



Policy Roundtable for Child Care Promoting Healthy Children, Strong Families and Vibrant Communities



Policy Roundtable for Child Care Mission Statement

The Los Angeles County Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable) builds and strengthens early care and education by providing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on policy, systems and infrastructure improvement.

Membership

The Roundtable's 25 members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and include a variety of backgrounds such as business, education, research and economics. Membership includes representation from the following County departments: Chief Executive Office, Children and Family Services, Mental Health, Office of Education, Parks and Recreation, Probation, Public Health, and Public Social Services. The Roundtable is staffed by the Office of Child Care within the Services Integration Branch of the Chief Executive Office.

Priority Actions

The Child Care Policy Framework 2011-13, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in March of 2011, serves as a roadmap for improving child, family and community well-being through connections with high quality early care and education programs. The work is embedded in the Strengthening Families Approach, which facilitates connections between child development, child welfare and other services through a shared commitment to the five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social/emotional development of children.

The Roundtable has identified the following five priority items for action:

Strengthening Families Learning Community

Comprised of County department leadership, the Strengthening Families Learning Community has been convened by the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to work internally, across departments and with community partners to integrate the **Strengthening Families Approach (SFA)** and **Protective Factors** into their work with children, families and communities and engage families in high quality child development services. The CEO, with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and key local partners, has established a multidisciplinary SFA learning community designed to support ongoing professional development and SFA projects that are underway or emerging in County departments. For more information on the learning community, visit the Office of Child Care website at www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

Integrated Services for Children and their Families Experiencing Homelessness

Work is in progress to develop recommendations in how to address the complex needs of families seeking to stabilize their housing while ensuring that they are able to keep their children safe and healthy. The recommendations will be informed by the importance of parents and other caregivers in helping children recover from trauma and the stresses they experience associated with homelessness.

Early Care and Education – Connecting Teen Parents, “County” and Low-income Families

Strategies are evolving and being tested to facilitate enrollment of families with young children to high quality early care and education programs. Efforts to date have ranged from providing information designed for professional staff working at the Department of Children and Family Services and Probation to help families navigate the subsidized child care and development system to offering technical assistance to facilitating enrollments of children and their families in Head Start Programs.

Steps to Excellence Program (STEP)

STEP, a quality rating and support system, is currently operating in 11 communities¹ throughout the County of Los Angeles and will be expanding into five additional communities each year for the next five years. STEP is designed to create incentives and supports for child care and development programs – centers and family child care homes - to meet and maintain higher program standards and to provide parents with clear, concise information on the quality of individual child care and development settings. To learn more about STEP, visit www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

Public Policy

The Roundtable, in collaboration with the Child Care Planning Committee, is committed to enlisting public and private sector partners to advocate for the maintenance and/or expansion of funding for high quality, comprehensive services that ensure the safety of children and promote school success, strong families and healthy communities. This work is accomplished through the Joint Committee on Legislation, which monitors state and federal legislation and proposed budgets that potentially impact the system of early care and education services and offers recommendations for action.

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¹ The 11 STEP communities are Altadena, Florence/Firestone, Inglewood, Long Beach, Pacoima/Arleta, Palmdale, Pasadena, Pomona, San Pedro, Santa Monica, and Wilmington.



Los Angeles County Child Care Policy Framework 2011- 2013 Promoting Healthy Children, Strong Families and Vibrant Communities



Executive Summary

*The Los Angeles County Child Care Policy Framework (Policy Framework) 2011-2013 reaffirms the commitment of the Board of Supervisors (Board), County departments and community stakeholders to close the gap between what we **know** and what we **do** to support the healthy development of young children, their families, and our communities.*

Despite significant budget challenges in the last few years, implementation of the original Child Care Policy Framework, adopted by the Board of Supervisors on January 6, 2009, resulted in significant accomplishments by several departments, a deeper understanding of ongoing challenges and a host of lessons learned; however, much work remains. The Child Care Policy Framework 2011-2013 builds on those successes, shared learning across departments, community-based agencies and clients, and seeks to engage new partners who share the vision of promoting healthy children, strong families, and vibrant communities.

Goals for 2011-13

Goal One: The quality of child development services for children birth to five years of age in Los Angeles County will be improved as the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) is expanded and support services to STEP participants are intensified.

Strategies: Expand STEP to additional communities, grow STEP's on-site coaching and link STEP participants to County resources to offer families "concrete supports in times of need".

Partners and Commitments: Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Goal Two: Utilization of local, State, and Federal child development resources will be maximized. All available resources and policies will help strengthen the child development infrastructure and support the expansion of high quality child development programs that integrate family support, health, mental health and other relevant services.

Strategies: Continue efforts to enlist public and private sector partners to advocate for the maintenance and/or expansion of funding for high quality, comprehensive services that ensure the safety of children and promote school success, strong families and communities; and expand efforts to assure that all available resources are used to benefit families and children.

