

# Welcome Home:

Design and Practice Guidance  
for Supportive Housing for  
Families with Children



**Child Welfare &  
Supportive Housing**  
RESOURCE CENTER

Center  
for the  
Study  
of  
Social  
Policy



*Welcome Home: Design and Practice Guidance for Supportive Housing for Families with Children*

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The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) works to secure equal opportunities and better futures for all children and families, especially those most often left behind. Underlying all of the work is a vision of child, family and community well-being which serves as a unifying framework for the many policy, system reform and community change activities in which CSSP engages.

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CSH is nationally recognized for expertise, resources and trainings that create housing as a platform to access services to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, maximize public resources and build healthy communities. CSH works to bring supportive housing – affordable housing and services designed to help vulnerable people live stably and independently – to every individual and family who needs it.

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Published March 2016

*Acknowledgments:*

This paper is a collaboration of the Center for the Study of Social Policy and CSH as the Child Welfare and Supportive Housing Resource Center, the technical assistance center for the Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System, a federally funded demonstration. This paper is made possible by the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Nilofer Ahsan authored this document. We are grateful for the important contributions of Sarah Morrison, CSSP; John Fallon, CSH; Chelsea Humphrey, The Connection, Inc., Preston A. Britner, Ph.D., The University of Connecticut; and Debbie Craig, Four Oaks, as well as the review by Susan Notkin, CSSP; Gayle Samuels, CSSP; Erin Wiswell, CSSP; Alison Harte, CSH; Leah Rhea, CSH; Christine Haley, CSH; Betsy Cronin, The Connection, Inc.; Debra Struzinski, The Connection, Inc.; Amanda Farley, New Jersey Department of Children and Families; Kelly Sachter, Family Connections; Alexandra Riley, Family Connections; and the supportive housing service teams in Broward County, FL; Cedar Rapids, IA; Connecticut; Memphis, TN; and San Francisco, CA. This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary.

*Suggested citation:*

Ahsan, N. (2016). *Welcome home: Design and practice guidance for supportive housing for families with children*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.

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## Section 1: About This Guide

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This guide is intended for supportive housing administrators and practitioners who are developing and involved in supportive housing efforts that serve families with children. Families being served by supportive housing efforts face a complex set of challenges including long-term and repeated homelessness, child welfare involvement, mental health issues, domestic violence, and a parental history of trauma. The instability, trauma and complex needs of these families not only impact their housing outcomes, but also their parenting and child development outcomes. Permanent supportive housing for these families provides a platform for adult healing, family strengthening and a healthier life course for the children and youth. To support a family's ability to use the opportunity that supportive housing provides fully it will be important for supportive housing providers to build an environment that is both developmentally appropriate to the needs of children and responsive to the unique needs and pressures of parents.

This guide is informed by three distinct supporting bodies of work:

- Years of experience in the supportive housing industry has underscored to CSH the essential elements for achieving good outcomes with the result being the [\*Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing\*](#).
- Through research and on-the-ground experience with child and family serving programs around the country, CSSP has defined five protective and promotive factors and approaches that build family and community capacity to enhance child and youth development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.
- The experience of the five jurisdictions across the country participating in the federally funded [\*Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System\*](#).

This guide is not meant to replace existing supportive housing guidance. Rather, it provides supplemental tools and resources that are specifically designed to help administrators and practitioners working with families take a structured two generation approach in high-quality, outcomes-focused supportive housing developments. The guide is meant to be used as an electronic resource. We have tried to provide a high level overview of the theory that informs the guide and then to provide links to other resources for those who want to go deeper into the theory and research behind the practice approaches outlined. The bulk of the guide serves to introduce tools that can be used directly by programs and practitioners. We have tried to cover a broad range of tools including some that are relevant to early planning stages and others that can inform day-to-day practice in mature programs.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [A profile of families being served by supportive housing](#)
- [Suggested child and family outcomes for family supportive housing](#)
- [Federal demonstration project](#): Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System initiative

## How to Use this Guide

Each of the remaining sections of this guide is described below. They build on each other but can also be used separately, depending on how you, the reader, want to use the material.

**Section 2, [Core Components of Supportive Housing](#)** defines the core components of supportive housing based on CSH's years of experience in the field and their framing of dimensions of quality for supportive housing. The definitions are a foundation for the guidance in the next two sections.

**Section 3, [Key Considerations for Delivering Supportive Housing to Families](#)** builds on the components defined in Section 2 by exploring three critical considerations for design, administration and practice in supportive housing for families:

- ▶ [Addressing stress and trauma](#)
- ▶ [Supporting optimal development for children and youth](#)
- ▶ [Supporting parents and youth in building protective and promotive factors](#)

**Section 4, [Windows of Opportunities for Strengthening Families in Supportive Housing](#)** builds on the information in Sections 2 and 3 by organizing tools and resources to help embed the critical considerations for families in design, administration and practice in supportive housing.

**Section 5, [Self-Assessment for Supportive Housing Serving Families](#)** is a tool that supportive housing practitioners can use to assess their movement toward a family supportive approach in their practice.

**Section 6, [Tools and Resources](#)** contains a complete set of the tools and resources referenced throughout the document.

Some of you will want to go directly to **Section 5** to begin assessing how well your supportive housing is set up to strengthen family protective and promotive factors. Others may want to go directly to reviewing the windows of opportunity (**Section 4**) available to planners, administrators and practitioners to incorporate tools and resources. Still others will want to start from **Section 2** and spend some time reviewing each section to gain a better understanding of the concepts, frameworks and definitions used in the tools provided here. Regardless of how you choose to start practical tools and resources to help implement ideas are only a click away—embedded right within the document.

## Section 2: Core Components of Supportive Housing

This section of the guide defines the primary components of supportive housing based on materials developed by CSH. These definitions serve as a foundation for the guidance in the next two sections.

### Components of Supportive Housing

CSH developed *Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing*<sup>1</sup> to foster achievement of the five core outcomes of supportive housing, illustrated on the right. In implementing any supportive housing project, CSH suggests there are four primary components that, when done well, contribute to these outcomes:



- **Project administration and design** – The process of planning and leading the supportive housing project, including key decisions about physical structure, team members and funding.
- **Property housing and management** – The ongoing operation of supportive housing and connection to private market landlords. It is a set of functions involved with receiving and processing tenant rental applications, receiving rent payments, and ensuring the ongoing physical upkeep of the housing. In projects that include ongoing ownership of units or a long-term master lease arrangement, property management staff is typically part of the supportive housing team. Housing management refers to the set of services concerned with connecting tenants to housing in the private rental market, making rental payments for units that the organization may lease directly from a landlord, and in some cases, receiving tenant rent payments. Housing management staff often serve as an ongoing landlord liaison and has a distinct role from a service provider. Housing management staff is typically found in organizations in which the tenants or the organization directly lease the units associated with the project from the existing rental market.
- **Supportive services** – This is the package of support services available to help tenants use stable housing as a platform for individual health, recovery and personal growth. These services may be provided by the project’s designated primary service provider or by collaborating organizations. The primary service provider ensures that tenants can access needed services on an ongoing basis.
- **Community** – This is the relationship to and role of housing in the larger context in which it operates. The most successful supportive housing does not operate in isolation, but serves an integral role in the larger community. This component represents the opportunities that an individual supportive housing project has to contribute to the achievement of larger community goals. The community can also be a rich resource for supportive housing.

<sup>1</sup> Visit <http://csh.org/quality> for available resources on planning for or operating quality supportive housing.

To achieve the designated outcomes, CSH has established **5 dimensions of quality**. **Supportive Housing projects are tenant-centered, accessible, coordinated, integrated and sustainable in every aspect of implementation.** CSH has also defined what the dimensions look like for each of the primary project components.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Dimensions of Quality Guidebook](#)
- [More tools to support effective implementation of supportive housing](#)
- [Family Matters: A Guide to Developing Family Supportive Housing](#)

## Section 3: Key Considerations for Delivering Supportive Housing to Families

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This section builds on the components of supportive housing described in the Section 2 by exploring three key lenses that should inform policy and practice for supportive housing for families.

- ▶ **Addressing stress and trauma** when parent child interaction is impacted by experiences of trauma.
- ▶ **Supporting child and youth development** within the context of housing
- ▶ Helping families build **protective and promotive factors** as a pathway to addressing trauma and supporting child and youth development

### Addressing Stress and Trauma

#### Understanding Traumatic Stress

##### ▶ **Adults**

All individuals have experiences that cause anxiety, nervousness and fear. While stress is normal it takes a lot out of us and our bodies. Severe, repeated or prolonged stress can provoke a physiological response in adults that may remain elevated even when the stressor has been removed. When our stress systems are activated for prolonged periods of time or repeatedly it can actually do our bodies harm. It can make us edgy or irritable, contribute to things like anxiety, depression, digestive problems, heart disease, sleep problems, weight gain and memory and concentration impairment. Research has shown that severe, prolonged stress can have long-term impacts on the cognitive and emotional centers of the brain. Simply put, prolonged stress affects one's ability to think clearly and respond to others – including our children – the way we want to.

##### ▶ **Children and Youth**

When children and youth experience stress that is severe or prolonged without support from an adult who can sooth and support them it can have cascad-

Toxic stress response can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years.

—[THE CENTER ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD](#)

ing impacts on their developmental trajectories, impacting not only child behavior, but also physical and cognitive development. Sustained, overwhelming stress is known as “toxic stress” because of its harmful impacts on the brain and body. Several damaging effects of toxic stress on early brain development can become most evident during adolescence. Stressful events that are severe and uncontrollable, especially those that occur when a child lacks access to responsive adults, tend to provoke a toxic stress response.<sup>2</sup>

• **Families**

It is important to remember that stress and trauma impact not only parents and children as individuals—but the whole family unit. When parents themselves have a trauma history their own trauma symptoms may impede their ability to provide the type of nurturing care that will help their children heal. Similarly, children’s experience of trauma can contribute to a range of behaviors—fussiness, tantrums, non-responsiveness, aggression—which can be challenging to adults and caregivers. This can exacerbate a traumatized caregiver’s ability to parent confidently and competently. Trauma can also impact behavior in ways that make it harder to develop and sustain relationships making families more isolated and vulnerable.

### Stress, Trauma and Families in Supportive Housing

While every family’s experience is different it is helpful to remember that for families entering supportive housing:

- Most of the parents have histories that include extreme stress and trauma often going back to their own childhoods.
- Most if not all families will be entering supportive housing from an extremely stressful and disruptive period of their lives.
- Most of the children and youth will have experienced a combination of deep stress and a caregiver who is experiencing extreme stress and therefore is less able to provide nurturing care and/or help the child process and heal.
- Almost half will have experienced or witnessed community or domestic violence in the past.

The good news is that for many families entering supportive housing, having a permanent roof over their head and supportive services will relieve a significant source of stress in their lives. The bad news is that in situations where families have experienced prolonged and severe stress, the impact of that stress is likely to continue to affect them, even when the stressor is removed. For these families it is not enough to remove stress from their lives by providing housing and supports. Those who work with them also need to understand and be responsive to how their prolonged experience of stress continues to impact their behavior, responses, and interactions.

### Taking a Trauma Informed Approach

As awareness has grown of the impact of trauma on our biological systems and stress responses a growing field of practice is developing to support practitioners that work

#### A TIP FROM CEDAR RAPIDS

Trauma training should be an ongoing activity and should engage community partners. The Supportive Housing Service Coordinators in Cedar Rapids play an active role in ensuring everyone is trained on taking a trauma informed approach. Having ongoing training and coaching available is important in response to turnover among community partners.

– CEDAR RAPIDS PARTNERS UNITED FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

<sup>2</sup> Life Course: Nurturing Early Growth and Development. (2013). *The Center for Leadership Education in Maternal and Child Public Health.*

with populations that have experienced a high degree of trauma. The following are attributes of a trauma-informed organization as defined by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA):

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization

In practice, this means that supportive housing programs should have the following elements:

- Programmatic policies and procedures that are informed by an understanding of how traumatic experience impacts behavior—especially in stressful circumstances.
- All staff trained to have a basic understanding of trauma and how it can impact behavior and responses.
- All staff respond to families with empathy, recognizing that challenging behavior may be a result of traumatic experience.
- Staff that work closely with families have been trained and have supports so they can:
  - Be trauma informed in their responses to families
  - Connect families to resources and supports to help them deal with trauma
  - Respond appropriately if families disclose or want to discuss past trauma
- Staff receives support in dealing with secondary trauma or their own emotional responses to supporting families that have trauma histories.
- Specific linkages in place that will help families get the support they need to heal from past trauma experiences. These may include access to therapeutic and mental health supports for parents *and children*; specialized parenting supports or social emotional development activities for children.

It is important to note that the expectation is not that staff play a counseling role in helping families heal from trauma, but rather that they, and the program itself, can help to create a safe, supportive environment and respond in ways that do not exacerbate traumatic responses from families in the program.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Trauma informed organizational toolkit: <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/90.pdf>
- [A Long Journey Home: A Guide for Creating Trauma-Informed Services for Mothers and Children Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Overview video on toxic stress and child development](#)
- [Self-help and coaching tools for adults dealing with the impacts of traumatic stress](#)
- Taking Care of Yourself: [Self Care For Workers](#)

#### TRAINING RESOURCES FOR STAFF:

[Recognizing and Addressing Trauma in Infants, Young Children, and their Families](#)

*This 40 minute on-line tutorial was created for Head Start workers and provides a strong introduction to dealing with trauma in young children.*

[National Child Traumatic Stress Learning Center](#)

*The Learning Center offers free on-line courses on a wide variety of topics related to child traumatic stress, including courses on stress and family systems. Many of the courses are set-up to provide continuing education credentials.*

- [Managing Stress as a Child Welfare Caseworker](#)
- [How Common Trauma Reactions May Explain Some “Difficult” Behaviors or Reactions within Homeless Service Settings](#)
- [Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Children by Age](#)
- [Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Trauma](#)

## Supporting Optimal Development of Children and Youth

When a family’s housing situation is unstable it can be harder for parents to create a positive environment for a child to learn and explore, to make themselves emotionally available, or to even take care of such basic things as food or a safe environment. In addition, just as we must recognize that families entering supportive housing are likely to have experienced trauma we need to recognize that this trauma may have impacted the child’s developmental trajectory—as well as the parents’ ability to provide nurturing support for children’s development. Children who are homeless experience four times the rates of developmental delays as other children, are three times as likely to experience emotional or behavioral problems, and twice as likely to have learning disabilities.

Entering supportive housing provides a tremendous opportunity to help put children back on track. To do so, however, it is important for supportive housing practitioners to be attuned to the specific developmental challenges children may be facing and how the stress and trauma they have already experienced may have affected their development.

### **Developmentally Supportive Practice**

Developmentally supportive practice is based on intentionally paying attention to the needs of children and ensuring that their environment and those around them provide opportunities for them to learn, grow and develop. Supportive housing staff do not need to be child and youth development experts, but they need to be attuned to children’s developmental needs and work as part of a team with those who can help them and help families support ongoing development and address developmental challenges. In practice this means that supportive housing programs should:

- Ensure that all staff have enough of a basic understanding of child and youth development to:
  - Have appropriate expectations of the children and youth with whom they interact
  - Flag when they notice signs that development may not be on target
- Ensure that staff that work closely with families have a deeper understanding of parenting and child and adolescent development that will allow them to:
  - Effectively connect families to child and adolescent development resources and parenting supports
  - Engage with their children in a nurturing and developmentally appropriate way
  - Talk with parents about common parenting issues
- Review design, policy and other decisions to ensure that they conform with appropriate developmental practice

The end goal is to support three key objectives:

1. Ensure developmental delays are identified and families are linked to supportive services to address these delays as early as possible;
2. Create a developmentally supportive environment for children and youth both within the building or community itself and in individual apartments
3. Support and enhance parent's ability to nurture effectively

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Birth to Five Watch Me Thrive: A Housing and Shelter Director's Guide to Developmental Screening](#)
- An example of collective community action to support optimal child development is the Massachusetts Brain Building in Progress Initiative, found at <http://brainbuildinginprogress.org/action>
- The Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University has several useful videos and publications for learning about early childhood development and strategies for working with adults and children that promote optimal childhood development, including
  - Five Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood found at [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/interactive\\_features/five-numbers/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/interactive_features/five-numbers/)
  - The importance of parent and community capacity for optimal child development [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory\\_of\\_change/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/)
  - [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/inbrief\\_series/inbrief\\_the\\_foundations\\_of\\_lifelong\\_health/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/inbrief_series/inbrief_the_foundations_of_lifelong_health/)

### Supporting Parents and Youth in Building Protective and Promotive Factors

The final area of practice we are suggesting for supportive housing programs serving families with children is adopting a protective and promotive factors approach. A protective and promotive factors approach provides a framework for practice that supports staff ability to be trauma-informed and developmentally supportive in their work. Traditionally, many social services and interventions for families have focused primarily on identifying and addressing risk. Risk factors refer to the stressful conditions, events or circumstances that increase a family's chances for poor outcomes, including child abuse and neglect. Risk factors include things like maternal depression, substance abuse, family violence and persistent poverty. Focusing exclusively on risks, however can have some limitations. For example:

- Not all risks can be changed. For example, we know that young maternal age is a risk factor for many poor outcomes. So is low parental IQ. Neither of these things can be changed.
- For many of the risks we are concerned about, we know that many, many individuals succeed and thrive despite the risk. If we focus only on the risk, we stigmatize those individuals who are in the risk category but are functioning well.
- A focus on risk may lead us to target families incorrectly. We all know cases of families that fit our risk profiles but are actually doing fine. And we know others who may not seem high-risk on paper but are actually very fragile.
- When we focus on risks our interactions with families tend to be focused on what is wrong with them. This can be a poor platform to build the type of engaged relationship with families that supports behavior change.

- Addressing risk doesn't necessarily get us to good outcomes. Addressing the risks in a family's life doesn't help to ensure that they have the underlying skills and capacities that will help them to thrive.

In contrast, a protective and promotive factor approach focuses on what we know about families who are able to be stable and even thrive in the face of risk. Supportive housing is both an opportunity to address risk and strengthen the family's protective and promotive factors.

There is a growing body of research on protective and promotive factors but for the purpose of this guide we will focus on the five protective and promotive factors at the heart of two initiatives that are being implemented broadly across the United States—[Strengthening Families™](#) and [Youth Thrive™](#). By using a protective and promotive factors approach with parents, children and youth we are building the capacity for:

- Children and youth to adapt, heal and thrive
- Parents to provide the nurturing supports that children and youth need
- The whole family to increase stability in internal and external interactions

A protective and promotive factors approach supports families in building the skills and the capacities they need to deal effectively with stress and challenges when they arise.

### Overview of the Strengthening Families and Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors

Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Youth Thrive™ is a research-informed approach that focuses on enhancing youth well-being and healthy development. Both frameworks address engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective and promotive factors:

- Resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting, adolescent and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Cognitive and social emotional competencies of children and youth

#### RESILIENCE

Resilience allows us to manage stress and function effectively, even when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma. Resilience helps families and youth respond with internal strengths so that crises do not escalate or negatively impact parenting and children.

