



# **A BETTER START**

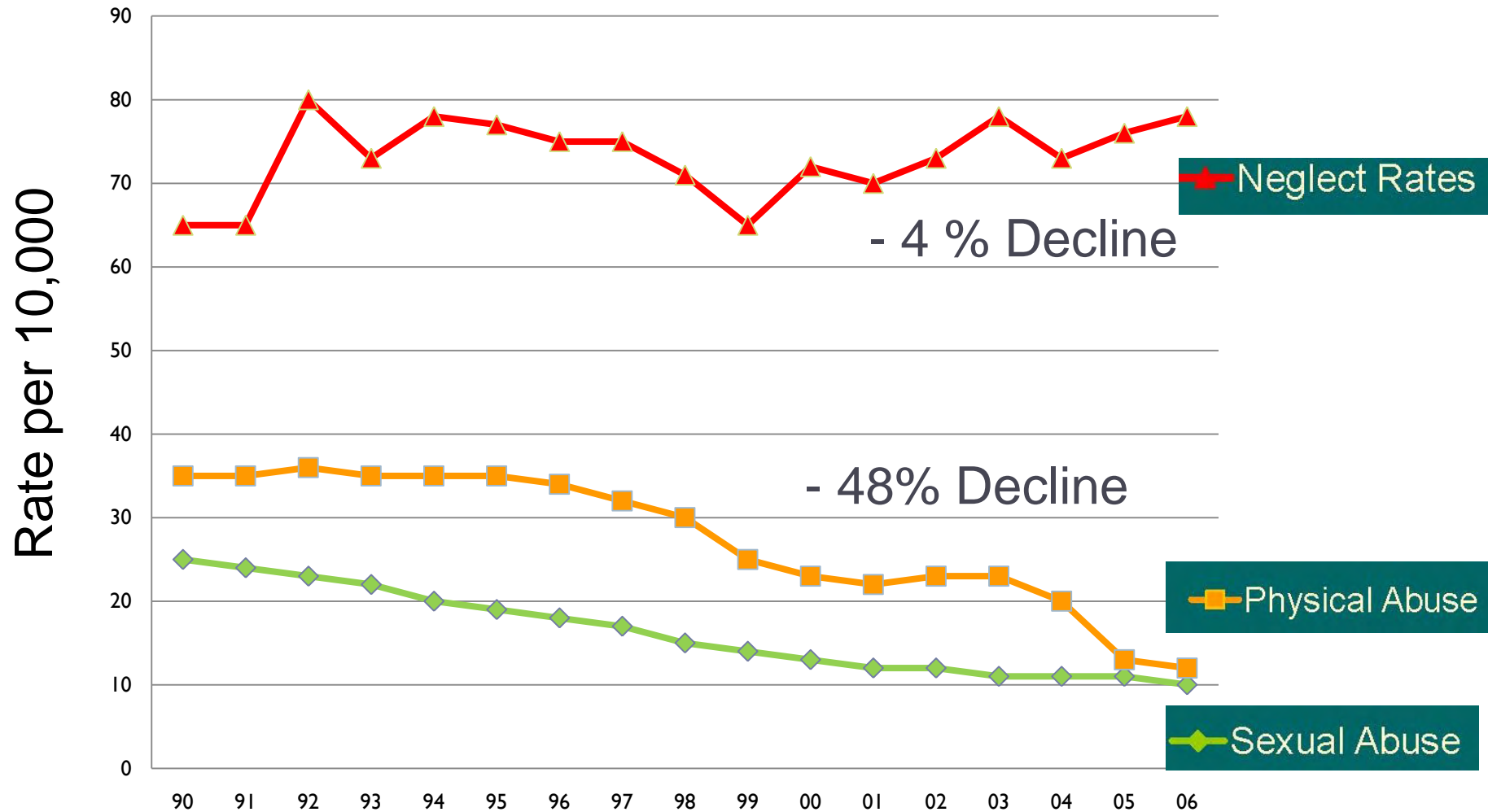
## **Child Maltreatment Prevention as a Public Health Priority**

September 10, 2009 -- Webinar

# Why a public health approach to preventing abuse and neglect?

- Scope and complexity of the problem
  - Primary prevention focus
  - Reduce risk and increase protective factors
  - Multidisciplinary approach
  - Maltreatment is a health and mental health issue
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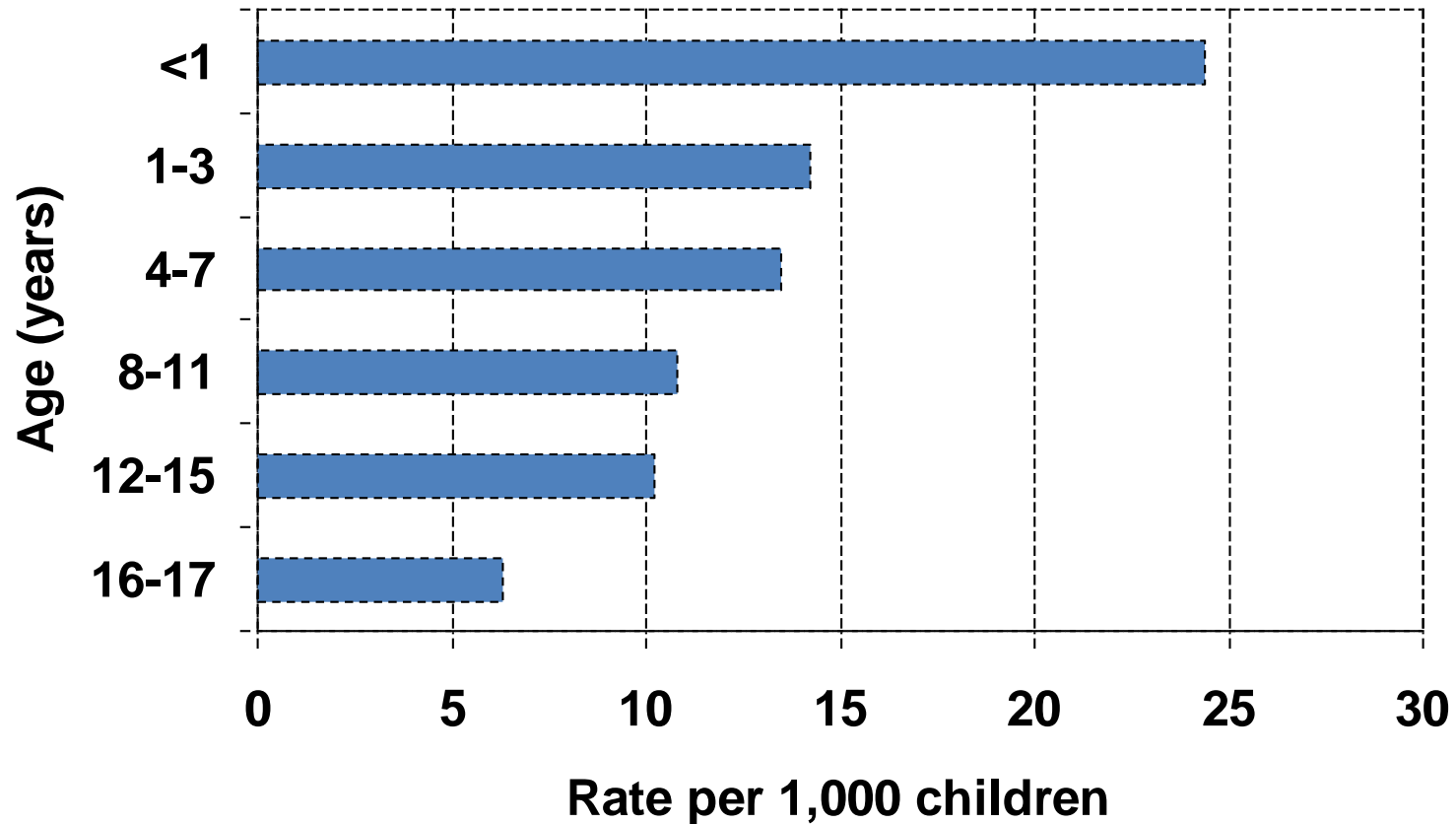
# U.S. Maltreatment Trends