Partners and Commitments: Chief Executive Office Intergovernmental Relations and External Affairs Branch and external advocacy groups including but not limited to Advancement Project, First 5 LA, Los Angeles County Office of Education - Head Start (LACOE-HS), LAUP, LAUSD, and Preschool California

Goal Three: County departments will work collaboratively with each other and community partners to maximize the utilization of available child development resources, support quality improvements and promote the delivery of integrated services for children and their families.

Strategies: Develop strategies to make the subsidized child development system more accessible to vulnerable children and families in Los Angeles County; convene a forum with after school community-based providers to identify opportunities to increase the enrollment of youth under the supervision of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Probation in safe and educationally enriching activities during non-school hours; convene Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies and child development stakeholders

to explore possible collaborative efforts to include child development personnel in Team Decision Making conferences; launch a targeted outreach effort aimed at CalWORKs participants with young children who are experiencing homelessness; promote, among Children's Services Workers, an understanding of the lifelong impacts of early brain development including cognitive, emotional and physical well-being.

Partners and Commitments: County departments (DCFS, Probation, Department of Public Social Services, Parks and Recreation, Library, Los Angeles County Office of Education/Head Start (LACOE/HS)), R&R agencies, LAUP, California Department of Education/Child Development Division (CDE/CDD)-contracted California State Preschool Programs, Long Beach Unified School District Head Start Programs, Regional Centers, Children Today, ICAN (Inter-agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect) Task Force on Pregnant and Parenting Teens, DCFS Pregnant and Parenting Teens Work Group, Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles, University of Southern California-School of Social Work

Goal Four: County departments will work collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), key school districts and community-based child development services to integrate services, thereby supporting effective: a) articulation between child development and kindergarten, including approaches to effectively engage parents in the education of their children; b) design of developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten programs; and c) identification and/or utilization of new or nontraditional funding for child development services such as, but not limited to, Federal Title 1 funds, to serve special populations.

Strategies: Promote articulation between child development programs and grades K-3, and the establishment of developmentally appropriate transition kindergartens with effective parent engagement practices in school districts throughout the County; support the development of an Educare site in Los Angeles County and promote co-location of County and other family services at the site; engage the CDE/CDD in a dialogue regarding the potential long term impacts of child abuse and neglect and the role of high quality child development services to mitigate those impacts; explore regulatory or legislative remedies to facilitate access to high quality child development services for children determined to be at risk or who have experienced child abuse and/or neglect; and identify and/or access new or nontraditional funding for child development services to serve special populations.

Partners and Commitments: LACOE and other local school districts, LAUSD, R&Rs, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

Goal Five: The Chief Executive Office (CEO) will facilitate County department efforts to work internally, across departments, and with community partners, to integrate the Strengthening Families Approach (SFA) and Protective Factors into their work with children, families and communities and engage families in high quality child development services. The CEO, with assistance from the Center for the Study of Social Policy and key local partners, will establish a multidisciplinary SFA learning community designed to support ongoing professional development and SFA projects that are underway or emerging in County departments.

Strategies: Promote the integration of the SFA into County department practices; facilitate collaborative partnerships among community stakeholders and County departments; support departments in accessing child development services for their clients; and work collaboratively to align countywide place-based effort in the promotion of the SFA.

Partners and Commitments: Center for the Study of Social Policy, First 5 LA, LAUP, Los Angeles Partnership for Early Childhood Investment, Education Coordinating Council, County Commissions, CEO Public Information, Cable and Telecommunications

The Los Angeles County Child Care Policy Framework is available in full on the home page of the Office of Child Care website at www.childcare.lacounty.gov or a copy may be requested by telephone at (213) 974-4103.

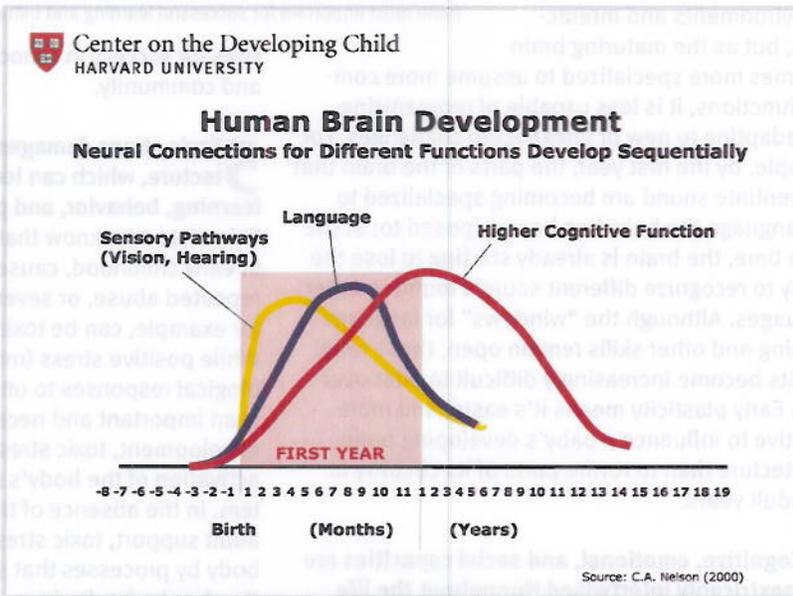
A series of brief summaries of the scientific presentations at the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy.