#### Parental Resilience

Resilient parents and youth are able to call forth their inner strength to meet challenges (both personal challenges and those related to their child), manage adversities, heal the effects of trauma and function successfully as a family unit. The way they respond to stressors is more import-

#### RESILIENCE AND FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Families entering our supportive housing systems have often faced challenges that will impact the resilience of both the parent and their children. Homelessness and its attendant stressors are not healthy for children or adults. The parents themselves may have grown up in environments of toxic stress, and because of this, their capacity for resilience may have been compromised. As children, they may have experienced strong, frequent and prolonged adversity without the buffering protection of nurturing adult support. As a result, these parents may display symptoms of depression, anxiety or other clinical disorders that inhibit their ability to respond consistently, warmly and sensitively to their own child's needs.

ant than the stressor itself in determining outcomes for both themselves and their children. Resilient people recognize and acknowledge difficulties while maintaining a positive attitude. When parents are resilient, they have more patience and are less likely to take their frustrations out on their children and repeat negative patterns they may have learned in their own childhood. When parents effectively manage stressors it helps them to be more nurturing and attentive to their child. When youth are resilient they are better able to persevere even when confronted with significant stressors. Resilience has two components:

RESILIENCE TO GENERAL LIFE STRESS	RESILIENCE TO PARENTING STRESS
Hope, optimism, self confidence	Not allowing stress to interfere with nurturing
Problem solving skills	Positive attitude about parenting and child
Self care/willingness to ask for help	
Ability to manage negative emotions	

### *Child/youth resilience*

Receiving nurturing attention and developing a secure emotional attachment with parents fosters the development of resilience in children, thereby allowing them to better handle life stressors. Resilient children/youth:

- Have close, supportive connections with trusted adults
- View themselves in a positive light
- Are aware of their emotional responses, can modulate their arousal and manage impulses
- Possess strong communication skills
- Have confidence in their ability to solve their own problems – but ask for help when needed

### *Building resilience*

It is important to remember that resilience is not something you are born with. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned by and developed in anyone. Building and sustaining resilience is a life-long learning process. In addition, resilience is responsive to our environment and the messages we are getting about our own worth and competence. This is why the way that workers interact with families, the environment within the supportive housing setting, and even the decisions that families are

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Provide positive strengths-based support</b>	
We have all been in situations and/or with people where we don't feel like our best selves. Part of this is simple brain science: When we feel threatened or disrespected, it can cause the part of our brain that deals with fear to activate. This can increase reactivity and shut down problem solving skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name and notice individual strengths and positive parent action. Celebrate family/youth milestones and successes.</li> <li>• Use assessment and case management tools that record strengths and tie them to action plans.</li> <li>• Ask staff to exhibit positive relationship building skills: greeting family members by name, active listening, customer service approach to interaction.</li> </ul>

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Support families/youth as decision-makers and build decision-making skills</b>	
<p>Making decisions for and not with families/youth sends the message that we do not trust their ability to make effective decisions, undermines their sense of self-efficacy and undercuts parental resilience. Workers do not need to validate all decision families make, but should engage them as active participants in ensuring their children are safe and that their family thrives. Placing parents/youth in the center of the process of weighing options and choosing strategies helps them to build and practice decision-making skills that will support their ongoing resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In direct case planning with families use decision-making models that place families in the center (e.g. <a href="#">Family Team Conferences/Meetings</a>, <a href="#">Motivational Interviewing</a>).</li> <li>• Train workers to engage in thoughtful supportive conversation about goals, strengths and barriers when developing service plans.</li> <li>• Lift up successes and validate good decisions.</li> <li>• Create substantive roles for tenant advisory boards/Youth advisory boards.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage families/youth to be intentional about their own wellness and self-care</b>	
<p>While resilience is exhibited in a moment of stress or crisis there is important work that can be done with families while things are stable to help them prepare for stressful moments. This may be as simple as creating a plan for how you will take care of dinner and the nighttime routine after a particularly stressful day at work, or it could be making a safety plan for children in the case of relapse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with families to recognize triggers that are stressful or challenging to them and create a plan or how they will care for themselves and their children are during these moments</li> <li>• Link family members to community organizations and activities that provide activities to support self-care—e.g. faith groups, yoga, exercise, support groups, etc.</li> <li>• Encourage family members to make self-care and the release of stress part of their daily routine.</li> </ul>
<b>Support and promote cultural, ethnic and racial pride</b>	
<p>Transmitting cultural identity and history is a central role of parents and parenting and a key form of engagement between parents and children. When there are negative stereotypes about a family's culture, ethnicity or race—or even if the family's culture, ethnicity or race is invisible to dominant culture—it can create a barrier between parent and child and undercut that part of resilience that is bolstered by a strong sense of cultural identity and personal and cultural history.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow, encourage and support families to engage in cultural expression in how they decorate their homes, what foods they cook, and the holidays they celebrate.</li> <li>• Ask questions about family members' cultural background and seek to learn about their perspectives.</li> <li>• Support families from non-dominant cultures in sharing their own culture and traditions if they wish.</li> </ul>

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Connect family members to clinical resources as needed</b>	
<p>Mental health issues, alcohol and drug use, domestic violence undercut resilience and have significant impact on family stability. Supportive housing has traditionally been strong on connecting individuals to the clinical resources to address these issues. Intentional thought must be given, however, to how family dynamics impact and is impacted by these issues and attempts to address them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to mental health and alcohol and drug treatment services for the parent consider mental health services for children, or activities that engage both parent and child such as <a href="#">Parent Child Interaction Therapy</a> or <a href="#">Circles of Security</a></li> <li>• Plan for how children will be cared for while parents receive clinical services—especially inpatient treatment.</li> </ul>

supported and encouraged to make for themselves are all important parts of resilience building.

**SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**

Social connections are a vital pathway to positive outcomes. They provide key instrumental supports—someone to turn to if you need emergency childcare or a ride, as well as deeper emotional supports. Positive social connections are associated with everything from better health and longer lives, to the enhanced ability to get a job. Like resilience, social connections is not something we have or don't have, but something we build based on how we engage and interact with the world.

*Parent's social connections*

For both mothers and fathers high levels of emotional, informational, instrumental or spiritual support is associated with positive parental mood; positive perceptions of and responsiveness to one's children; parental satisfaction, well-being and sense of competence; and lower levels of anger, anxiety and depression. Conversely, inadequate, conflicting or dissatisfying social connections can be the source of parental stress. Research also tells us that it isn't about how many people an individual knows, but the quality of those relationships and the support received from them. To support strong parenting we want social networks that are infused with healthy, supportive, caring relationships. Supportive social connections buffer parents from stressors and support nurturing parenting behaviors that promote secure attachments in children. Social isolation is a risk factor consistently associated with disengaged parenting, maternal depression and increased likelihood of child maltreatment.

*Child/Youth Social Connections*

**SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Families often reach supportive housing after extended periods of instability. They may have moved several times or spent months in temporary housing arrangements, in shelters, staying with friends and families, or even on the streets. Extended instability impacts the ability to create and keep friendships. In addition, many of these families are dealing with complex issues beyond homelessness. Families struggling with alcohol or drug abuse issues may have needed to abandon friendships in an effort to "stay clean." Families may have burned out friendships or familial relationships by asking for financial support or a temporary place to stay. A family's history of trauma can lead to difficulty in forming trusting relationships or manifest in depression, aggression, or other behavior that create social barriers.

For children and youth residential instability may limit the opportunities to form relationships with peers or experience the "normal" peer activities of childhood like having a friend over to play. Stress and trauma can impact behavior in ways that negatively impact peer relationships.

Learning to develop, manage and maintain relationships is an important developmental task for children and youth. For children and youth the focus on social connections has three dimensions—a strong connection with a loving caring adult, positive peer relationships and effective engagement with social institutions.

Many research studies affirm that youth who feel close and attached to at least one caring adult are psychologically healthier than peers who feel detached; and demonstrate that being connected to a trusted adult serves as a buffer against many types of health risks including depression, early sexual activity, violence and alcohol and marijuana use.

Relationships and interactions with peers help young people develop and express independence and develop their own identity differentiated from their family. Identity includes a youth's self-concept (i.e. beliefs about oneself) and a sense of who one is (including gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status). A sense of independence includes: emotional autonomy – relinquishing primary dependence on parents and forging more mature relationships with parents and other trusted adults; cognitive autonomy – developing one's own values, opinions and beliefs; and behavior autonomy – making and being responsible for personal decisions.

Research shows that being connected to a social institution can have a similar buffering effect on youth as being connected to other people. In order for youth to feel connected to a social institution, they must perceive the social institution as safe and believe that at least one adult associated with the institution is fair, cares about them both as a member of a group (e.g., student/team player/band member/congregant) and as an individual, and wants them to succeed.

***Building social connections***

In supportive housing we have a unique opportunity to engage family members in the place that they live. Think intentionally about how to create opportunities that invite social interchange within the housing setting.

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Create space that encourages social interaction</b>	
<p>Spaces or events that encourage individuals to linger and to interact provide informal opportunities for building social connections in the housing environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create seating around children's play areas so parents with young children can talk and connect.</li> <li>• Create hangout spaces for older youth</li> <li>• Place a bulletin board or coffee-maker by the elevators or stairs to encourage lingering or talking among residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Connect residents to social activities</b>	
<p>For families that may be socially isolated taking proactive steps to engage with others can be difficult. Planned social activities can help to break these barriers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan regular social events for tenants.</li> <li>• Post information on other social events happening in the community.</li> <li>• Provide space and supports for resident planned social events.</li> </ul>

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Prepare to deal with social conflict</b>	
<p>Whenever people live in close proximity there are opportunities for conflict. Having clearly understood guidelines for how to deal with conflict is important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a structured plan for dealing with conflict that is explained to all residents as they move in.</li> <li>• Use approaches to resolving conflict that help to build longer term skills like <a href="#">restorative justice</a> or mediation practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Support families in developing a plan to strengthen positive social connections</b>	
<p>For families that may be socially isolated taking proactive steps to engage with others can be difficult. Planned social activities can help to break these barriers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use eco-maps, genograms or other tools to help families intentionally evaluate which social relationships are positively contributing to their lives and which are not and make a plan for nurturing the positive connections in their lives.</li> <li>• Embed into planning activities with families prompts that help them to think about how they could engage family and friends as supports.</li> <li>• Focus specifically on youth and connecting them to resources that can help them think about how to build positive social connections that support positive choices.</li> </ul>

### **KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

To best help children learn and grow it is important that parents, staff who work with families, and as they grow older even youth themselves have an understanding of what is happening developmentally, how to support development and can recognize when development is off track.

#### *Helping parents understand parenting and child development*

No parent knows everything about children or is a “perfect parent.” An understanding of parenting strategies and child development helps parents understand what to expect and how to provide what children need during each developmental phase. All parents, and those who work with children, can benefit from increasing their knowledge and understanding of child development, including:

- physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development
- signs indicating a child may have a developmental delay and needs special help
- cultural factors that influence parenting practices and the perception of children
- factors that promote or inhibit healthy child outcomes
- discipline and how to positively impact child behavior
- understanding parenting and its role in development

- how to read and understand their child’s cues
- specific strategies on how to deal with challenging parenting issues

Gaining more knowledge about child development and developing greater skills in parenting are particularly important given the recent advances in the fields of neuroscience, pediatrics and developmental psychology. Scientists in these fields have provided much evidence of the critical importance of early childhood as the period in which the foundation for intellectual, social, emotional and moral development is established. Furthermore, numerous research studies show this foundation is determined by the nature of the young child’s environments and experiences that shape early brain development.

*Helping youth, parents, and those who work with youth understand adolescent behavior*

Research now shows that adolescence is a rich period of brain development—second only to the early years in the number of new neural connections formed. This period of developmental change lasts until the mid-twenties. Many of the “issues” we associate with adolescents—impulsivity, poor choices, thrill seeking, are natural by products of the brain changes they are undergoing. Understanding this context helps adolescents, and the adults around them, understand their own behavior and how to plan and create contexts that will help them make appropriate choices. A deepened knowledge of adolescent development can help adults and adolescents themselves to:

- Understand how changes in the adolescent brain impact behavior.
- Create safe outlets for adolescent developmental needs.

It is important for property managers and case managers to understand typical adolescent behavior so that issues around vandalism, smoking or drinking are put in a developmental context and addressed with appropriate consequences.

**FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Research shows that homelessness and housing instability can negatively impact development. This makes it even more important to focus on development and the skills parents need to support their child’s development. There are challenges however. Parents themselves may face developmental and processing issues that impact how parenting and child development information can be delivered. Parents with reading limitations, for example, cannot take advantage of written materials or tools. Others may find classroom style learning opportunities challenging. In many cases children and youth may not have a typical developmental profile. Thus it is important to provide context when providing information on milestones and developmental expectations.

**A TIP FROM THE INTENSIVE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR FAMILIES PROGRAM IN CONNECTICUT**

*During home visits case managers can follow-up on what parents are learning in parenting education classes. This provides a real time opportunity for parents to try out what they are learning with coaching and support.*

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Link families to appropriate developmental supports</b>	
<p>As discussed in the sections on trauma and development, the children who enter supportive housing often have experiences that can take their development off track. These families need extra support accessing quality childcare and supplemental developmental supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create linkages to child and adolescent service providers (a description of key services is provided).</li> <li>• <a href="#">Screen all children for developmental delays.</a></li> <li>• Share assessment results with parents and use it as an opportunity to discuss how best to support their children's development.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage families to learn more about parenting and child development</b>	
<p>It can be hard for parents to admit when they are struggling with parenting issues. By sending the message that all parents need to learn and making parenting resources widely available programs make it easier for parents to learn about parenting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When developmental issues arise connect parents to resources that can help them learn more about the issue.</li> <li>• Connect families to parent education classes, parent child activities, and other community resources designed to support parents and parenting.</li> <li>• Create a resource library with books, videos, fact sheets and other information.</li> <li>• Provide information and resources to adolescents that will help them to understand their own developmental processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Build staff knowledge of parenting and child and adolescent development</b>	
<p>While staff are not expected to be parent educators having a basic understanding of child and adolescent development and how parenting impacts development can help them to understand and be more supportive to not only the children and youth they serve but also their parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training to staff on parenting and child and adolescent development.</li> <li>• Encourage or support staff in participating in parent education courses, or otherwise building their knowledge base.</li> <li>• Make sure staff have access to tip sheets and resources on common parenting issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Train staff to deal with behavioral issues in an empathetic way</b>	
<p>When child or youth behavior issues arise it can be frustrating and hard for staff to be empathetic to the child or to the parent. Dealing with anger or other negative emotions may trigger trauma reactions that can increase problematic behavior. The parent may also be dealing with their own frustrations about the child's behavior or with how the interaction or dealing with their own history of trauma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the parent, or child themselves in the case of older youth, an opportunity to propose or develop a solution to the problem themselves.</li> <li>• Provide training on trauma and its impact on behavior.</li> </ul>

### CONCRETE SUPPORTS

It is no surprise that providing help when families need it can help to avert crises that can contribute to instability. Supportive housing by its nature is very attuned to the provision of concrete supports. We also want to make sure that supportive housing provides an environment where asking for help is easy, non-stigmatizing and expected. Learning how to ask for help will help parents and youth build advocacy skills and the underlying sense of self-efficacy. When thinking about family supportive housing there is a need to think about concrete supports that include key developmental supports for children, youth and parents and opportunities for constructive engagement for youth in their home and community.

#### *For Parents*

Assisting parents with identifying, finding and receiving concrete support in times of need helps to ensure they and their family receive the basic necessities everyone deserves in order to grow (e.g., healthy food, a safe environment), as well as specialized medical, mental health, social, educational or legal services. When parents seek help, it should be provided in a manner that does not increase stress.

Services should be coordinated, respectful, caring and strengths-based. Attention should be paid to the time and logistical requirements required to participate in the proposed services. Too often for high needs families workers focus on connecting them to an array of services without thinking through the challenges families face when trying to access multiple services.

#### *For Children/Youth*

The need for support and help is especially true for young people as they navigate the challenges and transitions that occur during adolescence. However, it can be difficult for a young person to realize that help is even needed.

### SUPPORTING FAMILIES AS THEY ACCESS CONCRETE SUPPORTS

Families also can feel very hesitant to engage in services, for a variety of reasons including stigma, lack of trust, high turnover in public health settings, etc.

Case managers can take steps to get to know the providers and make more personal referrals. They can also become knowledgeable about exactly what benefits clients may receive by engaging in services, which may have to be explored during several discussions. Case managers can provide transportation to some services, and have ongoing contact with the providers, and can act as a “bridge” in building and maintaining trust in the new provider relationship, especially when issues arise.

*-INTENSIVE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR FAMILIES, CONNECTICUT*

### THINKING ABOUT FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Families who enter supportive housing, because they are high need families may have a history of connection with the more intrusive of service systems—child welfare, mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, even penal systems. This may make them more mistrustful of services. In addition, their lack of stable housing may have made it difficult for them to form relationships with traditional service systems—education, health care, child care, etc. Thus they may have less experience and be less prepared to engage with service partners as decision makers and advocates for themselves and their children.

Whether they are looking for assistance with homework, searching for a first job, navigating a first relationship, or struggling with depression, it may be very difficult for a young person to ask for help, thinking they should be able to figure this out on their own.

One unique challenge is when there are conflicts between what children need or want and parents’ choices. A simple and common example

is birth control. For families in supportive housing this may become more complex because the child may have needs for therapeutic supports because trauma and instability in their childhood which the parent may have difficulty in dealing with because it brings up feelings of guilt or inadequacy.

*Providing concrete supports*

Because the provision of concrete supports is a clear strength of supportive housing settings this section of the document focuses on the ways in which supportive housing settings can help build the underlying capacity of the family to effectively self-advocate for services and support.

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Build help seeking skills</b>	
<p>Parents and youth need experiences that enable them to understand their rights in accessing services, what services are available and how to navigate service systems. Additionally, for some parents, asking for help is not an easy thing to do. It may be embarrassing because it can feel like asking for help implies that they don't know how to solve their own problems or take care of their family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make help seeking a sign of strength—be responsive and positive when families ask for support, even if you cannot get them connected to the resources they are asking for.</li> <li>• Provide coaching and support in understanding service systems and how to access services.</li> <li>• Leverage your trusting relationships with families to help them connect to services that may have a stigma attached to them (e.g. mental health, substance abuse or domestic violence services). A “warm hand-off” can help families connect to needed services they might not otherwise be willing to access.</li> <li>• Help family members practice what they will say to a service provider, what questions they will ask, and how to advocate for what they need.</li> </ul>
<b>Support the parent/youth as decision-maker</b>	
<p>It is important to put parents and youth in the decision making role about the services they are being connected to. This not only helps to build a strengths-based relationship with the family, but also to build their skills in getting the help and support they need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use decision-making processes where families are in a leadership role.</li> <li>• When families seem resistant to following up on a referral, talk with them to understand better what their experiences and reservations might be.</li> </ul>

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Remain sensitive to the challenges families may experience in accessing services</b>	
<p>Many families do not get the services they are eligible for and/or referred to. While it is easy to assume that this is a failure on the family's part, the navigation of service systems is hard for any family and the families that enter supportive housing often face specific challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help family members problem solve around the logistic barriers to accessing services such as difficulty in getting to the service, a mismatch of the hours to the family's schedule, or long waiting lines.</li> <li>• Pay attention to literacy or language issues that may be a barrier and provide extra support to families with these challenges.</li> <li>• Help families to process negative experiences they may have had with services and systems.</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage mutual support among residents</b>	
<p>Mutual support is an important strategy because it not only connects families to important resources, but it underline the facts that all families are valuable and have something to offer (supporting resilience) and supports the building of supportive relationships between families (building social connections). Scattered site housing programs may have to create one or several hubs when families are not housed in the same location or in close proximity to each other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize swap events; or set up other means for residents to pass on or trade resources such as children's clothes, toys, or other household things.</li> <li>• Set up a "time bank" or other mechanism for residents to exchange child care arrangement, or build off each other's skills.</li> <li>• Create specific opportunities for youth to help out around the building or with other tenants—ideally being paid for tasks such as shoveling walks, acting as mother's helpers, etc.</li> </ul>

**COGNITIVE, SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE**

Our social emotional competence is our ability to communicate and control our emotions and relate to the emotions of others. This basic capacity begins in early infancy and undergirds much of our ongoing development. When we can communicate what we are feeling and understand the emotions of others it helps us build relationships; get along with neighbors, peers, teachers and co-workers; and it shapes our day-to-day interactions. Our control of emotions helps us to shape how we respond to frustrations. As children grow and mature they will need to master a set of cognitive competencies that will allow them to succeed in school and move onto having a job and career that will support them in adulthood.

THE THEORY	IDEAS FOR PRACTICE
<b>Identify when social emotional development is not on track</b>	
<p>Because social emotional development is fundamental to all learning it is important to identify delays early and get families the help they need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screen children for social emotional delays (tools for social emotion screening. <a href="http://www.ecmhc.org/tools/screening.html">http://www.ecmhc.org/tools/screening.html</a>).</li> <li>• Ask parents if they have any concerns about their child and their emotions, ability to get along with others, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Help parents understand how to support their child’s social, emotional and cognitive development</b>	
<p>Children’s social emotional development is grounded in receiving loving support by parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage staff to model nurturing behavior when they are interacting with children.</li> <li>• Coach parents on how simple things, playing with children, asking them about their feelings, comforting them when they are hurt help support social emotional development.</li> <li>• Help parents think about how they create spaces in their home that help children to feel safe, explore safely and learn.</li> </ul>
<b>Support older youth as they develop cognitive, social emotional skills</b>	
<p>For older children and youth adolescence is a period of significant changes – both physical and emotional. Youth need nurturing adult support, positive peer relationships and wholesome experiences to help them navigate these transitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify opportunities for youth to participate in new experiences, take positive risks, and lead activities within the supportive housing setting and in the broader community.</li> <li>• Talk with youth about their future and involve them in setting goals and making decisions about their own lives, especially thinking about education and employment.</li> <li>• Encourage youth to be engaged in at least one ongoing activity (sports, arts, community service) or place (school, recreation center, faith institution) that builds on a unique talent or strength.</li> <li>• Build relationships with youth-serving organizations that address the needs of adolescents specifically.</li> <li>• Help youth practice and get feedback on new skills.</li> </ul>

### **TAKING A PROTECTIVE AND PROMOTIVE FACTORS INFORMED APPROACH TO PRACTICE**

Protective and promotive factors are influenced by environment and the interactions and relationships individuals have with others. Bringing a protective and promotive factors approach into supportive housing practice is not about changing the core of what we do with families, but it is bringing an intentional lens to existing practice that will help staff to interact with families in ways that subtly engage families in ways that build protective and promotive factors. To make this happen supportive housing programs should:

- ▶ Ensure that all staff have a basic orientation to the protective and promotive factors and can apply a protective and promotive factors approach in how they interact with families.
- ▶ Ensure that staff who work directly with families have a deeper understanding of the protective and promotive factors and understand how to:
  - Help families/youth build protective and promotive factors as part of their everyday lives.
  - Engage families around building their own protective and promotive factors.
- ▶ Review rules and procedures to ensure that they support the building rather than undermining of protective and promotive factors.

