



Early Childhood Mental Health: A New Standard of Care for Infants and Young Children

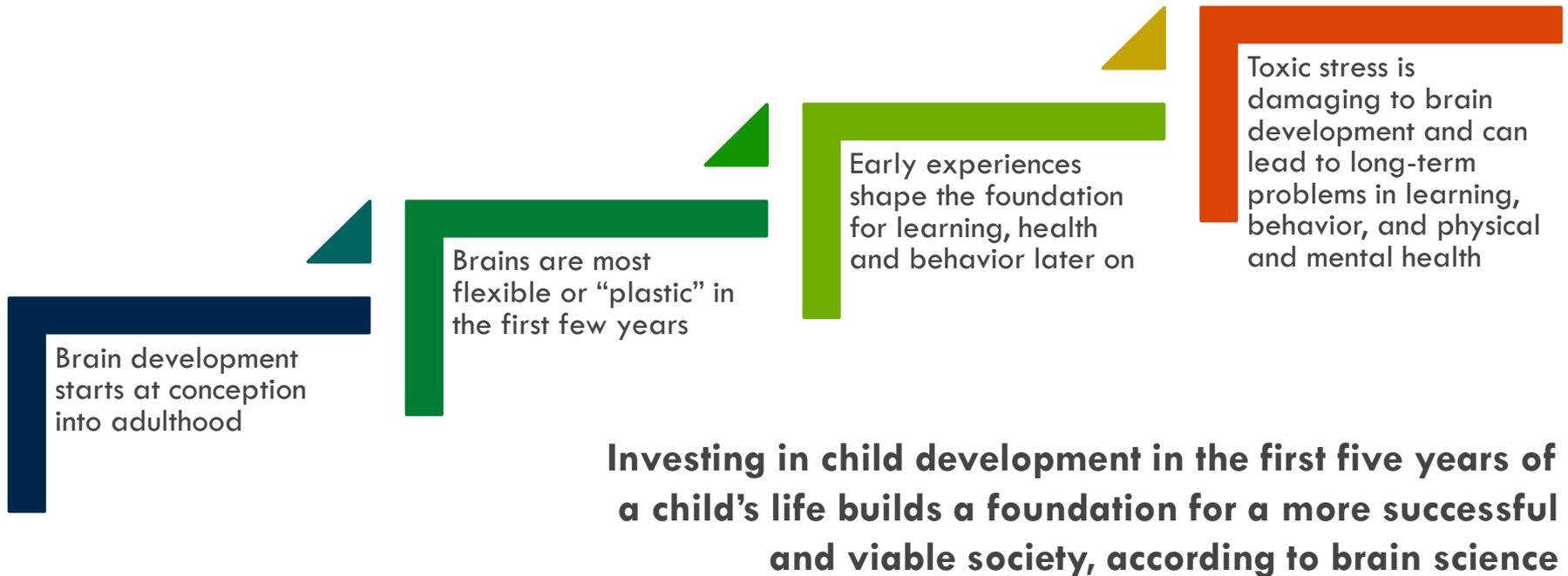
Presentation by

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Early Childhood is a Critical Time for Brain Development

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Children's brains grow by processing everything and everyone around them. That's why environment and relationships matter so much to their development.



Understanding Child Development

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Fear and Anxiety Affect the Brain Architecture of Learning and Memory

PREFRONTAL CORTEX

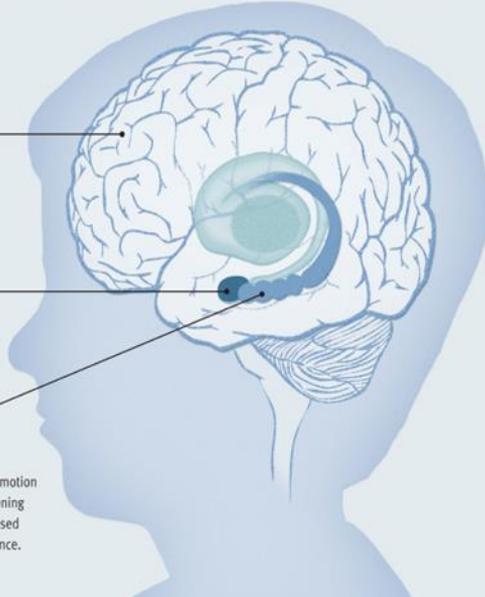
Center of executive functions; regulates thought, emotions, and actions. Especially vulnerable to elevation of brain chemicals caused by stress. Matures later in childhood.