The science of early brain development can inform investments in early childhood. These basic concepts, established over decades of neuroscience and behavioral research, help illustrate why child development—particularly from birth to five years—is a foundation for a prosperous and sustainable society.

1 Brains are built over time, from the bottom up. The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by es-

tablishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health and behavior that follow. In the first few years of life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second. After this period of rapid proliferation, connections are reduced through

a process called pruning, so that brain circuits become more efficient. Sensory pathways like those for basic vision and hearing are the first to develop, followed by early language skills and higher cognitive functions. Connections proliferate and prune in a prescribed order, with later, more complex brain circuits built upon earlier, simpler circuits.



In the proliferation and pruning process, simpler neural connections form first, followed by more complex circuits. The timing is genetic, but early experiences determine whether the circuits are strong or weak.

2 The interactive influences of genes and experience shape the developing brain. Scientists now know a major ingredient in this developmental process is the “serve and return” relationship between children and their parents and other caregiv-

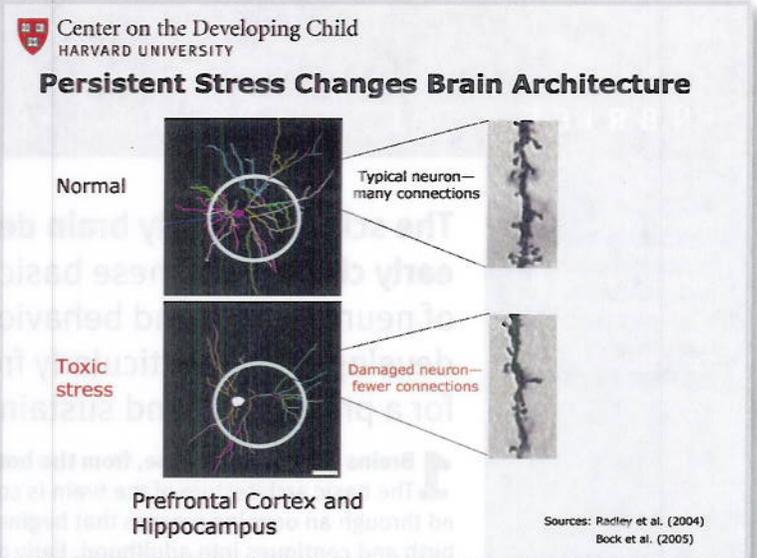
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The basic principles of neuroscience indicate that early preventive intervention will be more efficient and produce more favorable outcomes than remediation later in life.
- A balanced approach to emotional, social, cognitive, and language development will best prepare all children for success in school and later in the workplace and community.
- Supportive relationships and positive learning experiences begin at home but can also be provided through a range of services with proven effectiveness factors. Babies’ brains require stable, caring, interactive relationships with adults — any way or any place they can be provided will benefit healthy brain development.
- Science clearly demonstrates that, in situations where toxic stress is likely, intervening as early as possible is critical to achieving the best outcomes. For children experiencing toxic stress, specialized early interventions are needed to target the cause of the stress and protect the child from its consequences.

ers in the family or community. Young children naturally reach out for interaction through babbling, facial expressions, and gestures, and adults respond with the same kind of vocalizing and gesturing back at them. In the absence of such responses—or if the responses are unreliable or inappropriate—the brain’s architecture does not form as expected, which can lead to disparities in learning and behavior.

3 The brain’s capacity for change decreases with age. The brain is most flexible, or “plastic,” early in life to accommodate a wide range of environments and interactions, but as the maturing brain becomes more specialized to assume more complex functions, it is less capable of reorganizing and adapting to new or unexpected challenges. For example, by the first year, the parts of the brain that differentiate sound are becoming specialized to the language the baby has been exposed to; at the same time, the brain is already starting to lose the ability to recognize different sounds found in other languages. Although the “windows” for language learning and other skills remain open, these brain circuits become increasingly difficult to alter over time. Early plasticity means it’s easier and more effective to influence a baby’s developing brain architecture than to rewire parts of its circuitry in the adult years.

4 Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined throughout the life course. The brain is a highly interrelated organ, and its multiple functions operate in a richly coordinated fashion. Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar that comprise the foundation of human development. The emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important prerequi-



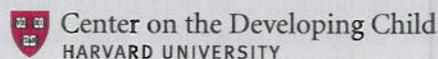
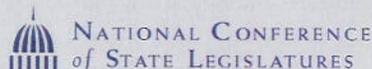
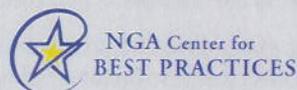
Brains subjected to toxic stress have underdeveloped neural connections in areas of the brain most important for successful learning and behavior in school and the workplace.

sites for success in school and later in the workplace and community.

5 Toxic stress damages developing brain architecture, which can lead to life-long problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health. Scientists now know that chronic, unrelenting stress in early childhood, caused by extreme poverty, repeated abuse, or severe maternal depression, for example, can be toxic to the developing brain. While positive stress (moderate, short-lived physiological responses to uncomfortable experiences) is an important and necessary aspect of healthy development, toxic stress is the strong, unrelieved activation of the body’s stress management system. In the absence of the buffering protection of adult support, toxic stress becomes built into the body by processes that shape the architecture of the developing brain.

