
Protective Factors & Family Strengths

Kay Johnson, MPH, MEd, Barb Frankowski, MD, MPH, Breena Holmes, MD



DISCLOSURES

- We have no relevant financial relationships to disclose or conflicts of interest to resolve
- We will discuss no unapproved or off-label pharmaceuticals

OBJECTIVES

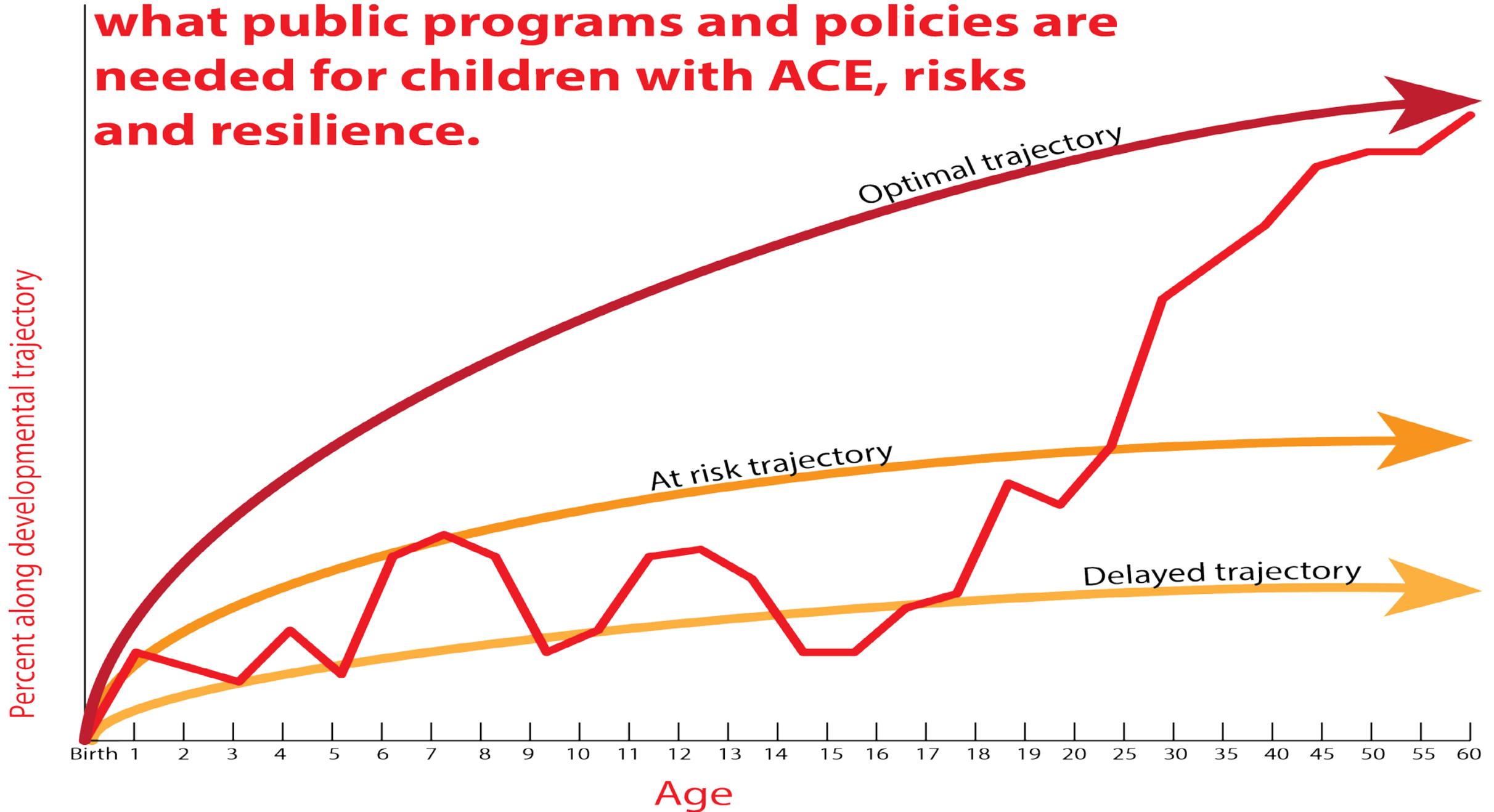
1. Describe factors which contribute to resilience and improved developmental trajectories under conditions of adversity, including social determinants of health
2. Describe Strengthening Families framework
3. Outline Vermont examples of parental strengths and protective factors, including ideas for primary care practice

