

Healthful Relationships for Healthy Families and Children

The Situation

Common knowledge tells us that growing up in a safe, stable and nurturing family environment supports well-being and positive development for everyone in the family. Healthy families also benefit communities by being a stable work force, being active citizens, and by supporting social good that benefits all. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agrees that safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments play an essential role in preventing child abuse and neglect and assuring that all children reach their full potential (www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/essentials.html).

Not only do all kinds of healthy families provide children and adults security and stability, family members also model satisfying relationships that can lead to greater emotional stability and resilience in times of adversity. Family units and individual family members establish long-term as well as occasional relationships with friends, colleagues, care-providers, organizations, and public networks each and every day. These relationships can be positive and often support well-being for everyone involved. However, relationships – even among family members and friends — can be negative, strained and traumatic. For nearly 30 years, researchers at the CDC have linked relationship trauma during ages 0 to 18 to poor health and social outcomes in adulthood. Those adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are often linked to social and economic determinants. Determinants such as poverty, poor housing, and limited education, lack of job skills, toxic physical environment, family displacements, discrimination and bias, and weak social connections relate to family disruption and reduced quality-of-life. Consequently, it becomes critical to prevent traumatic relationships from forming by strengthening skills and opportunities that support healthy relationships. Family unit relationship strength, comprised of six characteristics, can be built to strengthen families. Individuals also can contribute to family strength by helping others develop resilience across the lifespan. For example, we know that the first three years of life play an essential role in children's brain development. We know that positive parenting, quality child care and early education can greatly enhance children's lives and their long-term health and resilience. When children live in nurturing environments, they develop toward success in school, toward building friendships, and toward their futures as adults fulfilling roles in their communities. We see some improvements in the indicators of relationship health among Kansas families. However, we believe there is reason for concern and action:

A record number of children in foster care — 7,670 youth as of May 2018. (www.rebuildhopekansas.org).

- 9,384 Kansas families receive TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) (Kansas Kids Count, 2017).
- 14% of children live in poverty as compared to the U.S. rate of 20%. (County Health Rankings, 2018).
- The teen birth rate in Kansas is 30 births per 1,000 female population, ages 15-19, compared to the U.S. rate of 27 per 1,000. (County Health Rankings, 2018).
- The rate of infant mortality in Kansas equals the U.S. rate of 5.9 per 1,000 (CDC, 2016; www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/kansas/kansas.htm).

- The rate of adult suicide in Kansas is 17.9, compared to 13.5 for the U.S. (CDC, 2016; www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/kansas/kansas.htm)

Short-Term (Knowledge)

For Early Childhood and Early Years (0-6) Programs:

Parents/caregivers begin to understand the importance of:

- positive parent/caregiver-child interaction and supportive relationships;
- clear and consistent communication;
- adaptable and flexible parent/caregiver practices;
- quality early child care environments; and
- establishing and maintaining healthy activities and environments in early childhood.

For Strong and Resilient Families Programming:

- Family members improve their awareness and knowledge of the six qualities of strong families.
- Couples improve their awareness and knowledge about the importance of relationships that promote resilience, healthful behaviors, and well-being.
- Parents of school-age and adolescent children improve their awareness and knowledge, about the importance of: positive parent-child interaction; consistent, cohesive communication; adaptability and flexibility in parent practices; and effective parental monitoring.
- Community partners begin to increase their awareness and knowledge of healthy relationships and well-being; how to build strong families.

Indicators

For Early Childhood and Early Years (0-6) Programs:

- All parents/caregivers support parent-child interactions.
- All parents/caregivers support clear and consistent communication.
- All parents/caregivers support adaptable/flexible parenting practices including emergent literacy.
- All parents/caregivers support quality early childhood education facilities.
- All parents/caregivers support establishing and maintaining healthy activities and environments in early childhood.

For Strong and Resilient Families Programming:

- Family members improve their awareness and knowledge of the six qualities of strong families.
- Couples support relationships that promote resilience, healthful behaviors, and well-being.
- Parents of school-age and adolescent children support positive parent-child interaction; consistent, cohesive communication; adaptability and flexibility in parent practices; and effective parental monitoring.