Source: NCANDS

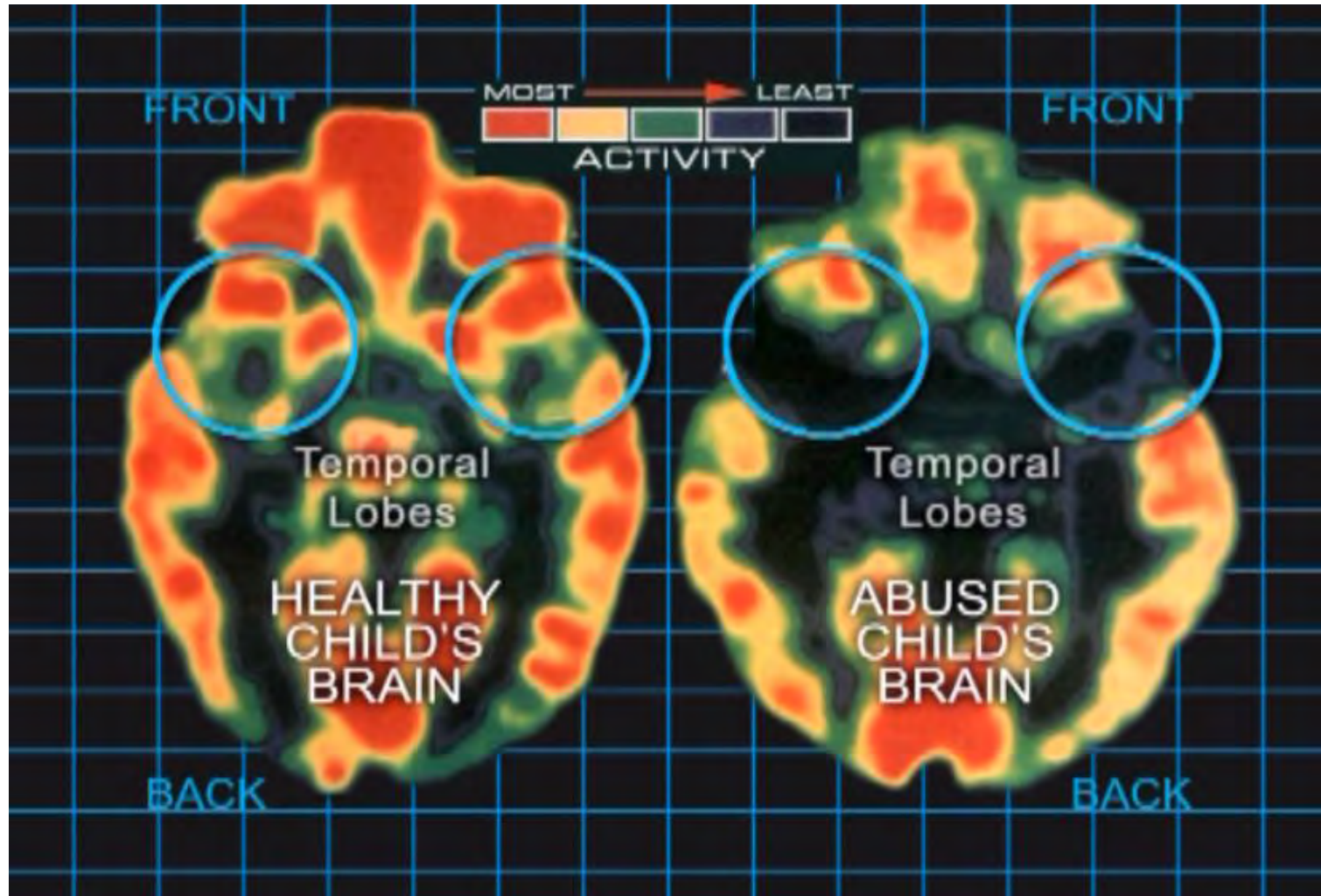
# Focus on Youngest Children

## Victimization Rates by Age Group, 2006



Source: *Child Maltreatment 2006*, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2008

# Negative Consequences of Maltreatment



Source: *Helping Babies from the Bench* DVD, ZERO TO THREE, 2007

# Invest in Early Childhood to Improve Workforce

“Recent studies of early childhood investments have shown remarkable success and indicate that the early years are important for early learning and can be enriched through external channels. Early childhood investments of high quality have lasting effect.”

James Heckman, Nobel prize winning economist at the University of Chicago

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In-home  
Services



Community Supports



Pediatrics



Early Education



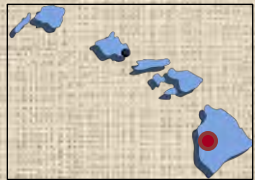
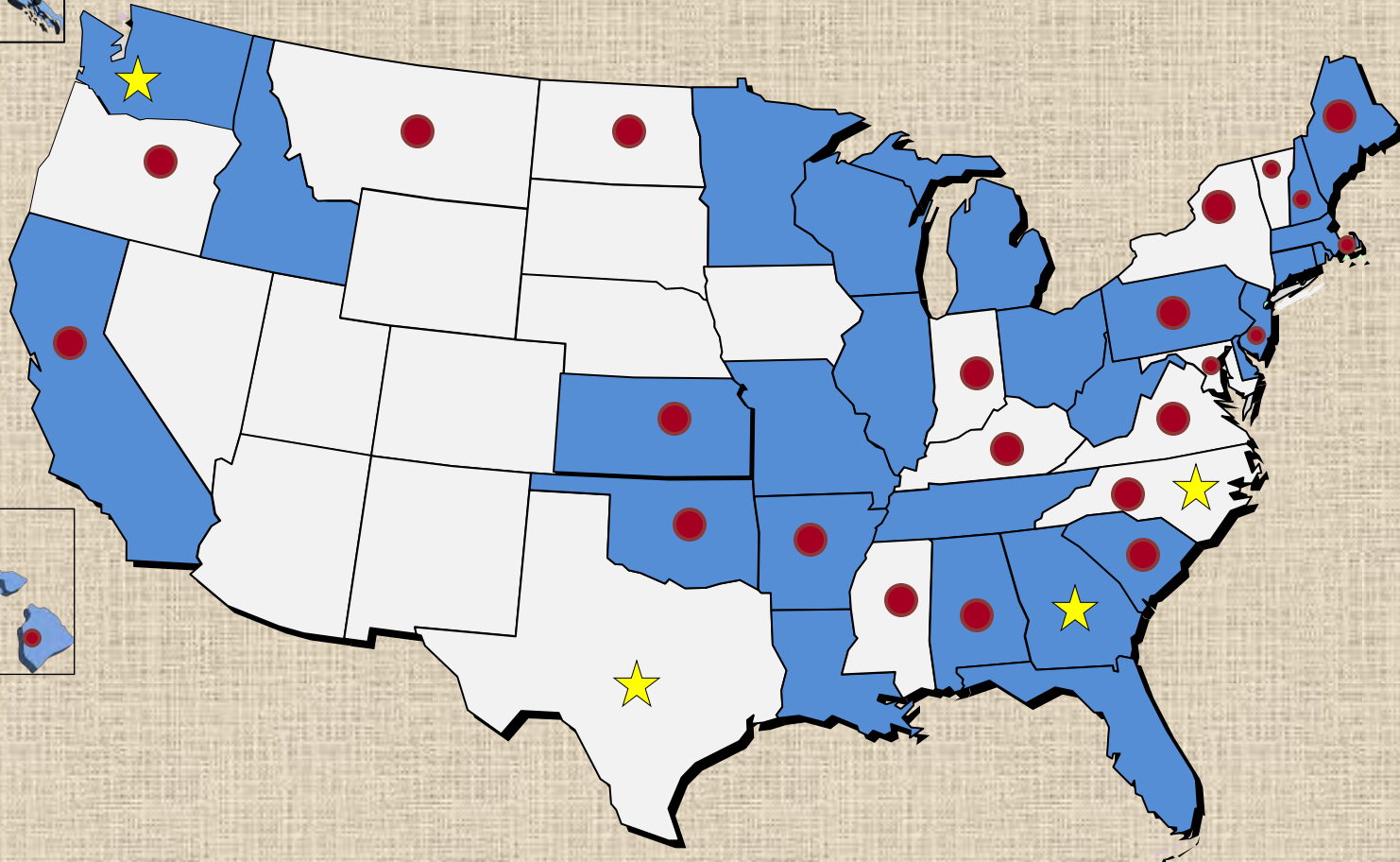
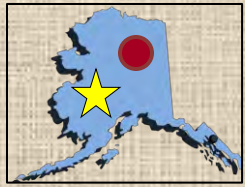
Public Education