AMYGDALA

Triggers emotional responses; detects whether a stimulus is threatening. Elevated cortisol levels caused by stress can affect activity. Matures in early years of life.

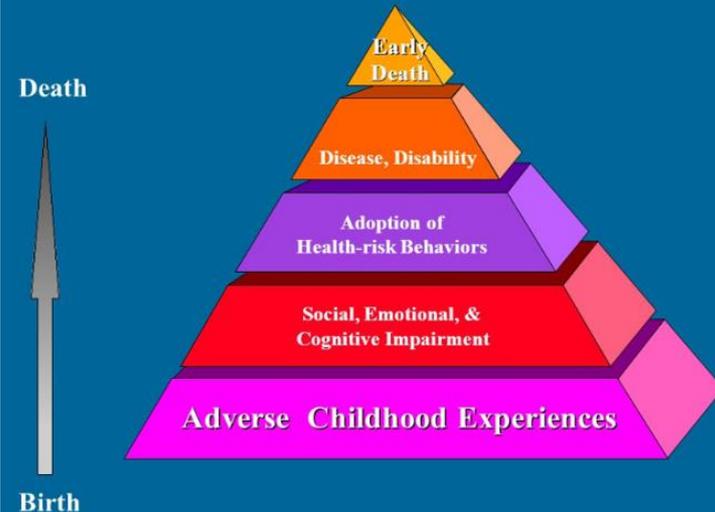
HIPPOCAMPUS

Center of short-term memory; connects emotion of fear to the context in which the threatening event occurs. Elevated cortisol levels caused by stress can affect growth and performance. Matures in early years of life.



Biology of Adversity

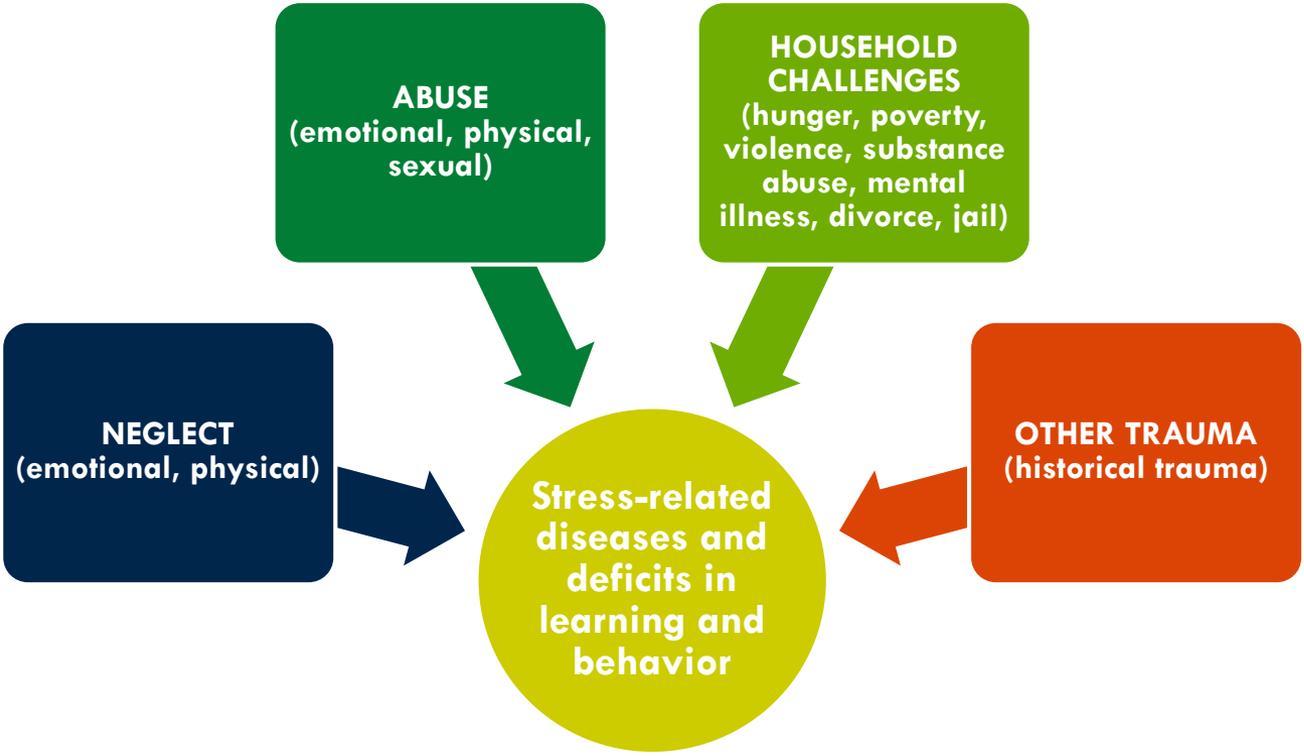
The True Nature of Preventative Medicine



