



THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF CHILD NEGLECT AND ITS PREVENTION

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March 11, 2013

AGENDA

- Child Neglect Definition
- Overview of Preventing Child Neglect Initiative
- Key Informant Interview Process
- Selected Highlights
- Presenter's Observations
- Participants' Observations, Experiences, & Questions

THE SEARCH FOR A DEFINITION

While there is no singular definition of child neglect, a generic statement that is unlikely to be refuted is:

Child Neglect is a failure to meet children's basic needs – whether the failure is the responsibility of parents, communities, or society – and this void places children in harm's way.

SCOPE OF WORK: PREVENTING CHILD NEGLECT

- Three year neglect prevention initiative
 - Integrating six years of work on Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework
 - Literature review
 - Key informant interviews
 - Creating Theories of Change
 - Identifying strategies that prevent child neglect
 - Leading a national conversation

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Alliance Selected Literature Review on Child Neglect (June 2011)
- Child Neglect Risk: What Do We Really Know? Kristen Shook Slack (July 2010)
- Addressing the Neglect of Neglect. Council for Children & Families (2011)

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

- Risk and Protective Factors at each of four levels of Socio - Ecological Model
- What is working well at family, community, system and policies to prevent neglect from occurring?
- What efforts need to be made to make significant impact on preventing neglect from occurring?
- Role/contributions to be made by the Alliance
- Role/contributions to be made by the CTFs

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWEES

- Variety of experiences/perspectives
- Selected CTF directors
- Researchers
- Policy Experts
- Practitioners/Social Workers
- Family Members
- Cross Disciplinary Professionals



DISCLAIMERS

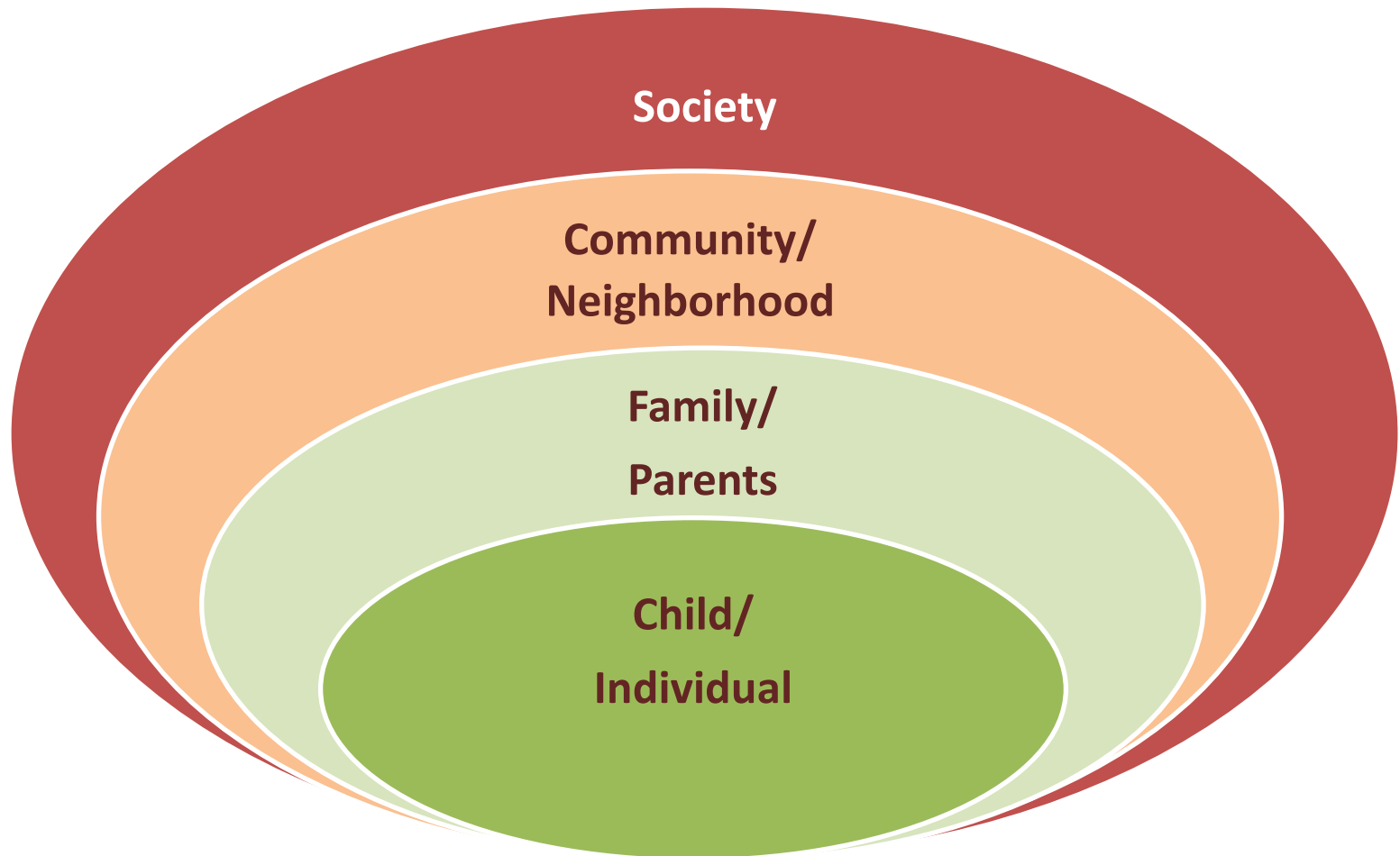
Information presented is portion of material
obtained during interviews