Research and Policy

# Strengthening Families Initiative

Integrating Prevention into Early Education/Child Care



**Strengthening Families National Network**

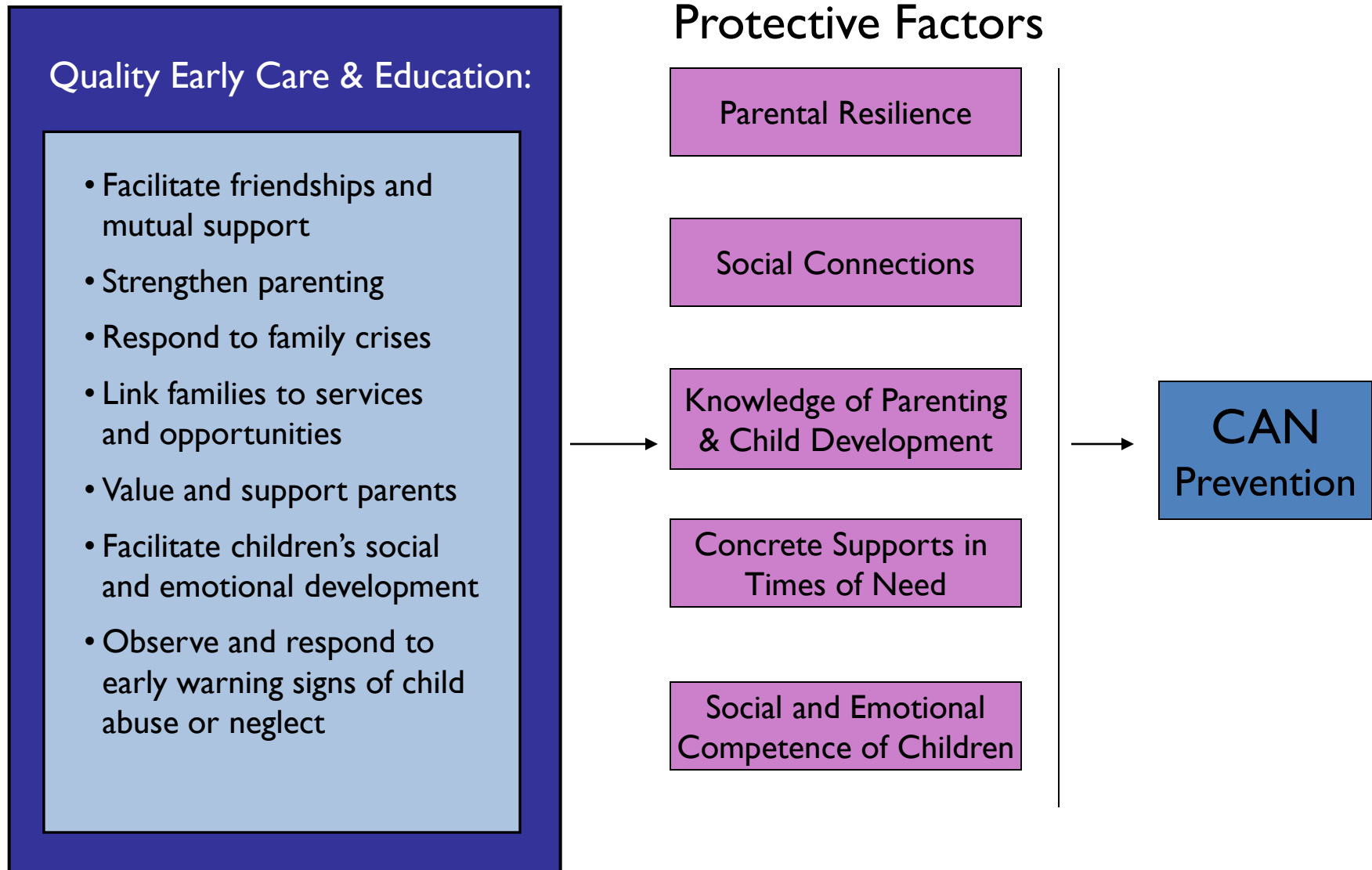


**United Way Strengthening Families Grants**



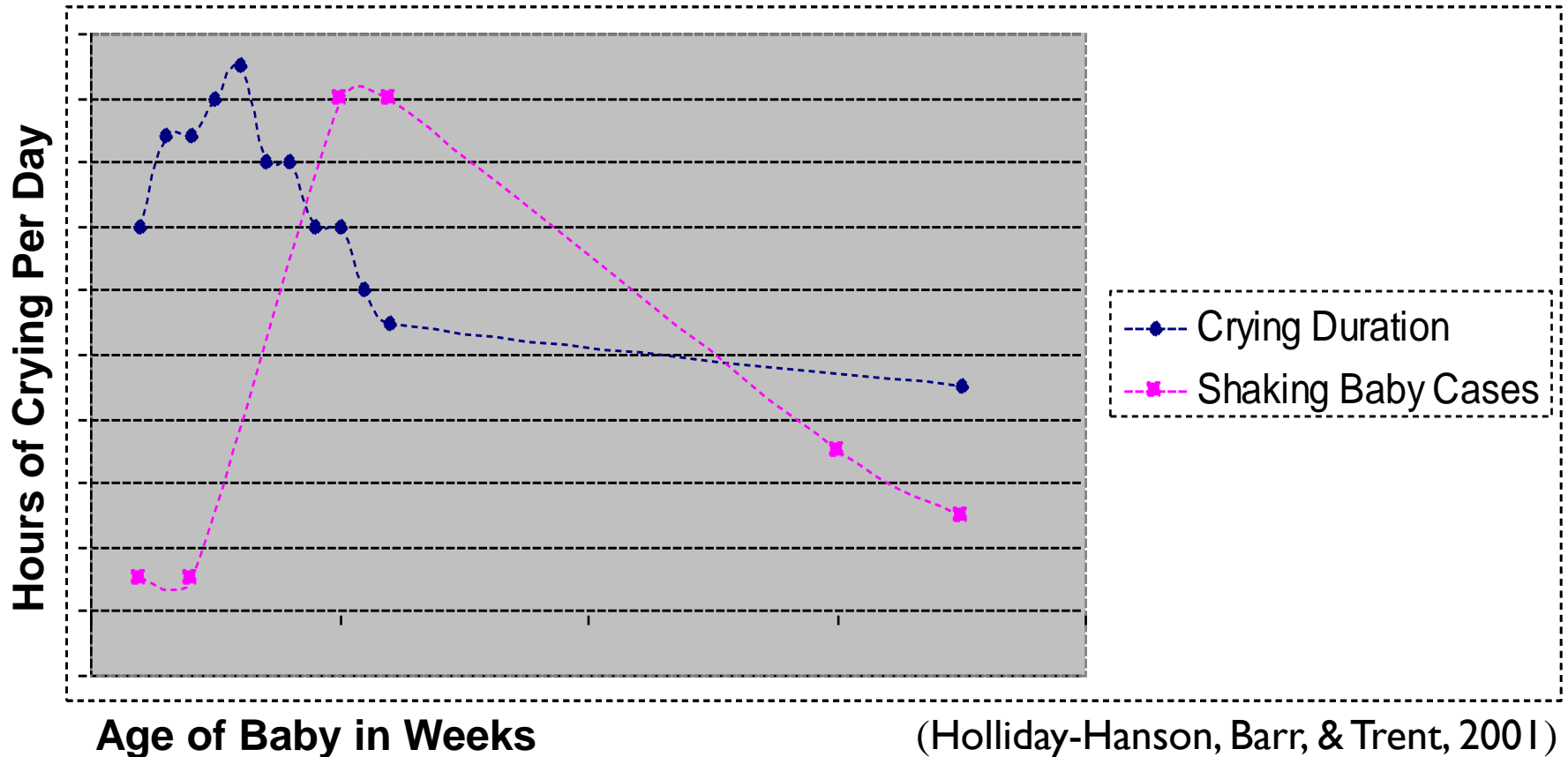
**Zero to Three Prevention Training**

# How Early Childhood Programs Contribute to Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect



Source: Center for the Study of Social Policy

# Crying Babies are at Risk for Child Abuse



# Statewide Implementation in North Carolina through the health care system

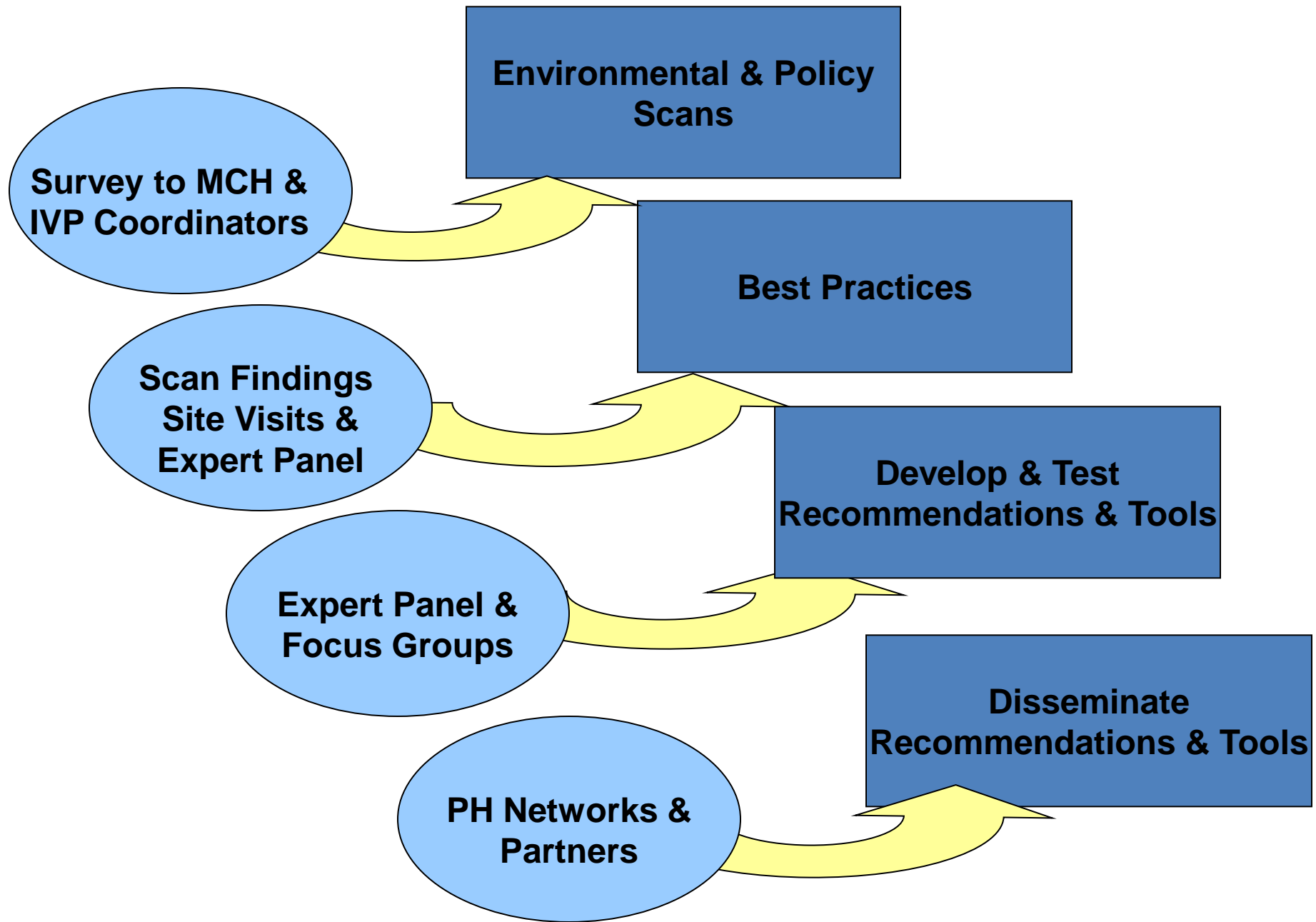


<b>P</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>PEAK OF CRYING</b>	<b>UNEXPECTED</b>	<b>RESISTS SOOTHING</b>	<b>PAIN-LIKE FACE</b>	<b>LONG LASTING</b>	<b>EVENING</b>

Educational information on crying for all new parents

Approximately 125,000 births/year

# CDC's Public Health Leadership Initiative







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# **The Childhood Roots of Health Disparities**

## **A New Framework for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

**Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D.**

CENTER ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**W. Thomas Boyce, M.D.**

COLLEGE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Bruce S. McEwen, Ph.D.**

MILLIKEN HATCH LABORATORY OF NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY  
ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

**CDC Web Conference | September 10, 2009**



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# Viewing Early Childhood Development Through a Lifespan Lens

The healthy development of young children provides a strong foundation for later academic achievement, economic productivity, and **responsible citizenship...**  
**...as well as a lifetime of physical and mental health.**