Trusting working relationships are essential to helping all families achieve their potential. Designers, developers, administrators and practitioners in the field of family supportive housing, must be particularly sensitive to entering into a family's life respectfully, gently, patiently and consistently because families in supportive housing have had limited experience with trusting relationships. The protective and promotive factors provide a framework to support staff as they build trusting relationships with families.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- For more about the research and evidence supporting the Strengthening Families™ concepts, see [http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework\\_Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf](http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework_Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf)
- For more about the research and evidence Youth Thrive™ see [http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/2014/Youth-Thrive\\_Advancing-Healthy-Adolescent-Development-and-Well-Being.pdf](http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/2014/Youth-Thrive_Advancing-Healthy-Adolescent-Development-and-Well-Being.pdf)
- For a rich set of Strengthening Families implementation tools go to: [StrengtheningFamilies.net](http://StrengtheningFamilies.net)
- [Everyday Actions to Build Protective Factors](#)

### **TRAINING RESOURCES FOR STAFF**

#### [NACTF Online Training](#)

*This on-line training course is built around the Strengthening Families protective and promotive factors. It includes seven modules, one on each protective factor as well as an introductory module which serves as an introduction to the protective and promotive factors, and a closing module that helps practitioners move from knowledge to action.*

#### [Overview of Strengthening Families Training Resources](#)

*Expanding the training link on this page will take you to a number of resources for training on a protective and promotive factors approach for staff. These include resources you can use to integrate into your own training as well as links to both free and fee-based training.*

## Section 4: Windows of Opportunity for Strengthening Families in Supportive Housing

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In the previous two sections, we introduced the core components of supportive housing, listed again in the box on the right. We also explored three key lenses for practice when delivering supportive housing to families:

- ▶ Addressing stress and trauma
- ▶ Supporting optimal development for children and youth
- ▶ Supporting parents and youth in building protective and promotive factors

### WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY:

- [Project Administration and Design](#)
- [Property Management](#)
- [Supportive Services](#)
- [Community](#)

In this section of the guide, we explore how each of the core components can serve as a window of opportunity<sup>3</sup>—an advantageous moment in time—to work with families through a trauma-informed, developmentally supportive, and protective and promotive factors lens. Throughout this section we offer examples, tools, and resources for applying this lens to each of the core components of supportive housing implementation. To facilitate easy access to the tools we have also marked each tool with a small icon to indicate its suggested use:

- ▶ **Planning:** Blue dots (●) indicate tools designed to be used at the program planning level—for example program self-assessments
- ▶ **Skill building:** Red squares (■) indicate a staff training or skill building tool
- ▶ **Practice:** Green stars (★) indicate a practice tool for programs to use directly with families

We also provide an additional summary chart which lists all tools by category—planning, skill-building, practice—and includes a short description of each tool.

### Project Administration and Design

As key decisions are being made about the structure, siting, staffing and design of supportive housing it is important to keep the unique needs to previously homeless families in mind. Here we focus on three key parts of the administration and design process: design and build out; building team capacity and developing partnerships.

<sup>3</sup> "Window of Opportunity" has been defined as "A short [period](http://www.investorwords.com/5323/window_of_opportunity.html#ixzz3ol97t9yo) of time during which an opportunity must be acted on or missed." Read more: [http://www.investorwords.com/5323/window\\_of\\_opportunity.html#ixzz3ol97t9yo](http://www.investorwords.com/5323/window_of_opportunity.html#ixzz3ol97t9yo)

## Design and build out/Identifying Units

Simple things make a huge difference in the lives of a family with children—for example a layout which allows a parent to easily monitor what is going on with their children while they are making meals, having a place to securely park a stroller so it does not need to be carried up the stairs each day, and having recreational space for youth. While these seem like small things it can often be the accumulation of small stresses that can make parenting feel harder. For those supportive housing installations that have the opportunity to start from the ground up, designing spaces with the needs of children, youth and families in mind can make the work of parenting easier and less stressful. For scattered site supportive housing this same type of thinking can help in the evaluation and selection of individual units in the community.

## Selecting Team Members and Building Team Capacity

Working in a supportive housing environment is hard in general. Working in a supportive housing environment that is focused on families requires a special set of skills. Staff not only need to be patient and attentive to the needs of high needs adults being served, but also like and work well with children and youth, and sensitive to how to address the needs of children and coach parents, without undercutting parental authority and confidence. Ideally all team members are grounded in a clear understanding of:

- Protective and promotive factors
- Child and youth development and the interaction of parenting and development
- Trauma and how it impacts adult and child behavior
- Recognizing and responding to crisis issues (child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, bullying, e.g.)

Different levels of training and professional development will be required based on how deeply staff members engage with families. A supportive housing case manager who works directly with families for example will need deeper training, whereas those staffing the front desk at a building or a receptionist at the office might only need a lighter introduction to the topics. It is important to be inclusive and think holistically about who engages with families. Sometime an unexpected partner, like maintenance staff or a night desk staffer, may be the first to notice that a family is under stress. These support and ancillary staff see families every day and, as a result, have insights on the fact that something is going on for a family. While these staff members are not expected to provide intensive support to families they can do their *day-to-day work in a way which is strength-based, trauma-informed, supportive and helps to support family and youth protective and promotive factors—and that they can help to ensure that families that are experiencing stress don't fall through the cracks, but rather get the support they need.*

## Developing Partnerships

While developing partnerships is an ongoing task for most supportive housing efforts it is important for those that are developing supportive housing to think from the outset about engaging the partners that can support them in their focus on family trauma, child and youth development and protective and promotive factors. These are an expanded set of partners from more traditional supportive housing efforts. Supportive housing providers may need to invest time in understanding the systems in which these new partners operate and helping these new partners understand the unique developmental and parenting needs of families recovering from homelessness.

Windows of Opportunity in Project Administration and Design		
DEFINITION FROM DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY: <i>The process of planning and leading the supportive housing project, including key decisions about physical structure, team members and funding.</i>		
FAMILY SUPPORTIVENESS QUALITY INDICATOR: <i>Planning, design and team building is all informed by an understanding of the needs of families.</i>		
WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY	DESIRED RESULT	RESOURCES AND TOOLS
<i>Design and Build Out</i>	A physical environment that helps to reduce parental stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Project administration and design self-assessment</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Environment checklist</a></li> </ul>
<i>Building Team Capacity</i>	<p>Key individuals who touch the lives of families are grounded in a clear understanding of elements of human services practice and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protective and promotive factors</li> <li>• Child and youth development and the interaction of parenting and development</li> <li>• Trauma and how it impacts adult and child behavior</li> <li>• How to recognize and respond to crisis issues (child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, bullying, e.g.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Staff competency matrix</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Protective and promotive factors actions sheets</a></li> </ul>
<i>Building Partnerships</i>	<p>Partnerships in place to support parenting, child and youth development for families in supportive housing</p> <p>A shared focus on family success from all partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Planning worksheet for family services</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Services to support child development and parenting - tips for understanding and accessing services</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Resource directory survey form</a></li> </ul>

## Property and Housing Management

Property and housing management may seem removed from the direct work with families, but the day to day business of rent collection, housing inspections, lease violation enforcement and responding to clogged toilets or burst pipes provide opportunities to interact with families in ways that:

- ▶ Build protective and promotive factors
- ▶ Are sensitive and responsive to trauma history and
- ▶ Support child development

### Move-in/orientation

Move-in and orientation is a big moment for many families, especially for those that have been dealing with housing instability for an extended period of time. Move-in and orientation is an important moment for housing management to help tenants understand expectations and the rules governing their housing situation. For families with children, complying with these expectations and rules will be partially dependent on family dynamics and parents' parenting skills. To support parents the move-in and orientation process ideally:

- Sends the message that all family members are welcome, engaged and supported.
- Clarifies expectations for families—and the supports they can draw upon to help them meet those expectations.
- Helps parents to understand the limits they must set and reinforce for their children in order to meet expectations of housing management and norms of the building and community.
- Provides information that will help the family feel at home both in the building/community and in the neighborhood.
- Identifies and addresses family needs that may require action by housing management (e.g. installing cabinet locks and other child proofing devices for a family with young children or deep cleaning for a family with a child with asthma).
- Connects families to resources and supports to help them maintain their home.

The goal is to create a move-in and orientation process that engages the entire family—parents and children.

### Everyday interactions

The regular interactions which staff have with families—taking rent payments, conducting inspections, hosting tenant meetings—provide important opportunities for day-to-day interactions with families that build protective and promotive factors, support parenting and child development, and are responsive to stress and trauma. Some of these actions can be small, for example setting aside time at a tenant meeting for families to interact informally over snacks, posting information about community events for families on the bulletin board, or including a parenting tip or a description of a fun parent-child activity in a rent reminder notice.

### When conflict or issues arise

With the goal of keeping families housed, it is important to keep attuned to what may be early warning signs of family stress and instability. The goal is to prevent a conflict or crisis. When warning signs appear and when an actual conflict or crisis emerges, it is especially important for property management and supportive services to effectively communicate. Things such as late rent payments, conflicts with neighbors, issues with unit upkeep and disruptive visitors can be indicators that families need extra support and can also provide important opportunities to engage families in dialogue before problems mount and begin to threaten housing stability. This is a time when it is critical for property management and support services to communicate effectively. Special protocols should be in place to address how staff will work with parents to address a range of issues.

#### TIP: "MOVE-IN/WELCOME BASKETS" COULD INCLUDE:

- magnets with important property management and emergency numbers
- calendars with local dates highlighted such as the start of school, tenant meeting dates and times, special community family events and rent due dates
- "special", colorful folders that families can use to keep important papers organized such as the lease, initial inspection, etc

## Windows of Opportunity in Property and Housing Management

**DEFINITION FROM DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY:** *The ongoing operation of supportive housing and connection to private market landlords. It is a set of functions involved with receiving and processing tenant rental applications, receiving rent payments, and ensuring the ongoing physical upkeep of the housing.*

**FAMILY SUPPORTIVENESS QUALITY INDICATOR:** *Policies and procedures are developmentally appropriate, trauma informed, and do not undercut protective and promotive factors.*

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY	DESIRED RESULT	RESOURCES AND TOOLS
<i>Move-In and Orientation</i>	Move-in and orientation process engages the entire family—parents and children—and helps families succeed in housing by clarifying expectations and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Language for tenants’ manual</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Move-in orientation checklist</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Sample tenants’ handbook</a></li> </ul>
<i>Everyday Interactions</i>	<p>In large and small interactions with families staff members engage in a way which helps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce protective and promotive factors</li> <li>• Engage with children in a developmentally appropriate way</li> <li>• Support parents in their parenting role</li> <li>• Is sensitive to trauma and how it impacts adult and child behavior</li> <li>• Recognizes and responds to crisis issues (child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, bullying, e.g.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Children by Age</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Everyday actions to reinforce protective and promotive factors</a></li> </ul>
<i>When Conflict and Issues Arise</i>	<p>Housing stability is encouraged because property management and supportive services work together effectively to address family issues that are contributing to conflict and issues.</p> <p>A shared focus on family success from all partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">Training and tools for conflict and crisis</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Addressing child behavioral issues</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Overview of de-escalation strategies for traumatized children and youth</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Creating a stability plan with families</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Recognizing child abuse and neglect</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Responding to child abuse and neglect: Creating a protocol for your program</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Taking a team approach to resolving problems with families</a></li> </ul>

## Supportive Services

The work of a family supportive housing case manager begins at “move-in” and ends at the family’s request or when they “move on”. In building a trust-based working relationship, case managers are called on to multi-task: assist families in achieving housing stability, navigate multiple systems to coordinate services, connect family members to community resources and re-engage family and other natural support networks that might have been fractured over time. The case manager works in partnership with family members, meeting with them in their home or in the community to assess strengths and needs, set goals, and coordinate services.

A separate resource has been developed to describe and establish standard for practice with families in supportive housing.<sup>4</sup> The inset describes five critical components of practice. Employing these components, supportive housing case managers have several opportunities to build and strengthen the protective and promotive factors in families, starting with the housing search.

### **Housing Search**

In scattered-site supportive housing, families are engaged in the housing search – finding an affordable rental property that meets their families need and becoming acquainted with the prospective landlord. This process can often take a long time, can involve both excitement and disappointments for families and is a key opportunity for relationship building between the case manager and the family. Case managers generally accompany families as they go to look at prospective apartments. Ideally case managers can use housing search as an opportunity to:

- Help parents think about what they need for their family both in their home and in a community.
- Get to know all family members within the context of housing search visits.
- Coach families on how to talk with landlords, what questions to ask, and appropriate expectations.

### **KEY COMPONENTS OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR FAMILIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:**

**ENGAGEMENT:** the process of developing and maintaining rapport and trust in a collaborative working relationship and creating a safe and supportive environment for family members, inviting them into a change process, valuing and making central the power, perspectives, abilities and solutions they offer.

**ASSESSMENT:** a dynamic process of gathering and reflecting on the strengths, needs and change process phase of family members to help family members make decisions. Information is collected on existing protective and promotive factors that can serve as building blocks for the change process and achieving family stability.

**TEAMING:** working with the family to build a network of support that consists of both informal supports and professional service providers to collaborate to help the family achieve its identified goals.

**PLANNING/LINKING TO SERVICES:** working with the family to develop clearly defined, realistic and measurable goals that address the family needs and designing plans accordingly and ensuring family members are connected to the necessary and desired services.

**ADVOCACY:** speaking out for families in order to support them in strengthening their family and developing their ability to advocate for themselves.

**TRACKING AND ADJUSTING:** ensuring the team’s plan is implemented with the necessary people, intensity, and quality to achieve the desired outcomes and adapting the plan as necessary given the progress being achieved.

<sup>4</sup> See A Practice Framework for Delivering Services to Families in Supportive Housing at [www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org) and then link to CSSP.

## Move-In/Orientation

Preparing a family and helping them to move into housing is a critical time. Families may be both hopeful and anxious – wary that this blessing will not last. The first priority is helping them to stabilize their lives as well as their living situation. The supportive housing case manager uses this time to set the foundation for a collaborative relationship by building an understanding of the family’s

larger needs, dynamics and who may already be a part of the family’s network and could be considered team members. It is also a time for the supportive housing case manager to share with the family the kind of support they can provide for the family and make a plan for how they will continue to work together. It may be a time when formal, standardized assessments are employed but the emphasis should be on getting to know the family, not completing forms.

Move-in and orientation also is a key transitional moment that a supportive housing case manager can use to help families to reflect on past experiences, set goals, and bond.

### TIP:

*During the Housing Search or at Move-in, drive or walk around the neighborhood with family members to scout out potential community resources for the family such as public transportation, parks, places of worship, grocery stores, police and fire stations, schools, etc.*

## Helping Families Access Services and Support

Staff should work in partnership with families to develop a service plan with family strengths, needs and goals at the center. Ideally the process of building a service plan provides an opportunity for family members to enhance their protective and promotive factors by exercising critical skills like goal setting, problem solving, and sequential planning, etc. A fundamental practice used in supportive housing settings that dovetails nicely with the goal of enhancing these critical skills is *Motivational Interviewing (MI)*. MI is an evidence-based practice for individuals with substance use disorders to identify, examine and resolve ambivalence about changing behavior and to strengthen their motivation to change.

We can unintentionally undercut parental resilience by making decisions for and not with families. When we do this, it sends the message that we do not trust their ability to make effective decisions and undermines their sense of self-efficacy. The goal is not to validate any decision they make, but to engage them as active participants in making a plan that will ensure their children are safe and that their family thrives. By placing family members in the center of the process of weighing options and choosing strategies we help them to build and practice decision-making and advocacy skills that will support their ongoing resilience and help them access concrete supports. Again, this is aligned with [Motivational Interviewing](#) that emphasizes supporting change in a way that fits with a person’s own values and concerns.

While the process of developing service plans is not unique to working with families with children several specific considerations are important to emphasize:

### MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING: A STRATEGY TO HELP PARENTS REFLECT ON THEIR STRENGTHS AND DESIRES FOR A BETTER LIFE

Motivational Interviewing, originally developed in the field of substance abuse treatment, engages the client in identifying, examining and resolving ambivalence toward behavior change. As its name implies it focuses on building the internal motivation for change and relies on the assumption that internally motivated changes will be more successful and lasting. Motivational interviewing may be especially successful when used with parents because the parental urge to protect and care for their children can be a powerful motivator.

- Assessment processes need to be structured to focus on understanding the needs and strengths of the entire family both as individuals and as a family unit with its own dynamics.
- Similarly service plans should reflect the needs of the full family—and the recognition that accessing services for one family member will have rippling effects for all family members.
- Specific attention should be paid to ensure that assessments and service plans are inclusive of the three key considerations from this guide: promoting child development, being responsive to the impact of trauma and building protective and promotive factors.

In the end, how services are provided is as important as what is provided. The supportive housing case manager should continue to engage and work as part of a team with families throughout the life of the family’s service involvement. The family’s needs and stability should govern the types and timing of referrals to partners and community resources. Important aspects of delivering ongoing services and support is to continue to apply assessment skills to understand what is happening in a family’s life and changes that can be celebrated or concerns that need to be addressed head-on. This requires periodic – at least monthly – plan reviews where family members, including youth, and the case manager evaluate the success of referrals, strategies and service delivery and identify next steps. It also requires frequent and consistent communication with all team members, encouraging any team member to request a meeting at any time to help further the family’s well-being.

### Regular Visits and Contacts

One of the most important interventions a supportive housing case manager can make may be in their regular interactions with families within their own homes. This is where they can engage families fully in building a new life for themselves which helps them to thrive as a whole. This is a coaching role where the case manager connects with family members in a way that helps to build skills, habits and interactions that can help families to heal from the trauma they have experienced and get stronger.

### Team Meetings

Helping a family build—or rebuild—a supportive team of professionals and informal relationships alike can be a critical strategy for family supportive housing. It is a strategy that, when done well, can give both case managers and families a wide circle of effective support, a team upon which to rely over time.

A component of effective teaming with families is the Family Team Meeting (FTM).<sup>5</sup> Within the child protection and mental health agencies, FTMs “strive to maximize a family’s strengths. The basic assumptions that all families can harness their strengths and capabilities to enter into partnership with both informal (relatives, friends) and formal (agencies, service providers, courts) in order to make decisions that protect and nurture their children.”<sup>6</sup> Family team meetings help build parental resilience and social connections by providing a time to discuss goals or anything significant happening in a client’s life that could benefit from a team approach.

<sup>5</sup> A “Family team” meeting as described here is used interchangeably with other names used in the field for the same practice of teaming with the family to achieve family goals. Different names for the same fundamental process include Family Team Decision Making, Child and Family Team, Family Team conference.

<sup>6</sup> See *Bringing Families to the Table*, p1, 2002, found at <http://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare/child-welfare-misc/bringing-families-to-the-table-a-comparative-guide-to-family-meetings-in-child-welfare.pdf>

### When conflicts or issues arise

With the goal of keeping families housed, it is important to keep attuned to the issues that might be early warning signs of family stress and instability. This helps staff to act early to help prevent a conflict or crisis. Sometimes conflicts cannot be averted but if staff proactively support families in managing and responding to the situation it can help prevent problems from escalating. When warning signs appear and when an actual conflict or crisis emerges, it is especially important for supportive services and property management to have effective communication. Things such as late rent payments, conflicts with neighbors, issues with unit upkeep and disruptive visitors can be indicators that families need extra support and can also provide important opportunities to engage families in dialogue before problems mount and begin to threaten housing stability. Special protocols need to be developed ahead of time to deal with child behavior related issues and how both the parent and the child will be engaged in resolving these issues.

### When families leave the program or leave/transition housing

Like moving in, moving out or transitioning out of the service component of supportive housing can be an important transition for families. It is important to mark this transition and help families make a plan for how they will continue to get access to the services they need and supports for themselves and their children. Staff can help the family think through how they want to transition the relationships they hold with their neighbors, as well as the service providers who have worked with them while they were in supportive housing. The positive informal and formal relationships family members formed can continue to serve them well in the future.

Windows of Opportunity in Supportive Services		
<p><b>DEFINITION FROM DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY:</b> <i>The comprehensive package of supports that help tenants sustain housing stability and meet life goals. These services may be provided by the project's designated primary service provider or by collaborating organizations. The primary service provider ensures that tenants can access needed services on an ongoing basis.</i></p>		
<p><b>FAMILY SUPPORTIVENESS QUALITY INDICATOR:</b> <i>Supportive services staff and service partners respond to families in a way that is trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate and builds protective and promotive factors.</i></p>		
WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY	DESIRED RESULT	RESOURCES AND TOOLS
<i>Housing Search</i>	Family characteristics and needs are a structured part of the search process. Family friendly properties are prioritized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Family Housing Search Form</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Landlord questions</a></li> </ul>
<i>Move-In and Orientation</i>	Move-in and orientation process engages the entire family helps families succeed in housing by using move-in as a moment to reflect, set goals and bond. It is also an opportunity to deepen the relationship between supportive services staff and families deepening understanding of family strengths and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Maintaining a clean and safe home</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Move-in and orientation checklist</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Eco-map tool</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Using protective and promotive factors to help identify relevant strengths factors</a></li> </ul>

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY	DESIRED RESULT	RESOURCES AND TOOLS
<i>Helping Families Access Services and Supports</i>	Services are matched to family strengths and needs and supportive housing staff work effectively as a team with service partners to support family members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Planning Worksheet for Family Services</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Protective and Promotive Factors Action Sheets</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Using Protective and Promotive Factors to Develop Case Plans</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Staying Alert to Developmental Issues and Trauma</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">A Housing and Shelter Provider's Guide to Developmental and Behavioral Screening</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Motivational Interviewing Background Sheet</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Ensuring Family Voice While Navigating Multiple Systems: The family team meeting strategy in supportive housing</a></li> </ul>
<i>Regular Visits and Contacts</i>	<p>In large and small interactions with families case managers engage in a way which helps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce protective and promotive factors</li> <li>• Engage with children/ youth in a developmentally appropriate way</li> <li>• Support parents in their parenting role</li> <li>• Is sensitive to trauma and how it impacts adult and child behavior</li> <li>• Recognizes and responds to crisis issues (child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, bullying, e.g.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">Building Protective and Promotive Factors During Case Work Visits</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Everyday Actions Any Staff Member Can Take to Build Protective Factors</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Family Strengthening Activities</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Protective and Promotive Factors Action Sheets</a></li> <li>★ <a href="#">Parent Protective Factors Tune-up Kit</a></li> </ul>
<i>When Conflict and Issues Arise</i>	Housing stability is encouraged because property management and supportive services work together effectively to address family issues that are contributing to conflict and issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">Training and tools for conflict and crisis</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Dealing with child behavior issues</a></li> <li>■ <a href="#">Overview of de-escalation strategies for traumatized children and youth</a></li> </ul>
<i>When Families Leave or Transition out of the Program</i>	Transitions are designed so that families have a plan for sustaining successes and continuing growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Planning Worksheet for Family Services</a></li> </ul>

## Community

As discussed earlier, social connections is an important protective factor. Previously we provided an array of tools which supported individual work with families to build their social connections. Here we focus on how supportive housing efforts build, support and engage with community—both community among residents and the broader sense of community in the neighborhood in which housing is located.