For more information, see “The Science of Early Childhood Development” and the Working Paper series from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.

www.developingchild.harvard.edu/content/publications.html



THE INBRIEF SERIES:

- INBRIEF: The Science of Early Childhood Development
- INBRIEF: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development
- INBRIEF: Early Childhood Program Effectiveness

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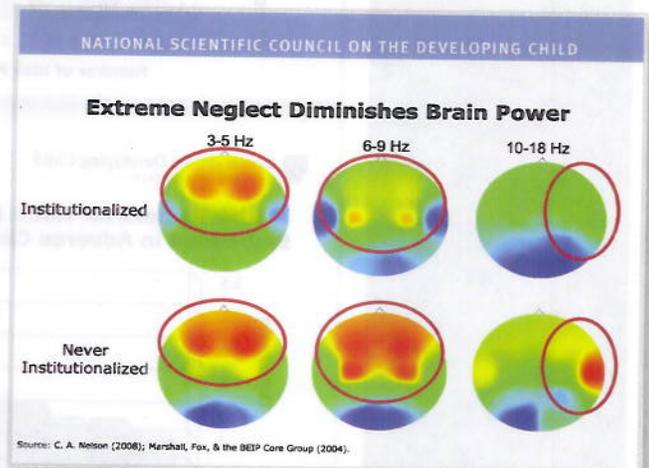
A series of brief summaries of the scientific presentations at the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy.

What happens in early childhood can matter for a lifetime. To successfully manage our society's future, we must recognize problems and address them before they get worse. In early childhood, research on the biology of stress shows how major adversity, such as extreme poverty, abuse, or neglect can weaken developing brain architecture and permanently set the body's stress response system on high alert. Science also shows that providing stable, responsive, nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress, with lifelong benefits for learning, behavior, and health.

1 Early experiences influence the developing brain. From the prenatal period through the first years of life, the brain undergoes its most rapid development, and early experiences determine whether its architecture is sturdy or fragile. During early sensitive periods of development, the brain's circuitry is most open to the influence of external experiences, for better or for worse. During these *sensitive periods*, healthy emotional and cognitive development is shaped by responsive, dependable interaction with adults, while chronic or extreme adversity can interrupt normal brain development. For example, children who were placed shortly after birth into orphanages with conditions of severe neglect show dramatically decreased brain activity compared to children who were never institutionalized.

2 Chronic stress can be toxic to developing brains. Learning how to cope with adversity is an important part of healthy child development. When we are threatened, our bodies activate a variety of physiological responses, including increases in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones such as cortisol. When a young child is protected by supportive relationships

with adults, he learns to cope with everyday challenges and his stress response system returns to baseline. Scientists call this *positive stress*. *Tolerable stress* occurs when more serious difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a frightening injury, are buffered by caring adults who help the child adapt, which mitigates the potentially damaging effects of



The brain's activity can be measured in electrical impulses—here, “hot” colors like red or orange indicate more activity, and each column shows a different kind of brain activity. Young children institutionalized in poor conditions show much less than the expected activity.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The basic principles of neuroscience indicate that providing supportive and positive conditions for early childhood development is more effective and less costly than attempting to address the consequences of early adversity later. Policies and programs that identify and support children and families who are most at risk for experiencing toxic stress as early as possible will reduce or avoid the need for more costly and less effective remediation and support programs down the road.
- From pregnancy through early childhood, all of the environments in which children live and learn, and the quality of their relationships with adults and caregivers, have a significant impact on their cognitive, emotional, and social development. A wide range of policies, including those directed toward early care and education, child protective services, adult mental health, family economic supports, and many other areas, can promote the safe, supportive environments and stable, caring relationships that children need.

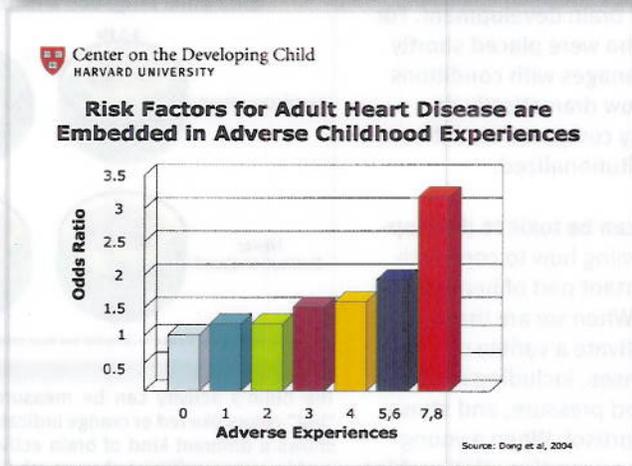
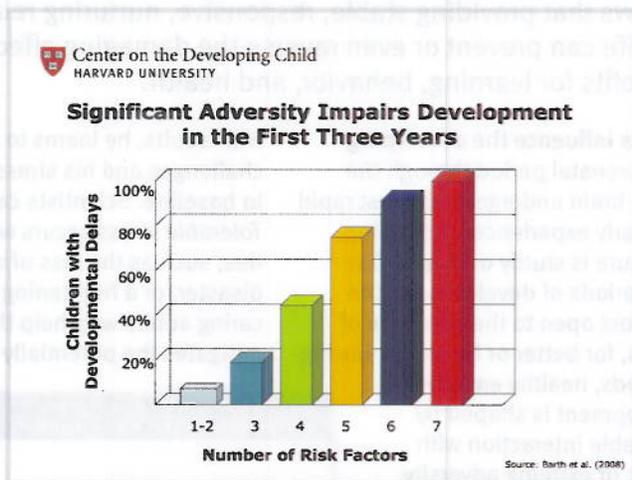
abnormal levels of stress hormones. When strong, frequent, or prolonged adverse experiences such as extreme poverty or repeated abuse are experienced without adult support, stress becomes *toxic*, as excessive cortisol disrupts developing brain circuits.

