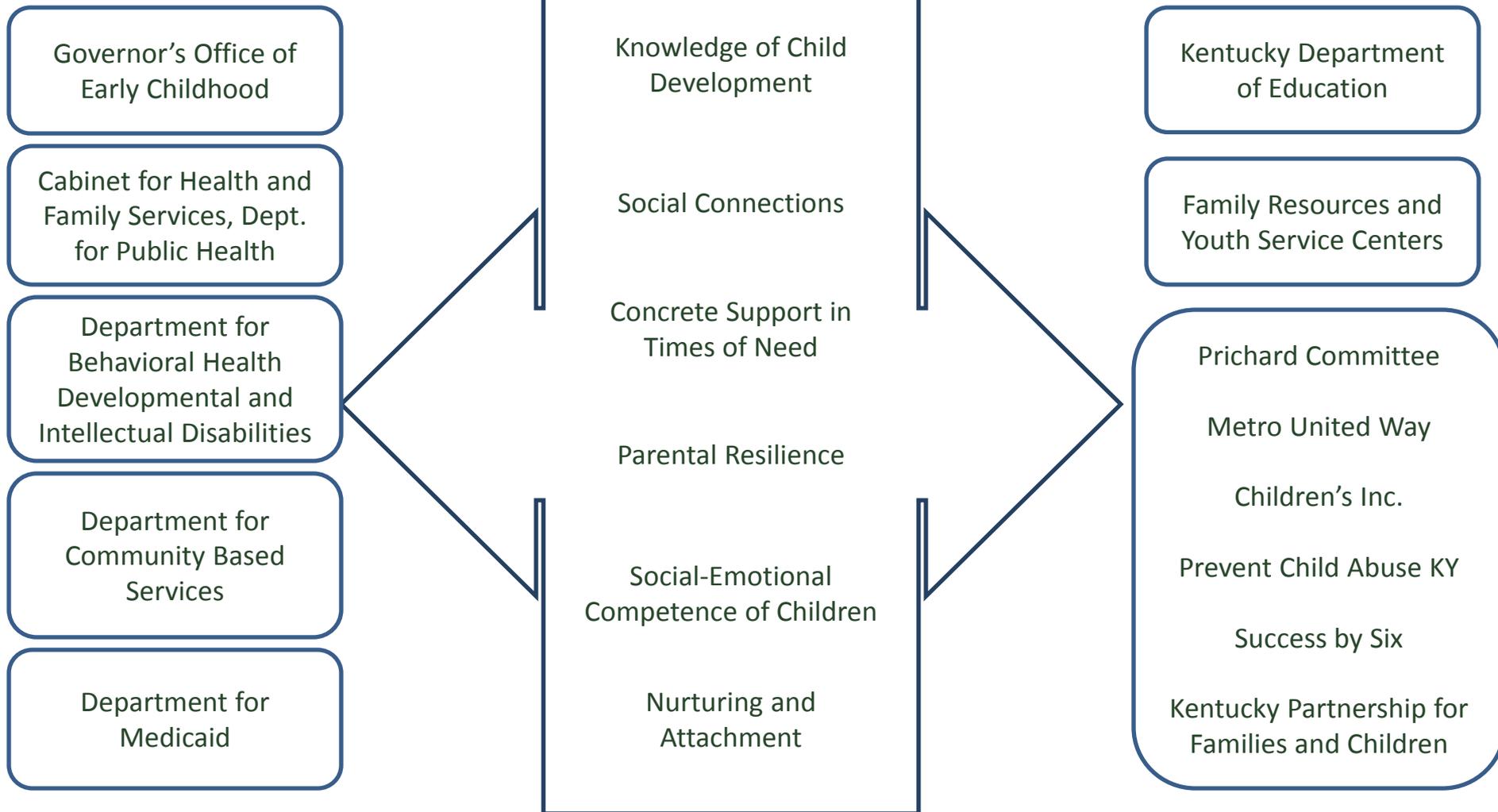
Results

Strengthened families
Optimal child development
Reduced likelihood of child abuse and neglect

CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF SOCIAL POLICY'S

strengthening families[®]
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

KY Strengthening Families Partners



KY Strengthening Families Initiative

→ Work in Progress

→ Six Protective Factors vs. Five from CSSP

→ **FAMILY** defined as any adult caring for a child

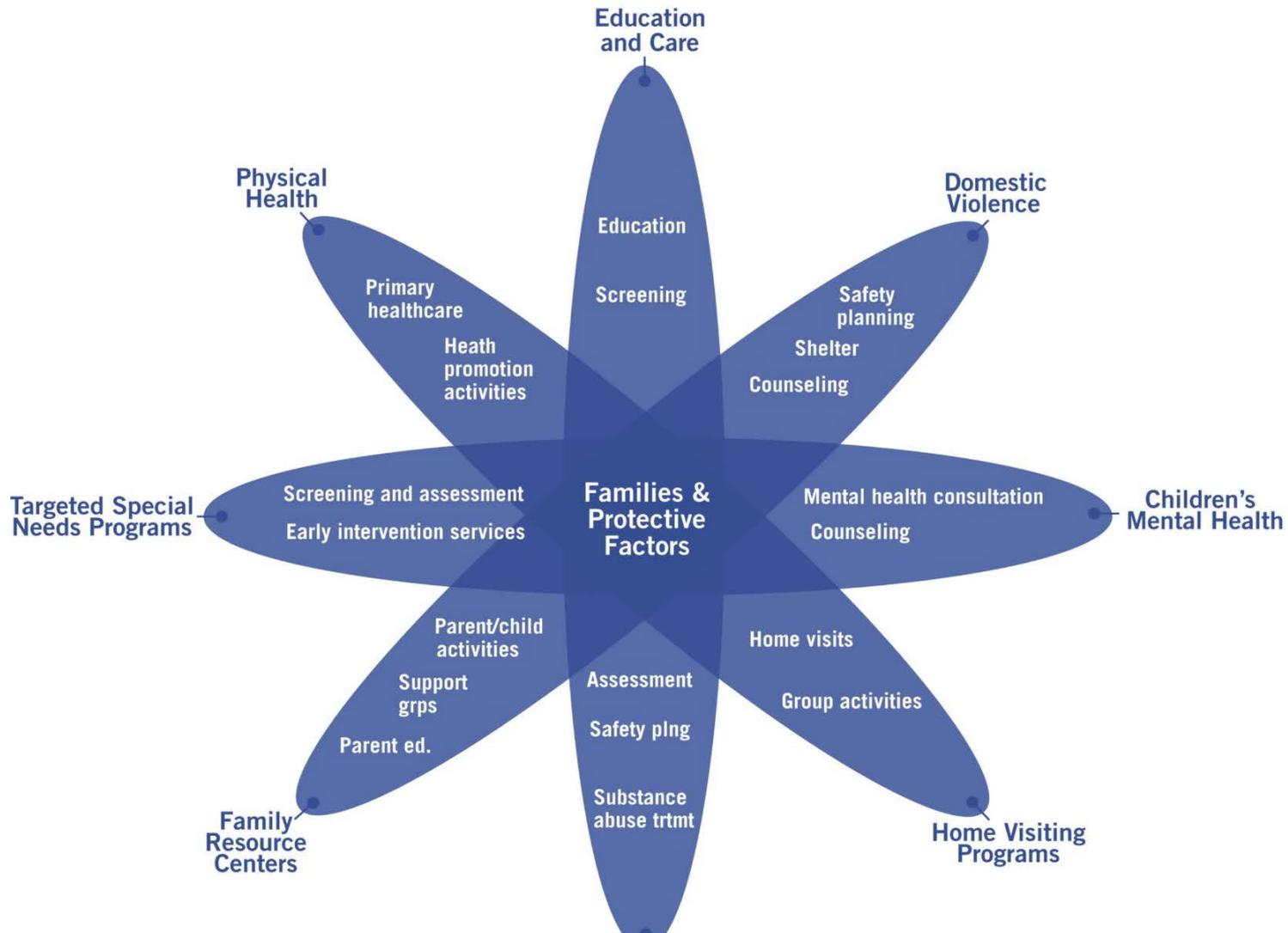
- biological parent
- Foster/adoptive parent
- grandparent
- other relative
- self-defined family member
- educator
- child care provider
- friend or neighbor

The Protective Factors Approach

- Benefits ALL families –
 - All families go thru times of stress and should be able to ask for help without stigma
 - Every parent should feel supported by their community in their efforts to be a good parent
- Builds on family strengths, buffers risk, and promotes better outcomes
- Can be implemented through small but significant changes in everyday actions
- Builds on and can become part of existing programs, strategies, systems and community opportunities
- Is grounded in research, practice and implementation knowledge
- Creates a common language and approach among agencies so that communities can meet the diverse needs of their families

Strengthening Families

ALIGNING RESULTS FOR FAMILIES



What Are the Six Protective Factors?

