



# Chronic Neglect: Assessment and Decision-Making

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# Why is this important?

- Chronic neglect is not a single phenomena
  - Many dimensions, multiple causative factors, consequences and effects vary
- Subtypes of neglect suggest variation in the ways in which the basic needs of children are unmet



# Some Consensus

- An ecological-developmental model fits best to guide comprehensive and individualized assessment
- Family engagement is crucial to a clear understanding of risk and protective factors
- Intervention and prevention strategies need to be tailored and outcome driven

# Snapshot of Concepts



- Types of neglect
- Assessment
- Targeting outcomes
- Selecting interventions to achieve outcomes

# Child neglect: Basic definition

- **Child neglect** occurs when a child's basic need is not adequately met
- **Basic needs** include: adequate food, clothing, health care, supervision, protection, education, nurturance, love, & a home

# Our responses then must support families to meet the basic needs of children



- Adequate food and nutrition
- Clothing
- Health care
- Supervision
- Protection
- Education
- Nurturance & love
- Home

# Assessment Questions

- What factors contribute to neglect or mitigate risk?
  - Risk factors
  - Protective factors
- What needs to change to reduce the risk of neglect?
- What outcomes if achieved will reduce the risk of neglect?

# Assessment of Risk & Protective Factors

- Process that guides intervention
- Process that targets outcomes
- Process used to tailor intervention
- Process used to begin to implement methods for measuring change over time (reduction of risk factors, enhancement of protective factors)

# Examples of Risk Factors

- Child: disability, prematurity, young age
- Parent: depression, alcohol & other drugs, low IQ, limited nurturing
- Family: domestic violence, father uninvolved, many children
- Community: social isolation, violence, housing, neighborhood conflict
- Society: poverty, lack of health insurance