3 Significant early adversity can lead to lifelong problems. Toxic stress experienced early in life and common precipitants of toxic stress—such as poverty, abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse or mental illness, and exposure to violence—can have a cumulative toll on an individual’s physical

and mental health. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and other problems. Adults with more adverse experiences in early childhood are also more likely to have health problems, including alcoholism, depression, heart disease, and diabetes.

4 Early intervention can prevent the consequences of early adversity. Research shows that later interventions are likely to be less successful—and in some cases are ineffective. For example, when the same children who experienced extreme neglect were placed in responsive foster care families before age two, their IQs increased more substantially and their brain activity and attachment relationships were more likely to become normal than if they were placed after the age of two. While there is no “magic age” for intervention, it is clear that, in most cases, intervening as early as possible is significantly more effective than waiting.

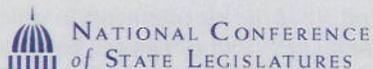
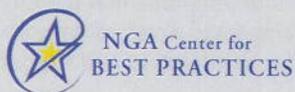
5 Stable, caring relationships are essential for healthy development. Children develop in an environment of relationships that begin in the home and include extended family members, early care and education providers, and members of the community. Studies show that toddlers who have secure, trusting relationships with parents or non-parent caregivers experience minimal stress hormone activation when frightened by a strange event, and those who have insecure relationships experience a significant activation of the stress response system. Numerous scientific studies support these conclusions: providing supportive, responsive relationships as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress.



As the number of adverse early childhood experiences mounts, so does the risk of developmental delays (top). Similarly, adult reports of cumulative, adverse experiences in early childhood correlate to a range of lifelong problems in physical and mental health—in this case, heart disease (bottom).

For more information, see “The Science of Early Childhood Development” and the Working Paper series from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.

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THE INBRIEF SERIES:

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INBRIEF: Early Childhood Program Effectiveness

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A series of brief summaries of the scientific presentations at the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy.

By creating and implementing effective early childhood programs and policies, society can ensure that children have a solid foundation for a productive future. Four decades of evaluation research have identified innovative programs that can improve a wide range of outcomes with continued impact into the adult years. Effective interventions are grounded in neuroscience and child development research and guided by evidence regarding what works for what purpose. With careful attention to quality and continuous improvement, such programs can be cost-effective *and* produce positive outcomes for children.

1 Effective services build supportive relationships and stimulating environments. To develop strong brain architecture, babies and toddlers require dependable interaction with nurturing adults and safe environments to explore. *Toxic stress* (see InBrief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Brain Development) can damage that architecture, but programs in a variety of settings—the home, early care and education, foster care, and other environments—can protect children from the effects of toxic stress by providing stable relationships with responsive caregivers. Within the context of these



Providing supportive relationships and safe environments can improve outcomes for all children, but especially those who are most vulnerable. Between 75 and 130 of every 1,000 U.S. children under age 5 live in homes where at least one of three common precipitants of toxic stress could negatively affect their development.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The development and retention of a skilled early childhood workforce is critical for success. Across all agencies and programs, a workforce that is appropriately skilled, trained, and compensated is a major contributor to achieving the best possible child and family outcomes. Ongoing investment in workforce skills and professional development is essential for program improvement.
- Quality of implementation is key. Model programs can lose their impact if not brought to scale correctly. Rigorous program standards, ongoing training and technical assistance, and continual quality assessment and improvement are critical to ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of large-scale programs.
- A multi-strategy approach will best enable states to ensure healthy futures for children. No single program can meet the diverse developmental needs of all children. A more promising approach targets a range of needs with a continuum of services that have documented effectiveness.

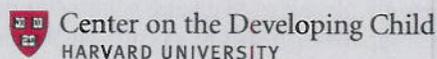
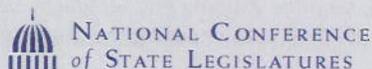
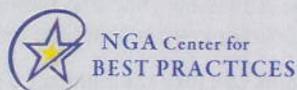
relationships, programs must support emotional, social, and cognitive development because they are inextricably intertwined in the brain. We can't do one without the other.

