

strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Everyday Strategies Module 1

Reducing Child Maltreatment
as an Early Care & Education Provider

This first session will focus on WHY our role is so important in preventing child abuse and neglect.

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia presents
**“Circles of Caring: What Child Abuse Prevention
Looks Like”**



<http://www.youtube.com/user/PCAWV>
(9 minutes 36 seconds)

Show DVD or View/Download You Tube video from Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia.

After showing the video, distribute the PCA-WV Protective Factors handout. If technical limitations prevent you from obtaining or viewing the video, go over the handout. Otherwise, simply distribute it for participants to have for review.



"Empathy can't be taught, but it can be caught." – Mary Gordon, founder of Roots of Empathy, a school-based program designed to foster compassion

A child's capacity for empathy can further be encouraged when parents model empathetic behavior themselves. When parents treat other people with compassion, selflessness and a lack of judgment, children copy those behaviors.

Summary of WV data : About 1 in 50 WV children are known to be abused or neglected.

Actual numbers are much higher.

Most are abused by people they know.

- In WV, about 7,500 children are found to be abused or neglected each year. That's about 1 out of every 50 children in the state.

(Source: 3-year average from *Child Maltreatment 2002, 2001, and 2000*, US Dept. of Health & Human Services)

- But anonymous surveys suggest that the actual occurrence of child abuse is 10 to 16 times greater than official reports. Official numbers reflect only those cases of maltreatment that have been reported, investigated and found to be true.

(Source: 1995 Gallup Poll)

- Nine out of ten perpetrators of abuse and neglect have a close personal relationship with the child. A very small percentage of children are abused by strangers.

(Source: *Child Maltreatment 2002*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)

Technical notes:

(1) The state rate of child abuse and neglect is half again higher than the national rate. This may be due to a higher incidence of actual abuse, more rigorous identification of abuse, or both

In the beginning, Center for the Study of Social Policy was seeking a strategic, feasible approach to child abuse prevention that was:

- systematic,
- national,
- reached large numbers of young children, and
- would have impact long before abuse or neglect occurred



This training is based on the Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education initiative developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

(Review slide)

ROLES Early care and education programs can serve several critical roles for young parents:

- as a **primary source of information and support** for young families
- as a **gateway to outside services or supports** such as health or mental health services, transportation, and even education, housing and jobs.
- as the **key early warning system** when families or children are in trouble.

The research has pointed out how important programs like ours can be to families, and it goes way beyond just caring for their children.

(Review slide)

Hypothesis was that early care and education programs could be central because they offer:

- Daily contact with parents and children
- Uniquely intimate relationship with families
- A universal approach of positive encouragement and education for families
- An early warning and response system at the first sign of trouble



(Review slides)

The “New Normal”

- Child abuse and neglect prevention becomes **building healthy families**
- Early childhood programs **support families and protect children**
- Child welfare and other state systems **support the developmental needs of young children**
- State policy and funding sustain the work of Strengthening Families



This breakthrough strategy for dealing with child neglect and abuse shows great promise because:

The Protective Factors have been demonstrated to work and are informed by extensive, rigorous research.

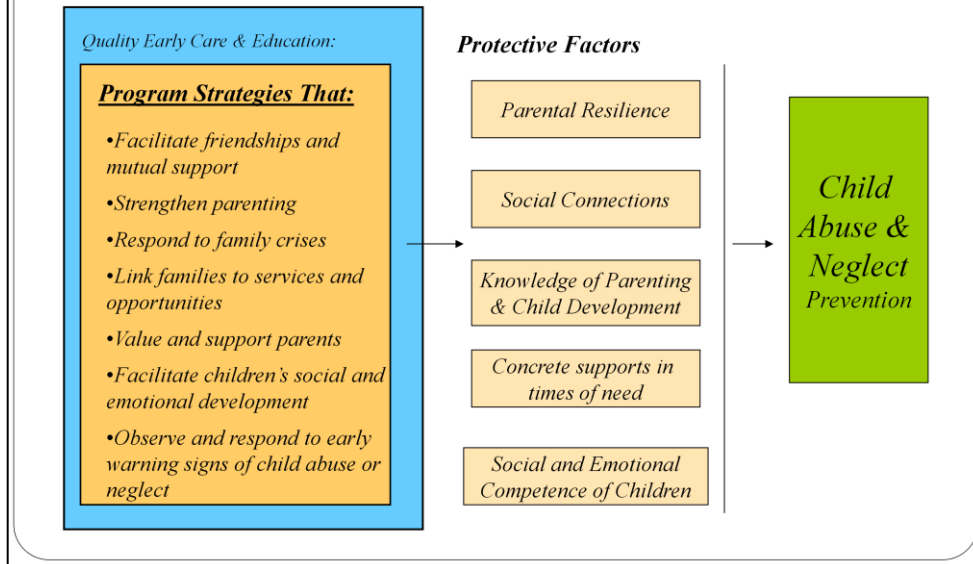
Activities that build the Protective Factors can be built into programs and systems that already exist in every state, such as early childhood education and child welfare, at little cost.