Supportive Housing has the unique opportunity to help families connect to community. Supportive housing programs do this in multiple ways including:

- Encouraging mutually supportive relationships among supportive housing residents
- Building intentional supports for social networking and engagement into the housing environment
- Intentionally connecting residents to community-building institutions in the larger neighborhood
- Serving as advocates and supporters for family friendly changes to the neighborhood

What this will look like will vary by site and be influenced profoundly by whether the supportive housing setting is single-site or scattered site and the nature of the larger community where supportive housing is located.

### **Helping residents build social networks**

As mentioned earlier, many families coming into supportive housing have limited social networks and personal histories that complicate their ability to easily enter into and maintain social networks. Supportive housing can play a role in helping residents to develop their social networking skills in ways that will support their ability to develop relationships with other residents in the program and with others. This can be supported by the individualized work that supportive housing caseworkers do with families by modeling pro-social skills and helping families to build a plan for developing their social networks.

### **Fostering an Environment that Supports Networking and Engagement**

By building community among residents supportive housing can help residents develop emotional and instrumental support with others who recognize and empathize with their struggles. There are many opportunities, both formal and informal to bring residents together that will foster relationship building. Scattered site supportive housing efforts can creatively build community among residents that are geographically spread out by co-hosting events with community organizations that are in the neighborhoods residents live. Alternatively they can create a central location which families and youth come to for social and other events, using text or e-mail as a way to promote information sharing or even sharing resources among residents.

### **Connecting Residents to Community-building Opportunities and Organizations**

Supportive housing programs have a mandate and a set of skills that are focused on connecting families to supportive services in the community that can help them achieve stability. As part of communi-

#### **THE CONNECTION, INC.— PARENT CAFÉ'S**

The Connection, Inc. (TCI) has been hosting quarterly Circle of Support events to increase families' natural support networks. Clients are encouraged to invite family and friends. Events involve families' from 7 different TCI programs. Participants help decide on the kinds of activities they would like to see and are involved in planning events. Overwhelmingly, participants wanted to focus on topics having to do with parenting and, rather than have formal speakers or education about parenting, wanted to use the groups to discuss parenting in a variety of formats and learn from each other in a peer-to-peer manner.

TCI is now using the Parent Café model for these quarterly gatherings and participants are eager for each one. Participants have requested to make it a potluck event and have brought a variety of food to share each time. They are eager for the discussions and to share their parenting experiences with one another, even those who may not currently have custody of their children.

ty-building activities the same attention should be spent on connecting families to the informal community spaces and organizations which can help families to connect to their neighbors and feel like an active and engaged part of their larger community.

### Advocating for a Family-Supportive Community

Just like supportive housing has a role to play in advocating for policies and perspectives that are supportive of the homeless they can also play a role for advocating for a family supportive communities. Family supportive communities are places that are good places for children and youth. They are good places because there are a lot of rich opportunities for kids to be kids—to play, to learn, to engage with adults all around. They are also good places because children are allowed to be children. There is a recognition that children make mistakes and policies and procedures focus on helping kids learn and change their behavior in positive ways rather than excluding children who have made mistakes or caused trouble. They are good places for children because they are safe and there are organized attempts to deal with violence, gangs, or even unsafe street crossings or parks with litter. Finally family supportive communities are good places for parents. They recognize that raising children is hard and that parents need support and opportunities to learn, grow and be nurtured themselves.

Windows of Opportunity in Community		
DEFINITION FROM DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY: <i>The relationship to and role of housing in the larger context in which it operates.</i>		
FAMILY SUPPORTIVENESS QUALITY INDICATOR: <i>Tenants are linked to formal and informal supports that support parents in their parenting role and promote child development.</i>		
WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY	DESIRED RESULT	TOOLS
<i>Helping Residents Build Social Networks</i>	Families have the skills and tools to build healthy social networks	★ <a href="#">Building a family eco-map</a>
<i>Fostering an Environment that Supports Networking and Engagement</i>	Residents are linked in ways that build mutual support and enhance relational skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Parent and community cafes</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Building parenting community</a></li> </ul>
<i>Linking Residents to Formal and Informal Support for Families within the Larger Community</i>	Residents are connected to community organizations and places where they can meet other families with same aged children and do developmentally appropriate activities with their children. Youth are connected to positive youth development activities in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Planning worksheet for family services</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Resource directory survey</a></li> </ul>
<i>Advocating for a Family Supportive Community</i>	Staff members and residents are supported in advocating for changes that will enhance the family supportiveness of the larger community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <a href="#">Advocating for Family Supportive Community</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Trauma informed community-building</a></li> </ul>

## Section 5: Self-Assessment for Supportive Housing Serving Families

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### Project Administration and Design

Use the series of check lists in this section to assess how well your supportive housing is set up to strengthen family protective and promotive factors.

#### **Design and Build Out**

An effort has been made to make units family friendly (see [environmental checklist](#))

- When choosing site locations an effort is made to choose sites that are close to family friendly amenities. (parks, schools, libraries, grocery stores, transportation).
- During site selection attention is also placed on locations that will be safe for families with children.
- Indoor and outdoor play spaces have been created which include space for parents to sit and supervise young children's play.
- Future tenants are involved in site-selection decisions.

#### **Team Selection and Capacity Building**

- At least one member of the family supportive housing team or a partner has a background in child development, family support, or other child and family discipline.
- All team members receive a basic orientation to:
  - Understanding a protective and promotive factors approach to working with families
  - Taking a trauma informed approach
  - Positive relationship building skills: greeting families by name, active listening, customer service approach to interaction
  - Mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect
- Clear protocols are in place for how to respond when staff suspect crisis issues such as:
  - Child abuse and neglect
  - Domestic violence
  - Substance abuse

- Staff that work closely with families have been trained and are comfortable ensuring that their day-to-day practice:
  - Is trauma-informed
  - Is developmentally supportive
  - Builds protective and promotive factors

### Establishing partnerships

- Partnerships include a structured effort to build relationships with providers who focus on child and youth development and parenting issues.
- Specific partners are in place that support recovery and healing from trauma for children and adults.
- Partnerships are in place with more informal partners like churches, after school programs, etc. which provide positive developmental activities for children and families.
- All partners are asked to participate are provided an orientation on: protective and promotive factors and providing trauma informed support.

## Property and Housing Management

### Move-in and Orientation

- When families move in:
  - There is a structured effort to welcome them and help them make connections to neighbors
  - Information on rules and regulations and how to reach staff and get support is provided
- The orientation manual and materials has been reviewed to ensure it is family friendly and covers key issues that arise for families (see [guidanj13ce](#)).

### Regular interactions

- If housing, property managers or other members of the team need to meet with parents they try to address any child care needs by:
  - Meeting in the tenants apartment
  - Letting the parent bring the child to the meeting
  - Holding the meeting at a time when child care is not an issue
  - Providing toys or activities to keep children's attention while parents are in conversation
  - Being sensitive to the fact that parents may need to interrupt the conversation to tend to children's needs
- All staff members take a strengths-based supportive approach in their regular interactions with families.
  - Lift up successes and validate good decisions
  - Acknowledge children when they encounter them—even when their primary business is with parents or on apartment matters that are unrelated to children
  - Greet families—by name if possible
- Staff keep age appropriate first aid materials on hand (including EpiPens, Children's Benadryl and Tylenol, band aids, etc.) in case children in the building get hurt.

### When conflict or issues arise

- When issues such as late payment of rent, conflicts with neighbors, or poor upkeep arise a staff member first reaches out to families to see if they need extra support.
- If children's behavior causes complaints or problems:
  - Parents are notified and given an opportunity to discuss with their child and develop a plan before any other official action is taken
  - Mediation is offered to engage teens in resolving potentially problematic behavior
- Proactive plans are in place to deal with common child problem behaviors (e.g. fighting, graffiti, defacing building property). These plans are communicated clearly to parents up front.

## Supportive Services

### Getting to Know Families

- Assessment and case management tools record strengths and tie them to action plans.
- As part of the service planning process there is an attempt to learn about:
  - Family make-up, history and dynamics
  - Family's strengths and protective and promotive factors
  - Trauma history
- An effort has been made to determine whether all children and youth are developmentally and educationally on target.
  - Families are asked about any developmental concerns
  - Children are either screened or linked to a provider who can perform a developmental screening

### Housing Search

- Supportive services staff work closely with families
  - Using the housing search process as an opportunity to help families set and articulate goals and to educate parents on the type of environments children need to thrive
  - Advocating for families during the housing search process
- During housing search an effort is made to ensure that children are engaged.
- Child care is provided when needed.

### Move in and Orientation

- Supportive services staff make an effort to help families on move-in day.
- Supportive services staff check in with families to ensure that they understand key aspects of the rules of the building and can answer questions for them.
- Supportive services staff use move-in as an opportunity to work with families around goal setting and the creation of routines for their new home.

### Helping Families Access Services and Supports

- Families are at the center of any service planning process and take the lead on goal setting and plan development.
- A family teaming approach is used in service delivery.
- Service plans address
  - Trauma
  - Protective and promotive factors
  - Supporting children's development
- If children are not developmentally on target the family's service plan includes services and activities to support children's development.
- Regular activities are planned to support parenting and child development (parent support groups, parent child activities, etc.).
- Assessments, case management forms and other tools are designed to capture information not just about risk but also about strengths and protective and promotive factors.

### Regular Visits and Contacts

- Supportive services staff use regular visits and contacts as an opportunity to build protective and promotive factors, watch for developmental delays or challenges and identify symptoms of trauma.
- Supportive services staff try to check in with all family members during visits.

### When families leave the program or leave/transition housing

- Families are supported in developing a transition plan which includes a continued focus on: building protective and promotive factors, supporting their child's development, healing from traumatic experiences.
- There is a structured effort to allow families and especially children to say good bye and transition relationships.

## Community

### Helping residents build social networks

- Staff that work closely with families:
  - Model pro-social behavior
  - Makes social network development an explicit part of family's plans
  - Intentionally tries to connect residents to neighbors or other supportive housing residents with common interests or with children of the same age
  - Work with parents and children (especially adolescents) on helping youth build positive social networks that help them thrive
- The program shares encourages residents to provide contact information and information about their family (names of family members, age of kids, etc.) to a contact list to encourage networking among residents.

## Fostering an Environment that Supports Networking and Engagement

- There are regular social events such as holiday parties, pot lucks, or support groups.
- Family milestones and successes are publicly celebrated.
- Space is designed to promote interaction and engagement between residents:
  - There is an informal space for residents to gather
  - Children's play spaces include seating area for adults to sit and talk while monitoring their children
  - There is hangout space for older youth
  - Regular social events are planned
  - Message boards, seating, or amenities such as coffee are used to create spaces for residents to linger and interact informally
- Residents are encouraged to have guests and use their home as a site for network building:
  - Rules for tenants (restrictions on having guests; sign-in requirements) have been evaluated to identify and address unintentional impacts on social networks.
  - There is a process to request exemptions and exceptions that is fair and equitable and recognizes and affirms the important role of the positive social network in times of stress and crisis.
- There are ongoing efforts to encourage mutual support:
  - For multi-site models use virtual networking or operate a hub for mutual support network activities at a convenient site.
  - Swap events; or other means for residents to pass on or trade resources such as children's clothes, toys, or other household things are supported
  - Residents are supported in participating in a "time bank" or other mechanism for residents to exchange "services" such as child care, chores.
  - Create specific opportunities for youth to help out around the building or with other tenants—ideally being paid for tasks such as shoveling walks, acting as mother's helpers, etc.
- Governance structures are family friendly:
  - Child care is provided so parents with children can participate in governing boards
  - Some designated youth roles are created to ensure that youth voice is included

## Linking residents to formal and informal supports for families within the larger community

- There are on-going efforts to connect residents to child and family friendly community events, activities and resources (e.g. parks, libraries, museums, playgrounds, play groups, afterschool programs, etc.) and gain their input and feedback on activities.
- An effort has been made to "map" the community:
  - Identify where community assets like parks, libraries, museums, playgrounds are located
  - Identify which groups or organizations hold regular activities or events for families
  - Identify if there are informal spaces where families gather
- Residents are encouraged to develop a community engagement plan and connect to:
  - Organizations that are doing work around issues they care about
  - The organizations their children are involved in (e.g. schools, child care, sports teams, etc.)
  - Faith organizations, ethnic or cultural groups, or other organizations linked to their larger sense of identity



## Section 6: Tools and Resources

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The following tables serve as a guide for locating the tools and resources referenced in previous sections. Some of the referenced material is included in this section. Other material can be found on the internet at the indicated url address. All items listed are hyperlinked to the actual document in this section or to an external webpage. If you chooses to print this guide, you may arrange the material in any order that works best for you.

## Tools Included in this Section

REFERENCE	NAME OF TOOL	DESCRIPTION
T1	<a href="#">Environment Checklist</a>	Provides a framework for reviewing building and unit space for appropriateness for children
T2	<a href="#">Planning Worksheet for Family Services</a>	Can be used as a planning worksheet to identify child and family services partners
T3	<a href="#">Resource Directory Survey</a>	Sample survey to be used with community providers
T4	<a href="#">Language for Tenant Manual</a>	Provides guidance on adapting tenants manuals to cover core family issues.
T5	<a href="#">Family Housing Search Form</a>	Can be used to help identify family needs when entering into housing search
T6	<a href="#">Questions to Ask Landlords</a>	Can be used with families to engage potential landlords around “child readiness” of buildings
T7	<a href="#">Move In Orientation Checklist</a>	Provides an overview of a family supportive process for move-in.
T8	<a href="#">Maintaining a Clean and Safe Home</a>	A simple guide to home maintenance for supportive housing case managers to use with families
T9	<a href="#">Everyday Actions any Staff Member can take to Build Protective Factors</a>	Provides simple guidance to all staff members on taking a protective factors approach in daily interactions with families
T10	<a href="#">Protective and Promotive Factors Activities for Case Managers and Families</a>	Fun activities to do with families organized around the protective factors
T11	<a href="#">Creating a Stability Plan with Families</a>	Guidance on the importance of stability plans for keeping children safe in the event of parental crisis
T12	<a href="#">Staying Alert for Developmental Issues and Signs of Trauma</a>	Resources for learning more about children’s developmental status and trauma history.
T13	<a href="#">Creating a Child Abuse and Neglect Response Protocol</a>	Steps in educating staff and what to do if abuse and/or neglect is suspected
T14	<a href="#">Advocating for Family Supportive Community</a>	Can be used as a brainstorming tool with workers to build knowledge and commitment to building a family supportive community
T15	<a href="#">Family Strengthening Activities</a>	This is a workbook created by the McSilver Institute for Poverty and Policy Research, New York University. It was created specifically for the five federal funded Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families Involved in the Child Welfare System

## Tools Found on the Internet

INTERNET SOURCE	NAME OF TOOL	DESCRIPTION
Center for the Study of Social Policy	<b>Tenant Manual and Welcome Package</b>	This a prototype housing manual that can be adapted to fit the needs of a particular site. <a href="http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/child-welfare-and-supportive-housing-resource-center">http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/child-welfare-and-supportive-housing-resource-center</a>
	<a href="#"><u>Protective and Promotive Factors Action Sheets</u></a>	Can be used as capacity-building tools with staff
	<a href="#"><u>Parent Protective Factors Tune-up Kit</u></a>	This resource can be used independently by families or can be used as a basis of dialogue between supportive housing case managers and parents
	<a href="#"><u>Using Protective and Promotive Factors to Help Identify Relevant Strengths</u></a>	What to ask and what to look for to build your understanding of family protective factors
	<a href="#"><u>Using Protective and Promotive Factors to Develop Case Plans</u></a>	Sample case planning activities using protective factors as a frame
	<a href="#"><u>Using Protective Factors to Take Care of Self—A Self Care Tool For Workers</u></a>	Guidance for workers on how to use a protective factors approach to deal with stress and secondary trauma.
	<a href="#"><u>Parent and community cafes</u></a>	Provides an overview of two café models and a checklist for implementing cafes with fidelity
Strong Bonds	<a href="#"><u>Eco-map tool</u></a>	Simple guide to using eco-maps to better understand and help families build positive social networks
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	<a href="#"><u>Training and tools for conflict and crisis</u></a>	Curriculum for supportive housing, found at <a href="https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/SHPCrisisConflict.pdf">https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/SHPCrisisConflict.pdf</a>
California School-Based Health Alliance	<a href="#"><u>Overview of de-escalation strategies for traumatized children and youth</u></a>	This is a presentation for secondary education that is based on several resources and contains important tips found at <a href="http://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Trauma-Informed-Strategies-to-Deescalate-Classroom-Conflict.pdf">http://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Trauma-Informed-Strategies-to-Deescalate-Classroom-Conflict.pdf</a>
Child Welfare Information Gateway	<a href="#"><u>Recognizing child abuse and neglect</u></a>	Fact sheet which defines child abuse and neglect and describes signs and symptoms
National Center on Family Homelessness	<a href="#"><u>Trauma informed organizational toolkit</u></a>	This toolkit provides programs with a roadmap for becoming trauma-informed. It offers homeless service providers concrete guidelines for how to modify their practices and policies to ensure that they are responding appropriately to the needs of families who have experienced stress.
U.S. Veterans Affairs Agency	<a href="#"><u>Self-help and coaching tools for adults dealing with the impacts of traumatic stress</u></a>	This is a resource developed for veterans and their families and friends <a href="http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/cope/index.asp">http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/treatment/cope/index.asp</a>

## Resource Material Included in This Section

TOPIC	REFERENCE	NAME OF RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Family Characteristics	R1	<a href="#">Profile of families in supportive housing</a>	Brief point-in-time statistical profile of families in supportive housing
Outcomes	R2	<a href="#">Desired Outcomes for Families</a>	Short list of child and family focused outcomes for supportive housing programs serving families
Who is doing Family Supportive Housing	R3	<a href="#">Federal Partnership</a>	Partnership to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System Brief description of the federally funded 2012-2017 family supportive housing demonstration in five jurisdictions across the country
Child development	R4	<a href="#">Developmental Supports for families with young children</a>	Description and links to support building relationships with child and family serving providers
	R7	<a href="#">Addressing Child Behavioral Issues</a>	Can be used to develop protocols for dealing with child behavioral issues
Trauma	R6	<a href="#">Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Children</a>	This provides a snapshot of behaviors at different ages that may suggest the child has had a traumatic experience(s)
	R11	<a href="#">Common Trauma Reactions</a>	Suggests "difficult" behaviors or reactions may be rooted in traumatic experiences
Staffing Competency and Professional Development	R5	<a href="#">Staff Competency Matrix</a>	Defines skill level for dealing with family issues across staff
	R10	<a href="#">Motivational Interviewing Background Sheet</a>	Background information on motivational interviewing as an engagement and planning tool
Teaming With Families	R8	<a href="#">Taking a Team Approach to Resolving Problems With Families</a>	Describes structure process and roles for supportive services staff and program management in resolving issues with families
Community	R9	<a href="#">Building Parenting Community</a>	Provides suggestions for how to help parents help each other

## Resource Materials Found on the Internet

TOPIC	INTERNET SOURCE & NAME OF RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Supportive Housing	CSH Dimensions of Quality Guidebook	CSHA had defined quality supportive housing and the activities aimed at quality in this guidebook found at <a href="http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CSH_Dimensions_of_Quality_Supportive_Housing_guidebook.pdf">http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CSH_Dimensions_of_Quality_Supportive_Housing_guidebook.pdf</a>
	CSH Supportive Housing Resources	Additional resources related specifically to Supportive Housing can be found at <a href="http://www.csh.org/resources/">http://www.csh.org/resources/</a>
Child Development	U.S. Administration for Children & Families (ACF) Birth to 5! Watch Me Thrive	Provides information specifically for shelter and housing assistance providers to help engage clients with children under the age of 5 in conversations regarding the developmental and behavioral health of their children and how to facilitate referrals for further screening and evaluation when required. <a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/shelter_screening_guide.pdf">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/shelter_screening_guide.pdf</a>
	U.S. Administration for Children & Families (ACF) Early Childhood Self-Assessment for Family Shelters	A guide to support the safe and healthy development of young children in shelter settings: <a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/ech_family_shelter_self_assessment_tool_120114_final.pdf">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/ech_family_shelter_self_assessment_tool_120114_final.pdf</a>
	Center on the Developing Child, Harvard	The Center has several useful videos and publications for learning about early childhood development and strategies for working with adults and children. <a href="http://developingchild.harvard.edu/about/">http://developingchild.harvard.edu/about/</a>  Specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood found at <a href="http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/interactive_features/five-numbers/">http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/interactive_features/five-numbers/</a></li> <li>• The importance of parent and community capacity for optimal child development <a href="http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/">http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/</a></li> <li>• Foundations of life long health <a href="http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/inbrief_series/inbrief_the_foundations_of_lifelong_health/">http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/inbrief_series/inbrief_the_foundations_of_lifelong_health/</a></li> <li>• Overview video on toxic stress and child development <a href="http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/">http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/</a></li> </ul>
	Massachusetts Brain Building in Progress Initiative	An example of collective community action to support optimal child development <a href="http://brainbuildinginprogress.org/action">http://brainbuildinginprogress.org/action</a>
Trauma	U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA)	This publication is intended to serve as a guide to agencies looking for practical ideas about how to create trauma-informed environments. <a href="#">A Long Journey Home: A Guide for Creating Trauma-Informed Services for Mothers and Children Experiencing Homelessness</a>

## Resource Materials Found on the Internet

TOPIC	INTERNET SOURCE & NAME OF RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Protective and Promotive Factors	The Center For the Study of Social Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For more about the research and evidence supporting the Strengthening Families™ concepts, see <a href="http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework-Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf">http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2014/The-Strengthening-Families-Approach-and-Protective-Factors-Framework-Branching-Out-and-Reaching-Deeper.pdf</a></li> <li>• For more about the research and evidence Youth Thrive™ see <a href="http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/2014/Youth-Thrive_Advancing-Healthy-Adolescent-Development-and-Well-Being.pdf">http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/2014/Youth-Thrive_Advancing-Healthy-Adolescent-Development-and-Well-Being.pdf</a></li> <li>• Training resources and tools can be found at <a href="http://StrengtheningFamilies.net">StrengtheningFamilies.net</a></li> </ul>
Family Team Meetings	The Center For the Study of Social Policy	<p><a href="#">Ensuring Family Voice While Navigating Multiple Systems: The family team meeting strategy in supportive housing</a></p> <p><i>Background paper on family team meetings as a supportive housing strategy</i></p> <p><a href="#">Bringing Families to the Table</a></p> <p><i>A comparison of various Family Team Meeting models</i></p>
Worker Self-Care	Ohio Child Welfare Training Program	<p><a href="#">Managing Stress as a Child Welfare Caseworker</a></p> <p><i>This is a caseworker readiness activity that includes several strategies for managing stress</i></p>

## Outcomes for Families

When designing supportive housing for families it is important to also focus on outcomes for families as a unit as well as for children and youth.