Mechanisms By Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Adult Health Status

ACEs & Trauma-Informed Care

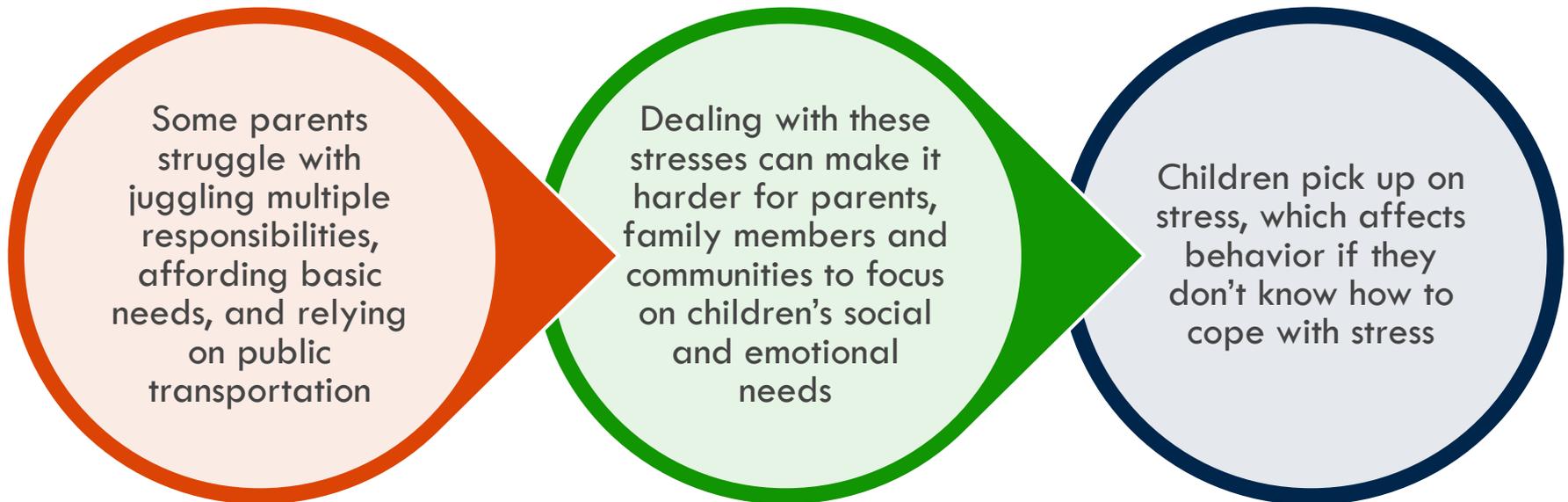
Adverse Childhood Experiences Can Impact Health Later On



Intervening early on is critical for achieving the best outcomes

Families' Stress Can Affect Infants and Young Children Too

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What the still face paradigm tells us