Strengthening Families has widespread support from social science researchers, state child welfare officials, early childhood practitioners, and policy experts. Currently, the Strengthening Families approach had been applied in 36 states as of 2008.

Early childhood educators want to strengthen families: a National Association for the Education of Young Children survey shows that 97% want to do more to prevent maltreatment.

In West Virginia, state agencies and organizations are turning more and more to evidence-based, supportive strategies to build healthy families.

ROLE: How Early Childhood Programs Contribute to Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect



- Strengthening Families is built on two key beliefs: All families have strengths, and all families need support. It might be hard sometimes to see some families' strengths. Some other families might already be getting all the support they need. Most families are probably somewhere in the middle.
- Strengthening Families is not like traditional child abuse prevention programs that target certain families because of risk factors. The idea is to use early care and education programs to reach a huge number of families, and focus on protective factors that all families need.
- As we talk about the protective factors you're going to see that these are characteristics your family has, and the families you know have them.
- All families need these protective factors, and we all need support to develop them. A lot of us get that support from our families, friends, partners, and so on. At different times in our lives we may need support from outside those informal networks to develop or maintain our protective factors.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

The foundation to a good beginning

“If there’s anything more fundamental than a decent start in life, I wonder what it could be.”

— David Hamburg, President of Carnegie Foundation of New York



The Early Years are so crucial because of what science teaches us about Brain Development. West Virginia has a few communities that are building Brain Under Construction Zones which share some important research. (The third module of this training will provide us some great tools to help strengthen the skills of parents and guardians.)

But for today, let's focus on the real, physiological impact of helping children grow up free from abuse and neglect:

- Much can be done by parents in the early days of life and the first two years have been recognized as critically important
- Research by Marion Diamond at the University of California in Berkeley, and found that the brain **changes physiologically** in relation to learning and experience.
- The brain is the only organ that is **incomplete at birth**.