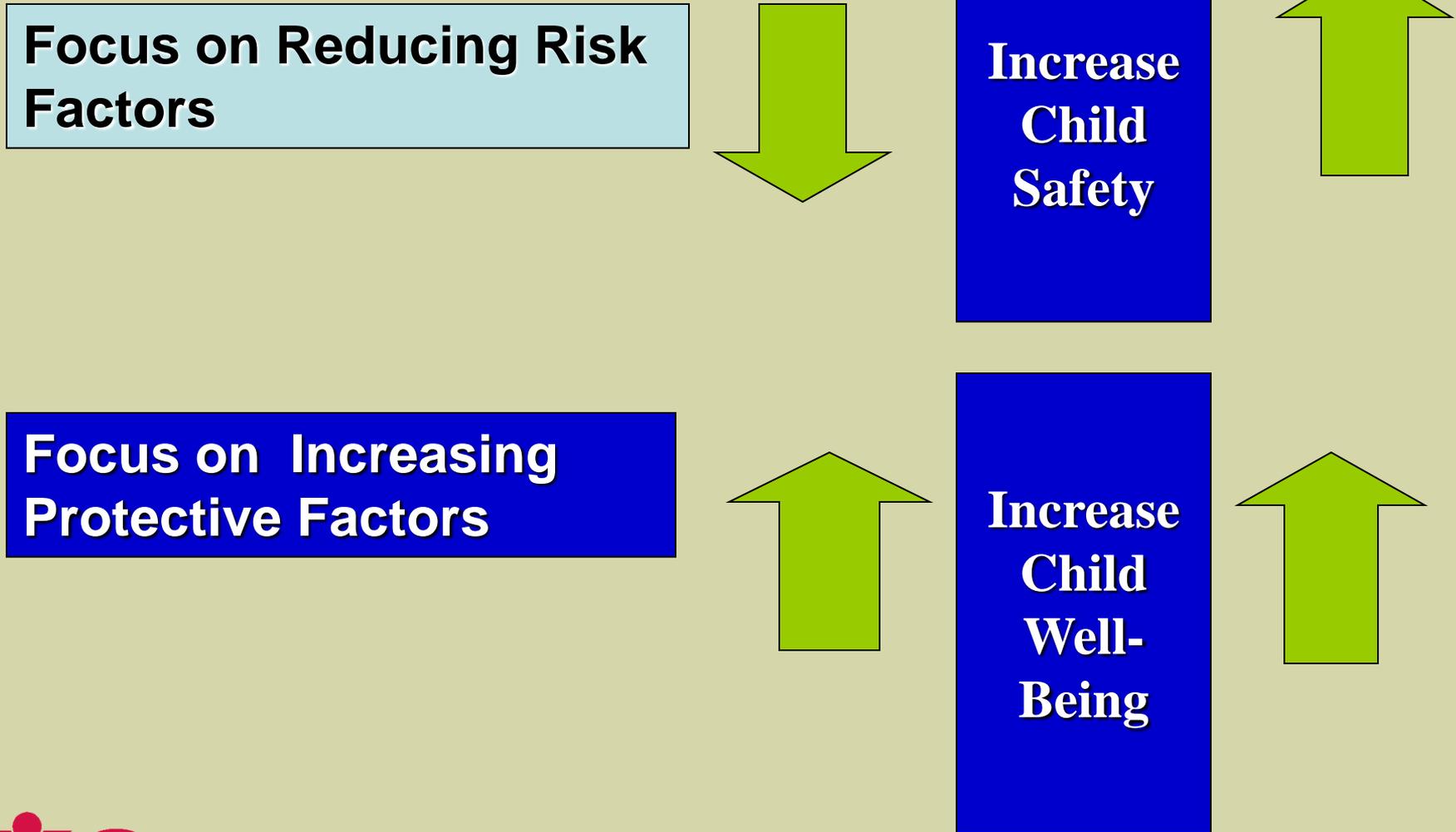
# Examples of Protective Factors

- Child: temperament, intelligence
- Parent: caring, intelligence, resourceful
- Family: supportive, father involved
- Community: resources, safe, playgrounds
- Society: good schools, health insurance

# Family Assessment Decisions

- What are the most important risk and protective factors?
- What must change in order for the effects of neglect to be addressed and for the risk of neglect to be reduced or eliminated?
- What is the parent or caregiver's level of readiness for change and capacity to assure that the basic needs of children will be met?

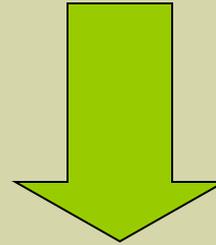
# Approach to Change



# For Example

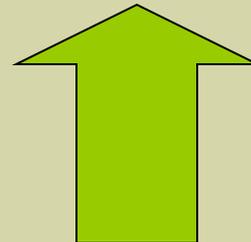
## Risk Factors:

- Caregiver depressive symptoms
- Parenting stress
- Life stress



## Protective Factors:

- Parenting attitudes
- Parenting competence
- Social support



**Child Safety**  
-basic needs of  
children are  
met

# Important considerations



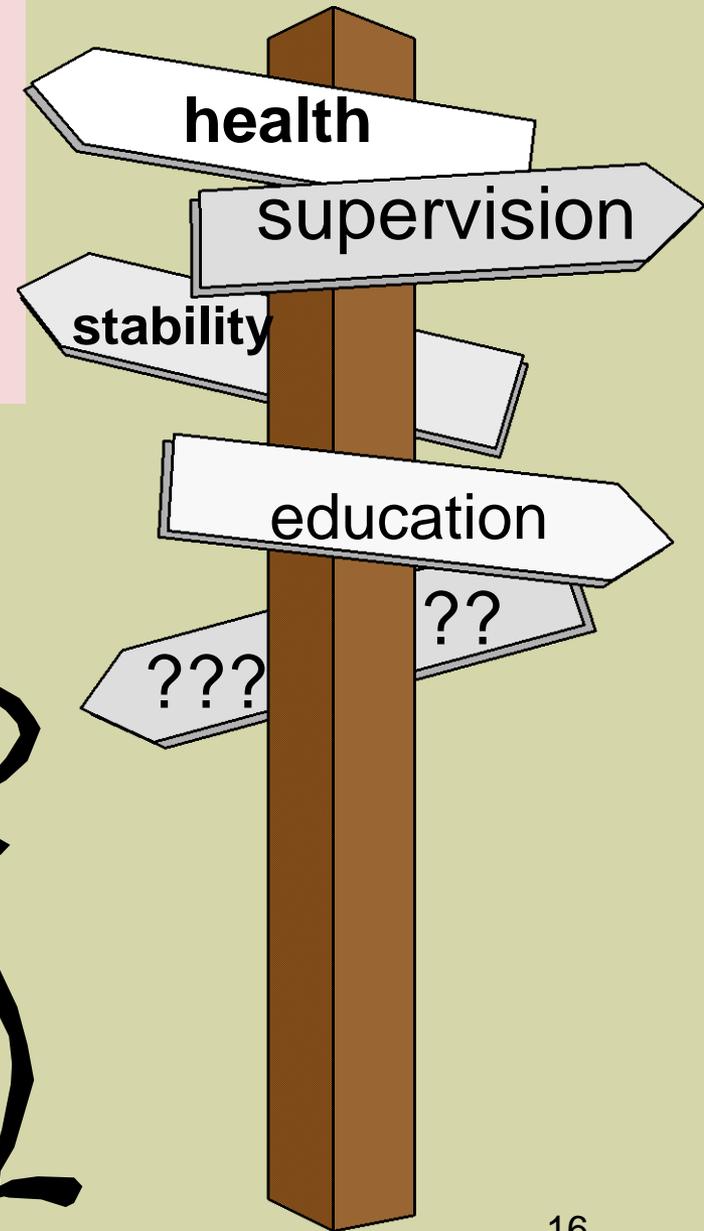
- Situational risks may be addressed in shorter term intervention
- Enduring risks take longer intervention to yield sustained change

