



Ecology of Neglect: Working with families to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors

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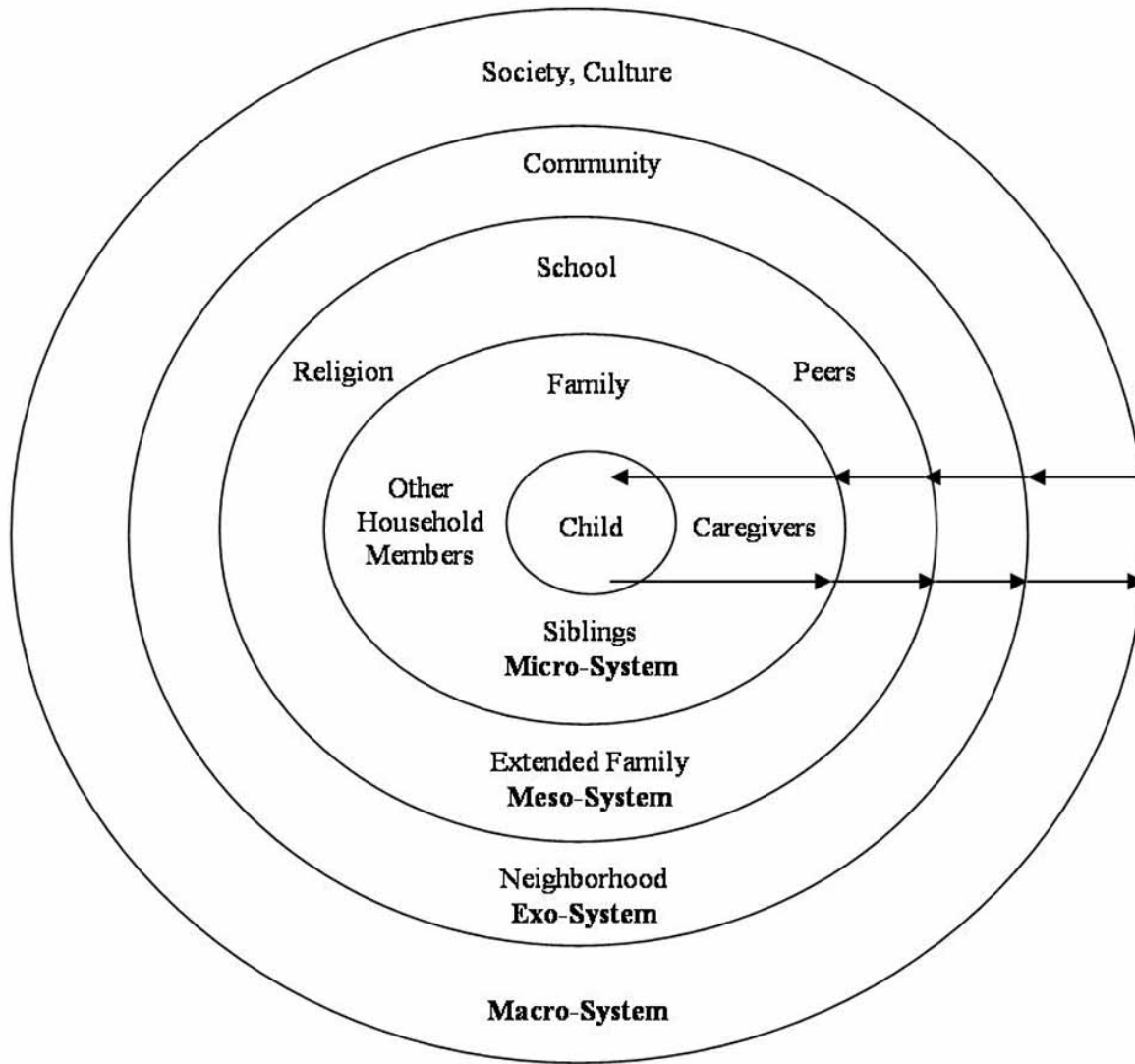
Objectives of this Presentation

- ❑ To briefly summarize research on ecological factors that increase risk for child neglect
- ❑ To provide examples of methods for enhancing protective factors and decreasing risk factors to increase safety and well-being of children.