Discernment of highlights based on judgment of
consultant

Key Informant selection based on knowledge,
experiences and expertise of Alliance team
about experts in this area.

THAT SAID....

Social-Ecological model



Excerpt from Key Informant Interview

Neglect is a hidden epidemic. It is not as easily detectable as abuse. We have a high tolerance and respect for the confidentiality of families and are reluctant to intrude in family behaviors. Young children are often invisible to the community until problems appear (particularly lack of supervision). These problems are reserved to local communities rather than a federal responsibility.

MOST FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED RISK FACTOR

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

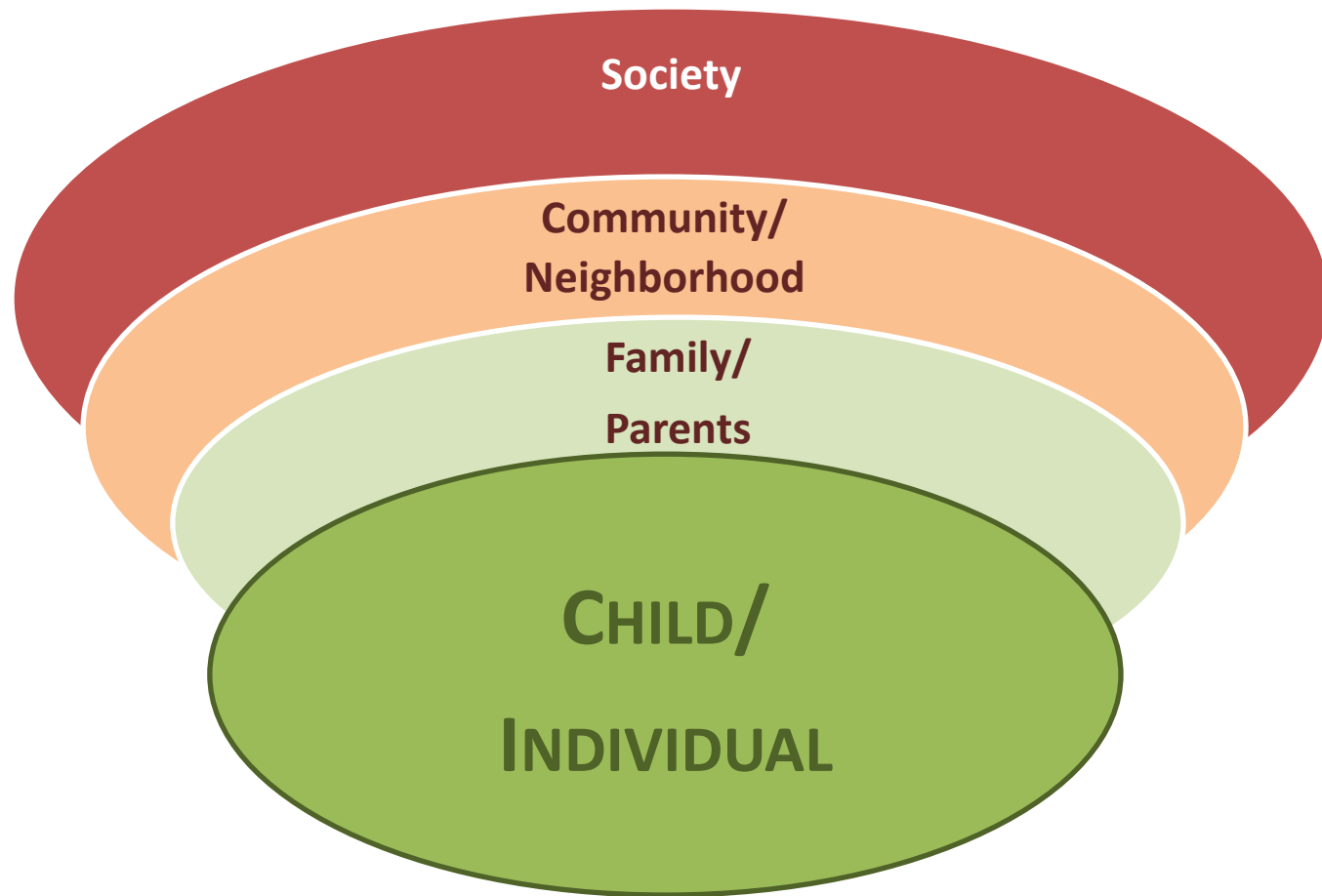
- History of Trauma
- Poverty/Insufficient Resources
- Maternal Depression/Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Devaluing/minimizing challenges associated with raising children

MOST FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED PROTECTIVE FACTOR

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Understanding of/Focus on Brain Architecture
- Universal Early Childhood Education & Development
- Standard of Adequate Parent Care /Parenting Behaviors
- Resources to Meet Family's Needs
- Competent Parenting