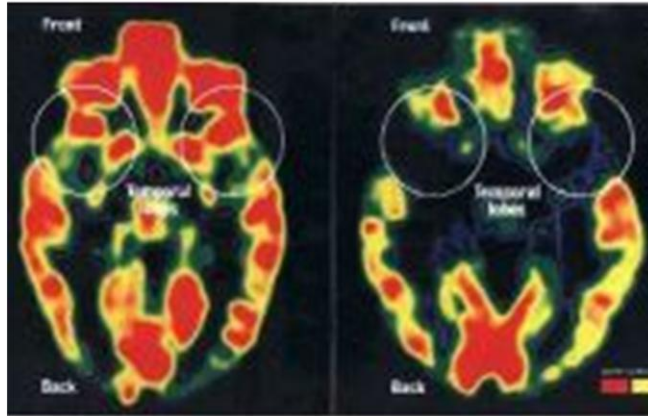


Wiring a brain is like wiring a house

Scan - Child in orphanage with extreme neglect

Scan - Child nurtured

**It's better
if you
start from
the
beginning**



SUCCESS BY 6
United Way of the River Cities

Brain
UNDER CONSTRUCTION ZONE™

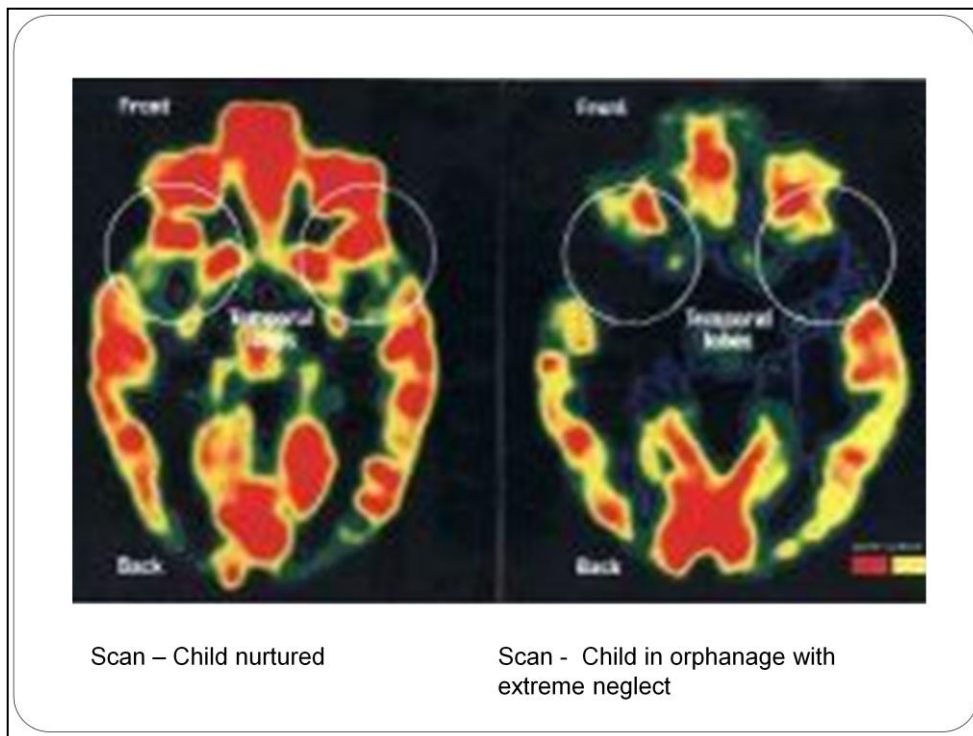
- Brain physically changes due to outside experiences.

- A study of over 1,000 abused and neglected children showed that their brains were 20-30% smaller than those of children raised in a stimulating environment.

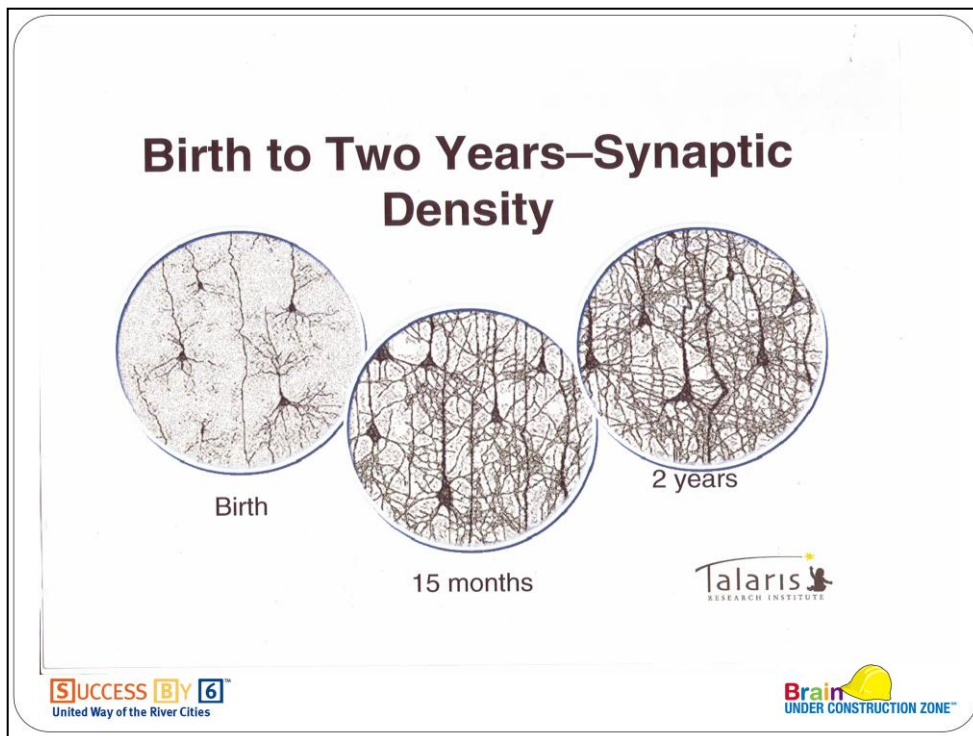
Simple neglect can be surprisingly damaging. In 2007, researchers published the first randomized, controlled study of the effect of being raised in an orphanage; that study, and subsequent research on the same sample of Romanian orphans, found that compared with babies placed with a foster family, those who were sent to institutions had lower IQs, slower physical growth, problems with human attachment and differences in functioning in brain areas related to emotional development.