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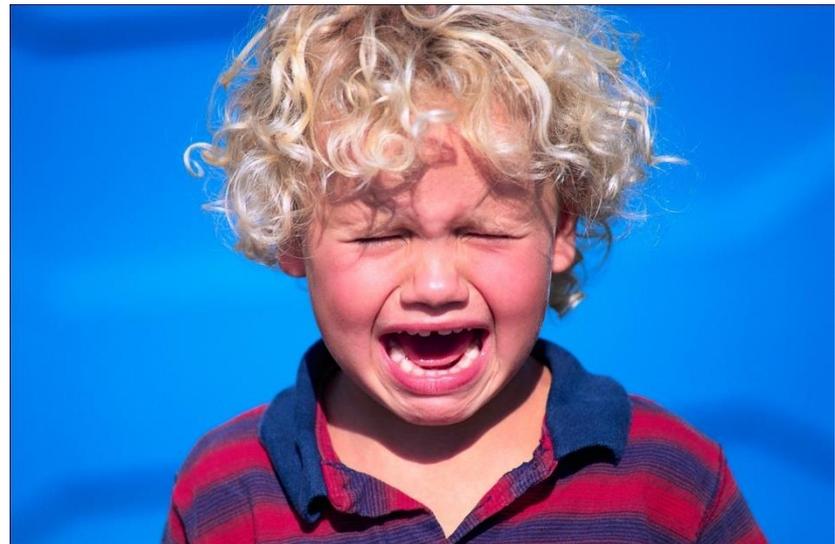


<https://vimeo.com/119255263>

Early Childhood Traumatic Stress Effects

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- Physical & Self-Regulation Effects
- Traumatic Reminders
- Development
- Play
- Behavior
- Relationship



Early Childhood Traumatic Stress Effects

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Sleep and/or eating disruptions
Withdrawal/lack of responsiveness
Intense separation anxiety
Inconsolable crying
Developmental regression
Intense anxiety, worries, and/or
new fears
Increased aggression and/or
impulsive behavior

Immediate Reactions

Physical health problems
Behavior problems
Risky Adolescent Behaviors
Pervasive depression
Anxiety
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Long Term Effects

Experiences Early On Can Impact How Our Children Learn

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x 3.5

Higher preschool
expulsion rates
than K-12

x 10

Expelled or suspended
young students are
more likely to drop out
of high school,
experience academic
failure, have negative
school attitude

x 8

Expelled or
suspended young
students are more
likely to be
incarcerated later
in life

Children of Color Are Disproportionately Affected

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**African American
Children 18%**
Of all preschoolers
enrolled

42% Suspended

48% Suspended multiple
times

**American Indian /
Alaska Native, or
AI/AN Children 0.5%**
Of all preschoolers
enrolled

2% Suspended

3% Expelled

Our Youngest Might Lack the Words to Express Their Needs

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Some infants and young children lack the words to express when they feel overwhelmed

Children who are labeled as defiant, too quiet, “naughty,” or overly clingy are telling us, through their behaviors, that they need our help

It can be hard to know the best way to respond when they are having a hard time

Caregivers Need Tools and Support for Our Little Ones

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Child care providers, home visitors, preschool teachers, families and communities could use more training and support to address infants and young children's social and emotional needs. Yet for preschool teachers, for example, research shows that:

Only 1 in 5

Preschool teachers have received specific training on facilitating children's social and emotional growth in the past year



Only 34%

Teachers believe they have the necessary skills to meet their students' mental health needs



Only 23%

Preschool programs have onsite or scheduled visits from mental health professionals





The Standard of Care is Evolving

The Standard of Care is Evolving

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OLD STANDARD OF CARE

Have limited ability to understand what children are telling us through their behavior

Perceive children of color as “problems” and treat them differently than white children

Expel children – even before preschool – without understanding their needs

Identify mental health concerns for parents without having access to additional support



NEW STANDARD OF CARE

Identify and address early signs of relationship and behavioral concerns to prevent escalation

Understand disparities and implicit biases that exist; create equitable solutions for infants and young children

Give social, emotional support to our little ones where they learn and grow

Offer support and reflection to caregivers, preschool teachers, home visitors and families

A New Standard of Care for Infants and Young Children

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Having a trauma informed, early childhood mental health lens, helps caregivers support healthy growth and development in our young children

It's not about “fixing” children or providing therapy.

- Promote strong relationships and a supportive environment for caregivers, such as home visitors and child care professionals, along with families and communities
- Partner with parents and caregivers to understand what babies and young children are telling us with their behaviors, and co-create solutions
- Equip caregivers with the tools and insights to develop healthy emotional and social behaviors in infants and young children
- Help our children feel safe, supported and value

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants are Equipped to Help

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Master's Degree in social work, psychology or related field

At least 2-3 years experience as a mental health professional

75% have worked in the field for at least 10 years

Foundational knowledge of early childhood development

Ability to work in natural settings, including homes and early care and education environments