Social-Ecological model



Risk and Protective Factors

CHILD

Protective Factors

Child Strengths

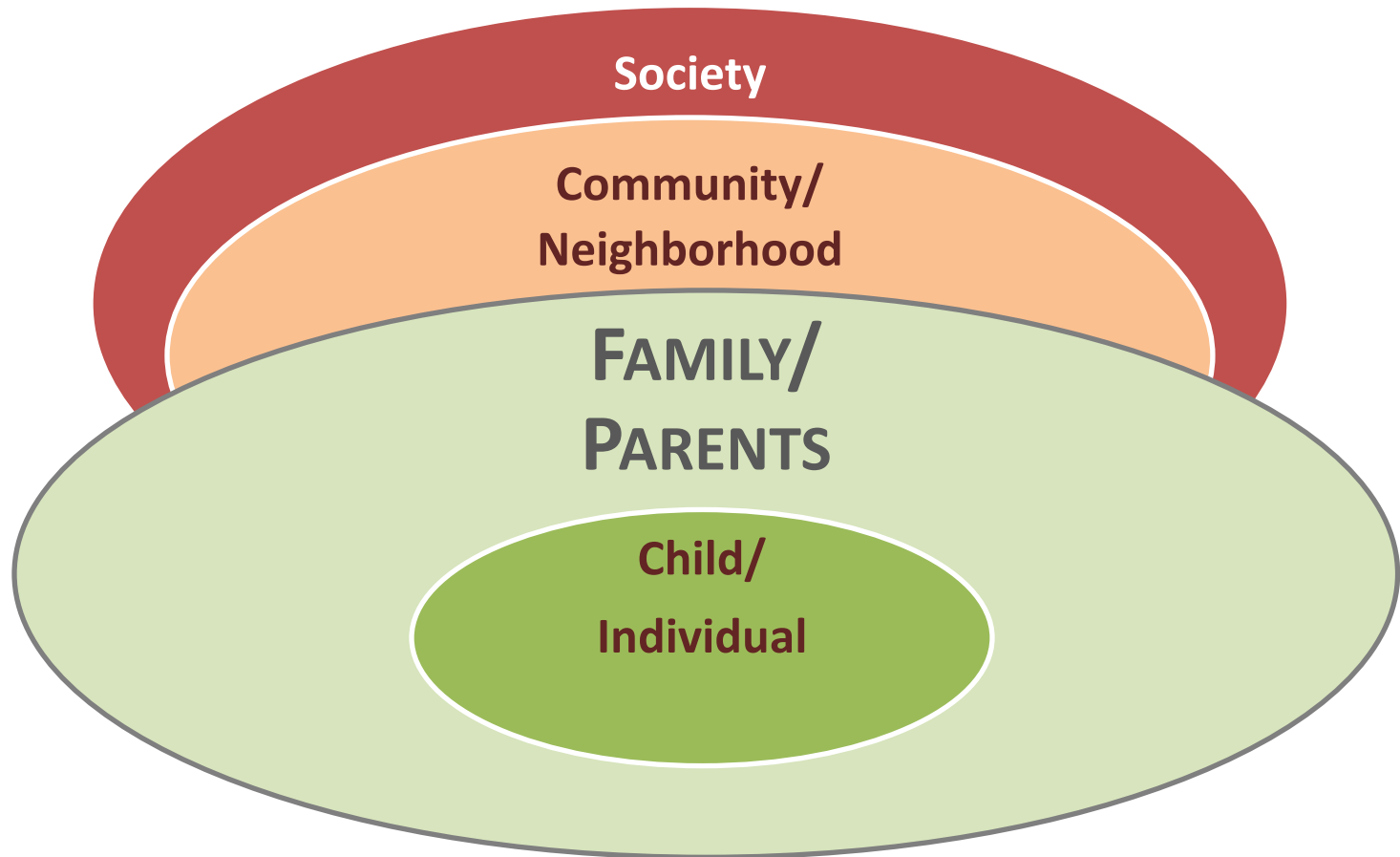
- Social and Emotional Competence of Child
- Willingness to accept nurturance
- Capacity and willingness to attach to parent
- Resilience
- Regular involvement in multiple contexts – day care, pediatrician visits, involvement of other caregivers

Risk Factors

Child Vulnerabilities

- Young Age
- Poor Health
- Disabilities
- Behavioral Challenges/Poor temperament

Social-Ecological model



Excerpt from Key Informant Interview

A parent who cannot care for him/herself is not in any position to care for a child.

Risk and Protective Factors

FAMILY

Protective Factors

Knowledge of Parenting and
Child Development
Capacity/willingness to nurture
and attach to child
Parental Resilience
Faith and Spirituality
Informal Supports