2 Effective interventions address specific developmental challenges. Decades of brain science and developmental research suggest a three-tiered approach to ensure the health and well-being of young children:

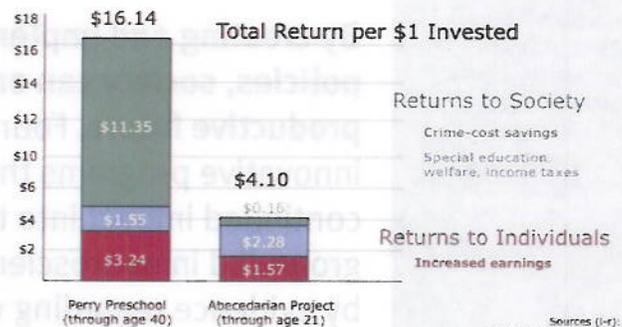
- Tier 1 covers the basics — the health services, stable, responsible caregiving, and safe environments that all children need to help them build and sustain strong brains and bodies.
- Tier 2 includes broadly targeted interventions for children and families in poverty. Programs that combine effective center-based care and education for children with services for parents, such as education or income supports, can have positive effects on families and increase the likelihood that children will be prepared to succeed in school.
- Tier 3 provides specialized services for children and families who are most likely to experience toxic stress. Specific, effective treatments, such as interventions and services for child maltreatment, mental health, or substance abuse, can show positive outcomes for children and parents and benefits to society that exceed program costs.

3 Effectiveness factors distinguish programs that work from those that don't. Evaluation science helps identify the characteristics of successful programs, known as effectiveness factors. In early care and education, for example, the effectiveness factors that have been shown by multiple studies to improve outcomes for children include:

- Qualified and appropriately compensated personnel
- Small group sizes and high adult-child ratios



Cost/Benefit Analysis Shows Positive Returns
Two Early Childhood Programs Demonstrate Range of Benefits to Society



Sources (1-4):
Schweinhart et al. (2005)
Massey & Barnett (2002)

Two major early childhood programs with effectiveness factors (see #3, below), the Perry Preschool Project and the Abecedarian project, show a range of sizable returns to the participants and to society for every dollar invested.

- Language-rich environment
- Developmentally appropriate “curriculum”
- Safe physical setting
- Warm and responsive adult-child interactions

4 Effective early childhood programs generate benefits to society that far exceed program costs. Responsible investments focus on effective programs that are staffed appropriately, implemented well, and improved continuously. Extensive analysis by economists has shown that education and development investments in the earliest years of life produce the greatest returns. Most of those returns, which can range from \$3 to \$16 per dollar invested, benefit the community through reduced crime, welfare, and educational remediation, as well as increased tax revenues on higher incomes for the participants of early childhood programs when they reach adulthood.

For more information, see “A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy” and Working Papers from the National Forum on Early Childhood Program Evaluation.

www.developingchild.harvard.edu/content/publications.html

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- INBRIEF: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development
- INBRIEF: Early Childhood Program Effectiveness

A series of brief summaries of essential findings from recent scientific publications and presentations by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

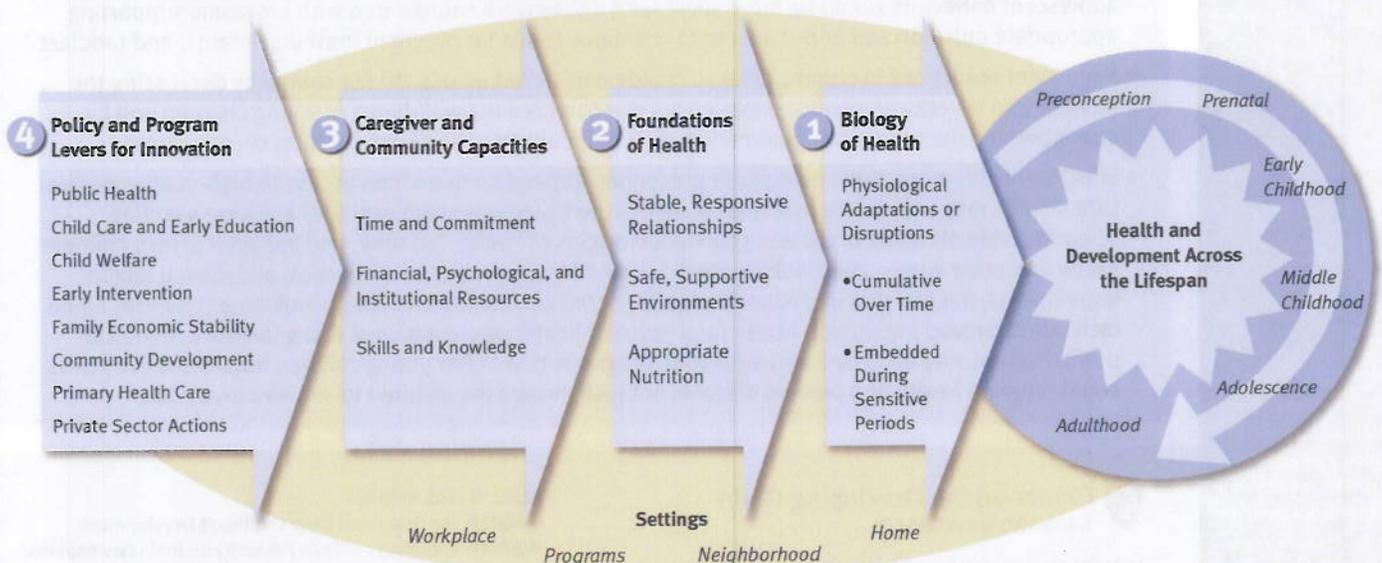
A vital and productive society with a prosperous and sustainable future is built on a foundation of healthy child development. Positive early experiences provide a foundation for sturdy brain architecture and a broad range of skills and learning capacities. Health in the earliest years—beginning with the future mother’s well-being before she becomes pregnant—strengthens developing biological systems that enable children to thrive and grow up to be healthy adults. The science of child development now helps us to see healthy development as a causal chain—policies and programs across the public and private sectors affect the capacities of caregivers and communities to strengthen three foundations of healthy development: stable, responsive relationships; safe, supportive environments; and appropriate nutrition. These foundations, in turn, trigger physiological adaptations or disruptions that influence lifelong outcomes in health, learning, and behavior. Understanding how each link in this chain affects the others can provide a science-based framework for decisions about policies, systems, and practices that support the healthy development of all young children and their families.