WHAT HAPPENS FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD TO YOUNG ADULT YEARS DEFINES LIFE TRAJECTORY



- **Early childhood years**
 - Positive relationships, experiences, and nurturing to avoid or ameliorate ACEs or toxic stress
- **Middle childhood, elementary grades**
 - Opportunities for success in larger environment (e.g., good schools, community activities)
- **Adolescence**
 - Diverting the course through well-regulated peers and/or specific interventions and supports
- **Young adults**
 - Opportunities lead to enduring positive change (e.g., education, work, marriage, mental health recovery)

Reflections on my lifecourse trajectory and what public programs and policies are needed for children with ACE, risks and resilience.



RESEARCH SHOWS THREE SETS OF FACTORS THAT DIFFERENTIATE CHILDREN WHO OVERCAME THE ODDS

1. Protective factors within individuals

- Temperament sociable, good impulse control, social-emotional competence
- Language, communication, and problem solving skills
- Realistic plans with strong achievement motivation, internal locus of control

2. Protective factors in the family

- Close bond with at least one emotionally stable, nurturing person
- Substitute caregivers, supportive adults often recruited by child

3. Protective factors in the community / larger environment

- Reliance on community for positive support (assumes availability)
- Services and supports toward better life options, mental health recovery
- Experiences of competence in larger domain (“turning points”)

Starter List of References and Resources

- Bethell, C, Newacheck, et al. Adverse childhood experiences: assessing the impact on health and school engagement and the mitigating role of resilience. *Health Affairs*. 2014 Dec; 33(12);210-216.
- Center on the Developing Child. *From best practices to breakthrough impacts: A science-based approach to building a more promising future for young children and families*. Harvard University. 2016.
- Garner AS, Shonkoff JP, et al. Early childhood adversity, toxic stress, and the role of the pediatrician: translating developmental science into lifelong health. *Pediatrics*. 2012;129(1):e224-e231.
- Luthar SS, Zigler E. Vulnerability and competence: A review of research on resilience in childhood. *Am J Orthopsychiatry*. 1991;61:6-22.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Parenting Matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0-8*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. 2016.
- Rutter M. Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms. *Am J Orthopsychiatry*. 1987;57:316-331.
- Sege R, Linkenbach J. Essentials for childhood: promoting healthy outcomes from positive experiences. *Pediatrics*. 2014;133(6):e1489-e1491.
- Shonkoff JP, Garner AS; et al. The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*. 2012; 129(1):e232-e246.
- Taylor ZE, Conger RD. Promoting Strengths and Resilience in Single-Mother Families. *Child Development*, 2017; 88(2), 350-358.
- Ungar M, Ghazinour M, Richter J. Annual research review: What is resilience within the social ecology of human development?. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 2013; 54(4), 348-366.
- Werner EE, Smith, RS. *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; 1992.
- Wise PH. Confronting social disparities in child health: A critical appraisal of life-course science and research. *Pediatrics*. 2009; 124 Supplement: S203-S211.

THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES MODEL

ALASKA STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

- 1. Parental Resilience:** Be strong, not stressed
- 2. Social Connections:** Get and give support
- 3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:**
Learn more so you can parent better
- 4. Concrete Support in Times of Need:**
Get help when you need it
- 5. The Social-Emotional Competence of Children:**
Help your child manage feelings and relationships

Parental Resilience



Social Connections

Concrete Support
in Times of Need



Knowledge
of Parenting
and Child
Development

Social and
Emotional
Competence
of Children



Resilience is the process of managing stress and functioning well even when things are difficult.

Being resilient as a parent means...

- Taking care of yourself and asking for help when you need it.
- Feeling good about yourself and hopeful about your future.
- Planning for the future and for what you will do in situations that you know are challenging for you.
- Not allowing stress to get in the way of providing loving care for your child.
- Taking time to really enjoy your child and what you like about parenting.



Social Connections: Get and Give Support!

Sometimes being a parent can be very stressful. It's easier to handle parenting challenges when we have positive relationships with family, friends and neighbors. Having a network of caring people in our life helps us feel secure, confident and empowered — and this helps us become better parents.

Build a strong social support system by...

- Focusing on the relationships where you feel respected and appreciated
- Being willing to accept help from others and looking for opportunities to help them back
- Building your skills and comfort in reaching out to others, communicating, resolving conflict and doing all the other things that help to keep a friendship strong
- Building your network so you have multiple friends and connections to turn to

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

There is no such thing as a perfect parent, but knowing what to expect does make the job a lot easier.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development Helps Us...