Medium-Term (Behavior)

For Early Childhood and Early Years (0-6) Programs:

Parents/caregivers regularly practice:

- positive parent/caregiver-child interactions and supportive relationships;
- clear and consistent communication;
- adaptable and flexible parent/caregiver practices;
- establishing quality early child care environments; and
- establishing and maintaining healthy activities and environments in early childhood.

For Strong and Resilient Families:

- Family members regularly contribute to each other's well-being; relationship satisfaction; identity and family strengths; and development of resilience skills.
- Couples regularly commit to a positive relationship; develop skills to manage stress and conflict; and contribute to the other's well-being.
- Parents/Caregivers of school-aged adolescent children regularly practice positive parent-child interaction; clear and consistent communication, adaptable/flexible parenting practices; and effective parental monitoring.
- Community partners regularly offer effective child, youth, and family programs; support healthy relationships and well-being

Indicators

Early Childhood and Early Years

- All parents/caregivers practice parent-child interactions.
- All parents/caregivers practice clear and consistent communication.
- All parents/caregivers practice adaptable/flexible parenting practices including emergent literacy.
- All parents/caregivers have access to quality early childhood education facilities.
- All parents/caregivers establish and maintain healthy activities and environments in early childhood.

Strong and Resilient Families:

- Family members **regularly** contribute to **each other's** well-being; relationship satisfaction; identity and **family** strengths; and development of resilience skills.
- Couples **regularly** commit to positive relationships; develop skills to manage stress, conflict; and contribute to the other's well-being.
- Parents of school age and adolescent children **regularly** practice positive parent-child interaction; clear and consistent communication, adaptable/flexible parenting practices; and effective parental monitoring.
- Community partners **regularly** offer effective child, youth, and family programs; support healthy relationships and well-being.

Long-Term (Change in Condition)

All individuals and families experience safe, stable and positive relationships where they live, learn, work and play. Those relationships lead to resilience, healthy development and well-being across the lifespan.

Indicator

- Parents/caregivers employ parenting practices that support the positive growth and development of children in the early years.
- All people live in healthful, supportive, and nurturing relationships.

Public Value

K-State Research and Extension's Family and Child Development programming contributes to environments where safe, stable and positive relationships flourish.

Outputs

Provide evidence-based programs that improve relationships and build personal and family resilience across developmental stages, social settings, diverse cultures and family structures.

Signature Programs - Early Childhood

Program Participants –

- Parents and caregivers of young children
- Family child care home providers
- Child care center directors and staff
- Community partners

Programs (Evidence-based programs) – Evaluation tools and support available

Better Brains for Babies: The, evidenced-based, Better Brains for Babies initiative and curriculum functions to improve the potential of young children by promoting the use of early brain development research in everyday life experiences. Better Brains for Babies is a collaboration of national, state and local, public and private organizations dedicated to promoting awareness and education about the importance of early brain development in the healthy growth and development of infants and young children.

Train-the-Trainer: After completing the training, educators become eligible to offer information on early brain development throughout their communities. The Better Brains for Babies curriculum provides a clear and consistent science-based message about the impact of early brain development on children's overall growth and development. To learn more, visit www.bbbgeorgia.org. Bradford Wiles is approved to train-trainers in the state of Kansas. Contact Wiles to discuss implementing or completing a Train-the-Trainer experience.

Community Education: Community education experiences are facilitated by Better Brains for Babies trained professionals. Community education is approved for KDHE in-service hours with proper program delivery and facilitator training. Contact Wiles for details.

In-Direct Education: In-direct community education experiences can be facilitated by professionals not trained in Better Brains for Babies, but through the application of KSRE supported publications, such as the Building Baby's Brain Fact Sheets.

Other Evidence-Informed Programs in Early Childhood to Support Better Brains for Babies:

Bonding Thru Board Games: This short-term or series-based lesson by Elizabeth Brunscheen-Cartagena promotes using board games as a tool to support child and youth development while also supporting strong families and relationships. MF3400-MF3403.