- ▶ Enhanced child development
  - Children developing on track
  - Children ready for school
  - Children reading at grade level
  - Children graduating high school
- ▶ Enhanced parenting
  - Parent's feeling supported in parenting role
  - Parent confidence in parenting role
  - Increased parenting skills
- ▶ Enhanced parent engagement
  - Parent participation in children's education (classroom activities, homework, communicating and meeting with teacher)
  - Parent reading to child
  - Parent participation in getting needed care for child (well-child care, dental appointments, prenatal care)
  - Parent child attachment
- ▶ Child/youth well-being
  - Connected to a caring adult
  - Attached to institution or opportunity
  - Positive relationship with teachers and peers
  - Succeeding in school

## Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System initiative

This 2012 federal demonstration, funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) tests an intensive approach to providing vulnerable families with safe, affordable housing together with the services and supports they need in order to stay together. Five sites and multiple private and public partners, are working to bring supportive housing to more than 500 families with children at risk of, or already in, foster care placement. ACF expects outcomes of this initiative to be a reduction in child maltreatment, child removals and foster care placements and overall child welfare system involvement.

Five, five year grants were awarded to sites in Broward County (Fla.), Cedar Rapids (Iowa), Memphis (Tenn.), San Francisco and the state of Connecticut. The grantees are testing an intensive approach to serving families who come to the attention of the child welfare system because of problems with chronic or recurring homelessness and other serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, alcoholism or drug abuse.

## A profile of families in supportive housing<sup>7</sup>

People in families made up 37 percent of the homeless people counted in 2014.<sup>8</sup> The families being served by family supportive housing efforts across the country represent an especially vulnerable segment of the larger population of homeless families as reflected in the following statistics drawn from referral data collected in Partnerships to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System and data from the Washington Family Fund evaluation.

WHAT FAMILIES ARE EXPERIENCING	WHAT THE DATA REVEAL
A history of child welfare involvement	<p><i>Partnership data shows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of the families had prior child protection reports</li> <li>• 40% of families had history of receiving child welfare services</li> </ul>
Parental history of trauma	<p><i>Partnership data shows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 56% of the primary caregivers had a history of abuse or neglect</li> <li>• 22% of the primary caregivers experienced placement in foster care as a child</li> </ul> <p>Washington Family Fund data shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 93% experienced physical or sexual violence</li> </ul>
High rates of co-occurring issues that serve as a barrier to stability	<p><i>Partnership data shows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 50% of the care givers had mental health issues</li> <li>• 39% had high rates of substance abuse</li> <li>• 40% had rates of criminal justice involvement</li> </ul> <p>Washington Family Fund data shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70% Mental health condition:</li> <li>• 63% Chronic or ongoing medical problem:</li> <li>• 63% Received substance abuse treatment:</li> </ul>
Long-term and repeated history of homelessness	<p><i>Partnership data shows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% have history of frequent moves</li> <li>• 42% had episodes of past homelessness</li> <li>• 41% were being evicted or asked to leave within 14 days</li> <li>• 32% were in emergency shelters at the time of program entry</li> </ul> <p>Washington Family Fund data shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average number of times homeless in lifetime: 10</li> <li>• Average number of times doubled up in lifetime: 16</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Profile based on data from federal demonstration and from data compiled by the Washington Family Fund.

<sup>8</sup> According to Part 1 of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2014 Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 216,261 people in families were homeless on a single night in 2014, making up 37 percent of all homeless people counted. That estimate represents a 3 percent decline compared to HUD's 2013 estimate and an 8 percent decline compared to its 2007 estimate.

## Environment Checklist

By designing spaces with the needs of children and families in mind we can make the work of parenting easier and less stressful. Simple things make a huge difference in the lives of a family with children—for example a physical layout which allows a parent to easily monitor what is going on with their children while they are making meals, recreation space for youth, or having a place to securely park a stroller so it does not need to be carried up the stairs each day. While these seem like small things it can often be the accumulation of small stresses that can make parenting feel harder.

This check-list can be used in multiple ways within the supportive housing context for example:

- When units are being designed, developed, or updated the checklist can be used to guide design decisions.
- When units are being selected this tool can help to evaluate the family friendliness of the unit
- When families are moving into the unit the checklist can be used as a coaching tool to help them think about how they create a safe, nurturing home for their child.
- In regular visits to the home staff can use the checklist:
  - To notice and talk with parents about any issues that might be putting their child at risk or contributing to parental frustration
  - To validate good choices families are making
  - To flag additional resources or supports families might need
- The checklist can be used to design and think about common spaces within the building
- The checklist can also be used to think about the places where families often bring their children—even if they are not designed to be family spaces. For example, the office of the building manager, or a room where caseworkers regularly meet with parents. If it is likely that a parent will be bringing their child with them into these settings then addressing the issues on the checklist will make things simpler and easier for everyone.

### **Safety:**

- Has the unit and the building been screened for lead?
- Are there safety covers on electrical outlets?
- Have temperature regulators been set on bathroom faucets (bathtub and sink) to prevent scalding?
- Have child safety locks been installed on cabinets that contain household or industrial cleaners or chemicals that may be toxic for children, medications, other hazardous materials?
- Are guns, knives, scissors, tools or other dangerous implements in locked or out of reach places?
- Are blinds or curtains either designed to be cordless, or is there a way to wrap the cords out of the reach of young children?
- Are all windows designed to either: open at the top, outside of a young child's reach, have a stop or a guard to ensure that there is not an opening a child could fall out of?
- Are there safety gates for internal stairs or other unsafe spaces?

- Are there door stops to prevent doors slamming on children's fingers?
- Is there an operational smoke detector?
- Is there an operational carbon dioxide detector?
- Are bookshelves and other tall furniture anchored so they will not topple if climbed?
- Are sleeping areas for children safe?
  - Infant cribs meet safety standards
  - Crib space does not have smothering hazards
  - Bunk beds have safety rails and children under 6 do not use the upper bunk.

### Supports for learning and development

- Is there an accessible outdoor play space?
- Is there an accessible indoor play space?
- Do play spaces also have space for parents to easily observe and monitor their child during play?
- Are age appropriate toys available for the child?
- Are there age appropriate reading and learning materials?
- For older children are there appropriate, quiet spaces for them to complete homework?
- For older children are there youth-friendly spaces for them to gather with friends?

### Child- and family-friendliness:

- Have spaces been soundproofed so that children can engage in normal childhood activities with out inconveniencing neighbors.
- Have things been designed with the normal wear and tear of life with children in mind (use of easily scrubbed paint, extra paint for touch-ups, easily cleaned fixtures, etc.)
- Is there easily accessible space to store children's accessories such as strollers, bikes, etc. (ideally on the ground floor so these things do not need to be carried upstairs)
- Does the family have access to conveniences that support child rearing: washing machine, dish washer, microwave
- Is it easy for parents to monitor children when they are making meals

Staff Competency Matrix

	FAMILY WORKER	LIGHT TOUCH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	INCIDENTAL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
Description	These individuals work with families directly to address family issues	These individuals engage with families regularly, though their primary work role does not require them to interact with families	These individuals do not come into regular contact with families, but may be called on in their work to enter a family's home.
Examples of roles	Supportive Housing Case Manager Family Advocate Case worker	Front desk staff Building manager Administrative staff at office	Maintenance staff Janitorial staff Service partners (e.g. cable guy)
Positive strengths-based interaction	X	X	X
Respond to possible child abuse and neglect	X	X	X
Diffuse conflict Recognize signs and symptoms of trauma	X	X	
Talk with families about challenging issues	X	X	
Understand protective and promotive factors	X	X	
Work with families to build protective and promotive factors	X	X	
Understand child and adolescent development	X	X	
Work with families to support child and adolescent development	X		

## Resource Directory Survey<sup>9</sup>

Description of program

### Contact Information

Name of program

Contact person, email address

Address, phone number, website

1. Who is eligible?
2. What is the application process (in person, online, mail in, etc.)?
3. If an in-person interview is required, do families need to make an appointment?
4. Where can families apply? What are the hours of operation?
  - How to apply: in person, online?
  - Hours and days of operation.
5. What documentation do families have to provide with the application?
6. How long does it take from the time an application is submitted until services begin?
7. What specific services are provided through the program?
8. Are there limits on how long a family can receive services?
9. Do families have to be re-certified eligible on a periodic basis? If yes, how frequently?
10. Are there any other programs to meet a family's emergency needs (prior to approval)? If so, where can we get more information?
11. Are there other programs that families could apply for if they are denied help? If yes, who can we contact for more information?

<sup>9</sup> This questionnaire was used to develop the resource directory by Partners United for Supportive Housing in Cedar Rapids (PUSH-CR). Data was collected through in-person interviews, import of data from United Way's 211 site, and a survey monkey survey of partners. The final directory exists in database format for ease in searching and updating.

### Planning Worksheet for Family Services

The following expanded service list is intended to be used as a supplement to the supportive services planning worksheet:

[http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SVCSPlanningMenu\\_F.pdf](http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SVCSPlanningMenu_F.pdf)

For a select number of the services below we have also included a more detailed description along with information on who to identify providers in your community.

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES	WHO PROVIDES THE SERVICE	WHERE/HOW WILL TENANTS ACCESS
<b>FAMILY SUPPORT</b>		
• Home Visiting		
• Parent-child activities		
• Family resource centers		
• Parent support groups		
• Children’s support groups		
• Family advocate		
• Parenting education/child development information		
<b>HEALTH SERVICES</b>		
• Pediatric health care provider or family doctors		
• Pediatric dental services		
• WIC		
<b>CHILD CARE AND LEARNING</b>		
• Head Start/Early Head Start		
• Pre-Kindergarten		
• Child Care		
• After School Care		
• Tutoring/homework help		
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORTS</b>		
• Developmental screenings		
• Part C (services for developmental delays)		
• Children’s mental health services		
<b>POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT</b>		
• Sports programs		
• Art and music programs		
• Mentoring		
• Other		

## Overview of developmental supports for families with young children

### Home visiting

Home visiting is a set of services provided in the home to support parents and children and impact parent-child interaction. Home visiting programs may be especially useful within the context of supportive housing because services are provided within the home with the intent of modeling and coaching parents about how they can engage in positive parenting behavior within the home environment. There are many different home visiting program models which employ home visitors with different backgrounds, use different curriculum, and are focused on different outcomes. The new Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program has ensured the federal funds are available to expand home visiting in every state. Fourteen models which have been deemed to have proven effectiveness are available for MIECHV funding. To learn more about these 14 models use this link: <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/models.html>

Unfortunately there is no centralized source that will provide information on the type of home visiting programs that may be available in your area. In addition to the 14 evidence-based models eligible for MIECHV funding there are many more home visiting models available.

### Head Start & Early Head Start

Head Start provides comprehensive education, health care and social services to low-income children birth to five and their families. Early Head Start serves infants, toddlers and pregnant women through center-based child care, family child care and home-based care/home visiting. Meanwhile, Head Start serves children ages three to five in both part-day and full-day center-based preschools. In addition to promoting healthy cognitive and social-emotional development, Head Start and Early Head Start programs include health, nutrition, disability and family engagement services. Services are free to families who meet federal poverty income guidelines. In addition, all children in foster care are categorically eligible for Head Start services, regardless of the family's income level. In fact, children receiving any child welfare services should be prioritized for enrollment. It should be a priority to ensure that any family with age appropriate children are enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start. Because Head Start dollars come down directly from the federal government to grantee agencies establishing a relationship with local programs will be important.

**FIND LOCAL HEAD START PROGRAMS:**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>

### Pre-Kindergarten

Nationally there is a growing interest and policy discussion around the expansion of publically funded pre-school education. Forty states provide funding for Pre-K programs and over half of these states increased their funding for Pre-K in the 2012 to 2013 fiscal year.<sup>10</sup> Depending on the state pre-school may be available for four year olds only, or may go down to three years old. Even in states where there is not statewide or universal pre-kindergarten services available free or subsidized preschool may be available through local government, or free or subsidized slots may be offered through local programs with a commitment to supporting local families. Unfortunately

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/docs\\_research/14\\_StatePreKEvaluations.pdf](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/docs_research/14_StatePreKEvaluations.pdf)

there is not a single source to learn more about free or subsidized preschool opportunities. The following link will allow you to learn more about your state's preschool investments: <http://www.nieer.org/yearbook>. To find out more about how to access subsidized preschool near where your families are living will require more local searching.

### Part C

Part C funds both the evaluation of infants and toddlers for developmental delays and interventions and supports to address developmental issues. Federally funded Part-C services should be available in every community.

Service plans vary to meet the unique needs of every child. Below is a partial list of services that may be available to a child who is eligible for Part C:

- ▶ Audiology services
- ▶ Assistive technology
- ▶ Counseling/psychological assessments
- ▶ Family training, counseling and home visits
- ▶ Medical evaluations (for diagnostic purposes only)
- ▶ Nursing care
- ▶ Nutritional assistance
- ▶ Occupational therapy
- ▶ Physical therapy
- ▶ Service coordination
- ▶ Social work services
- ▶ Speech/language therapy
- ▶ Transportation service

Part C services can be a tremendous support for families with a young child where developmental delays are present.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT PART C:** <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/ei-overview/>

Connect to local Part C services: Most states operate a referral website with parent friendly information about how to get a child screened and connect to services. To identify the local early intervention services provider in your community use the following link to find out more about the Part C services in your state.

<http://ectacenter.org/contact/ptccoord.asp>

### Women, Infants and Children’s Program (WIC)

WIC is a federally-funded health and nutrition program for women, infants, and children. WIC helps families by providing checks for buying healthy supplemental foods from WIC-authorized vendors, nutrition education, and help finding healthcare and other community services. Participants must meet income guidelines and be pregnant women, new mothers, infants or children under age five. The following link will take you to the USDA website which provides contact information for the WIC agency in each state: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts>. Most state agency web pages have a quick link to find WIC programs near you by zip code or address.

### Developmental screening

Developmental screenings are usually quick and simple tools for identifying if there may be developmental issues or delays. They are used to pick up issues that may need to be assessed or explored further. Again, because the children entering supportive housing programs are likely to be at high risk for developmental delays it is important to ensure that they do get screened and get connected to supports as needed. Luckily many of them may already receive developmental screenings through some of the other programs discussed above such as Head Start, Part C, their Pre-K program or through a health provider. For those who have not received screening through any of these means it will be important to ensure that screening takes place and families get support in getting any needed services.

In 23 states, Help Me Grow can serve as a great resource for connecting families to developmental screenings as well as additional developmental supports. Use this link to find out if your state has a Help Me Grow support line:  
<http://www.helpmegrownational.org/pages/hmg-affiliate/state-affiliates.php>

Regardless of where developmental screenings are taking place it will be important for the supportive housing case manager to talk with parents to:

- Identify if they have questions or concerns about the results
- Are willing to share the results
- Have any developmental concerns that were not picked up in the screening
- Need help following up to get access to any recommended assessments or services.

### Early childhood mental health services

A special part of the early intervention system are mental health services for young children. Earlier in this guide we talked about social emotional competence of children as an important protective factor which and building block for children’s development. Therefore, in this portion of the guide we are going to focus less on the promotive and preventative services focused on building children’s social emotional well-being and more on ensuring that families have access to services and supports when it looks like social emotional development is not on track. Early childhood mental health services is a relatively new specialization. In earlier eras there was an assumption that young children would “forget” the traumatic events that happened to them and “grow out” of challenging behavior. Growing information about young children’s brain development, however, challenges these assumptions. In fact new understandings of child

development imply that if mental health issues are not addressed at a young age they can “cascade” creating a pattern of disruptions that will have long ranging impacts on health, learning and well-being.

### **Well-child care**

If families have been homeless or in unstable living situations for a long period of time it is likely that they will not have a sustained relationship with a health care provider who is focused on monitoring the child’s development. This may mean that children are not up to date on their immunizations; that they have not had their vision or hearing checked; or they may have untreated chronic conditions. Any of all of these things may result in educational or developmental challenges for the child. Getting families, as quickly as possible, connected to a pediatric health provider, helping them get that provider any existing medical records on the child’s past care, and supporting families in continued engagement with that provider is crucial.

### **Parent-Child Activities**

Parent child activities play an important role. They provide a way for parents to learn new skills, bond with their child, meet other parents with same age children, and get a break from their day-to-day routines. Often there are many spaces around the community hosting parent-child activities for low prices or free. Places like family resource centers, your local park district, the library, museums, the YMCA are all likely candidates for hosting parent-child activities.

## Language for Tenant Manual

Tenant's manuals are generally thought of in a very functional way—as a tool for establishing the rules that govern a tenant's occupancy. They also provide an important opportunity to establish a strengths-based and supportive relationship with the whole family. We have included a link to a sample tenants manual that has been written to reflect some of the themes in this guide. The following checklist should also help sites update existing manuals to reflect these themes:

- Reviewed to ensure that language is family friendly and reads at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level
- Includes a map of the neighborhood which shows the building in relationship to a variety of family friendly resources (parks, schools, grocery stores, WIC clinics, etc.)
- Occupancy and visitation rules recognize and support the capacity of families to engage and draw support from their social network.
- Includes clear protocols and processes for conflict resolution which:
  - Avoids addressing conflicts when tempers are high
  - Delineates parental responsibility, authority and engagement in dealing with issues caused by their children
  - Provides clear process for dealing with complaints and conflicts:
    - Against building management
    - Between tenants
    - If the tenant is the subject of a complaint
  - Clarifies up-front how tenants can get supports for common problems (e.g. inability to pay rent,)
- Clearly addresses child abuse and neglect reporting:
  - Reminding tenants that it is staff's obligation to report if they feel the child is unsafe
  - Reminders that:
    - Staff will try to address concerns with them as soon as possible
    - That they can come to staff if they are feeling overwhelmed in ways that may compromise their ability to keep their child safe.
  - Clarity about the age at which a child is allowed to be left unsupervised in the apartment (should be at or below the age specified by the state child welfare agency—if your state does not specify we recommend the age of 10)
- Asks parents to proactively set limits for children around issues that might cause conflict with other tenants or management. For example
  - Noise levels both within apartments and in common areas
  - Graffiti or marking on the walls
  - Leaving toys, bicycles or other equipment in pathways or common spaces

- Playing in common areas in ways that prevents others from accessing them, makes them feel unsafe, causes injury, or other wise inconveniences.
- Conflict with other children in the building
- Provide information and linkages to resources that can support a parent in maintaining a safe and healthy home. Covering topics such as:
  - Childproofing
  - Cleaning
  - Pests

## Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Children by Age

BIRTH TO THREE	FOUR TO SIX	SIX TO TWELVE	THIRTEEN TO TWENTY-SIX
Eating disturbances	Avoidant, anxious, clingy	General fearfulness/new fears	Difficulty imagining future or planning
Sleep disturbances	General fearfulness/new fears	Helplessness, passive, low frustration	Eating disorders
Somatic complaints	Helplessness, passive, low frustration	Restless, impulsive, hyperactive	Self-harm behavior, e.g., cutting
Clinginess/separation anxiety	Restless, impulsive, hyperactive	Physical symptoms (headache, etc.)	Over or under estimate danger
Feeling helpless/passive	Physical symptoms (headache, etc.)	Difficulty identifying what is bothering them	Inappropriate aggression
Irritable/difficult to soothe	Difficulty identifying what is bothering them	Inattention, difficulty problem solving	Learning or school problems
Constricted play, exploration, mood	Inattention, difficulty problem solving	Daydreaming or dissociation	Reckless or self-destructive behavior
Repetitive/post-traumatic play	Daydreaming or dissociation	Irritability	Drug or alcohol abuse
Developmental regression	Irritability	Aggressive behavior Feel depressed	Act out sexually
General fearfulness/new fears	Aggressive behavior Avoidant, anxious, clingy		Sleep disturbances
Easily startled			Pull away from activities, relationships
Language delay			Feel numb, shut down or separated from life
			Discuss traumatic events in detail

## Everyday Actions Any Staff Member Can Take to Build Protective Factors

While supportive services staff will play the lead in engaging and working directly with families to support and build their protective factors any and all staff members—from the receptionist at the property management office, to building maintenance—can play a role in creating a climate where day-to-day interactions are positive, supportive and build protective factors.