1. Parental Resilience

“Families are strong and can cope in good times and bad”

2. Social Connection

“Families have people they can count on”

3. Knowledge of Child Development

“Families help their children grow and learn”

4. Concrete Support in Times of Need

“Families get the help they need from caring communities”

5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

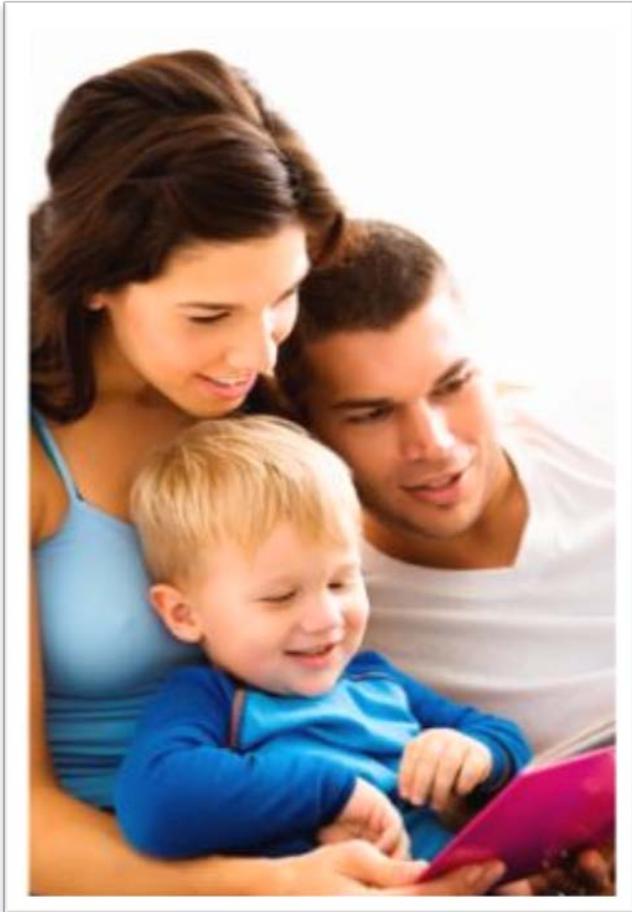
“Families help their children manage feelings and relationships”

6. Nurturing & Attachment

“Families create secure bonds with their children”



Parental Resilience



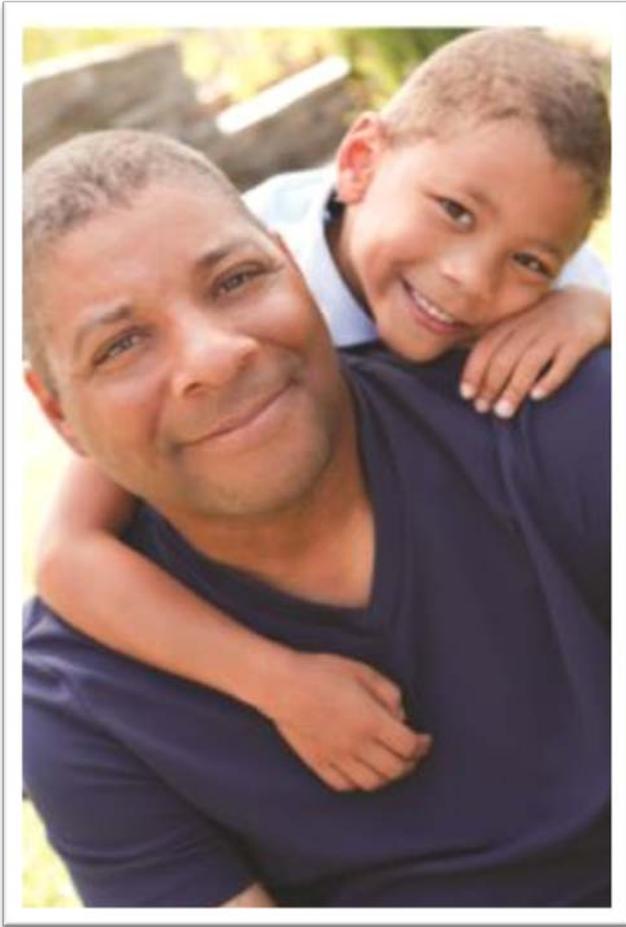
- Resilience is the ability to cope with everyday stress & recover from occasional crises
- Have positive attitude, creatively problem solve, effectively address challenges
- Are less likely to direct anger & frustration at their children
- Are aware of own challenges, seek support when needed