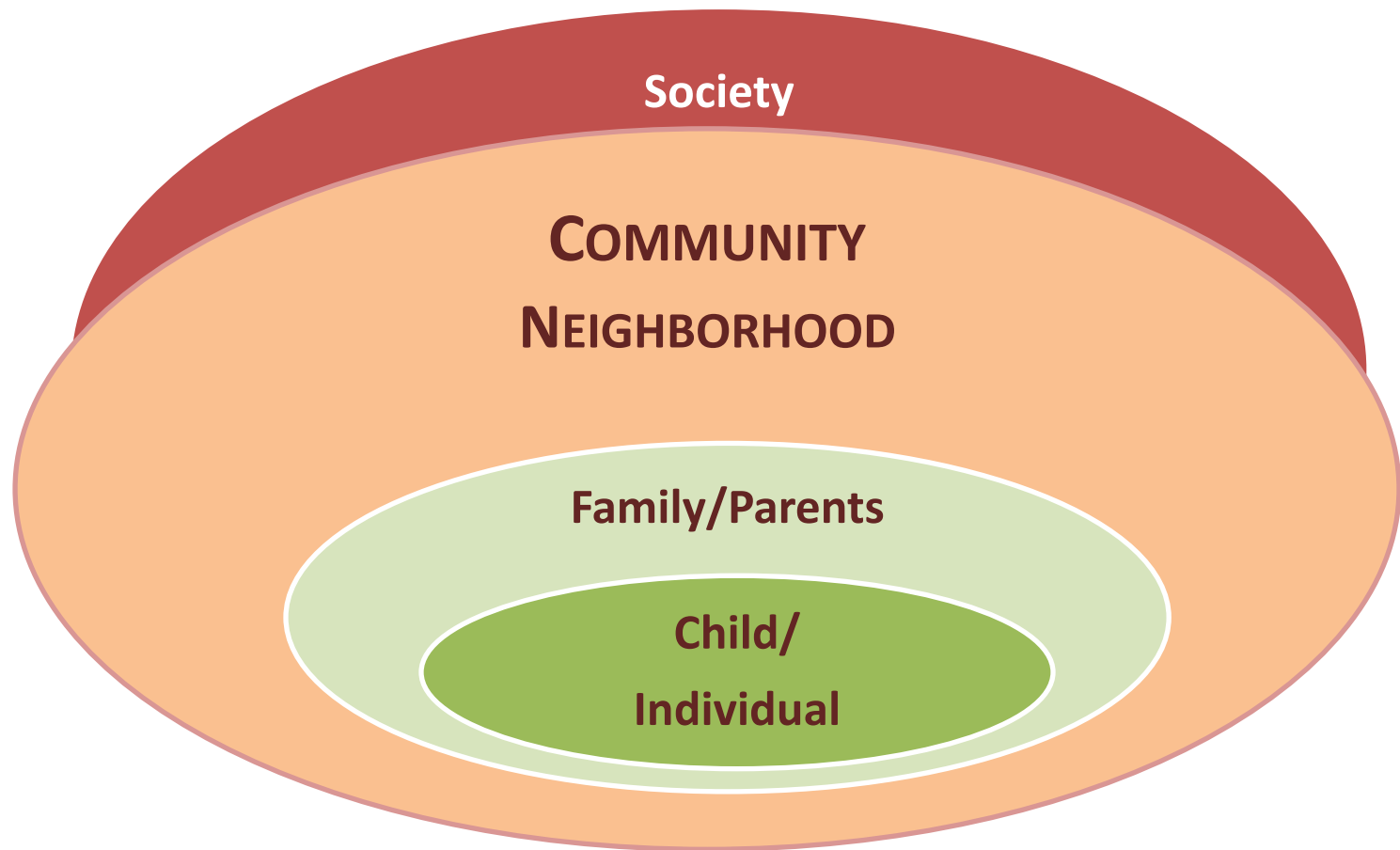
Risk Factors

Insufficient parenting
knowledge/capacity
Situational or Enduring Problems

- Mental Health/**Depression**
- Substance Abuse
- Interpersonal Family Violence

Socially Isolated
Homeless or Precariously Housed
Unemployed or Underemployed
Food Insufficiency
History of Adversity/Trauma
Apathy/Hopelessness

Social-Ecological model



Excerpt from Key Informant Interview

Somehow we have created divisions in order to organize and encapsulate the work and ultimately we have done a disservice to the impact that we are trying to achieve and a disservice to children and their families. We cannot be limited by programmatic levels; we have to put together research and theory and practice and policy in a way that can lead to transformational change.

