The First Years of Life

Henrietta S. Bada, MD, MPH
Director, Division of Maternal and Child Health
Professor of Pediatrics, University of Kentucky
These children are not created equal but they equally deserve to reach their full potential to be healthy.
SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

PROTECTIVE Factors

CHILD

FAMILY

NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMUNITY

POLICY

RISKS Factors
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- Prenatal drug exposure
- Complications in pregnancy
- Preterm birth
- Low birth weight
- Congenital malformations
- Substance use
- Domestic violence
- Verbal, emotional, sexual abuse
- Criminal justice involvement
- Mental illness
- Adverse home environment
- Gangs
- Drug use
- Homelessness
- Few activities
- Isolation; lack of resources
- Urban versus rural
- Unemployment
- Poverty
- Policy not addressing resources, identification or stratification of risks or provision of needed intervention
- No ongoing surveillance system
- Delay in legislative action

PROTECTIVE Factors
- Healthy pre-conceptional health and pregnancy
- Prenatal care
- Maternal mental health
- Well-child
- Child’s temperament
- Caretaker-child attachment
- Caretaker involvement
- Family support/resources
- Caretaker supervision
- Home
- Friends
- Extra curricular activities
- Safe streets and playgrounds
- Access to resources
- Transportation
- School / Community Activities
- Community engagement
- Policies address community needs
- On-going surveillance
- Culturally competent services
- Funding available
- Buy-in from stakeholders
- Availability of treatment centers

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The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Maternal Depression
- Physical & Emotional Neglect
- Emotional & Sexual Abuse
- Divorce
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Domestic Violence
- Incarceration
- Homelessness
- Violence

Adverse Community Environments

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Community Disruption
- Poor Housing
- Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital
- Quality & Affordability


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Life Course Perspective

Risks Versus Protective Factors

• A continuum before birth and throughout lifetime
• Recognize and prevent risks from early in life
• Enhance protective factors to mitigate risks
• Build resilience: characteristic versus process
Resilience

- Resilience is the ability to overcome serious hardship
- The foundation of resilience is the combination of
  - Supportive relationships
  - Adaptive skill building
  - Positive experiences that re-enforce self-efficacy, perceived control, and belonging
- Resilience requires relationships
- The capabilities that underlie resilience can be strengthened at any age

Harvard Center for the Developing Child. Key Concepts
Summary

• Exposure to violence/trauma is the single most prevalent risk factor for children today
• Adversity is necessary for life and learning; toxic stress disrupts life and learning
• Relationships are necessary for resilience
• The lifelong toll of unaddressed Adverse Childhood Experiences is a major cause of death and disability in adults
• Knowing what we know, we can do better in preventing, mitigating, and treating toxic stress
Adverse Childhood Experiences are **not** destiny, and early trauma does not have to dictate a life story.

Research shows that protective factors – chiefly the presence of a nurturing adult - can cushion the impact of adversity in a child’s life.

Dr. Robert Anda
“Some children thrive happily; others languish sadly. Are they not all ours?”

....Sheldon B. Korones, MD 1993

“The level of civilization attained by society will be determined by the attention it has paid to the welfare of its children.”

....The Children’s Bill of Rights

Billy F. Andrews
Thank you!

Henrietta S. Bada, MD, MPH
henrietta.bada@ky.gov
hbada2@uky.edu