- Know what to expect as your child grows and how you can best help her learn and thrive
- Use new skills to help your child be happy and healthy
- Recognize your child's unique needs
- Understand how to respond in a positive way when your child misbehaves
- By learning what our children need to do their best, we can give them the best start in life, enjoy parenting more and build strong, healthy families



Concrete Support in Times of Need

All families go through tough times.

However, knowing where to get help in the community can make things a lot easier.

It Is Important that We as Parents...



- Know what help is available.
- Ask for help when we need it.
- Get what we need to keep our families healthy and safe.
- Help others when possible.

CONCRETE SUPPORTS

- **When our families' basic needs are met:**
 - We can spend less time worrying
 - More time helping our children learn and develop.
- **Have you ever felt embarrassed to ask for help?**
 - Take some time to remember how you feel when someone else asks you for help.
 - It can be hard to be the one asking, but everyone needs help sometimes.
 - Not only is there nothing wrong with getting help when you need it, but getting the help you need for yourself and your child is part of being a good parent.

Social & Emotional Competence

Helping children develop social-emotional competence allows them to manage their emotions and build healthy relationships with their peers and adults.

The things we do to model & help our children learn these skills makes a huge difference. We can help our children develop these skills by:

- Responding warmly and consistently to your child
- Teaching your child the words they need to express how they feel
- Allowing your child to express their emotions
- Being a role model: show your child how to be kind and how to interact positively with other people

BALANCING ACES WITH HOPE (HEALTH OUTCOMES OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES)

- **The Science of Thriving!** The possibility for flourishing even in the face of adversity
- National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH): Childhood Resilience related to 3 parental attributes:
 - Parents could discuss things that mattered
 - Parents participated in their child's activities & knew their friends
 - Parents managed their own stress around parenting
- **The positive effect is profound regardless of the other adversities the child experiences!!**

How Positive Childhood Experiences Affect Adult Well-being

Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS)

■ Positive Childhood Experiences



- Family stood by me
- Felt supported by friends
- Sense of belonging at high school
- Enjoyed community traditions

■ Effect on Adult Health



- Lower rates of poor/fair health
- Lower rates of obesity
- Lower rates of smoking

POSITIVE COMMUNITY NORMS



- The role of social factors such as how individual behaviors and attitudes are influenced by our perceptions of the normative (majority) behaviors and attitudes of others
- 2,500 Americans were asked about their practices and beliefs concerning parenting
 - Most endorse the use of 7 specific positive parenting practices
 - BUT – few parents seek help raising their children – parents may be reluctant to seek support and may underestimate their need for support and the role of the community in health parenting!!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VERMONT?



Help Me Grow
Vermont

Evidence-
based Home
Visiting

Developmental
Understanding
Legal
Collaborations
for Everyone
(DULCE)

Building
Flourishing
Communities

Promise
Communities

Bright Futures
4th Edition



Help Me Grow Vermont



Statewide system for improving access to existing resources and services for prenatal parents and families with young children through age 8.

Proactively addresses family's concerns about their child's behavior and development by making connections to existing community-based services and **high quality parent education resources**.

Facilitates collaboration between health professionals, early care and education professionals, human services providers, and families in order to better identify and address of the needs of children in Vermont.

Response to Survey Questions

Parent Responses (%)

<i>As a result of my call to Child Development Infoline and the information and services I received:</i>	Extremely or Quite a bit	Not at all	N/A
I have a better understanding of my child's development.	80%	4%	7%
I am able to better understand and meet my child's needs.	79%	2%	5%
I have a better understanding of services for me and/or my child.	81%	6%	1%
I am able to access services if I need it.	84%	2%	2%
There are people who can provide me with assistance when I need it.	87%	1%	4%
I have people I can talk to for advice and emotional support.	79%	1%	4%
There is improvement in my family's day-to-day circumstances.	66%	5%	17%
My relationship with my child has improved.	71%	2%	27%
My child's behavior has improved (e.g., mood, attitude, play, relationships with other children).	45%	1%	32%

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VERMONT?