How we build it:

- Being welcoming & supportive
- Building relationships with families
- Involving families in decisions about their children and program

“Families are strong & can cope in good times & bad”

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development



- Families that understand how children grow and develop can provide environment where children can live up to their potential
- accurate information about raising children and appropriate expectations (lack of this... often associated with child maltreatment)
- Timely mentoring, coaching, advise, and practice may be more useful than information alone

How we built it:

- Sharing observations with parents
- Making parent info available in families' home language
- Offering parent classes
- Conducting home visits
- Telling parents something positive about what child did during the day

“Families help their children grow and learn.”

Social Connections

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- Provides emotional support and concrete assistance from friends, family, neighbors and other members of the community.
- Having a positive peer network, mutual support systems, & community connections
- Families have willingness and permission to reach out to others.
- Addresses social isolation and perceived lack of support as key risk factors related to child maltreatment

How we build it:

- Making space for families to meet informally
- Arranging family field trips and activities
- Working closely with parent advisory groups



“Families have people they can count on”

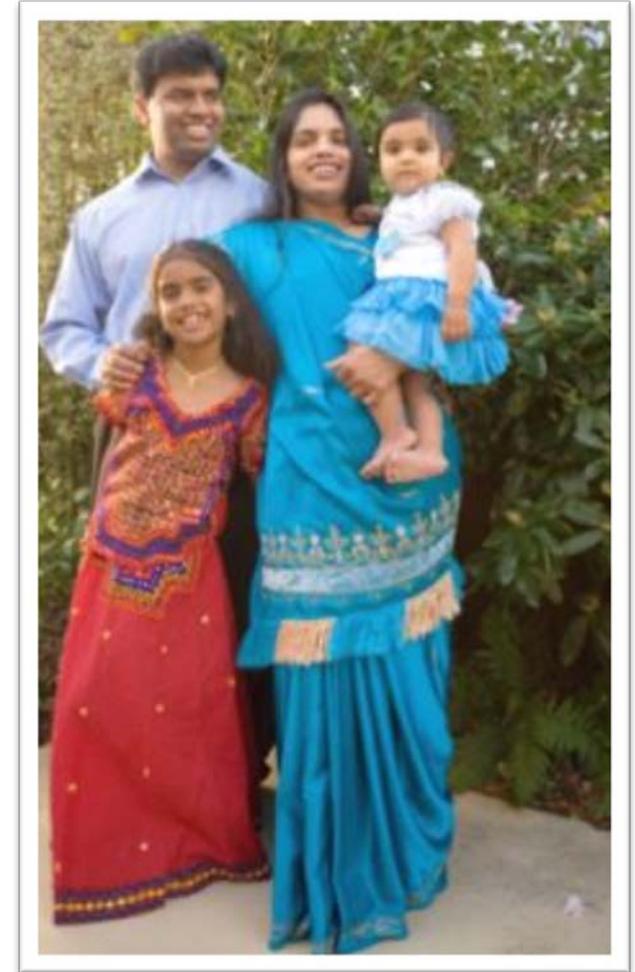
Concrete Supports in Times of Need

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- Support must be trusted, reliable and easy to access for both emotional and basic supports (food, clothing, shelter, transportation)
- Having access to program services, informal support, and resources to deal with a crisis
- Minimizes the stress of difficult situations, such as a family crisis or a illness such as substance abuse
- Connects families to services, particularly those more difficult to accept (domestic violence, substance abuse counseling, mental health, etc.)

