Promising Practice #8: Early Childhood Development

Early child experiences establish the foundational building blocks for development across the life stages\(^1\). Furthermore, with the greatest gains experienced by the most deprived children, investments in early child development have been referred to as powerful equalizers\(^1\).

Early child experiences influence language, physical, social, emotional and cognitive development, which in turn, and throughout the lifecourse, affect learning, educational, economic, and social success, and health\(^1\), \(^2\), \(^3\). Early childhood development (ECD), nurturing environments, and quality childhood experiences are important for positive human development and health. Early child experiences contribute to positive developmental outcomes, and subsequently health, through a number of pathways, including psychological, behavioural, and physical\(^4\).

Some of the specific early childhood interventions noted in the literature and familiar to public health practice include prevention of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, promotion and support of breastfeeding, home visiting, and positive parenting practices. Areas of policy and program focus that have been demonstrated to be effective include those related to housing quality, childcare and early learning, food security, youth sexual education and consultation, promotion of equity between rural and urban areas, and elimination of child poverty.
Practice #8 example: Triple P Positive Parenting Program of Sudbury and Manitoulin districts

Community partners from across Sudbury and Manitoulin districts have embraced the Triple P Positive Parenting Program as a valuable resource for every parent. Providers from health, education, and social services agencies have been trained to assist parents with interventions ranging from providing advice by telephone, in-person consultations, and parenting support.

By working collaboratively to provide area parents with the resources and support they need, Triple P partners are working to enhance early childhood development by

- promoting development, growth, health, and social competencies
- promoting the development of non-violent, protective, and nurturing environments
- promoting the independence and health of families by enhancing parenting skills
- reducing the incidence of child abuse, mental illness, behavioural problems, delinquency, and homelessness

What helps me promote positive early childhood development?

- expertise and experience in the promotion of child and family health
- public health skills and competencies in the provision of services to vulnerable and at-risk families
- trusting partnerships with other community agencies and services providers

What makes the promotion of positive early childhood development challenging?

- Child health depends on the support and actions of all community sectors.
- A balance of targeted with universal child health programs is required.
- Time, resources, and trust are required to maintain the engagement of vulnerable families in planning, implementing, and evaluating early child development initiatives.

Useful Links

- Childhood/Early Life Backgrounder. Unnatural Causes Health Equity Database. 2008
- Video - “Brain Hero”. Centre on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2011

To learn more about health equity and ways we can all help reduce social inequities in health:

Contact:
Information Resource Centre
Resources, Research, Evaluation and Development Division Sudbury & District Health Unit
705.522.9200, ext. 350

Visit: www.sdhu.com
References
10 Promising Practices

Promising Practice #1: Targeting With Universalism


Promising Practice #2: Purposeful Reporting


Promising Practice #3: Social Marketing


Promising Practice #4: Health Equity Target Setting

3. Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee. Follow-up to policy or initiative options in the Health Disparity in Saskatoon Report: Recommendations for action in our community – working document. Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee; 2009.

Promising Practice #5: Equity-Focused Health Impact Assessment

Promising Practice #6: Competencies/Organizational Standards


Promising Practice #7: Contribution to the Evidence Base

• no references

Promising Practice #8: Early Childhood Development


Promising Practice #9: Community Engagement


Promising Practice #10: Intersectoral Action

• no references

For an accessible version of this document, please visit: https://www.sdhu.com/health-topics-programs/health-equity/10-promising-practices-health-equity

To learn more about health equity and ways we can all help reduce social inequities in health:

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Visit: www.sdhu.com
Watch our video: Let’s Start a Conversation About Health . . . and Not Talk About Health Care at All

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