Figure 1

The social ecology of children and families in child welfare



Ecology of Neglect

- Examples of risk factors:
 - Poverty
 - Neighborhood
 - Housing



Poverty

- Economically deprived families face greater challenges in adequately caring for and protecting their children (Drake & Pandey, 1996; Giovannoni & Bilingsley, 1970; Pelton, 1994; Wolock & Horowitz, 1979; Zuravin, 1989).



Neighborhood

- Relationship confirmed between neighborhood characteristics and child maltreatment (e.g., frequent moves, proximity to high-poverty, percentage of female-headed families, percentage of unemployed people, percentage of those living in overcrowded housing, and percentage of vacant housing) (Coulton, et al., 1995; Coulton et al., 1999; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; and Zuravin, 1986, 1989).



Housing

- Research has suggested a link between housing density or overcrowding and child neglect (Martin & Walters, 1982; Wolock and Horowitz, 1977); housing conditions and child neglect (Nelson, Saunders, & Landsman, 1993); housing quality and punitive parenting practices (Kasl, Will, White, & Marcuse, 1982); and housing conditions and the adequacy of the physical care of children (Ernst, Meyer, & DePanfillis, 2004).

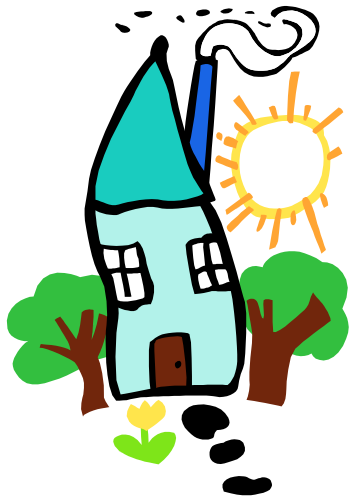


Prevention Science Framework

- Increase protective factors
- Decrease risk factors



Making Family Connections



- Family Connections was specifically designed to:
 - reduce risk factors associated with neglect and
 - enhance protective factors that may help families more adequately meet the basic needs of their children.



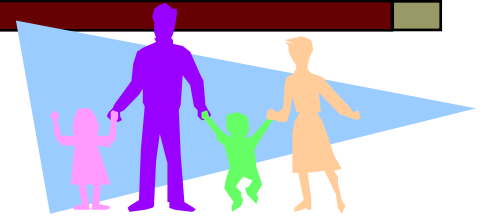
Targeting neighborhoods in West Baltimore Empowerment Zone*

- **Poverty** – up to 58% of children live in poverty.
- **Truancy** – 39% miss > than 20 days/year.
- **Child abuse & neglect** – 39 per 1000 children.
- **Juvenile arrest rates** – 130 per 1000 children.
- **Teen pregnancy** – 16% of females ages 10-17 give birth.



*Baltimore City Data Collaborative, 2001

Target Population

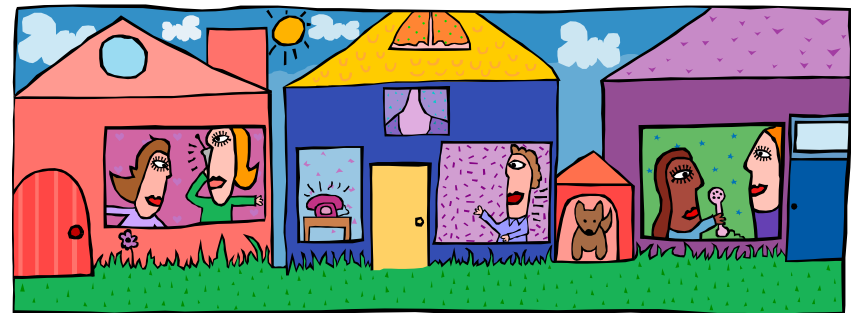


- **Geographic location**
 - The family lives in the West Baltimore Empowerment Zone
- **Family demographics**
 - Child between 5 and 11 years living in the household
- **Basic needs may be unmet**
- **Presence of at least 2 risk factors**
- **Voluntary status**
 - No current CPS involvement
 - The family is willing to participate



Intervention

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



Guiding Principles



- Ecological Developmental Framework



Guiding Principles

- Community Outreach
 - Worked out of a row house for 10 years
 - Currently in a community multi-service building