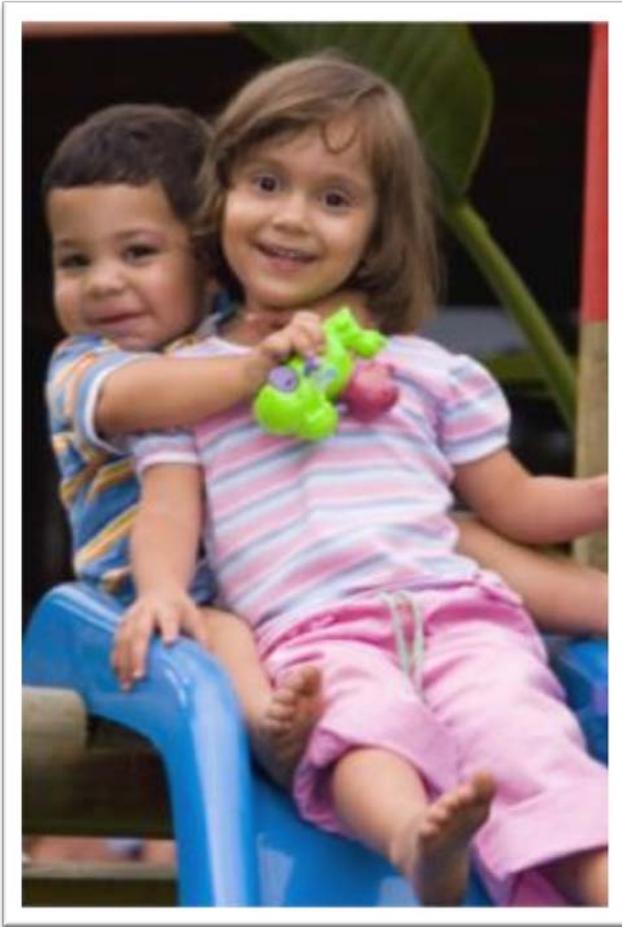
How we build it:

- Building relationships with families so they feel comfortable sharing the challenges
- Making space available for staff to meet privately with families
- Responding to signs of parent and family distress
- Being connected to and familiar with community services & organizations



“Families get the help they need from caring communities”

Social & Emotional Competence of Children



- Helping children identify and express feelings in a positive way (encouraging interactions)
- Helping children understand that other people have feelings and needs (encouraging friendships)
- Helping children develop and engage in self-regulating behaviors (Building Executive Functions like cognitive flexibility, impulse control, working memory)

How we build it:

- Helping families understand age appropriate social & emotional skills & behaviors
- Encouraging children to express feelings through words, artwork, expressive play
- Providing individualized support to families
- Use Social emotional curricula

“Families help their children manage feelings & relationships

Nurturing & Attachment

- A child's early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development
- This is the core feature to optimal brain development
- This secure bond or attachment occurs in healthy, reciprocal adult-child relationship and allows for future relationship building

How we build It:

- Offering parent-child activities
- Parent education and skill building opportunities that promote attachment



"Families create secure bonds with their children"

Strengthening Families Protective Factors- What can you do?



Applying the Frame Across the Developmental Arc

Protective/ Promotive Factor	Strengthening Families	Youth Thrive
Resilience	Ability to parent effectively despite stressors	Ability to survive and thrive in the face of positive and/or adverse experiences
Social Connections	Social networks that support parenting by being conduits for positive parenting norms, emotional and substantive support, etc.	Social networks that help youth to build healthy, supportive, caring relationships with adults and peers and provide opportunities for constructive engagement in school and community
Concrete Supports	Access to the resources and supports to help you meet your child's needs	Access to resources and supports (e.g., skill building, crisis support, housing)
Knowledge of Development	A clear understanding of your child's development and how to parent in ways supportive of their development	Adults and youth have a clear understanding of biopsychosocial development during adolescence and recognize that all youth have strengths and capacities
Developmental Competence	<p><u>Social and Emotional Competence:</u> Children's age appropriate ability to regulate their emotions, engage with others, and communicate feelings</p> <p><u>Nurturing and Attachment:</u> This secure bond occurs in healthy, reciprocal adult-child relationships and allows for future relationship building</p>	<p><u>Social, Emotional, Behavioral, Intellectual and Moral Competence:</u> Youth engage in behaviors that promote healthy biopsychosocial and cognitive development</p>

Strengthening Families Resources

Youth Thrive Website

- <http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive>

Strengthening Families Resources

National Alliance of Trust and Prevention Funds

Bringing the Protective Factors Framework To Life In Your Work

-- A Resource For Action

Free Self Paced On-line Training on the SF Framework

(7 modules total)

<http://ctfalliance.org/onlinetraining.htm>

Closing Thought

Decades of Science from Many Disciplines All Point to the Same Conclusion

The healthy development of children provides a strong foundation for healthy and competent adulthood, responsible citizenship, economic productivity, strong communities, and a sustainable society.



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Presenter Information

Tal Curry, LCSW, Dept. for Public Health:

Tal.Curry@ky.gov

Division of FRYSC:

LeeAnn.Gabbard@ky.gov

Sherrie.Martin@ky.gov

TammyS.Gay@ky.gov