Risk and Protective Factors

COMMUNITY/ NEIGHBORHOOD

Protective Factors

- Social Connections/Cohesion
- Adequate Resources to Meet Community Needs [concrete supports]
- Cross Discipline and Systems Connections
- *Caring* Communities
- Good quality public transportation
- High Quality Pre-Natal Programs
- Faith communities/groups

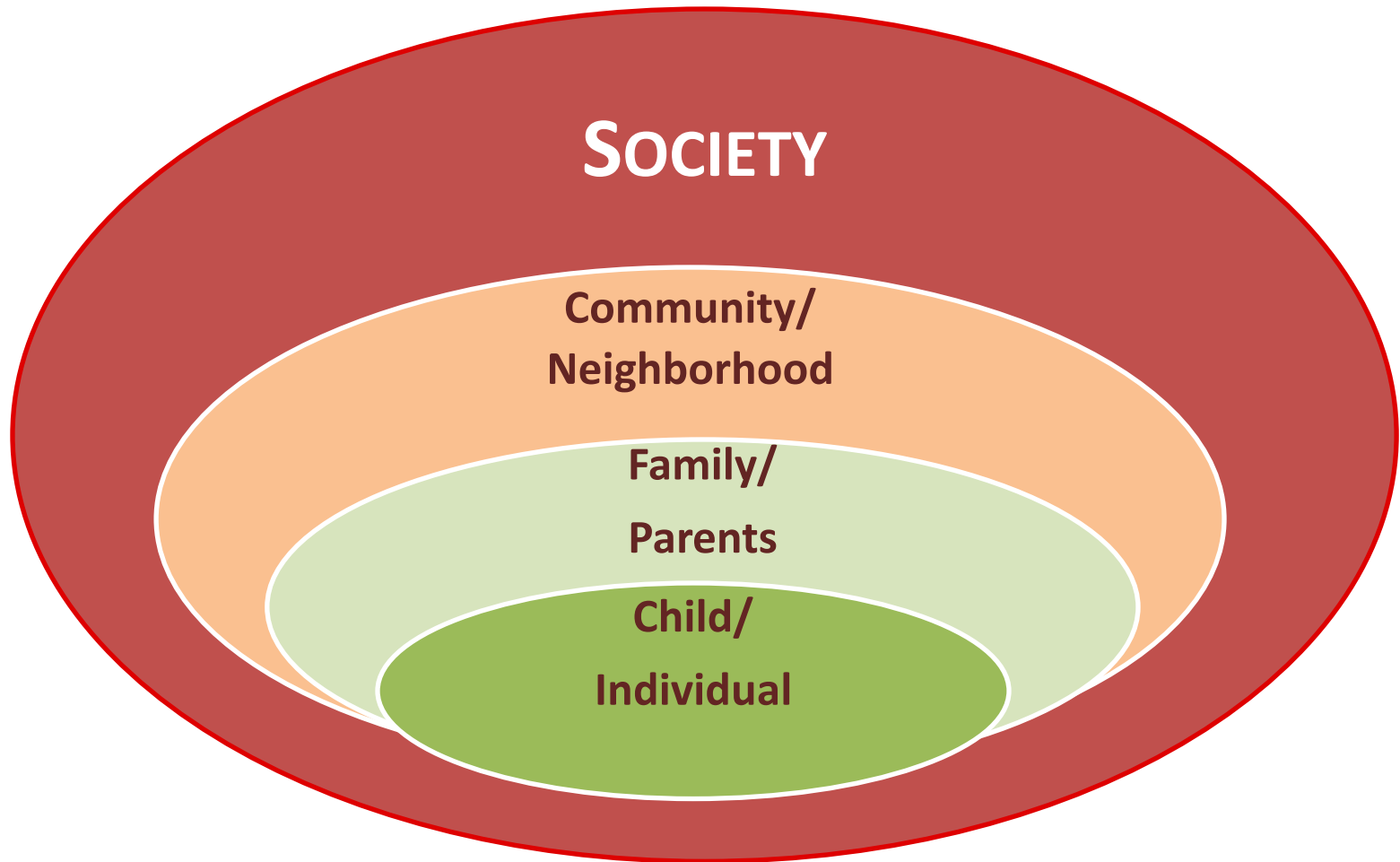
Risk Factors

Environmental Problems

- Neighborhood Violence
- High Crime
- High Mobility
- Poor Schools
- Unemployment
- Inadequate Housing
- Social Isolation

Lack of Shared Responsibility
for Children

Social-Ecological model



Excerpt from Key Informant Interviews

I would like to see a Great Society Program for children.