Guiding Principles



- Family assessment & tailored intervention



Guiding Principles

- Helping alliance with family



Guiding Principles

- Empowerment & strengths based

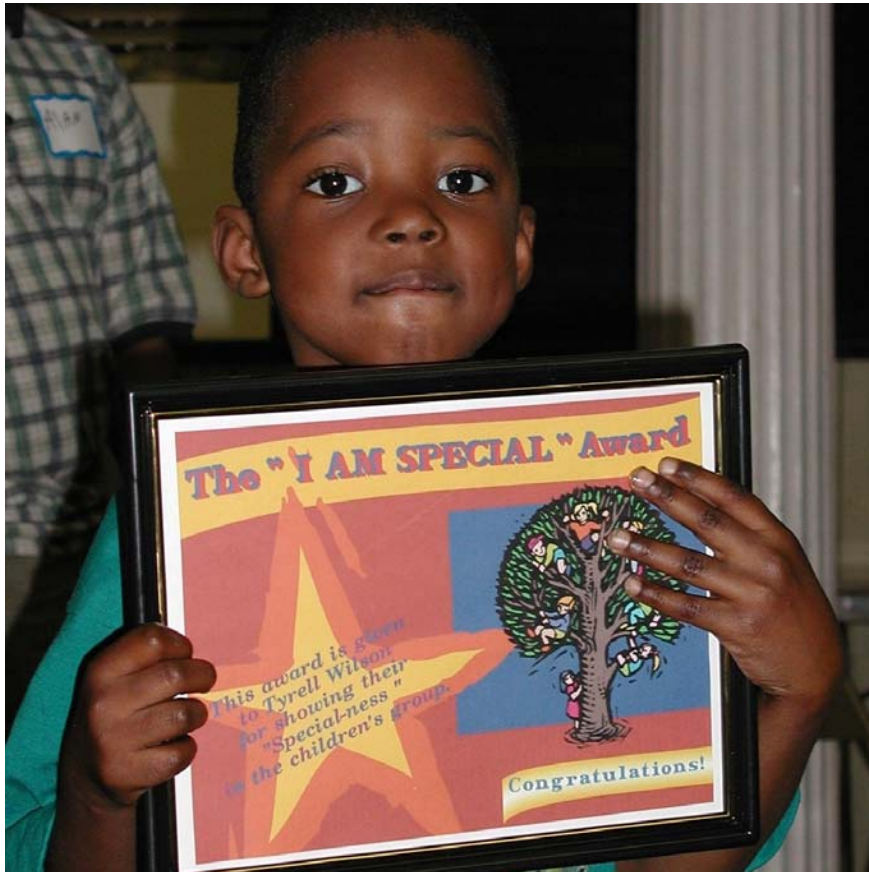


Guiding Principles

- Cultural competence



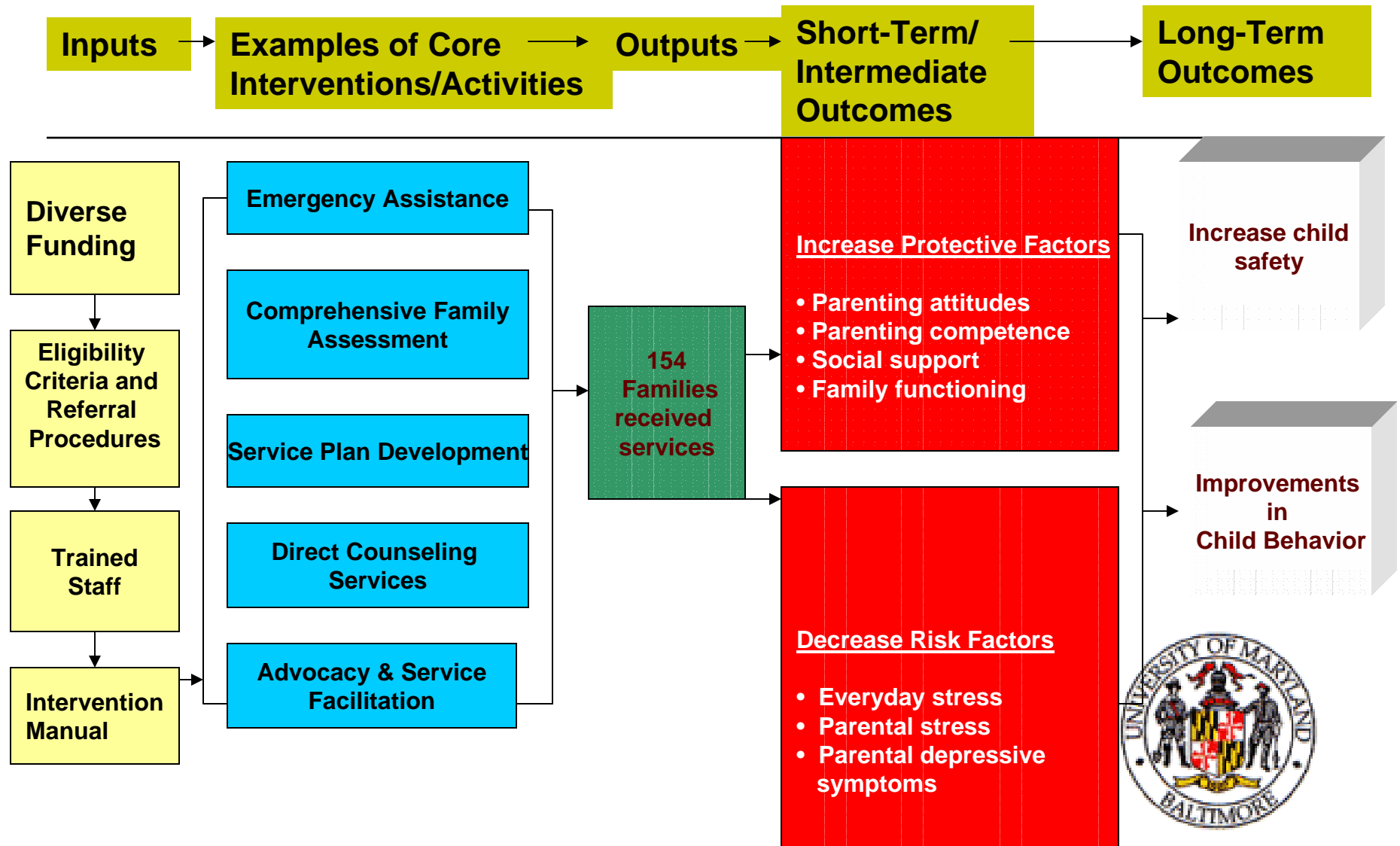
Guiding Principles



- Outcome-driven service plans



Logic Model: Family Connections



Purpose of Initial Study



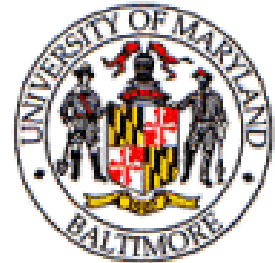
- To explore the relationship between length of service and the achievement of intermediate outcomes (risk and protective factors) and final outcomes (child safety and behavior).



Intervention: Random assignment

□ 3-Month or 9-Month Intervention

- Emergency assistance & concrete services (food, clothing, shelter, etc.)
- Home based counseling services
 - Family Assessment
 - Outcome driven service plans
 - Individual & family counseling
- Service referrals, advocacy, service coordination, and facilitation



Social work interns followed an intervention manual to deliver services to both groups.

Original findings

- **Analyses indicated changes over time:**
 - **Reducing Risk Factors**
 - depressive symptoms
 - parenting stress
 - life stress
 - **Increasing Protective Factors**
 - parenting attitudes and competence (satisfaction)
 - social support

AND.....

DePanfilis & Dubowitz, 2005



Original findings

- **Results suggested improvement over time in targeted outcomes:**
 - **Child Safety**
 - **Low incidence of CPS reports**
 - **Improved physical care**
 - **Improved psychological care**
 - **Child Behavior**
 - **Decreased externalizing and internalizing behavior**



Next steps

- ❑ **Replicating with grandparent families in Baltimore & in 7 other sites across the country**
- ❑ **Exploring interdisciplinary community project with expanded services in targeted neighborhoods.**



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