

HANDS & VOICES GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE SESSION: CHILD SAFETY & SUCCESS SECTION

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HOOD RIVER , OR

What are the factors that place a child at risk for neglect?

DePanfilis, (2006)

- Environmental Factors
 - Poverty
 - Community access to health care, social services, and affordable child care
 - Acceptance of violence and neglect in the community
- Social Support Factors
 - Social isolation
 - Lack of positive emotional support
 - Distrust of available social support systems

● Family Factors

- Marital problems
- Domestic violence
- Single parenthood
- Unemployment
- Financial stress
- Difficulty in interacting and communicating in a positive manner, e.g., more chaotic, few positive statements, less empathy and openness.
- Substance abuse
- Poor problem solving skills
- Lack of knowledge re. child development
- Engaging in criminal behavior

What are the factors that place a child at risk for abuse?

Goldman, Salus, Wolcott, & Kennedy (2003)

- Caregiver Factors
 - Personality Characteristics: Individuals with:
 - low-self esteem
 - external locus of control
 - poor impulse control
 - depression
 - anxiety
 - antisocial behavior
 - severe mental disorders

- Caregiver Factors (cont.)

- History of Maltreatment: Individuals who:

- had poor parental role models
 - did not have their needs met as a child
 - experienced maltreatment as a child

- Substance Abuse: Individuals who:

- use alcohol and drugs that impair their mental functioning, judgment, inhibitions, protective capacity
 - spend money on alcohol and drugs vs. household expenses
 - are involved in criminal activities that jeopardize children's health or safety.
 - use of alcohol and drugs during pregnancy

- Caregiver Factors (cont.)

- Attitudes & Knowledge: Individuals who:

- have inaccurate knowledge re. child development
 - have unrealistic and unmet expectations for child behavior
 - use of inappropriate punishment
 - lack of knowledge re. appropriate child behavior management strategies

- Age: Individuals who:

- are so young as to lack social, economic, and maturity needed to understand and effectively take care of their children

- Family Factors: Families in which:
 - there is consistent martial conflict
 - there is domestic violence
 - a single parent must meet all of the family needs
 - unemployment has caused financial stress
 - social isolation is the norm
 - there are frequent changes in the member adults and children

- Child Factors that increase their vulnerability
 - Age
 - The younger the child (i.e., birth to three yrs.)...
 - ...the more dependent they are upon caregivers and the greater their social isolation, thus the increased risk for maltreatment, e.g., neglect and physical abuse
 - The older the child...
 - ...the more likely they are to experience sexual and emotional abuse.

• Child Factors (cont.)

- Disability: Children who:
 - have chronic illness, physical, cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral disabilities that overwhelm their parents
 - do not understand what constitutes maltreatment
 - have limited communication skills to tell others that they have been abused
 - are physically dependent upon others to meet their essential needs
 - are considered to be unresponsive, or over responsive, to affection
 - are separated from their caregivers for extensive periods of time
 - interact with a significant number of adults in a variety of contexts

• Child Factors (cont.)

- Disability: Children who:
 - do not understand their own sexuality
 - do not know how to recognize or protect themselves in a “risky situation”
 - are socially isolated
 - are not recognized to be at higher risk for maltreatment
 - display physical marks and/or patterns of behavior that are difficult to attribute to abuse vs. their disability
 - would be difficult and time consuming to investigate due a lack of professional training, inconsistent definitions, and limited/different patterns of communication
 - would prove to be a unconvincing witness in a court of law
 - would be difficult to place in a foster home
 - are not a “valued” member of a community

What factors and strategies serve to prevent neglect and abuse?

- 2011 Report: Strengthening Families & Communities: The Five Protective Factors
- Nurturing & Attachment
- Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development
- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Supports for Parents

• Nurturing & Attachment

- “Building a close bond helps parents better understand, respond to, and communicate with their children. “
- Exploring Strengths & Needs:
 - How the parent observes and attends to the child
 - Specific play or stimulation behaviors
 - How the parent responds to the child’s behavior
 - How the parent responds to emotional needs
 - How the parent demonstrates affection
 - How the parent models caring behavior
 - How the parent recognizes accomplishments
 - How the parent provides a safe and stable home and family environment

- Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development
 - “Parents learn what to look for at each age and how to help their children reach their full potential. “
 - Exploring Strengths & Needs:
 - The parent’s view of his/her child’s strengths
 - How the parent views his/her own role
 - How the parent observes and interprets the child’s behavior
 - Ways the parent is currently responding to the child’s needs and behaviors
 - How the parent encourages positive behavior through praise and modeling
 - Whether the parent can identify alternative solutions for addressing behaviors
 - Community, cultural, and ethnic expectations and practices about parenting
 - How the parent understands the child’s development
 - Any parental concern that the child’s behavior appears to be outside the normal range

• Parental Resilience

- “Recognizing the signs of stress and enhancing problem-solving skills can help parents build their capacity to cope. “
- **Exploring Strengths and Needs**
 - What the parent identifies as his or her coping strengths and resilience
 - What the parent identifies as everyday stressors
 - Problem-solving skills
 - Impact of stress on parenting
 - How the parent communicates with his or her spouse or partner
 - Short-term supports (respite care, help with a new baby, help during an illness)
 - The parent’s ability to set and work toward personal goals

- **Social Connections**

- “Parents with an extensive network of family, friends, and neighbors have better support in times of need. “

- **Exploring Strengths and Needs**

- The parent’s current social support system, including family, friends, and membership in any formal groups
- The parent’s social skills and capacity to make and keep friends
- The parent’s desire for new friends and social connections
- Needs that might be met with better social connections (for instance, respite care, a sympathetic listener, a role model)

- Concrete Supports for Parents

- “Caregivers with access to financial, housing, and other concrete resources and services that help them meet their basic needs can better attend to their role as parents.”

- **Exploring Strengths and Needs**

- The parent’s view of the most immediate need
- Steps the parent has taken to deal with the problem
- Ways the family handles other problems
- Current connections that might offer help for the new problem
- Other services and supports that would help the family
- The parent’s desire and capacity to receive new services, including completing applications, keeping appointments, and committing to the solution process

Conclusion

- We know the risks
- We know the “protective factors”
- We have programs that work with families and children in their homes
- We are discovering “Bright Spots” that can help inform and enhance our work.
- What we do not have is a systematic vision and “will” to use our knowledge and programs to inform parents and professionals on how to prevent, recognize, and report neglect and abuse.

Strategy

- An idea that has recently emerged concerns the use of IFSP and IEP documents to “build in” safeguards, programs and procedures to enhance the safety of children with disabilities.
- This idea, at least as it relates to IEP and “bullying” is being used by the [PACER Center- Champions for Children with Disabilities](#)
 - [PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center](#)
 - [Addressing Bullying with a Child's IEP](#)
- The question now becomes, how can we build upon and expand the work that PACER has begun.

Thank You

Together We CAN Make a Difference

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