### **Resilience**

- Notice and comment on positive behavior
- Greet all tenants by name
- Be positive, even when frustrated
- Acknowledge when parents appear to be frustrated

### **Social Connections**

- Model good social behavior
- Make connections between tenants with similar interests or with children of the same age
- Be welcoming to tenant's guests

### **Knowledge of parenting and child and youth development**

- Acknowledge effective parenting strategies
- Post parenting tips and links to parenting resources
- Post information on child and youth friendly activities going on in the community

### **Concrete Supports**

- Always validate the importance of help seeking—even if you have to refer the family member to someone else to get the support they need

### **Social, emotional and developmental competence of children**

- Greet children by name
- Be warm and nurturing when you engage with children
- Create opportunities for children to help or take the lead in activities you are engaged in
- Keep toys, books and crayons on hand to occupy children when you are meeting with parents

Family Housing Search Form

This form is intended to help ensure that issues that are relevant to families are addressed in the housing search process.

Family composition including ages and sex of children:

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How many bedrooms are needed in total: \_\_\_\_\_

Do any family members have special needs that may affect apartment choice? (e.g. Asthma, physical disabilities, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Which of these are priorities?

- Maintaining continuity in schooling/child care arrangements
- Proximity to extended family or other supportive adults
- Proximity to particular services
- A neighborhood with a particular ethnic or racial composition
- Neighborhoods with quality schools
- Access to transportation
- Proximity to grocery stores
- Yard or safe play space

Questions to Ask Landlords

What schools serve the neighborhood the apartment is in? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the apartment child ready?

- ▶ Child proofed
- ▶ Screened for lead
- ▶ Easy clean paint
- ▶ Carpeting if above other units

Are there appropriate play/recreation areas for children nearby? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there gangs active in the area? \_\_\_\_\_

The following are common issues that come up with children in apartments, please describe your building's policies around these:

- ▶ Noise in between apartments
- ▶ Noise in common areas
- ▶ Disposal of diapers
- ▶ Storage of strollers, bikes, etc.
- ▶ Fights between children
- ▶ Graffiti

## Move-in Orientation Checklist

- ▶ One staff member is on-site to personally welcome the family and support them through the move
- ▶ Tenant guide and welcome manual provided to family
- ▶ Verbal instruction on:
  - How to pay rent
  - Who to call in emergencies
  - Any rules or restrictions that could impact tenancy
  - How to address issues or complaints
- ▶ In-person demonstration:
  - Tour of building
  - How to operate doors; dispose of garbage
- ▶ For families with young children
  - Child care support provided during move-in
  - Child proofing resources and information/education on child proofing provided
- ▶ Families with school-age children
  - Review building rules with parents and children
  - Review the steps for school registration
  - Provide information on local schools
  - Provide information on after-school programs
- ▶ Utilities
  - Provide list of those covered as part of tenancy
  - Provide list of those tenant is responsible for paying independently
  - Provide contacts and information on setting up utilities

## Addressing Child Behavioral Issues

### Create a clear framework

#### • *Get parents and children involved*

Ideally both parents and children in the program should be involved in defining the parameters for appropriate behavior. This helps to get broader buy in for the rules developed and is an important developmental opportunity for children to think through the consequences of behavior and why limits need to be set.

#### • *Identify and clearly articulate examples of problematic child behavior*

It is important for children to have clear examples of the types of behavior that can be problematic. While it will be impossible to anticipate everything that could happen certain things are predictable problems—graffiti, fights, leaving things in walkways and paths that can serve as hazards. Other things may be unique to a particular building or a time.

#### • *Explicitly outline consequences for problem behavior*

It is important to have a graduated set of consequences to draw on in the face of problem behavior. Ideally loss of housing should only be a last resort for behavior that is dangerous, destructive or deeply negatively impacts the building or those around the family. Consequences can include loss or privileges, fines, or work to repair or compensate for what was done—cleaning off graffiti for example.

### Address problem behavior

#### • *Get parents involved*

It is important to immediately engage parents around children's problem behavior. Parents have a much wider range of levers they can pull to create consequences for children's behavior. Remember that parents may themselves feel anxious or judged in the situation. Help to diffuse this anxiety by conveying that you see them as your partners in solving problem behavior. Also make sure to keep the dialogue focused on behavior and changing behavior rather than making judgments about the child as a person or the parents and their parenting. Set a meeting at a time that works on the parent's schedule, ideally when they can bring their child as well.

- Explain why the behavior is problematic and the impact it is having on others.
- Ask parents for their suggestions in terms of consequences for their child's behavior and how to make sure the behavior doesn't happen again.
- Help them evaluate the consequence they suggest explaining why it is appropriate or inappropriate.<sup>11</sup>
- Explain what the broader consequences may be if the child's behavior does not change.

<sup>11</sup> Note, in some cases parents may suggest punishment that is overly harsh or otherwise inappropriate. Many homeless parents have a history of child abuse or neglect and/or may have needed to use harsh discipline to control children's behavior in chaotic environments. If parents seem overly angry or threatening of children or suggest harsh or inappropriate discipline it may be important to help them to regain calm, to remind them that harsh physical discipline is both ineffective and may cause a child welfare intervention.

• ***Get children involved***

Engaging children over the age of five in the discussion can help build their social emotional skills by using the issue as an opportunity to have them reflect on their behavior, the consequences it has for others, and for the family.

- If the child is old enough, ask them to explain why they are engaging in the behavior.
- Ask the child what consequences they should potentially face for their behavior.
- Help them evaluate the consequence they suggest explaining why it is appropriate or inappropriate.

• ***Set consequences and agree on when to check in***

Following up after an incident of problem behavior is important. This provides an opportunity to deal with recurrence and to reinforce and encourage when behavior has improved.

• ***Address underlying issues***

Often problem behavior is a sign of deeper issues. Many of these children may be struggling with a history of trauma and may need support from appropriately trained mental health specialists. Others may need intervention to help them deal with substance abuse or cut ties with gangs. Parents may also need help in dealing with underlying issues in order to strengthen their ability to parent effectively.

## Creating a Stability Plan with Families

All families should have a plan in place for how their children will be cared for if something happens and the parent or caregiver is not able to provide care for a period of time. For families in supportive housing this can be especially important as even with supportive housing in place they may experience repeated cycles of instability. Without a stability plan in place a short-term crisis could result in child protective services needing to be called.

Our recommendation is that:

- Supportive housing case managers sit down with families to help them develop their emergency safety and stability plan—walking them through the process of:
  - Choosing a safe individual who can step in in the case of an emergency
  - Thinking through their children’s needs that would need to be communicated
- Families are asked to share the plan with the emergency care giver they have chosen
- A copy of the plan is filed with the property manager so they know what to do in the case of a crisis
- Plans are updated annually
- In cases where a family member is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence this stability plan should be paired with a safety plan which delineates the actions that will be taken to ensure the safety of that individual and other family members.

## Stability Plan

This plan helps to make sure that your kids are safe and cared for if something happens that keeps you from being with them for a short time. It helps to make sure that we know who to call and what to do until you can be back with your children.

Name of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Co-parent: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and age of children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who would be willing to care for your children if an emergency kept you from coming home to be with them:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

What daily routines does this person need to know about (e.g. when do children need to get to school, when are bed times, etc. ): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Creating a Child Abuse and Neglect Response Protocol

### • ***Educate staff on signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect***

All staff who come into contact with children and families should understand how to recognize signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. The following is a link to a [simple fact sheet](#) that defines child abuse and neglect and lists common signs and symptoms. Your state's child welfare department may offer resources with state specific guidance and there may be local child abuse and neglect programs that provide training for staff.

### • ***Decide on a set of protocols and ensure all staff are clear on the protocols***

To facilitate developing program specific protocols we have provided the following guidance to help programs think through various scenarios:

- **If there is a concern of immediate harm to a child** [staff member witnessing incident] shall call [number of child abuse and neglect reporting hotline] immediately. Staff member shall also notify: [family's supportive housing case manager, other]. [Supportive housing case manager or other staff member with relationship with family] will discuss allegation with parent.
- **If there is a concern that child abuse and neglect is occurring but the child is not at immediate risk of harm** the staff member with concerns should discuss with [staff members who can help assess whether or not abuse or neglect is occurring—these may include program management, workers with regular direct contact with the family, program social worker, or other]. If it is determined that abuse or neglect is indicated [worker best able to describe concerns] will call [number of child abuse and neglect reporting hotline]. [Supportive housing case manager or other staff member with relationship with family] will discuss allegation with parent.

### • ***Educate staff on what is not child abuse and neglect***

Too often parents are penalized for being abusive and neglectful when they are simply not able to access the resources they need or do not understand how to care for their child or are facing barriers (e.g. depression, domestic violence, etc.) that are preventing them from caring for their child. If staff bring up concerns that fall into these categories it is important to help families resolve these issues in ways that can prevent the need for making a child abuse and neglect report. In these cases:

- Staff that work closely with the family should meet with the parents to discuss the issues, explain why they are raising concerns and make a plan for ensuring that children's needs are being met.
- Staff should connect families to external resources that will help them to address the need.
- Staff should agree with parents about how they will monitor to ensure that children are being safely and appropriately cared for.
- If parents seem to be unable or unwilling to ensure that issues will be addressed and children appropriately cared for parents should be informed that a child abuse and neglect report may need to be made.

## Taking a Team Approach to Resolving Problems With Families

One of the promises of supportive housing is increased stability for families because when problems or issues arise—whether that is late rent payments, conflicts with neighbors, or children making noise—property management and supportive services can work together to help families resolve the issue—each with defined roles to play in the interaction.

1. **Property management defines the issue:** Property management clearly describes—the nature of the problem behavior (including specific instances when it has occurred), why the behavior is problematic, what consequences could ensue if the behavior is not addressed, a timeline within which the behavior needs to be addressed).
2. **Supportive services staff work with the family to help develop a plan to address the problem behavior:** This plan should include: What the family member who is causing the problem behavior will do, how other family members can support that individual, how supportive services staff and can support the family, connections to outside resources or additional resources if needed, clear markers for progress.
3. **Property management, family and supportive services staff meet to agree on plan:** Explicit agreement on the plan is important to ensure that property management knows that the family is working to address the issue, the family is knows that the proposed plan meets property management's concerns and is assured that there housing is not at risk as long as they meet their markers of progress. Having supportive services at this meeting is important so that the family knows that they have an advocate in the process and supportive services has the information they need to help families monitor progress and move forward on their plans. At this meeting a time at which family progress will be re-evaluated should be set.
4. **Family progress is evaluated and successes are acknowledged:** At the agreed upon check in point property management, families and supportive services should meet again. The goal of this meeting will be to check in on: family success in meeting progress markers and whether or not the problem behavior has been sufficiently resolved. If the answer is no a new plan can be developed or the family can be given a longer period of time to complete the existing plan.

## Staying alert for developmental issues and signs of trauma

Supportive housing staff can serve as an important gateway and support to helping families get help when developmental progress is not on track.

### **1. Ask parents questions about developmental progress:**

- Is your child up to date on their immunizations?<sup>12</sup>
- Have any developmental screenings been performed on your child recently? If so did they show any concerns?
- Do you have any concerns about your child and how they are developing?
- How is your child doing in their school or childcare setting?
- How does your child get along with other kids?

### **2. Ensure that children under five get a developmental screening.**

- [Developmental Screening Guide for shelter and housing providers](#)

### **3. Screen for child traumatic stress**

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) has an overview of appropriate screening tools for children and youth

### **4. Connect families to developmental resources**

- All families should be connected to:
  - Parent-child activities and resources (e.g. mommy and me classes, etc.)
  - Quality early care and education if child is below 5
  - Afterschool and positive youth development programs if child is above 5
  - Medical home
- Where there are indications of trauma or social emotional or developmental issues families should be connected to specialized supports in these areas including children's mental health services and specialized therapeutic supports.

<sup>12</sup> If parent does not know you can print an immunization guide from the CDC [here](#).

## Protective and Promotive Factors Activities for Case Managers and Families

The following activities are designed for supportive housing case managers to do with families as a way to support relationship building. Many activities are designed to help families to feel welcome and grounded in a new home—though they could be used at various points in workers interactions with families. We have organized activities within each of the protective and promotive factors.

### Resilience

#### • *Create safe spaces*

Encourage each family member to identify a space that will be their own safe space in the apartment that they can retreat to if they are feeling sad, stressed or scared. This might be a favorite chair, their own bed, or—for children—even a corner of a closet. Ask family members to “decorate” their space so it reflects their personality and make sure that from it they can see or touch one object that helps them to feel secure and strong. Remember that even infants need safe spaces that hold cherished objects and have been child proofed so they can explore freely. Caseworkers can use this activity to encourage family members to discuss what they need to feel safe and to encourage each family member to take care of themselves and of each other.

#### • *Create restorative routines and rituals:*

Rituals and routines play an important role in helping children –and adults—feel safe and grounded. Homelessness often prevents families from maintaining or developing rituals and routines. Ask the family to identify the moments of the day that they feel are the most important to their strength as a family (e.g. bedtimes, homework, dinner). Encourage them to collaboratively develop a routine for one of these key moments. Ask one family member to start and other family members to add or modify the routine. Ask the family to try out the new routine for a week and then modify it based on what they learned.

#### • *Recognize and plan for stressful situations*

Ask each family member to identify a situation that they find stressful or difficult to deal with and develop a plan for how they will respond when this situation comes up.

### Social Connections

#### • *Family eco-map*

An eco-map is a simple tool that helps to map the relationships in a family’s life. Moving into a new home provides a key moment to evaluate existing relationships and make an action plan for creating a strong and healthy social network. This may include nurturing or deepening existing relationships, transitioning away from unhealthy relationships and consciously cultivating new relationships. We have provided an eco-map tool with key questions for families transitioning from homelessness to supportive housing.

- ***House warming***

Holding a housewarming can help families start to rebuild frayed relationships, meet and get to know neighbors and enhance their feeling of pride and ownership in their new home. Helping families plan for housewarming activities can also serve as a key moment to help them think through issues such as: what are the rules they are going to set for visitors in their new home and who are the important parts of their social network they want to bring into their new lives—and are their individuals they don't want in their lives.

## Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- ***Child proofing***

This appendix includes a child proofing guide that you can share with families, but participating in child proofing with parents provides an excellent opportunity to talk through what it means to keep children safe and a parent's role in keeping children safe.

- ***Shopping trip***

A first grocery run can be an important opportunity to discuss with families key issues like what it takes to maintain a home; nutrition and healthy eating and the importance of budgeting. Remember that families that have been homeless over a long period of time probably need coaching on things that may seem obvious like what cleaning supplies are needed or how to cook a healthy meal.

## Concrete Supports

- ***Neighborhood walk***

Start ahead of time by researching some of the family friendly resources that might be in the community. Bring a physical map of the neighborhood with resources such as parks, libraries, grocery stores, video rental sites and child and family serving programs marked. Take time to visit a few sites with families.

- ***Resources Scavenger Hunt***

This provides a fun way to help families get to know the community and the activities and resources it provides for families with children. Create a list of community resources and ask families to bring back a marker for each one—this could be a brochure, a refrigerator magnet, or the name or a card for a worker. This can also be done over a course of multiple visits with families where they are asked to visit a targeted resource in-between visits.

## Social, emotional and developmental competence of children

- ***Set up learning spaces for each family member***

A learning space is each member of the family's dedicated space for learning activities. For older children this may be a quiet space to do homework for younger children this may be an area with paper and crayons or blocks and toys.

- ***Organize a family game night***

Play is an important tool to help children learn. Playing together is an important way for children and parents to bond and engage. Children play at all ages—from peek-a-boo as toddlers to board games or tag when they get older. Help the family identify several games that are of interest to their children and parents are comfortable playing. Create a ritual around game night with treats and celebrations of “winners”.

## Advocating for Family Supportive Community

A family supportive community is a community where there are supports for children to:

- Learn
- Play
- Feel safe
- Make mistakes

It is also a place where parents feel supported in their parenting role.

Some of the types of issues that you can advocate for to help build a family supportive community are:

- **Learn:** Quality of the local school; number of head start slots available; access to after school learning programs for kids.
- **Play:** Upgrading or cleaning a local park; opening up the school playground to the community on weekends.
- **Feel safe:** Putting a traffic sign at an unsafe intersection; dealing with gang violence; installing lighting or a fence at a local park
- **Make mistakes:** combatting overly high suspension and expulsion rates at the local school; community policing strategies that are youth friendly
- **Parenting support:** Availability of parent child activities and support groups; Family discounts at local restaurants or movie theaters

What do you need to make your community more family supportive and what is standing in your way? Pick one issue to organize around. Connect with other parents at your child's school or child care center and start a campaign.

## Building parenting community

Building parenting community across residents in a supportive housing community is an important aspect of ensuring that every parent has individuals they can turn to when they need help in their parenting role.

### ▶ ***Set parenting norms***

Creating a common set of norms is an important way to ensure that there is a positive parenting culture infusing the parenting community. Norms can be set for when families come together—for example group events hosted by the supportive housing provider—but may not carry over to what goes on in the home. Here are some examples of types of norms to be included:

- No physical punishment or yelling at children
- Praise your children and others
- No candies or sodas

### ▶ ***Help individual parents set and communicate rules for their child***

A key source of tension in parenting communities is when different families have different rules for their children and feel that other parents are not respecting these rules. It is important for parents to be encouraged to share up-front their rules for their children so tensions do not occur. Some common issues are:

- Rules around food (this includes which foods are off limits, when snacking is allowed, any restrictions on the amount of food, etc.)
- Rules around when children are due home
- Rules around what to do if a child misbehaves
- Rules around how and when a child is supposed to communicate with their parent or designated family member

### ▶ ***Help parents to share resources***

One constant about childhood is that children grow out of things. This includes clothes, strollers and cribs, backpacks for school, etc. Helping parents easily pass on resources that they no longer need can be a concrete way to build connections among families. Single site buildings can create a designated bulletin board space for families to post things they want to share or sell. Scattered sites might support the same sharing through an e-mail list.

• ***Promote mutual support***

Mutual support strategies encourage parents to help each other with all the different tasks of parenting. It can be tremendously important to have another parent who can share the load of walking the children to school or picking them up, can pick-up the homework from school the day your child is sick, or otherwise help out. Strategies for mutual support can be formal or informal for example:

- Creating a contact list for parents who have their children at the same school
- Setting up a [time bank](#) or other mechanism for families to trade hours on child care or other tasks
- Creating a homework club where parents of children in the same class can support them doing homework together
- Trading off meal making

## Keep Your Home CLEAN

### What's the problem?

**W**hat's the problem? Too much clutter and dirt in your home can cause germs, pests, and contaminants to collect, which can make your family sick. A dirty home can put your family at risk for poisonings and injuries, and can cause health problems like asthma.

### How does it happen?

As you go in and out of your home, your family may bring in dirt and dust that can build up over time. Also, busy schedules often prevent us from picking up and cleaning on a regular basis.

Extra clutter in your home may create tripping hazards, provide a home for pests, and can make cleaning tasks even more difficult.

### Things you can do:

- Make sure your home has smooth surfaces, that you can wet-clean or mop.
- Get rid of extra clutter to make it easier to clean.
- Take off your shoes before entering your home to reduce dirt and dust.
- Keep pets away from sleeping areas and especially off the beds.
- Keep a cleaning schedule that includes vacuuming.

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**“Keeping a home clean includes controlling the source, creating smooth and cleanable surfaces, reducing clutter, and using effective cleaning methods.”**

National Center for Healthy Housing

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## GENERAL CLEANING SCHEDULE



### Daily

- Clean counters, sinks and stove top with warm, soapy water.
- Wipe any spills on the floor or counters.
- Clean cutting boards with hot soapy water.
- Store all food in sealed containers.
- Keep garbage in a sealed or covered container.
- Take garbage out daily and keep container clean.

### Weekly

- Sweep and mop hard-surface floors.
- Wash and dust all hard surfaces.
- Scrub sinks, showers and toilets.
- Vacuum all carpeted areas.
- Wash bed sheets in hot water.

### Monthly

- Clean the tops of cabinets and baseboards.
- Clean the top of the refrigerator and ledges in the bathroom.
- Check for leaks under the sink and repair if found.
- Clean window sills and window tracks.
- Clean washing machine by running an empty load with hot water and 2 cups of vinegar.
- Wipe down the inside of the oven or use the self-cleaning cycle.



You do not need dangerous chemicals to clean your home. Instead try these healthier options:

**All-purpose cleaner:** Mix 1 tsp. dish detergent, 1 tsp. borax and a squeeze of lemon in 1 qt. warm water.

**Toilet bowl cleaner:** Mix 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 cup vinegar, pour into basin and let it set for a few minutes. Scrub with brush and rinse.

**Window cleaner:** Mix 2 tsp. of white vinegar with 1 liter warm water. Use crumpled newspaper or cotton cloth to clean.

**Tub and tile cleaner:** For simple cleaning, rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse with fresh water. For tougher jobs, first wipe surfaces with vinegar and follow with baking soda to scour. (Use sparingly since vinegar can break down tile grout.)

**Air freshener:** Place baking soda or vinegar with lemon juice in small dishes to absorb household odors.

**Dishwasher cleaner:** Run an empty cycle using 1 tbsp. bleach or by placing a coffee cup with one cup of vinegar on the dish rack during a cycle. This removes rust, mold and discoloration.



# Family Strengthening Activities

A guide for providers and families of the  
The Child Welfare and Supportive Housing  
Resource Center

McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research  
New York University



This guide is designed to give providers and families the basic foundational knowledge of *The 2 Ss and 4 Rs for Strengthening Family Life*. It includes the six core areas of family life that have been shown to help strengthen families and decrease behavior problems. This guide also includes applicable practices to use with families to help manage difficult behaviors at home and to enhance family functioning.