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**Advances in the Biological Sciences  
Tell Us That Early Life Experiences Are  
Built Into Our Bodies**



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## **Three Numbers to Remember**

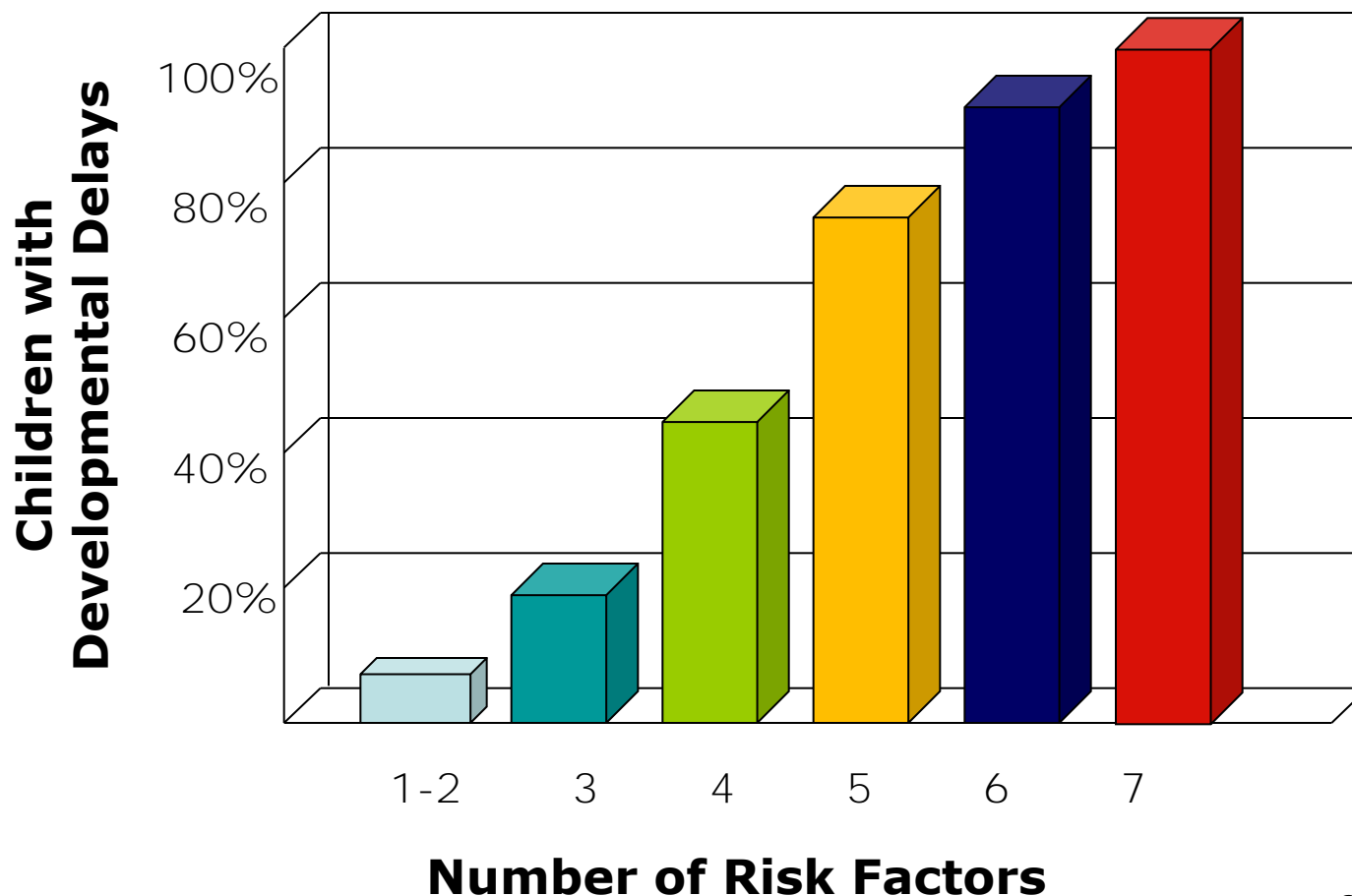
90-100 percent

5:1 odds

3:1 odds

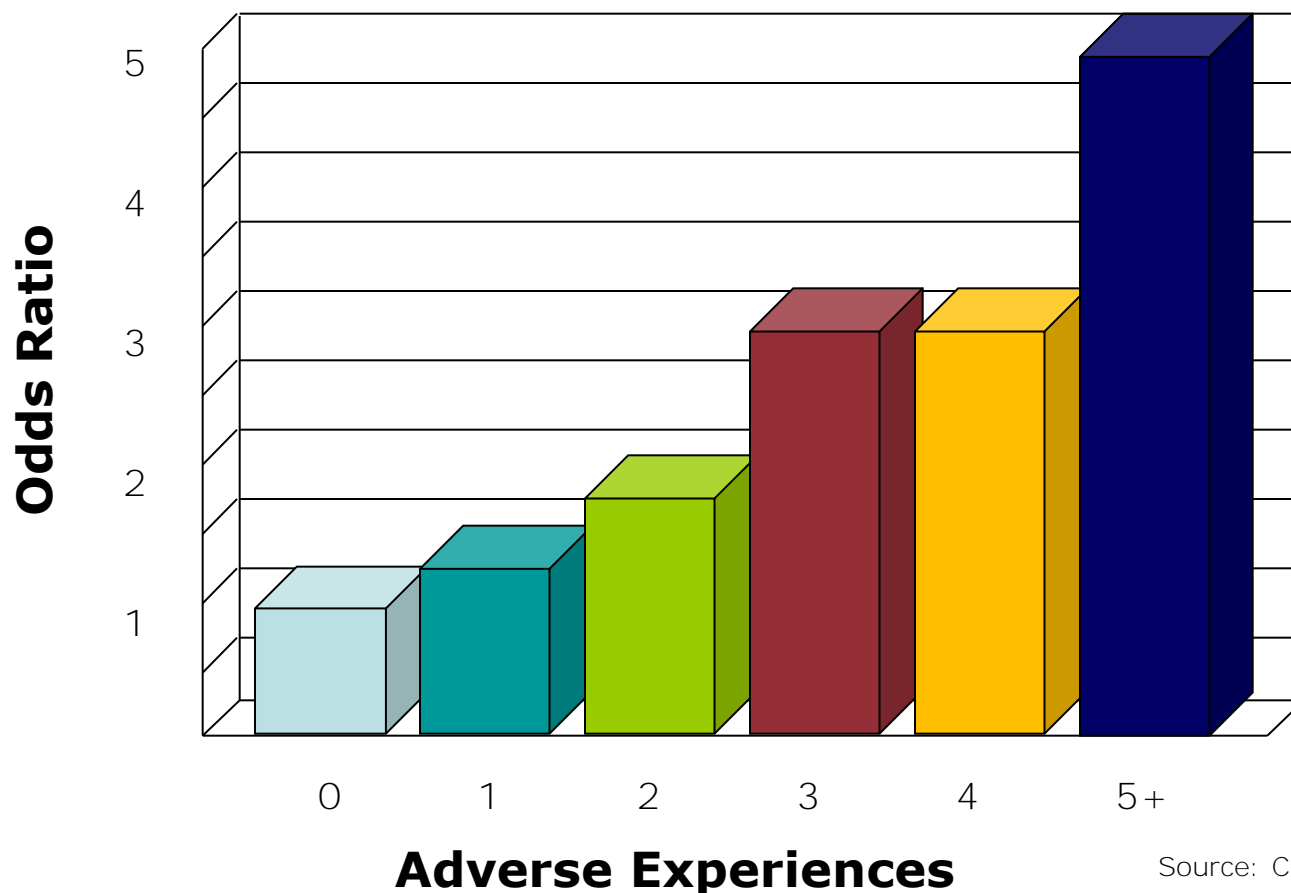


## Significant Adversity Impairs Development in the First Three Years





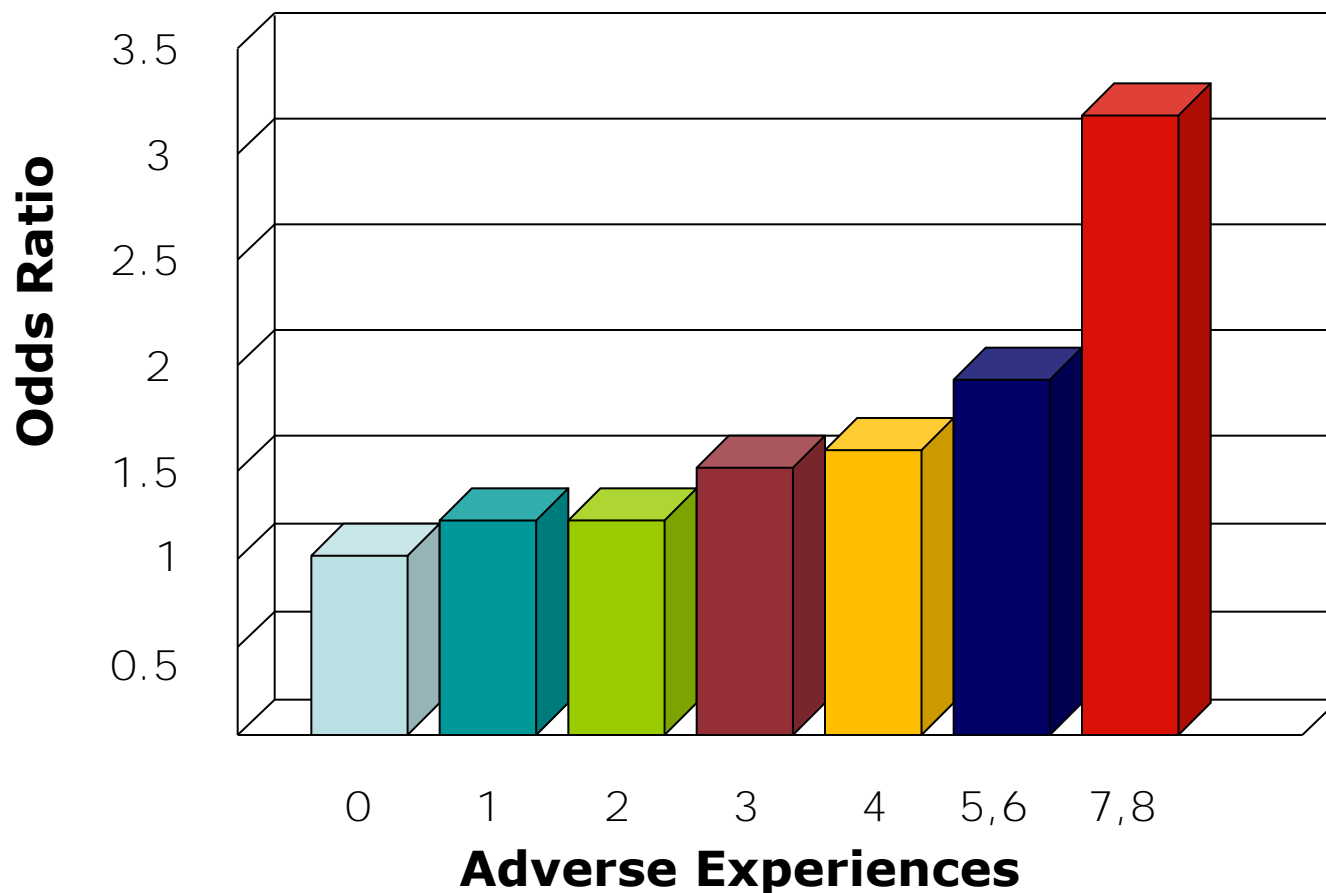
## **Risk Factors for Adult Depression are Embedded in Adverse Childhood Experiences**



Source: Chapman et al, 2004



## **Risk Factors for Adult Heart Disease are Embedded in Adverse Childhood Experiences**





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## **Extensive Evidence Indicates That Adversity Can Get “Under the Skin” and Undermine Health and Development**

Persistent stress produces excessive elevations in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones, which can impair brain architecture, immune status, metabolic systems, and cardiovascular function.



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Persistent stress produces excessive elevations in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones, which can impair brain architecture, immune status, metabolic systems, and cardiovascular function.

These findings support a promising causal model of how poverty, maltreatment, and discrimination in childhood can have adverse impacts on later health, learning, and behavior.



## Three Levels of Stress

### **Positive**

Brief increases in heart rate,  
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

### **Tolerable**

Serious, temporary stress responses,  
buffered by supportive relationships.

### **Toxic**

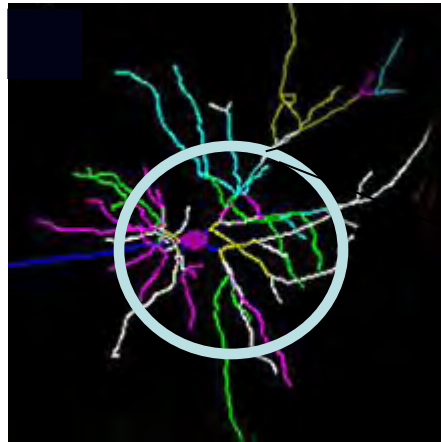
Prolonged activation of stress response systems  
in the absence of protective relationships.



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# Toxic Stress Changes Brain Architecture