Help Me Grow
Vermont

Evidence-
based Home
Visiting

Developmental
Understanding
Legal
Collaborations
for Everyone
(DULCE)

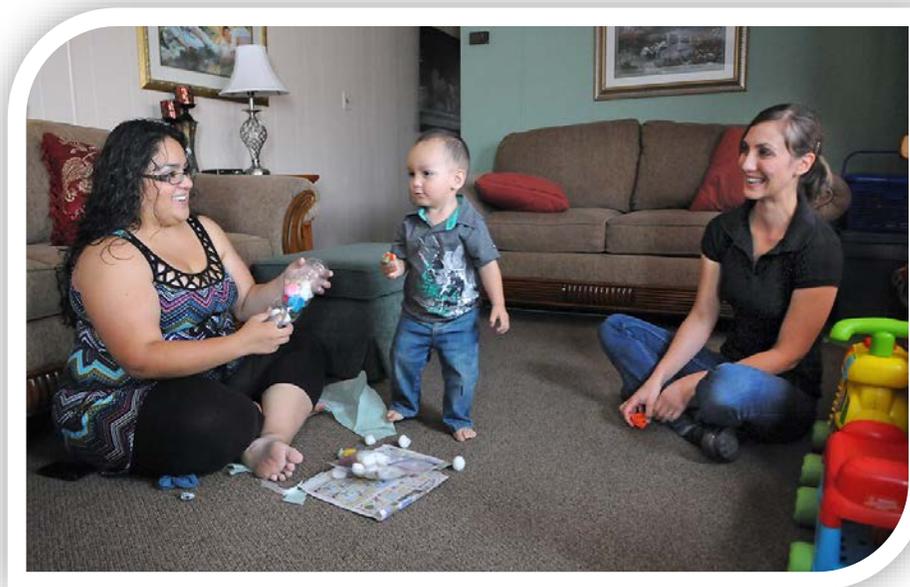
Building
Flourishing
Communities

Promise
Communities

Bright Futures
4th Edition

WHAT HOME VISITORS DO?

- Focus on improving the well-being of pregnant women and families with young children.
- Meet with families in their homes, evaluate and identify their needs, provide them with the support they need to be successful, and connect them with assistance that can make a difference in a child's health, development, and ability to learn.
- Provide culturally-competent, family-centered services.
- Provide health education and guidance on preventive health practices.
- Help link families with medical homes, conduct child wellness screenings, and communicate the results to a child's provider.
- Visits are based on the needs of each family and are different for every family.
- **All of which leads to stronger families.**



HOME VISITING STRENGTHENS FAMILIES



- Parents as Teachers
- Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH)
- Nurse Family Partnerships (NFP)

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VERMONT?



Help Me Grow
Vermont

Evidence-
based Home
Visiting

Developmental
Understanding
Legal
Collaborations
for Everyone
(DULCE)

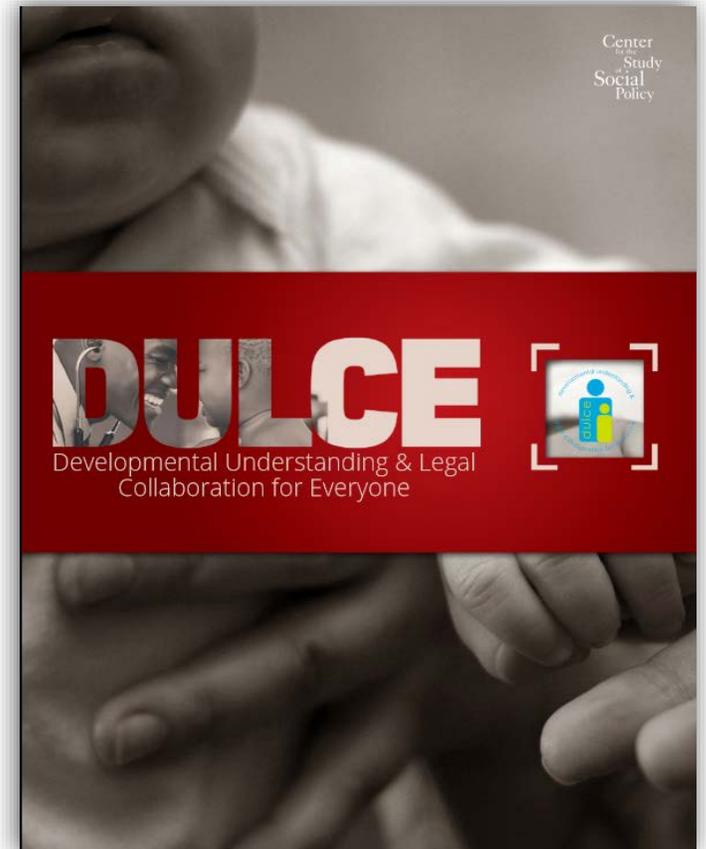
Building
Flourishing
Communities

Promise
Communities

Bright Futures
4th Edition

DULCE – *IT'S ALL IN THE NAME*

- **D**evelopmental **U**nderstanding – Promoting parent knowledge of child development and parenting – in collaboration with the Brazleton Touch Points Center
- **L**egal **C**ollaboration – Helping families meet their basic needs, in collaboration with the Medical – Legal Partnership
- For **E**veryone – Reaching families where they already bring their babies – healthcare clinics



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VERMONT?