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## The 2 Ss & 4 Rs for Strengthening Family Life

### STRESS Management

*Stress* can get in the way of seeing strengths in each other and ourselves. A child's behavior can look exaggerated when seen by a parent who is under a lot of stress. Parental stress can also negatively impact the child.

### SUPPORT

Both parents and children need positive, responsible sources of *support*. It is important to advocate for oneself to get support needed and to be heard.

### RELATIONSHIPS

*Relationships* are the cement of the family. Relationships represent how much each member cares about the other. By building more positive relationships with each other, children are more likely to behave well.

### RULES

*Rules* organize the family. They also organize a child's life in other areas like school and neighborhood. Caregivers play a huge part in deciding which rules are right for which age child. Also, caregivers have to set up systems for knowing when rules are being followed and when they are not. They have to decide how best to reinforce positive behaviors when they are following rules and how to respond when they aren't following rules.

### RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

*Good communication* is the foundation for spending positive time together. By communicating, caregivers are able to know what their kids are doing and feeling and kids will feel supported by their caregivers. Respectful communication means using certain body language and ways of speaking to a person that show you are listening.

### RESPONSIBILITY

Both kids and caregivers have *responsibilities* within their families. Caregivers and kids have different responsibilities within the family, but each family member contributes to the family and each member has the responsibility to help fix those things that are not going as well.



### **Children Learn What They Live**

By Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D., Copyright ©1972

**If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.**

**If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.**

**If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.**

**If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.**

**If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.**

**If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.**

**If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.**

**If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.**

**If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.**

**If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.**

**If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.**

**If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.**

**If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.**

**If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.**

**If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.**

**If children live with fairness, they learn justice.**

**If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.**

**If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.**

**If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.**



## Stress Management Activities



## How Caregivers Can Help Children Manage Stress\*

1. Teach children to recognize symptoms of stress and the changes they feel in their minds and bodies. Help them understand that a fast heartbeat, sweaty palms, fast breathing, headaches, tummy aches, tight tense muscles and nervous panicky feelings may be signs of stress.
2. Teach simple relaxation exercises to use when that happens so they can calm themselves down. Practice breathing and relaxation exercises regularly. This will reduce tension, anxiety, tiredness and the feeling of being stressed out. Children will focus better on tasks.
3. Create an environment that provides ways for children to work off the “fight or flight” reaction. Children have a lot of energy and need plenty of exercise or ways to release that energy. Encourage physical activities that help children work off aggressive feelings safely and avoid angry outbursts. One principal of a school takes children who are ‘acting out’ or ‘misbehaving’, for a fast walk around the block before he even tries to talk to them about their problem. This may stop the need/desire to ‘fight’. Periods of quiet time, a “safe” place to get away for a while and by yourself activities provide for “flight” needs.
4. Caregivers can talk with teachers and find out how kids are dealing with stress at school. Teachers and caregivers can work together to think of ways to help their children. Children need the attention, approval and affection of their caregivers, and clear and reasonable expectations from both caregivers and teachers to give them guidance.
5. Teach children a way of solving problems to fix those problems rather than running away from them or acting without thinking.
6. Caregivers are role models. Talk about how you handle stress and demonstrate effective ways of dealing with it.

\*This information taken from “How Caregivers Can Help Children Manage Stress,” published by The New York Academy of Medicine, Office of School Health Programs.

### Worry Tree Exercise

Write your worries on the tree with your family members and discuss them with each other.



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## Family Self-Care Plan



1. What is something you can do (to feel better) when you are stressed out?

Caregivers: \_\_\_\_\_

Kids: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Write 3 things you can do as a family to have fun together:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Things that make me feel better

<p><b>Distract yourself</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> call or talk to a friend to talk about something completely different</li> <li><input type="radio"/> take a shower/bath</li> <li><input type="radio"/> go for a walk or run</li> <li><input type="radio"/> take a bike ride</li> <li><input type="radio"/> dance</li> <li><input type="radio"/> play with a pet</li> <li><input type="radio"/> watch tv</li> <li><input type="radio"/> drink a glass of water</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relax yourself</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> count to 10 slowly</li> <li><input type="radio"/> take a shower/bath</li> <li><input type="radio"/> listen to relaxing music to change how you feel</li> <li><input type="radio"/> try breathing exercises</li> <li><input type="radio"/> learn to “let go”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Express yourself</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> draw or scribble designs on paper</li> <li><input type="radio"/> write in a journal</li> <li><input type="radio"/> draw the pain</li> <li><input type="radio"/> compose songs or poetry</li> <li><input type="radio"/> listen to music that expresses how you feel</li> </ul>
<p><b>Release tension</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> go for a walk/run/bike ride</li> <li><input type="radio"/> dance</li> <li><input type="radio"/> write</li> <li><input type="radio"/> scribble on paper</li> <li><input type="radio"/> squeeze, kneed, or smooch a stress ball, handful of clay, or Play Doh</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support yourself</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> call or talk to a friend</li> <li><input type="radio"/> play with a pet</li> <li><input type="radio"/> drink a cup of warm milk or hot chocolate</li> <li><input type="radio"/> find a hobby</li> <li><input type="radio"/> seek out other people who are going through the same thing as you</li> </ul>

## Environmental Stressors



Sometimes parents and kids do not realize what things out in the world contribute to feelings of stress (e.g., community violence, natural disasters)

- ▶ How do we find resources to help us deal with these kinds of stress?

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- ▶ How do they exacerbate the stress you are already exhibiting?

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- ▶ Are there any environmental stressors related to family life in supportive housing?

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### Crisis Plan

When conflict between parents and kids gets really intense, sometimes it is helpful to take a step back and rely on supports to help stay calm. Having a “Crisis Plan” can be helpful during these times.

<b><u>Parents:</u></b>	<b><u>Kids:</u></b>
Who can you call for support?	Who can you call for support?
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
What else can you do to help stay calm?  1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	What else can you do to help stay calm?  1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____



## Social Support Activities



## Resources for Support Handout



Use the STAR to fill in who you go to for support.  
Include your children's supports too. Add as many lines as you need!

**Family**

**School**

**Neighborhood**

**Friends**

**Place of Worship**

## Positive Sources of Support



- ▶ Family members
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Other parents who have children with the same problems
- ▶ Family advocates
- ▶ School staff (teacher, parent coordinator, etc.)
- ▶ Counselor/therapist
- ▶ Clergy
- ▶ Community based organizations
- ▶ Supportive housing sponsored programs
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Others (fill in below):

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## Building Supports for Successful Family Life

When we have problems, we need supports to help us.



- How do we ask for support?

---

- How do we use support?

---

- What can get in the way?

---

### My Feel Good Box



Instructions: Family members create a box or bag full of things that will help you to take good care of yourself now or in the future. It can contain favorite food items, special pictures, music, poems, etc. Make sure you include items that make you feel good on a day when you need it most.

These are the things inside of my box:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Relationship Activities

## Family Time Activity Plan:

- ⇒Talk with your child about what he/she would like to do and how often
- ⇒Make every effort to stick to the plan
- ⇒Don't take family time away as punishment
- ⇒Both parents and children are re-adjusting to each other during reunification and relating to each other may take time.
- ⇒Try to have one-on-one time with each child.
- ⇒Share family experiences and accomplishments that occurred during deployment

## Suggestions for Family Fun

### A list for Families:

- ❖ Plan a picnic in the park/day in the park/ barbecue.
- ❖ Go to beach or local swimming pool.
- ❖ Theme parks (Rye Playland, Coney Island, Six Flags)
- ❖ Set up a movie, game, and a special treat night
- ❖ Play a video game with your child.
- ❖ Go ice-skating (Winter) or bike riding (Summer/Spring)
- ❖ See famous sights around your town or city
- ❖ Take a trip to a museum.



### A List for Kids:

- ❖ Karate Class
- ❖ Dance Class
- ❖ Sports Teams (tennis, basketball, baseball)
- ❖ Swimming
- ❖ Boys and Girls Club
- ❖ Girls Inc.
- ❖ Boys/ Girls Scouts

# Family Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Family time rules are: \_\_\_\_\_

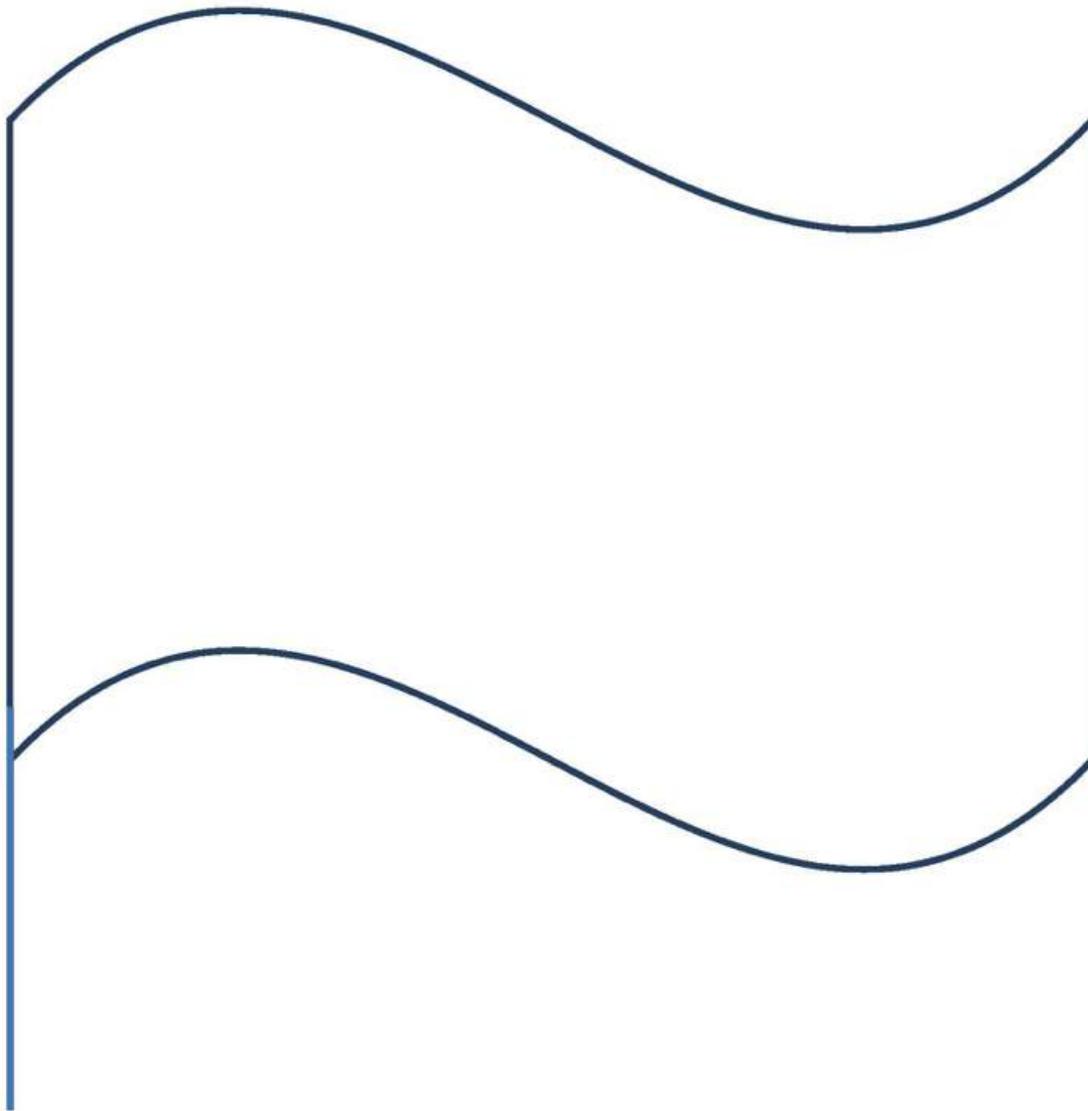
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## Your Family Flag

Set up a time during the week where your family will work together to design a family flag. Show what your family is all about. Be creative!



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## Rules Activities

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## Why Rules are Important:



- They keep everyone safe.
- They organize the family.
- They also organize a child's life in other areas like school and the neighborhood.
- Experiencing the consequences of their choices helps children learn self-discipline.

### One Father's Experience:

"Four years ago, when my son was seven years-old, we moved and he got his own room. He soon discovered that slamming his bedroom door was a great way to get out his frustrations when he was angry at me. I asked him several times not to slam the door, but he wouldn't stop. Finally, I told him that if he continued to slam the door, I would remove it. The behavior continued the next day, so when he went out to play, I removed the door from its hinges. I put it back on a week later, and he hasn't slammed it since."

### Consequences and Rewards:

- Every rule should have an appropriate consequence when broken and a reward when followed.
- Consequences and rewards must be consistently delivered in a timely way.
- Rewards do NOT need to be monetary; statements of praise, such as "Thank you" or "Good job!" can be the reward, or an extra few minutes of play time.
- Catch children being good! When you see a child following a rule, be sure to reward them with specific praise. For example, "I love how you put your toys away without my even asking. You're really good at following that rule. Thank you!"

Effective consequences include time-outs (about one minute per age of the child), the removal of privileges (TV viewing time, video games, cell phones, etc.), and for older children—a reduction in allowance.

## The Right Rules at the Right Ages

Age	What to expect	Rules
<b>Toddlers</b> 1-3 year old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to do more things by themselves</li> <li>• Learning how to calm themselves down</li> <li>• Starting to communicate through talking</li> <li>• "I am the most important person in the world"</li> </ul>	
<b>Preschool</b> 3-5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to explore more</li> <li>• Playing with others</li> <li>• Able to do simple chores</li> <li>• Language continues to develop</li> </ul>	
<b>School-age</b> 6-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to not to act on impulses</li> <li>• able to do homework and more chores</li> <li>• Friends become more important</li> <li>• Beginning of puberty</li> </ul>	
<b>Teenager</b> 12+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less time spent at home and more time with friends</li> <li>• Wanting more independence</li> <li>• Maybe more moody, taking risks, trouble managing emotions</li> <li>• More capable of planning and thinking about the future</li> </ul>	

## Rewards and Consequences: What can I do with my child?

### Rewards

Extra time doing favorite activities (e.g., TV, games, reading) or additional privileges

Allowance

Earn money towards buying an item of your child's choosing (like shoes, clothes, games)

***Praise/acknowledge good behavior!***

Tips for praise:

1. Look your child in the eye
2. Move close to your child
3. Smile
4. Praise a specific behavior "You did a great job cleaning up your room"
5. Speak with feeling and sincerity
6. Touch your child affectionately
7. Praise immediately, as soon as you notice commendable behavior
8. Praise should be honest and specific
9. Don't overdo it or be insincere



Effective Use of Rewards:

- Make sure it is something your child truly wants.
- Let them earn their reward. Don't just give it to them without them showing the desired behavior.
- Give the reward right away. Don't wait too long!
- Do the same thing every time.

### Consequences

Take away time from favorite activities or privileges

Withhold allowance or buying item that your child chooses

Extra chores

Time outs

Remove toys

Tips for giving consequences:

1. Give the consequence immediately following unacceptable behavior, not tomorrow or next week
2. Be clear and specific: describe exactly how you want your child to act
3. Give brief choices: avoid long discussions and state the consequence in a sentence or two
4. Be consistent: don't give a big consequence one week and a small one the next week
5. Follow through: always give consequence right away!

Avoid the following:

- never use a threat – it has no teaching value and will teach your child how to problem-solve
- a reward is not a bribe – a bribe is a reward given in advance, often given even when your child shows inappropriate behavior. Instead, a reward is earned by your child for positive behavior
- Avoid too many negative consequences and not enough rewards
- Don't let consequences snowball – your child may taunt you by continuing to misbehave while you keep adding consequences. You may soon find yourself in a position where you have promised more consequences than you can deliver. Your child may also feel she/he has nothing left to lose and continue to misbehave
- Don't start with huge consequences: if you ground your child for a month right away, what's next? Start with the smallest possible consequence.
- Don't give up!!!! Rewards and consequences have to be repeated consistently over a long period of time to have a lasting effect on behavior.

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## How to Make a Good Rule



### What's WRONG with this Rule?

"Don't make a mess" - *Rules work best when stated in positive language.*

▶ *Change to:* \_\_\_\_\_

What's still wrong with this Rule? *The clearer the better.*

▶ *Change to:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Age-appropriate rules work best - for example:*

▶ *For a 4 year-old, cleaning messes looks like:*

\_\_\_\_\_

▶ *For a 12 year-old, cleaning messes looks like:*

\_\_\_\_\_

### CONSISTENCY is KEY!

Make a consequence and a reward for every rule. Follow through with consequences AND rewards every time. (If you say you are going to take the game away, then you have to take the game away.) Choose realistic consequences that you *can* follow through on.

▶ *If my child does not clean up their mess, the consequence is:*

\_\_\_\_\_

▶ *If my child does clean up their mess, the reward is:*

\_\_\_\_\_

### Decide which rules apply to everyone in the household.

For example: "We speak to each other respectfully, without using curse words."  
Or, "We all take our dirty dishes to the sink after eating and rinse them".

Answers to above: **Positive Language:** "Clean up your mess"; **Clearer:** "Put your toys away when you're done playing with them"; **Age-Appropriate:** For a 4 year-old: "Put your plate in the sink after you're done eating." Or "Put your dirty clothes in the hamper when you take them off." For a 12 year-old: "Wash your plate when you're done eating." Or, "Do a load of laundry when your hamper is full."



### Daily Behavior Chart (Example)

Insert smiley faces 😊 on the days chore was completed. Reward child for a # of smiley faces per week

BEHAVIOR CHART							
TAKING CARE OF ME	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA	SU
I brushed my teeth							
I washed my hands before meals							
I went to bed on time							
MY MANNERS							
I listened to my parents/caregivers							
I used good manners when I ate							
I said "Please" and "Thank You"							
I was nice to my siblings							
AT SCHOOL							
I listened to my teachers							
I completed my assignments							
I finished my homework							
JUST PLAYIN' AROUND							
I was a good sport playing games							
I shared my toys with my friends							
I shared my toys with my siblings							
HOME SWEET HOME							
I made my bed							
I put away my toys							
I took out the garbage							
I helped with the dishes							

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## Respectful Communication Activities

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### Communication Tips for Caregivers

(This document is from [apahelpcenter.org](http://apahelpcenter.org), American Psychological Association, ©2004.)

#### **Be available for your children:**

- Notice times when your kids are most likely to talk--for example, at bedtime, on the bus/subway--and be there to listen to them.
- Start the conversation--this lets your kids know you care about what's going on in their lives.
- Find time each week for a one-on-one activity with each child, even if it's only for 20 minutes. It can help you bond and lets your child know you are there for them.
- Learn what your children like to do (for example, favorite music and activities) and show interest in them.
- Start conversations by sharing what you have been thinking about rather than beginning with a question.

#### **Let your kids know you're listening:**

- When your children are talking about things that bother them, stop what you are doing and listen.
- Express interest in what they are saying without questioning them.
- Listen to their point of view, even if it's difficult to hear.
- Let them complete their point before you talk.
- Repeat what you heard them say to make sure that you understand them and so that they feel understood.

#### **Respond in a way your children will hear:**

- Stay calm; kids will tune you out if you appear angry or defensive.
- Say your opinion without putting down theirs; say that it's okay to disagree.
- Try not to argue about who is right. Instead say, "I know you disagree with me, but this is what I think."
- Think about your child's feelings rather than your own during your conversations.

#### **Remember:**

- Ask your children what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, simply listening, help in dealing with feelings, or help solving a problem.
- Kids learn by imitating. Most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems, and work through difficult feelings.
- Talk to your children--don't lecture, criticize, threaten, or say hurtful things.
- Kids learn from their own choices. As long as the consequences are not dangerous, you don't have to step in.
- Realize your children may test you by telling you a small part of what is bothering them. Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk, and they may share the rest.

#### **Parenting is hard work:**

- Listening and talking is the key to a healthy connection between you and your children. But parenting is hard work and keeping a good connection with kids can be challenging, especially since caregivers are dealing with many other pressures. If you are having problems over a long period of time, you might want to consider seeing a mental health professional to get support.

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## Express Yourself Skills

There are four parts of your body to remember when you express yourself.



### ◆ Our BACK

- ◆ We use our BACKS to stand or sit up straight.
- ◆ No one pays attention to what you are saying because they cannot see your face. And you can't fill up your lungs with air.



### ◆ Our EYES

- ◆ We use our EYES to look at people.
- ◆ When we use our eyes to look at the person we're talking to, they know that we are serious and want them to pay attention.



### ◆ Our MOUTHS

- ◆ We use our MOUTHS to speak.
- ◆ When we talk, we need to speak in a strong and clear voice.
- ◆ When we use a nice clear voice, people will be able to understand you and want to listen to what you have to say!



### ◆ Our EARS

- ◆ We use our EARS to listen.
- ◆ It is important to listen to what other people say.
- ◆ If we do a good job of listening, then when it's our turn to talk, that person will probably listen to us too!

*\*Remember to stand up straight, look others in the eye, and speak clearly!!\**

## Caregiver and Child Listening Activity



### Questions for the kids:

⇒ What can you do so that your parents know that you are listening to them?

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⇒ What kinds of words can you use that will get your parents' attention? (please, thank you, etc.)

---

⇒ When is the best time to ask for something that you really want?

---

### Questions for Parents:

⇒ What can you do so that your children know that you are listening to them?

---

⇒ When is the best time for your children to ask you for something they want?

---

⇒ What can you do so that your kids come and talk to you when they need help?