# STAY FOCUSED on OUTCOMES



# Why is this important important?

- If we don't know where we are going, how will we know when we get there?



# Program versus Intervention Level Outcomes

- Program Outcomes

- Broad results that indicate success of a program.
- Usually measured by numeric counts and by available data that can be easily aggregated.

- Intervention level Outcomes

- Results that indicate success at the level of an individual child, caregiver, and/or family.
- Usually measured by standardized self report or observational measures or level of functioning measures.

# Sample Family Level Outcomes

- Risk/Problem
  - Condemned housing (e.g., no heat or running water, children diagnosed with lead poisoning, safety hazards for young children)
- Possible Family Level Outcomes
  - Household safety (child safety)
  - financial management skills (family well being)
  - problem solving skills (family well being)

# Review of Process for Targeting Client Level Outcomes

- Define key needs, risks, problems
- Define key outcomes and dimensions that are your primary focus
- Consider alternative measures as indicators of outcomes
- Select assessment measures
- Apply measures at beginning, intervals, and at closure

# Philosophical Principles

- Helping alliance –relationship based (child focused and family centered)
- Ecological systems framework
- Developmental and trauma informed
- Community outreach
- Family assessment and tailored interventions
- Empowerment approaches/Strengths perspective
- Cultural competence
- Outcome driven service plans

# Intervention Planning Principles:

- Maximum involvement of family members and informal networks
- Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, & related to risks (linked to outcomes) with positive feedback (SMART GOALS).
- Select interventions that help families achieve individualized goals.

# Intervention

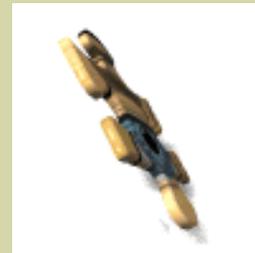
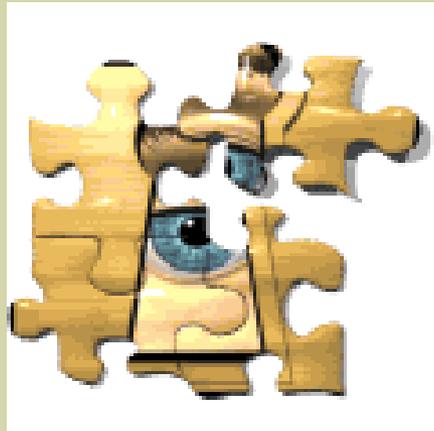
- Multi-model intervention: Individualized services geared to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors.



# Tailoring Intervention

- Interventions should be selected that are strategically structured to increase protective factors or decrease risk factors.
  - AND support family members to achieve individualized SMART goals

# Putting it all together



# Take Home Points

- Principles guide our practice
- Engagement of family as partner is crucial
- Focus on specific risk and protective factors to guide the assessment
- Select outcomes that match the risk and protective factors and develop SMART goals with the family
- Select & tailor interventions to support the change process

# References:

- DePanfilis, D. (2006). *Child neglect: A guide for prevention, assessment, and intervention*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, Children's Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect.
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- Dubowitz, H., & DePanfilis, D. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook for child protection practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



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