Until we have political will, the momentum and desire to truly and adequately address poverty, child neglect will always be a staple in our society and an increasing source of trauma for our children.

We should not be swimming upstream when it comes to raising our children well.

Risk and Protective Factors

SOCIETY

Protective Factors

- Concrete Supports (principally policy and law)
- Selected federal income supports – EITC, TANF, Food Stamps, etc.
- Research on Brain Architecture

Risk Factors

- Poverty & deprivation of basic needs
- Lack of collective (shared) responsibility for children
- Lack of support for families in distress
- Low level of importance to politicians
- Lack of political will
- Current social norms support lack of adequate parenting behavior
- Individualism/individual responsibility
- Punitive in attitude/approach
- Lack of public knowledge about brain research

IDENTIFYING WHAT IS WORKING WELL

And Do MORE of It

- Home Visiting – universal & targeted
- Family Connection
- Project Safe Care
- Triple P – Positive Parenting Program
- Strengthening Families Initiative
- Nurturing Parent Program
- Early Head Start
- Incredible Years
- Circle of Parents

IDENTIFYING THAT WHICH IS RELATED

And Join the Existing Effort

- Comprehensive Community Change Initiatives
- Half in Ten
- WI Community Response Program – Project Gain
- Promise Neighborhoods (DOE)
- Choice Neighborhoods (HUD)
- Invest in Children – Cuyahoga County, OH
- Help Me Grow

WORK THAT HAS A SENSE OF URGENCY

URGENCY

Parallels the Latest Child Death

*What hits the papers makes matters urgent
...And then, it falls off the list.*

WORK THAT HAS A SENSE OF URGENCY

Child

- Impacts of trauma on neglected child



Parents/Family

- Impact of trauma on parents who have hx of same
 - Early recognition of building strong relationship between adults & children
 - Change the dialogue – Recognize parental struggles and need to focus on supporting fulfillment of parental role **[Society]**

WORK THAT HAS A SENSE OF URGENCY

Neighborhood/Community

- Interventions designed & responsive to landscape of contributors to child neglect
- Comprehensive community approach to child well-being
- Bubbles of safety and security in nurturing environment for families

- Identification and training of community building organizers - - we have reached the end of efficacy of institution interventions.



WORK THAT HAS A SENSE OF URGENCY

About Poverty

- Shore up social safety net
- Raise political awareness about poverty
- Recreate narratives that currently polarize our reactions to social problems
- Move discussion from incriminating parents to examining context and communities in which parents are trying to raise children safely

Society

- Build strong evidence base around Protective Factors
- Involve general public in discussions re. child development, early intervention, ACES study
- Provide PH messages that target nurturance from infancy onward
- Research on etiology of CN and evaluation of policy → broader impact

GETTING STARTED: OPPORTUNITIES AT STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

- **Entertain Prospect of Collective Impact**
 - **Start with Low Hanging Fruit** – Identify what works and DO MORE of it
 - **Convener**
 - To increase public awareness & understanding
 - [Brain Research & ACES Study]
 - To build consensus
 - To determine/take action
- Some Specifics*
- Respite Center/ safe place
 - Screening for maternal depression postnatally
 - Screening by pediatricians - SEEK
 - Story telling/Narrative
 - Anything related to IPV, MH, & AOD – comorbidity
 - ACA - Advocate for community health needs assessment
 - Engage accountable care organizations
 - CA/N within new health care plans
 - Take Power Leaders to Needy Environments

OBSERVATIONS

- According to Key Informants, preponderance of work 'resides' at Community & Society levels
- Majority of informants indicated need for clarity re what is *good enough* in terms of raising children... as well as the avenues available to support parents
- [Thus far] While Key Informant's use different terminology and vary in their priorities, tremendous commonality in description of child neglect within socio-ecological model and what must be done to prevent child neglect

OBSERVATIONS

EXPERIENCES

QUESTIONS





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