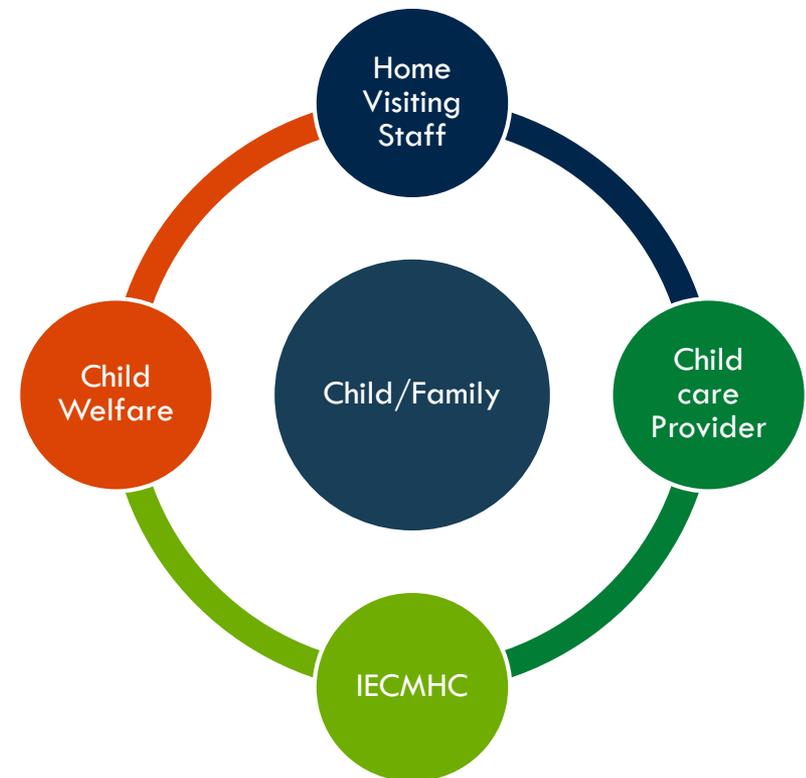
Understanding of cultural variations in development, childrearing practices, and caregiver expectations

Mental Health Consultants Support Providers and Families

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- Provide support early on – before preschool – to help new parents and caregivers understand babies' needs and recognize that all relationships in a child's life matters
- Promote trusting, respectful relationships with providers, families and communities to help children at home, in preschool, and in other child care settings
- Understand how culture (e.g., beliefs, values, attitudes, biases, and experiences), equity, and environment shape relationships and behaviors, and influence settings and communities in important and meaningful ways

Everyone brings their wisdom to the circle and learns from one another



Mental Health Consultants Support Providers and Families

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Three types of mental health consultation services:

Child/Family

- Help adults understand and address the child's needs by developing an individualized plan with the parents, providers and home visitors

Classroom/Group

- Work with child care providers, teachers and home visitors to improve care offered to all children by helping to identify and address attitudes, beliefs, practices, and conditions that may be undermining quality relationships between adults and children

Programmatic

- Support administrators, directors, home visitors and other program leaders to make changes in their care practices and/or policies to the benefit of all the children and adults in their setting

New strategies and approaches are not necessarily child and family focused, but may include changes to policy and practice

Mental Health Consultants Support Providers and Families

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Services are Having a Real Impact

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Positive Outcomes

Providers who partner with IECMHC are more likely to implement positive strategies and less likely to leave their fields

Parents and caregivers involved with these services miss less work and report lower levels of stress

Nearly **90%** of home visitors with IECMHC support are more knowledgeable about children's emotional and behavioral needs and follow-up services available for behavioral issues

Some studies have shown that expulsions are reduced by **47%** when preschoolers are given access to mental health services

Research shows that young children who are good at sharing, cooperating, and helping others are more likely to do well at school and go on to get jobs than children without these skills

Every dollar invested in early childhood development saves more than **\$8.00** down the road

Programs that IECMHC in Our Community

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- [Insert program description(s)]

Early Childhood Mental Health in Our Community

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- [Insert local case study]

Embrace IECMHC Services to Benefit Infants and Young Children

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- Adopt IECMHC services in your service provision
- Create infrastructure to support these services
- Adopt national standards for mental health consultants
- Monitor and evaluate the success of these services
- Spread the word about the benefits of IECMHC
- Contact the NCTSN Center of Excellence for more resources (<https://www.nctsn.org>)



Questions ?