1 The biology of health explains how experiences and environmental influences “get under the skin” and interact with genetic predispositions, which then result in physiological adaptations or disruptions that affect lifelong outcomes in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental well-being. Advances in neuroscience, molecular biology, and genomics have converged on three compelling conclusions:

- Early experiences are built into our bodies, creating biological “memories” that shape development, for better or for worse.

- Toxic stress caused by significant adversity can produce physiological disruptions that undermine the development of the body’s stress response systems and affect the architecture of the developing brain, the cardiovascular system, the immune system, and metabolic regulatory controls.
- These physiological disruptions can persist far into adulthood and lead to lifelong impairments in both physical and mental health.

A Framework for Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Policies and Programs to Strengthen Lifelong Health



2 The foundations of health establish a context within which the early roots of physical and mental well-being are nourished. These include

- *A stable and responsive environment of relationships*, which provides young children with consistent, nurturing, and protective interactions with adults that enhance their learning and help them develop adaptive capacities that promote well-regulated stress response systems;
- *Safe and supportive physical, chemical, and built environments*, which provide places for children that are free from toxins and fear, allow active, safe exploration, and offer families raising young children opportunities to exercise and make social connections; and
- *Sound and appropriate nutrition*, which includes health-promoting food intake and eating habits, beginning with the future mother's pre-conception nutritional status.

3 Caregiver and community capacities to promote health and prevent disease and disability refers to the ability of family members, early childhood program staff, neighborhoods, voluntary associations, and the parents' workplaces to support and strengthen the foundations of child health. These capacities can be grouped into three categories:

- *Time and commitment*, which includes the nature and quality of time caregivers spend with children and on their behalf, as well as how communities assign and accept responsibility for monitoring child health and developmental outcomes and pass and enforce legislation and regulations that affect child well-being;
- *Financial, psychological, and institutional resources*,

which includes caregivers' ability to purchase goods and services, their physical and mental health, and their child-rearing skills, as well as the availability of community services and organizations that promote children's healthy development and supportive structures, such as parks, child care facilities, schools, and after-school programs; and

- *Skills and knowledge*, which includes caregivers' education, training, interactions with child-related professionals, and personal experiences, plus the political and organizational capabilities of communities to build systems that work for children and families.

4 Public and private sector policies and programs can strengthen the foundations of health by enhancing the capacities of caregivers and communities in the multiple settings in which children develop. Relevant policies include legislative and administrative actions that affect public health, child care and early education, child welfare, early intervention, family economic stability, community development, housing, environmental protection, and primary health care. In short, nearly any policy that touches the lives of children and families can be seen as an opportunity to improve lifelong health outcomes in our communities and states. The private sector can also play an important role in strengthening the capacities of families to raise healthy and competent children, particularly through supportive workplace policies.

For more information, see "The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood" and the Working Paper series from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

www.developingchild.harvard.edu/library/

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Current health promotion and disease prevention policies focused on adults would be more effective if evidence-based investments were also made to strengthen the foundations of health in the prenatal and early childhood periods. For example, obesity-reduction measures focused on changing adult and adolescent behaviors would be more successful if they were coordinated with programs supporting appropriate nutrition and better access to nutritious foods for pregnant mothers, infants, and toddlers.
- Significant reductions in chronic disease could be achieved across the life course by decreasing the number and severity of adverse experiences that threaten the well-being of young children and by strengthening the protective relationships that help mitigate the harmful effects of toxic stress.
- Effective health promotion and disease prevention depend on more than access to high-quality medical care. A wide range of service systems could improve outcomes significantly by applying a unified scientific understanding of the early childhood origins of health, learning, and behavior across multiple sectors. In other words, child welfare agencies could help prevent adult physical and mental health impairments, not just provide immediate child protection. Zoning and land-development policies could facilitate improved population health (and reduced health care costs), not just generate commercial profit. High-quality early care and education programs that buffer young children from excessive stress could promote health and prevent disease, not just prepare the children to succeed in school.