Help Me Grow
Vermont

Evidence-
based Home
Visiting

Developmental
Understanding
Legal
Collaborations
for Everyone
(DULCE)

Building
Flourishing
Communities

Promise
Communities

Bright Futures
4th Edition

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VERMONT?



Help Me Grow
Vermont

Evidence-
based Home
Visiting

Developmental
Understanding
Legal
Collaborations
for Everyone
(DULCE)

Building
Flourishing
Communities

Promise
Communities

Bright Futures
4th Edition

PROMISE COMMUNITIES

- Community collaborations will do ‘whatever it takes’ to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children in their communities.
- Promise communities will leverage the state resources, initiatives and partnerships into targeted high-intensity supports to build local infrastructure and coalesce local resources in order to improve outcomes for young children in our highest need, rural communities.



24 PROMISE COMMUNITIES TO DATE

Community Cohort 1	Community Cohort 2	Community Cohort 3
Winooski Franklin: St. Albans, Swanton, Sheldon St. Johnsbury Barre Rutland Bellows Falls Green Street	Milton Alburgh Troy / North Troy Lyndon Springfield Guilford Pownal	Bennington Chelsea-Tunbridge-Royalton Eden Greater Craftsbury Community Chester Morrisville Newport City Northfield Richford Windsor

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VERMONT?



Help Me Grow
Vermont

Evidence-
based Home
Visiting

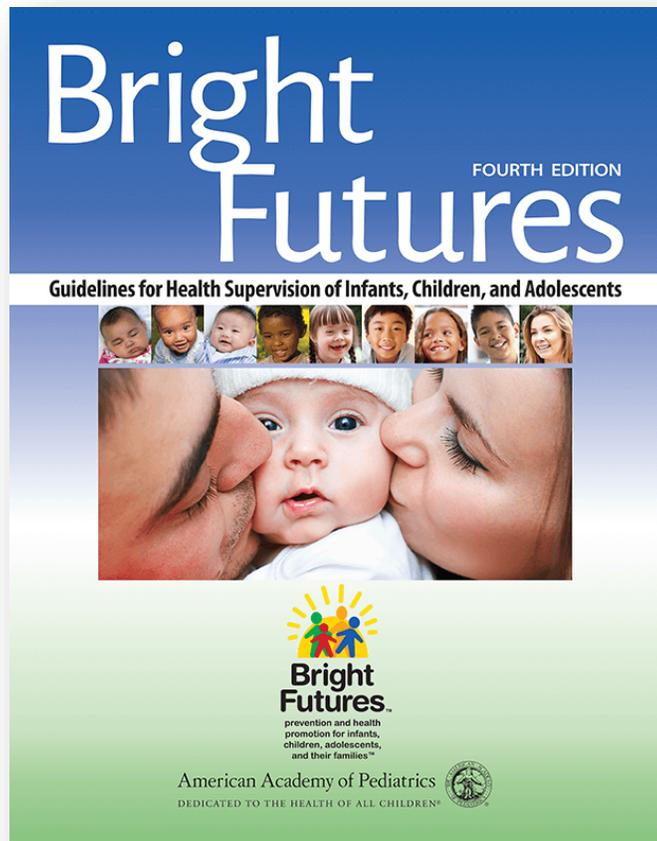
Developmental
Understanding
Legal
Collaboration
for Everyone
(DULCE)

Building
Flourishing
Communities

Promise
Communities

Bright Futures
4th Edition

BRIGHT FUTURES 4TH EDITION AND STRENGTHS



- Sample questions (4-month visit)

What do you do when problems really get to you? Who do you turn to at times like that? How are you and your partner getting along together? Who helps you take care of your baby?

- Promoting lifelong health for families and communities

Paula Duncan's commitment to strength based approaches for decades



THANK YOU AND QUESTIONS?