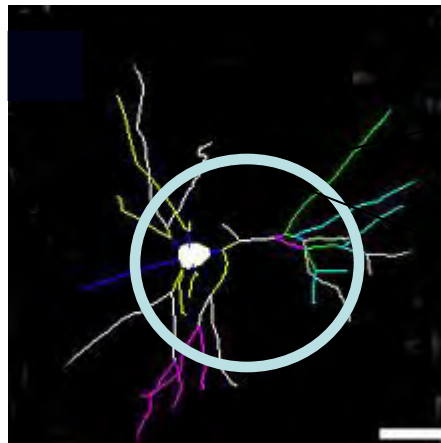
Normal



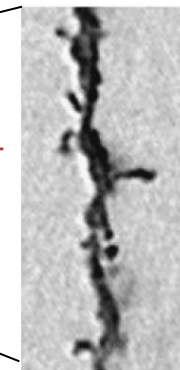
Typical neuron—  
many connections



Toxic  
stress



Damaged neuron—  
fewer connections

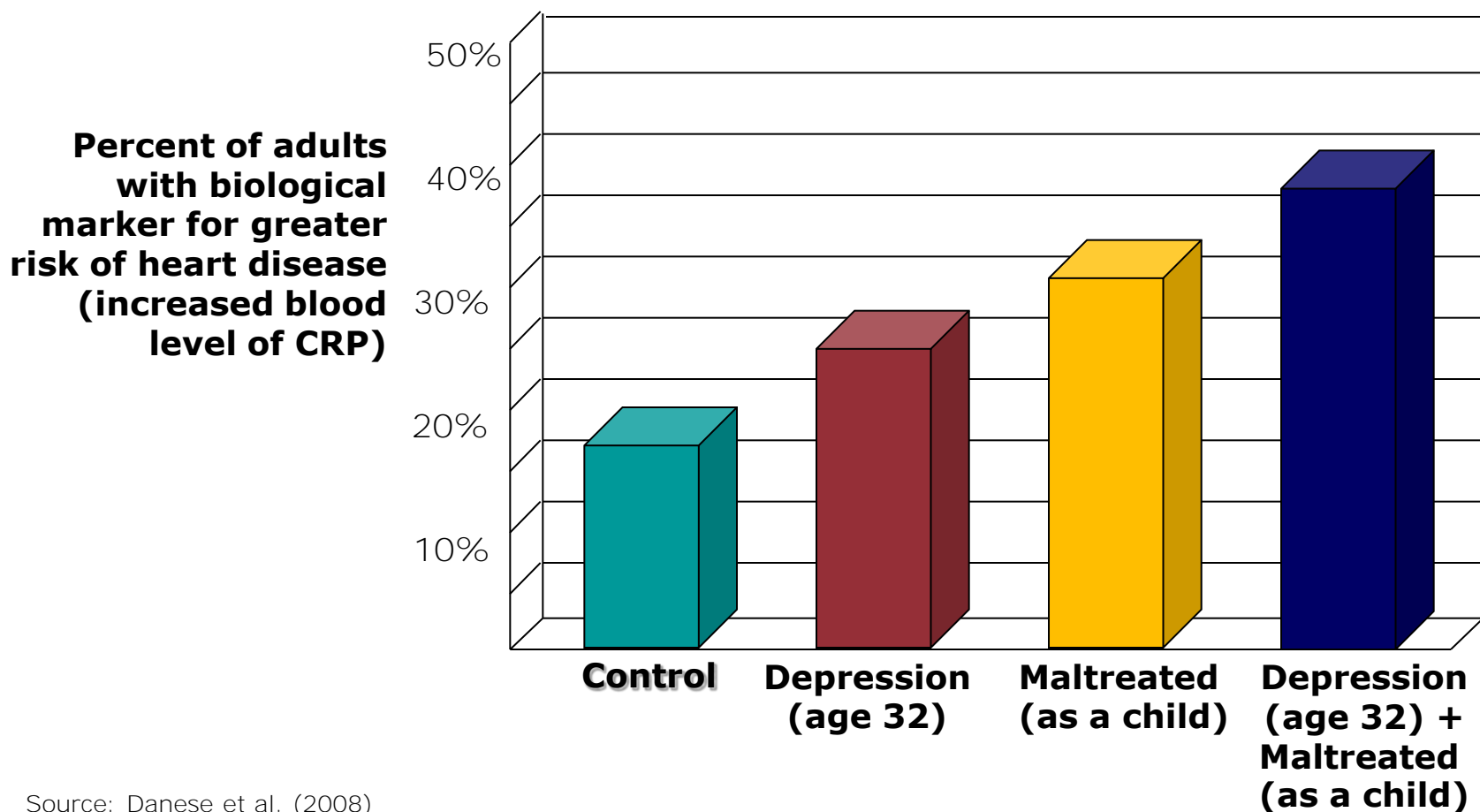


Prefrontal Cortex and  
Hippocampus

Sources: Radley et al. (2004)  
Bock et al. (2005)



# New Biological Evidence Links Maltreatment in Childhood to Greater Risk of Adult Heart Disease





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# **Building a New Science-Based Approach to Promoting Health and Preventing Disease**

A healthier population begins with reducing toxic stress in childhood, not just trying to change adult behavior.



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Effective early childhood programs offer an opportunity to promote lifelong health and prevent adult disease, not just prepare children to succeed in school.



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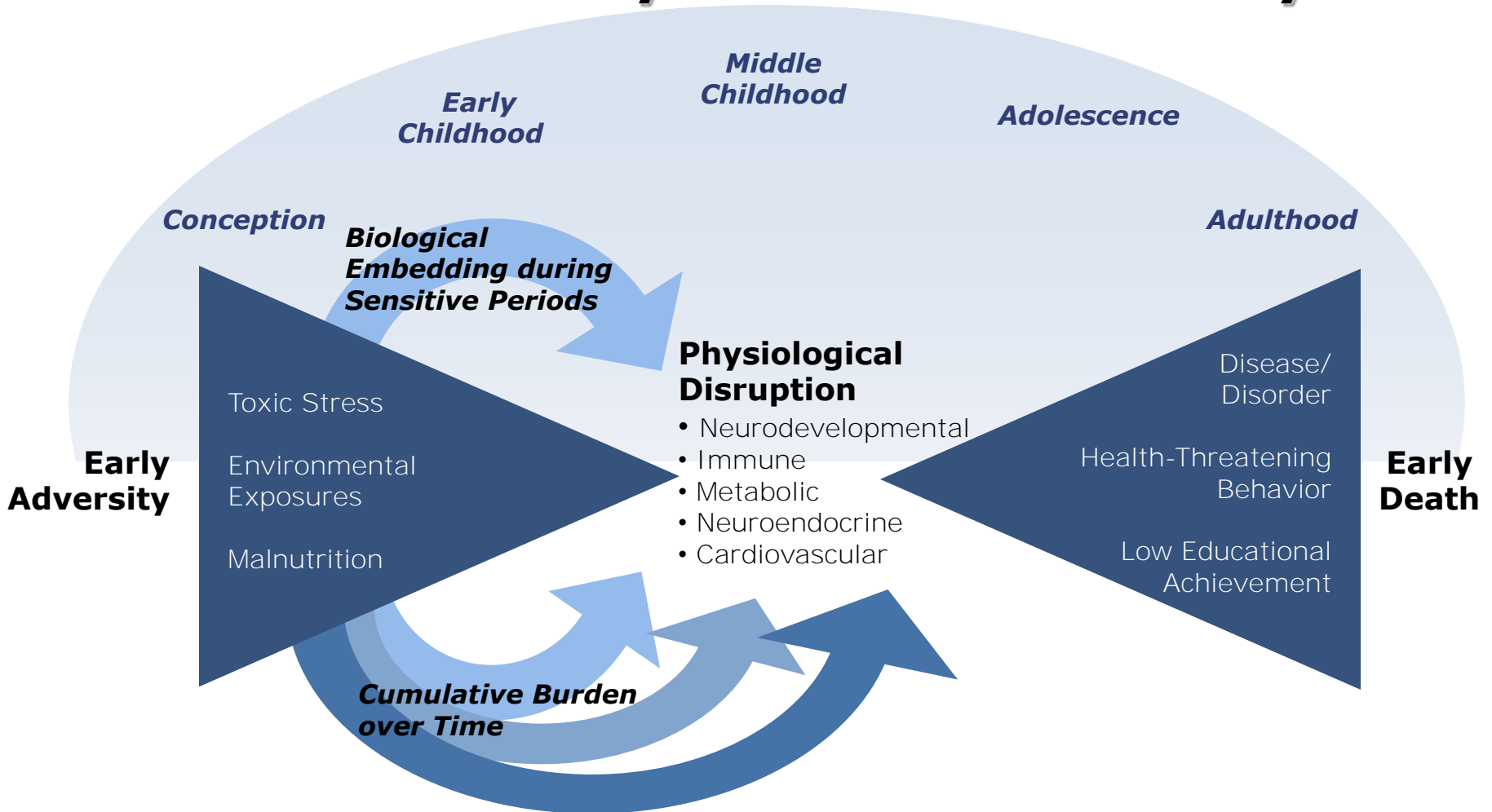
Effective early childhood programs offer an opportunity to promote lifelong health and prevent adult disease, not just prepare children to succeed in school.