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ALSO IN THIS SERIES:

- INBRIEF: The Science of Early Childhood Development
- INBRIEF: The Impact of Early Adversity on Brain Development
- INBRIEF: Early Childhood Program Effectiveness

6
Ways to
Keep Your Family
Strong

1
Be strong *and* flexible

2
Parents need friends

3
Being a parent is part
natural *and* part learned

4
Parents all need help
sometimes

5
Help your child
communicate

6
Give your child
love and respect

Child Care and Development Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Finding a child care and development program that meets the needs of your child and family is a very important responsibility. As a parent, while you are going to school or working, you want to trust that the person or program you choose to care for your child is keeping her/him safe and healthy and nurturing your child's growth and development. In addition, you want to share information about your child's progress with your child's provider or program staff and discuss ways that both of you can help your child grow and learn.

This paper provides a brief overview of child care and development programs that may be available to support you while you are attending school or working and contribute to your child's healthy growth and development. More detailed information about the programs and how to seek for and select the program that is the best fit for you and your family are available in the booklet, *For Pregnant and Parenting Teens: A Guide to Child Care and Development Programs* (the *Guide*). You may download a copy of the booklet from the Office of Child Care website at www.childcare.lacounty.gov or call the Office of Child Care at 213.974.5187 to request a copy be sent to you by U.S. mail.

California School Age Families Education (Cal-SAFE) Programs

Supports the academic success of pregnant and parenting teens, increases the availability of support services for enrolled students, and provides child care and development services to their children. Sixteen school districts throughout Los Angeles County offer Cal-SAFE programs.

See page 13 of the Guide for information on contacting the programs.

Early Head Start

Free comprehensive early education program for low-income pregnant women, infants and toddlers from birth to three years old, including young children with disabilities. Provides comprehensive services, including helping families get health, nutrition, and social services, and encourages parent involvement.

Head Start

Free comprehensive child development program for low-income children from three to five years old, including children with disabilities, living in the local community. Provides comprehensive services, including helping connect families with health, social, mental health, disability and nutrition services. Encourages parent involvement.

For referrals to Early Head Start and Head Start programs, call the Los Angeles County Office of Education toll-free at 1-877-773-5543 or visit www.PreKKid.com. The Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies also provide families with referrals; call the L.A. County R&R Consumer Education Line at 1-888-922-4453 to be connected to your local R&R. Be sure to ask for referrals to Early Head Start or Head Start programs.

6
Activities to do with
your child

1
Sing and dance

2
Play at the park

3
Visit the library

4
Look at and read books
together

5
Search for bugs

6
Share mealtimes

State Subsidized Child Care and Development Programs

The California Department of Education/Child Development Division (CDE/CDD) contracts with schools and organizations to provide child care and development services to children from low-income families in one of the following program types:

- Child Care and Development Centers – Comprehensive programs for low-income infants and toddlers (birth to three years old) and school age children (up to 10 or 12 years old).
- State Preschool – Part-day (**free**) or full-day comprehensive child development programs for three to four year old children from low-income families living in the community.
- Family Child Care Home Education Networks – Groups of family child care homes that receive training and support from a sponsoring organization.
- Alternative Payment Programs – Child care subsidies for services provided primarily in private centers, family child care homes, or by a family, friend or neighbor to children from birth to 12 years old.

For referrals, call the L.A. County R&R Consumer Education Line at 1-888-922-4453 to be connected to your local R&R. Be sure to ask for referrals to state subsidized child care and development programs. In addition, see the Office of Child Care website at www.childcare.lacounty.gov for a complete listing of the subsidy programs; click on “Navigating Child Care & Development System and Subsidy Programs”, then scroll down to the link for the zip code or alphabetical listing of the subsidized programs.

Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)

Part-day child development programs for four year old children. **Free** to families receiving services and/or under the supervision of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department.

For referrals, call toll-free 1-866-581-5287 or visit www.laup.net. The R&Rs also provide families with referrals; call the L.A. County R&R Consumer Education Line at 1-888-922-4453 to be connected to your local R&R. Be sure to ask for referrals to “LAUP” programs.

Los Angeles County Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agencies

There are ten R&Rs throughout Los Angeles County that provide families with referrals to child care and development programs. In addition, the R&Rs offer written materials on a variety of topics, such as how to select a quality program as well as brochures on child development issues like separation, toilet training, discipline, and more. Call toll-free 1-888-922-4453 to be connected to your local R&R. Be prepared to provide information about your family and your need for services. The *Guide* offers a list of items you may want and need to discuss with the R&R Resource Specialist.

Adapted from For Pregnant and Parenting Teens: A Guide to Child Care and Development Programs (Revised: June 2011) published by the Los Angeles County Office of Child Care

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