Institutionalized infants do not experience being the center of a loving family's attention; instead, they are cared for by a rotating staff of workers, which is inherently neglectful. The infants miss out on intensive, one-on-one affection and attachment with a parental figure, which babies need at that vulnerable age. Without that experience, they learn early on that the world is a cold, insecure and untrustworthy place. Their emotional needs having gone unmet, they frequently have trouble understanding or appreciating the feelings of others.

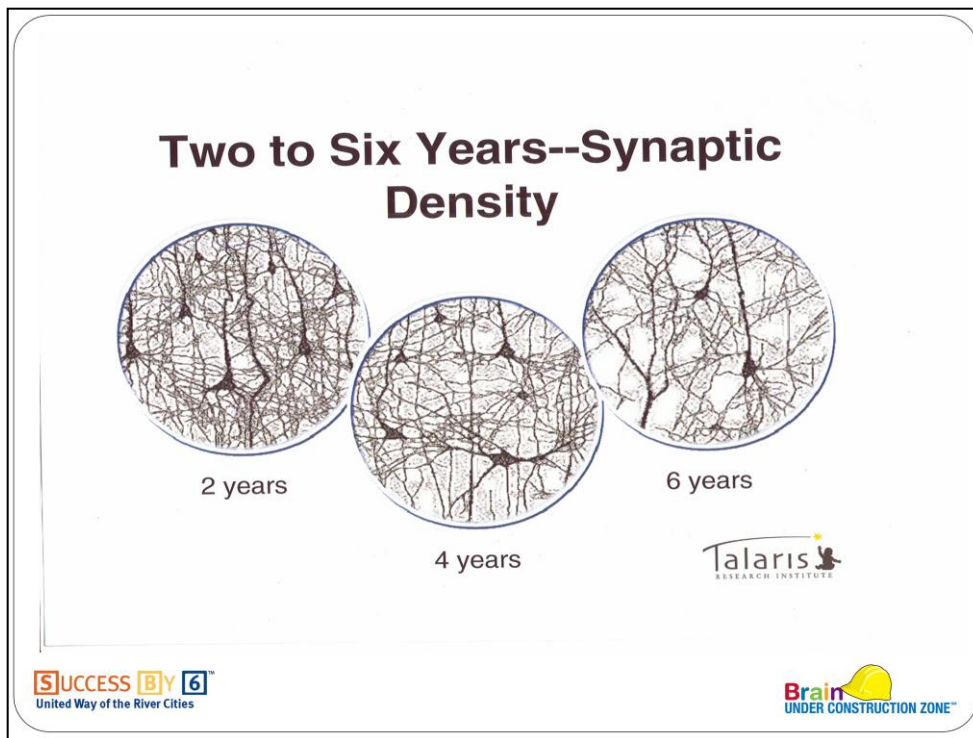
Nearly 90% of brain growth takes place in the first five years of life, and the minds of young children who have been neglected or traumatized often fail to make the connection between people and pleasure. That deficit can make it difficult for them to feel or demonstrate love later on. "You can enhance empathy by the way you treat children," says Martin Hoffman, an emeritus professor of psychology at New York University and a pioneer of empathy research, "or you can kill it by providing a harsh punitive environment."