---

**Share responses with each other.**

# “How Was Your Day?”



**Caregivers:**

Ask children about 1 good thing that happened to them today. Write it here:

---

---

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

**Kids:**

Ask your caregivers about 1 good thing that happened to them today. Write it here:

---

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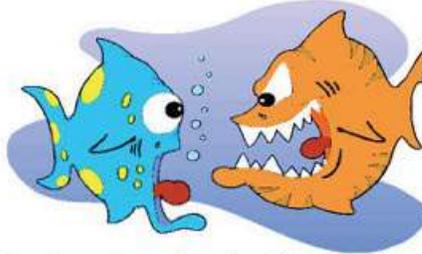
Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

## Responsibilities Activities

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR FAMILIES

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*"2 Ss and 4 Rs" for Strengthening Family Life*, McSilver Institute for Poverty and Policy Research, NYU,  
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**Conflict Resolution is easier when families spend quality time together.**

- Listen carefully to what the other person has to say. Try practicing these listening skills: 1) good eye contact. 2) concentrate on what's being said. 3) don't interrupt. 4) ask questions that relate to what's being said.
- **Be sure that both sides are clear about what the problem is.**
- Don't keep things inside. Deal with the problem as soon as it happens.
- **Don't take out your anger on others when you are mad. For example, if you are mad at your brother, don't yell at your best friend. Talk to your brother and tell him how you feel.**
- Avoid bringing up old problems. Once the fight is over drop it. Forgive and forget.
- **Think before you speak. This may help avoid problems from the start. However, make sure you say how you feel and tell the other person what they did that hurt you or made you mad.**
- While speaking to the other person show respect by using their name.
- **Never use violence or abuse to get your way. Fighting or hitting someone is not okay.**
- Ask yourself where the conflict is coming from. Who actually owns the problem that is causing the conflict?
- **Think through how you respond to the conflict situation. Should it even be a source of conflict?**
- Resolving other family conflicts, such as those between siblings, may require more creativity.
- **Conflict is a normal, healthy part of every relationship. No conflict would mean no differences of opinion; no independent thinking. Conflict is normal, but it can also be stressful, particularly between parents and children.**
- Conflict resolution works better when you change the focus from "me versus you" to "we versus the problem"

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/family>. "Building Family Strengths" Copies of the publication are available from county offices of the U of Minnesota Extension Service.

"2 Ss and 4 Rs" for Strengthening Family Life, McSilver Institute for Poverty and Policy Research, NYU, 2014 for the Child Welfare and Supportive Housing Resource Center

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## Tips for readjusting responsibilities



- ◆ Everyone should agree about the responsibilities each person has in the family.
- ◆ Responsibilities expected of each family member should be fair and make sense for the child's age.
  - Sit family members down together and look at all the responsibilities that have been written.
  - Now think about a day for your family. Are there any responsibilities that are not getting done, or that create a problem within the family?
  - If so, address the person who's responsible for that chore or duty. Ask them why they are not able to meet their responsibilities.
  - Try to talk about it using respectful communication and find a solution that works for everyone, so the responsibility will be fulfilled.
  - If the child feels they have too many responsibilities, think about whether that may be true.
  - See if a chore may not be getting done because of things that are taking away the child's attention in the home (i.e., TV, video games, loud talking, etc.).

They may need some space for quiet work. Or, if the child doesn't want to start homework immediately, allow them a set period of time (15 mins.) to rest, play, watch T.V., etc. before starting homework.)

### Setting a Good Example...As caregivers, it is our job to set a good example for our kids!

- ◆ When you say you'll be at your child's school play or help with a science project or homework, make sure you do it!
- ◆ When making family decisions, include your child (age appropriately). Remember these decisions will affect your child as well. You may make the final decision, but children are more likely to cooperate if their opinion has been heard.
- ◆ Explain your decisions to your children! If they know why you decided something or said 'No', then they will understand and learn from it and are much less likely to 'fight' it.

## Let's Talk about Responsibilities for Solving Family Conflicts

- ⇒ Every family member can help solve family problems
- ⇒ Parents always have more responsibility than kids, but if kids are involved too, they learn valuable life skills.
- ⇒ Including kids in family problem-solving encourages positive behavior.



### Remember:

- Ask your children what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, simply listening, help in dealing with feelings, or help solving a problem.
- Kids learn by imitating. Most often, they will follow your lead in how they deal with anger, solve problems, and work through difficult feelings.
- Talk to your children - don't lecture, criticize, threaten, or say hurtful things.
- Kids learn from their own choices. As long as the consequences are not dangerous, don't feel you have to step in.
- Realize your children may test you by telling you a small part of what is bothering them. Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk, and they may share the rest.

## Responsibility



What does Responsibility mean in your family?

What does Responsibility mean in your community?

2 responsibilities of the caregiver(s) in our family are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

2 responsibilities of the kids in our family are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Do caregivers and kids agree that these are their responsibilities?

## Responsibility for Solving Family Conflicts

“Every family member can help solve family problems.”

Describe a recent family problem that you’ve had:

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**Kids:** In what way did you help solve the problem?

Ignored the problem    Used an R or S    Admitted your mistake |    Got angry    Other

Could you have done something differently?

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**Caregivers:** In what way did you help solve the problem?

Ignored the problem    Used an R or S    Admitted your mistake |    Got angry    Other

Could you have done something differently?

---



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### The 2 Ss and 4 Rs Review



- Stress Management
- Social Support
- Relationships
- Rules
- Respectful Communication
- Responsibility

Write one problem that came up during the week:

---

If you used an R or S to solve the problem, circle which one you used:

- |                   |                          |                  |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Stress Management | Support                  | Relationships    |
| Rules             | Respectful Communication | Responsibilities |

Describe how you used the R or S:

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If you didn't use an R or S, think back on what happened and circle which R or S you might have used:

- |                   |                          |                  |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Stress Management | Support                  | Relationships    |
| Rules             | Respectful Communication | Responsibilities |

Describe how you might have used the R or S:

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## The Right Chores at the Right Ages

Age	Sample chores
2-4 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help dust</li> <li>• put napkins on the table</li> <li>• help put toys away</li> <li>• put laundry in hamper</li> <li>• help feed pets</li> </ul>
4 - 7 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help set the table</li> <li>• put away toys/things</li> <li>• help feed pets</li> <li>• water plants</li> <li>• help make the bed</li> <li>• dust</li> <li>• put laundry in the hamper</li> <li>• help wipe up messes</li> <li>• help clear the table</li> </ul>
8-10 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make bed</li> <li>• water plants</li> <li>• clean room with direction</li> <li>• set table</li> <li>• dust</li> <li>• vacuum</li> <li>• feed pets</li> <li>• help make dinner</li> <li>• put laundry in hamper</li> <li>• help wash the car</li> <li>• help wash dishes or load/empty dishwasher</li> </ul>
11 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take garbage out</li> <li>• set table</li> <li>• clean room</li> <li>• vacuum</li> <li>• feed pets</li> <li>• water plants</li> <li>• help with laundry and eventually start doing own laundry</li> <li>• help make dinner/make small meals on their own</li> <li>• help or wash the car</li> <li>• clean room</li> <li>• make bed</li> <li>• wash dishes/load or empty dishwasher</li> </ul>

## Identifying Strengths Activity

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## Identifying Your Family Members' Strengths



**Caregivers** → These are some **strengths** I see in my child(ren); these are some things that they do well (write at least one strength per child):

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_\_\_

**Kids** → These are some **strengths** I see in my caregiver(s); these are some things I like about my caregiver(s) (write at least one strength per caregiver/parent):

Caregiver's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Strength \_\_\_\_\_

## Setting Goals Activity

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## Make a Family Goal

Work together as a family to create one goal or identify one thing to work on as a family. All family members should participate in the discussion and decide on a family goal together.

Write your goal below.



Our family goal is:

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### **A Definition of Motivational Interviewing**

The definition of Motivational Interviewing (MI) has evolved and been refined since the original publications on its utility as an approach to behavior change. The initial description, by William R. Miller in 1983, developed from his experience in the treatment of problem drinkers. Through clinical experience and empirical research, the fundamental principles and methodologies of MI have been applied and tested in various settings and research findings have demonstrated its efficacy. MI is now established as an evidence-based practice in the treatment of individuals with substance use disorders.

Motivational Interviewing focuses on exploring and resolving ambivalence and centers on motivational processes within the individual that facilitate change. The method differs from more “coercive” or externally-driven methods for motivating change as it does not impose change (that may be inconsistent with the person's own values, beliefs or wishes); but rather supports change in a manner congruent with the person's own values and concerns.

The most recent definition of Motivational Interviewing (2009) is:

**“... a collaborative, person-centered form of guiding to elicit and strengthen motivation for change.”**

### **The Motivational Interviewing Approach**

Motivational Interviewing is grounded in a respectful stance with a focus on building rapport in the initial stages of the counseling relationship. A central concept of MI is the identification, examination, and resolution of ambivalence about changing behavior.

Ambivalence, feeling two ways about behavior change, is seen as a natural part of the change process. The skillful MI practitioner is attuned to client ambivalence and “readiness for change” and thoughtfully utilizes techniques and strategies that are responsive to the client.

Recent descriptions of Motivational Interviewing include three essential elements:

1. MI is a particular kind of conversation about change (counseling, therapy, consultation, method of communication)
2. MI is collaborative (person-centered, partnership, honors autonomy, not expert-recipient)
3. MI is evocative (seeks to call forth the person's own motivation and commitment)

These core elements are included in three increasingly detailed levels of definition:

**Lay person's definition (What's it for?):** Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative conversation to strengthen a person's own motivation for and commitment to change.

**A pragmatic practitioner's definition (Why would I use it?):** Motivational Interviewing is a person-centered counseling method for addressing the common problem of ambivalence about change.

**A technical therapeutic definition (How does it work?):** Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented method of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen an individual's motivation for and movement toward a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own arguments for change.

**The "Spirit" of Motivational Interviewing**

MI is more than the use of a set of technical interventions. It is characterized by a particular "spirit" or clinical "way of being" which is the context or interpersonal relationship within which the techniques are employed.

The spirit of MI is based on three key elements: **collaboration** between the therapist and the client; **evoking or drawing out** the client's ideas about change; and emphasizing the **autonomy** of the client.

- **Collaboration (vs. Confrontation)**

Collaboration is a partnership between the therapist and the client, grounded in the point of view and experiences of the client.

This contrasts with some other approaches to substance use disorders treatment, which are based on the therapist assuming an "expert" role, at times confronting the client and imposing their perspective on the client's substance use behavior and the appropriate course of treatment and outcome.

Collaboration builds rapport and facilitates trust in the helping relationship, which can be challenging in a more hierarchical relationship. This does not mean that the therapist automatically agrees with the client about the nature of the problem or the changes that may be most appropriate. Although they may see things differently, the therapeutic process is focused on mutual understanding, not the therapist being right.

- **Evocation (Drawing Out, Rather Than Imposing Ideas)**

The MI approach is one of the therapist's drawing out the individual's own thoughts and ideas, rather than imposing their opinions as motivation and commitment to change is most powerful and durable when it comes from the client. No matter what reasons the therapist might offer to convince the client of the need to change their behavior or how much they might want the person to do so, lasting change is more likely to occur when the client discovers their own reasons and determination to change. The therapist's job is to "draw out" the person's own motivations and skills for change, not to tell them what to do or why they should do it.

- **Autonomy (vs. Authority)**

Unlike some other treatment models that emphasize the clinician as an authority figure, Motivational Interviewing recognizes that the true power for change rests within the client. Ultimately, it is up to the individual to follow through with making changes happen. This is empowering to the individual, but also gives them responsibility for their actions. Counselors reinforce that there is no single "right way" to change and that there are

multiple ways that change can occur. In addition to deciding whether they will make a change, clients are encouraged to take the lead in developing a “menu of options’ as to how to achieve the desired change.

### **The Principles of Motivational Interviewing**

Building on and bringing to life the elements of the MI “style”, there are four distinct principles that guide the practice of MI. The therapist employing MI will hold true to these principles throughout treatment.

- **Express Empathy**

Empathy involves seeing the world through the client’s eyes, thinking about things as the client thinks about them, feeling things as the client feels them, sharing in the client’s experiences. This approach provides the basis for clients to be heard and understood, and in turn, clients are more likely to honestly share their experiences in depth. The process of expressing empathy relies on the client’s experiencing the counselor as able to see the world as they (the client) sees it.

- **Support Self-Efficacy**

MI is a strengths-based approach that believes that clients have within themselves the capabilities to change successfully. A client’s belief that change is possible (self-efficacy) is needed to instill hope about making those difficult changes. Clients often have previously tried and been unable to achieve or maintain the desired change, creating doubt about their ability to succeed. In Motivational Interviewing, counselors support self-efficacy by focusing on previous successes and highlighting skills and strengths that the client already has.

- **Roll with Resistance**

From an MI perspective, resistance in treatment occurs when then the client experiences a conflict between their view of the “problem” or the “solution” and that of the clinician or when the client experiences their freedom or autonomy being impinged upon. These experiences are often based in the client’s ambivalence about change. In MI, counselors avoid eliciting resistance by not confronting the client and when resistance occurs, they work to de-escalate and avoid a negative interaction, instead “rolling with it.” Actions and statements that demonstrate resistance remain unchallenged especially early in the counseling relationship. By rolling with resistance, it disrupts any “struggle” that may occur and the session does not resemble an argument or the client’s playing “devil’s advocate” or “yes, but” to the counselor’s suggestions. The MI value on having the client define the problem and develop their own solutions leaves little for the client to resist. A frequently used metaphor is “dancing” rather than “wrestling” with the client. In exploring client concerns, counselors invite clients to examine new points of view, and are careful not to impose their own ways of thinking. A key concept is that counselor’s avoid the “righting

reflex”, a tendency born from concern, to ensure that the client understands and agrees with the need to change and to solve the problem for the client.

- **Develop Discrepancy**

Motivation for change occurs when people perceive a mismatch between “where they are and where they want to be”, and a counselor practicing Motivational Interviewing works to develop this by helping clients examine the discrepancies between their current circumstances/behavior and their values and future goals. When clients recognize that their current behaviors place them in conflict with their values or interfere with accomplishment of self-identified goals, they are more likely to experience increased motivation to make important life changes. It is important that the counselor using MI does not use strategies to develop discrepancy at the expense of the other principles, yet gradually help clients to become aware of how current behaviors may lead them away from, rather than toward, their important goals.

### Motivational Interviewing Skills and Strategies

The practice of Motivational Interviewing involves the skillful use of certain techniques for bringing to life the “MI spirit”, demonstrating the MI principles, and guiding the process toward eliciting client change talk and commitment for change. Change talk involves statements or non-verbal communications indicating the client may be considering the possibility of change.

### OARS

Often called micro counseling skills, OARS is a brief way to remember the basic approach used in Motivational Interviewing. Open Ended Questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries are core counselor behaviors employed to move the process forward by establishing a therapeutic alliance and eliciting discussion about change.

- **Open-ended questions** are those that are not easily answered with a “yes/no” or short answer containing only a specific, limited piece of information. Open-ended questions invite elaboration and thinking more deeply about an issue. Although closed questions have their place and are at times valuable (e.g., when collecting specific information in an assessment), open-ended questions create forward momentum used to help the client explore the reasons for and possibility of change.
- **Affirmations** are statements that recognize client strengths. They assist in building rapport and in helping the client see themselves in a different, more positive light. To be effective they must be congruent and genuine. The use of affirmations can help clients feel that change is possible even when previous efforts have been unsuccessful. Affirmations often involve reframing behaviors or concerns as evidence of positive client qualities. Affirmations are a key element in facilitating the MI principle of Supporting Self-efficacy.

- **Reflections** or reflective listening is perhaps the most crucial skill in Motivational Interviewing. It has two primary purposes. First is to bring to life the principle of Expressing Empathy. By careful listening and reflective responses, the client comes to feel that the counselor understands the issues from their perspective. Beyond this, strategic use of reflective listening is a core intervention toward guiding the client toward change, supporting the goal-directed aspect of MI. In this use of reflections, the therapist guides the client towards resolving ambivalence by a focus on the negative aspects of the status quo and the positives of making change. There are several levels of reflection ranging from simple to more complex. Different types of reflections are skillfully used as clients demonstrate different levels of readiness for change. For example, some types of reflections are more helpful when the client seems resistant and others more appropriate when the client offers statements more indicative of commitment to change.
- **Summaries** are a special type of reflection where the therapist recaps what has occurred in all or part of a counseling session(s). Summaries communicate interest, understanding and call attention to important elements of the discussion. They may be used to shift attention or direction and prepare the client to “move on.” Summaries can highlight both sides of a client’s ambivalence about change and promote the development of discrepancy by strategically selecting what information should be included and what can be minimized or excluded.

#### **Change Talk**

Change talk is defined as statements by the client revealing consideration of, motivation for, or commitment to change. In Motivational Interviewing, the therapist seeks to guide the client to expressions of change talk as the pathway to change. Research indicates a clear correlation between client statements about change and outcomes - client-reported levels of success in changing a behavior. The more someone talks about change, the more likely they are to change. Different types of change talk can be described using the mnemonic DARN-CAT.

#### **Preparatory Change Talk**

- Desire (I want to change)
- Ability (I can change)
- Reason (It’s important to change)
- Need (I should change)

And most predictive of positive outcome:

#### **Implementing Change Talk**

- Commitment (I will make changes)
- Activation (I am ready, prepared, willing to change)
- Taking Steps (I am taking specific actions to change)

### Strategies for Evoking Change Talk

There are specific therapeutic strategies that are likely to elicit and support change talk in Motivational Interviewing:

1. **Ask Evocative Questions:** Ask an open question, the answer to which is likely to be change talk.
2. **Explore Decisional Balance:** Ask for the pros and cons of both changing and staying the same.
3. **Good Things/Not-So-Good Things:** Ask about the positives and negatives of the target behavior.
4. **Ask for Elaboration/Examples:** When a change talk theme emerges, ask for more details. "In what ways?" "Tell me more?" "What does that look like?" "When was the last time that happened?"
5. **Look Back:** Ask about a time before the target behavior emerged. How were things better, different?
6. **Look Forward:** Ask what may happen if things continue as they are (status quo). Try the miracle question: If you were 100% successful in making the changes you want, what would be different? How would you like your life to be five years from now?
7. **Query Extremes:** What are the worst things that might happen if you don't make this change? What are the best things that might happen if you do make this change?
8. **Use Change Rulers:** Ask: "On a scale from 1 to 10, how important is it to you to change [the specific target behavior] where 1 is not at all important, and a 10 is extremely important? Follow up: "And why are you at \_\_\_and not \_\_\_\_ [a lower number than stated]?" "What might happen that could move you from \_\_\_ to [a higher number]?" Alternatively, you could also ask "How confident are that you could make the change if you decided to do it?"
9. **Explore Goals and Values:** Ask what the person's guiding values are. What do they want in life? Using a values card sort activity can be helpful here. Ask how the continuation of target behavior fits in with the person's goals or values. Does it help realize an important goal or value, interfere with it, or is it irrelevant?
10. **Come Alongside:** Explicitly side with the negative (status quo) side of ambivalence. "Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ is so important to you that you won't give it up, no matter what the cost."

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**How Common Trauma Reactions May Explain Some “Difficult” Behaviors or Reactions  
within Homeless Service Settings (Hopper, et al., 2010)**

"Difficult" Behaviors or Reactions within Homeless Service Settings	Common Trauma Reactions
Has difficulty “getting motivated” to get job training, pursue education, locate a job, or find housing	Depression and diminished interest in everyday activities
Complains that the setting is not comfortable or not safe, appears tired and poorly rested. Is up roaming around at night.	Nightmares and insomnia
Perceives others as being abusive, loses touch with current-day reality and feels like the trauma is happening over again	Flashbacks, triggered responses
Avoids meetings with counselors or other support staff, emotionally shuts down when faced with traumatic reminders	Avoidance of traumatic memories or reminders
Isolates within the shelter, stays away from other residents and staff	Feeling detached from others
Lacks awareness of emotional responses, does not emotionally respond to others	Emotional numbing or restricted range of feelings
Is alert for signs of danger, appears to be tense and nervous	Hyper-alertness or hypervigilance
Has interpersonal conflicts within the shelter, appears agitated	Irritability, restlessness, outbursts of anger or rage
Has difficulty keeping up in educational settings or job training programs	Difficulty concentrating or remembering
Becomes agitated within the shelter. Is triggered by rules and consequences. Has difficulty setting limits with children.	Feeling unsafe, helpless, and out of control
Has difficulty following rules and guidelines within the shelter or in other settings. Is triggered when dealing with authorities. Will not accept help from others.	Increased need for control
Feels emotionally “out of control.” Staff and other residents become frustrated by not being able to predict how he or she will respond emotionally	Affect dysregulation (emotional swings – like crying and then laughing)
Seems spacey or “out of it.” Has difficulty remembering whether or not they have done something. Is not responsive to external situations.	Dissociation
Complains of aches and pains like headaches, stomachaches, backaches. Becomes ill frequently.	Psychosomatic symptoms, impaired immune system
Cuts off from family, friends, and other sources of support	Feelings of shame and self-blame
Has difficulty trusting staff members; feels targeted by others. Does not form close relationships in the service setting.	Difficulty trusting and/or feelings of betrayal
Complains that the system is unfair, that they are being targeted or unfairly blamed	Loss of a sense of order or fairness in the world
Puts less effort into trying--does not follow through on appointments, does not respond to assistance	Learned helplessness
Invades others' personal space or lacks awareness of when others are invading their personal space	Boundary issues
Has ongoing substance abuse problems	Use of alcohol or drugs to manage emotional responses
Remains in an abusive relationship or is victimized again and again	Revictimization (impaired ability to identify danger signs)