Emergent Literacy: Helping Young Children's Development Through Reading: This short-term lesson by Bradford Wiles helps parents learn to build pre-reading skills intentionally by the way they interact with their children through reading and other activities. MF3161-MF3162.

Employee ServSafe: The ServSafe® program is an evidence-based, national certification program designed to teach safe handling practices to foodservice employees and others who handle and serve food to the public. The ServSafe® program in Kansas is provided by K-State Research and Extension in partnership with the Kansas

Restaurant and Hospitality Association. Complete details at: <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/servsafe/index.html>.

Essential Living Skills: 11 publications that offer resources and educational information on job skills, budgeting, food and nutrition, child development, and more. Each component offers teaching/facilitation tools, learning opportunities and encouragement to simplify daily life and ease stress. S134A-S134K.

Family Dance! Dance as a Healthy and Fun Family Activity: This program can be facilitated as an 8-10 session series or as a single lesson. It promotes using dance to improve adult-child healthy and fun engagement. Dance provides benefits across the physical, mental, and behavioral areas. MF3355-MF3356. Contact Bradford Wiles for series-based leader resources.

Managing Challenging Behavior by Creating Supportive Environments: This program by Rebecca McFarland, KSRE includes a teaching guide, PowerPoint presentation, and additional resources. MF2844-MF2845.

Soft Skills Are Success Skills: This short-term lesson by Elaine Johannes and Nora Rhoades promotes social and emotional learning among Kansas youth by explaining the concepts and provides activities for helping youth develop their soft skills. MF3287.

Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships: This program by Rebecca McFarland, KSRE includes a teaching guide, PowerPoint presentation, and additional resources: MF2841-MF2842.

Strong and Resilient Families

Program Participants –

- Pre-adolescents and adolescents
- Adult couples
- Families and individual family members
- Parents/caregivers of children and adolescents
- Community partners

Programs (Evidence-based programs) – Evaluation tools and support available

1. Together We Can (TWC): Creating a Healthy Future for our Family – contact Elaine Johannes about program

TWC (Together We Can) prepares single parents and designated caregivers (e.g., foster parents) to set goals to promote and create a healthy future for their children and children in their community.

- Supports a community-based response to the stress associated with poverty.
- Suitable for teen parents, teen couples.
- Can be used as an educational component with community poverty initiatives.
- Implementation of TWC is part of a north central region, multi-state collaborative.

2. Dating Smarts (for youth grades 5 to 9) – contact Anne Pitts about program

- **Six one-hour lessons** that include highly engaging activities to explore essential aspects of early relationships — attraction, infatuation, feelings, and rejection.

- The messages are respectful, affirming the value of early romantic experiences while offering perspectives on how these grow and change over time.

3. Relationship Smarts PLUS (for youth grades 8 to 12) – contact Elaine Johannes about program

- Relationship skills curriculum for teens.
- **Twelve one-hour lessons** that address life skills, healthy relationships, dating violence, and pregnancy prevention, delivered by these innovative educational strategies: Building assets and strengthening protective factors; and empowering success with skills to form and maintain healthy relationships, make wise sexual choices, and work toward their goals.

4. Viva La Familia Sanos (Long Live the Healthy Family!) — contact Debra Bolton about program

- An interactive program for building and maintaining strong Latinx marriages and families.
- Includes leader training, PowerPoint masters, evaluation surveys, certificate of completion, and instructional manual for community family life educators to deliver a four-lesson series in groups.
- All available on the Families! website.

5. Strengthening Families Program (SFP) (ages 7-17) – contact Deb Andres about the program

Strengthening Families Program (ages 10-14) – contact Elaine Johannes about the programs

- The family skills training programs effectively addresses two of the largest predictors of juvenile delinquency
- parenting style and family conflict while also training youth in family skills
- pro-social behaviors and refusal skills.
- SFP proves to reduce significantly problem behaviors, delinquency, and alcohol and drug abuse in children, and improves social competencies and school performance.

6. Essential Health and Wellness (Individuals, Adults, and Children) – Contact Debra Bolton

- Essential Living Skills for the whole family
- Teaches health and wellness for optimal family health
- Healthful behaviors contribute to positive family and community relationships.