- Children raised in deprived conditions (orphanages) – brains are smaller and resemble those of Alzheimer’s patients (show brain scan on slide show here...**point out connections, etc.**)
- Other studies have found that childhood trauma can directly affect the way the brain functions – unless intervention occurs, these children will likely develop emotional, behavioral and learning problems.
- Experiences of neglect and abuse can literally cause some genetically normal children to become mentally retarded or to develop serious emotional difficulties.
- Even babies born with deficits in one or more of the senses will also be helped to compensate and to develop more fully through multisensory stimulation appropriate to their needs.



- By the 17th week of pregnancy, the fetus already has 1 billion brain cells – more than the adult brain.
- Even though most of the neurons a human being will ever have are developed before birth, the brain grows another two-thirds in size and weight.
- It is the connection between neurons that many researchers believe to be “the hardware” of intelligence.
- Neurons are the building blocks of the brain/synapses are the wiring that connect the neurons
- The number and organization of these connections **influence everything**.
- The growth of these connections can be accelerated by good nutrition and a warm, loving environment in which stimulation is offered and response is encouraged.
- During the first year of life, the brain develops faster than it ever will again, and this is a **critical period** for the foundations of intelligence to be laid.

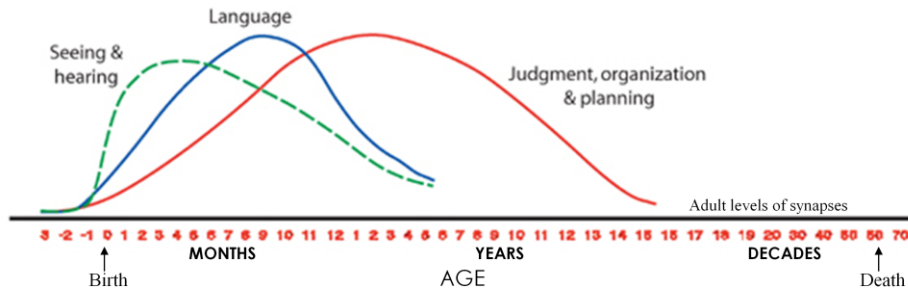


- There is a four year potential for growth that is the most critical – conception to three years of age.

SENSES AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- **HEARING** – functioning before birth/one of the first senses to develop/profound effect on cognitive development. Hearing develops at 21 weeks. At three months, the brain has the potential to distinguish several hundred spoken sounds.
- **SIGHT** – appears to be related to cognitive development/babies can see sharply contrasting colors such as red and white and black and white/visual stimulation seems to lead to later sequencing abilities essential to learning (black and white cards) Wiring for sight is developed during the 3rd and 4th months of life.
- **TOUCH /MOVEMENT** – related to physical development; however, can be essential to learning and emotional development. Some rocking or dancing with a baby also seems to be related to physical development ...also a connection to cognitive processes such as focus of attention
- **TASTE/SMELL** – related to early bonding and the beginning of healthy emotional development

Human Brain Development



SOURCE: Charles A. Nelson, University of Minnesota.

It's not just the first few years of life that are so important to healthy development. This graph shows how the various functions of the brain develop in waves from before birth through the teen years. We can see here that "prime time" for developing hearing and vision is very early, while the higher brain functions – such as judgment, organization and planning – develop much later.

Technical Note: The peak of each wave is when the brain has produced the maximum number of synapses – which are the connections between brain cells – for that particular function. After this period of overproduction, the brain then prunes back the synapses to those that are most often used. (Source: *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*, Institute of Medicine, 2000)

Next Session...

- Strategies to build Protective Factors
- Staff Surveys on Protective Factors

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia and its funding partners—the West Virginia Children's Trust Fund, the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources—provide this opportunity to help children grow up free from abuse & neglect.

This training is also made possible through partnership with Innovation Grant sites in Cabell & Wayne Counties administered by the Cabell County Family Resource Network, with in-kind support from West Virginia Child Care Centers United, River Valley Child Development Services, United Way of the River Cities, United Way of Monongalia and Preston Counties



The next session will focus on exactly how to build the Circles of Caring, or protective factors. We'll also have a quick staff survey to evaluate each of our strengths and challenges in working with families.