A redesigned child welfare system could be a powerful vehicle for preventing chronic physical and mental health impairments by promoting nurturing relationships and positive early experiences, not simply focusing on physical safety and custody.



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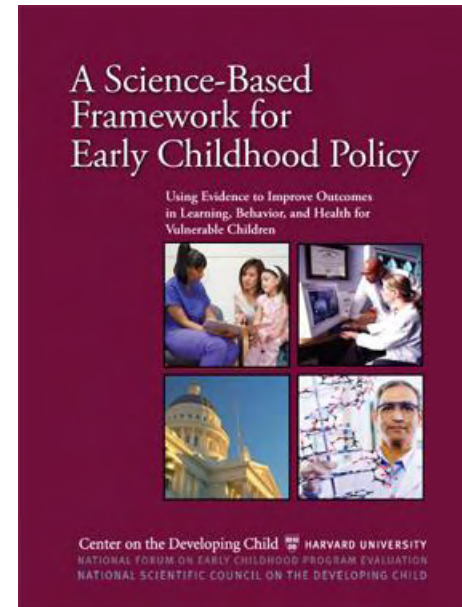
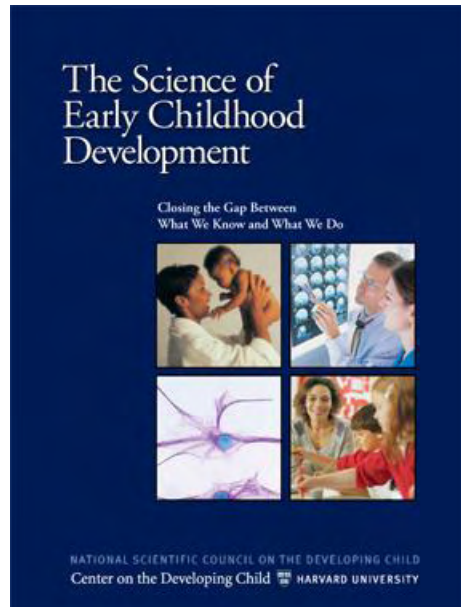
# The Childhood Roots of Health Disparities: How Adversity is Built Into the Body





# Center on the Developing Child

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**[www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)**

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NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD  
NATIONAL FORUM ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM EVALUATION

# **Promoting Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Relationships**

**A Public Health Strategy for Addressing Child Maltreatment,  
other Early Adversities, and Health Disparities**

**James A. Mercy, PhD  
Division of Violence Prevention  
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
September 10, 2009**

# A New Lever for Public Health



# Safe, Stable and Nurturing Relationships



# **Relationships are the “Active Ingredients” of Environmental Influence on Early Brain Development**

- **Nurturing, responsive, and individualized interactions build healthy brain architecture that provides a strong foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health**
- **Excessive and repeated stress causes the release of chemicals that disrupt brain architecture by impairing cell growth and interfering with the formation of healthy neural circuits**

# SSNRs: The Positive End of the Continuum

## Relationships/Environments

### Positive

Safe

Stable

Nurturing

### Negative

Neglectful/Violent

Unpredictable/Chaotic

Hostile or Cold/Rejecting

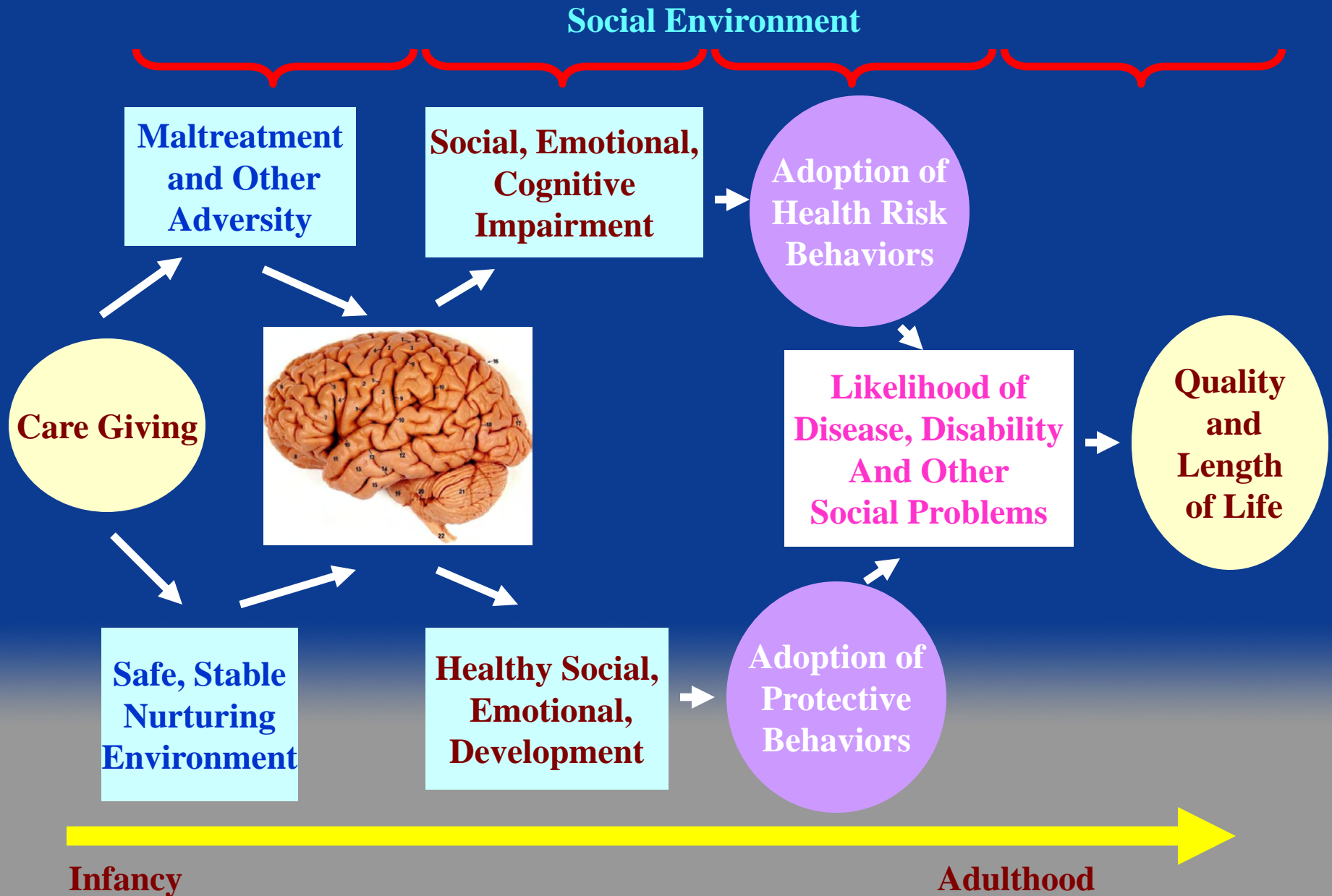
# SSNR Definitions

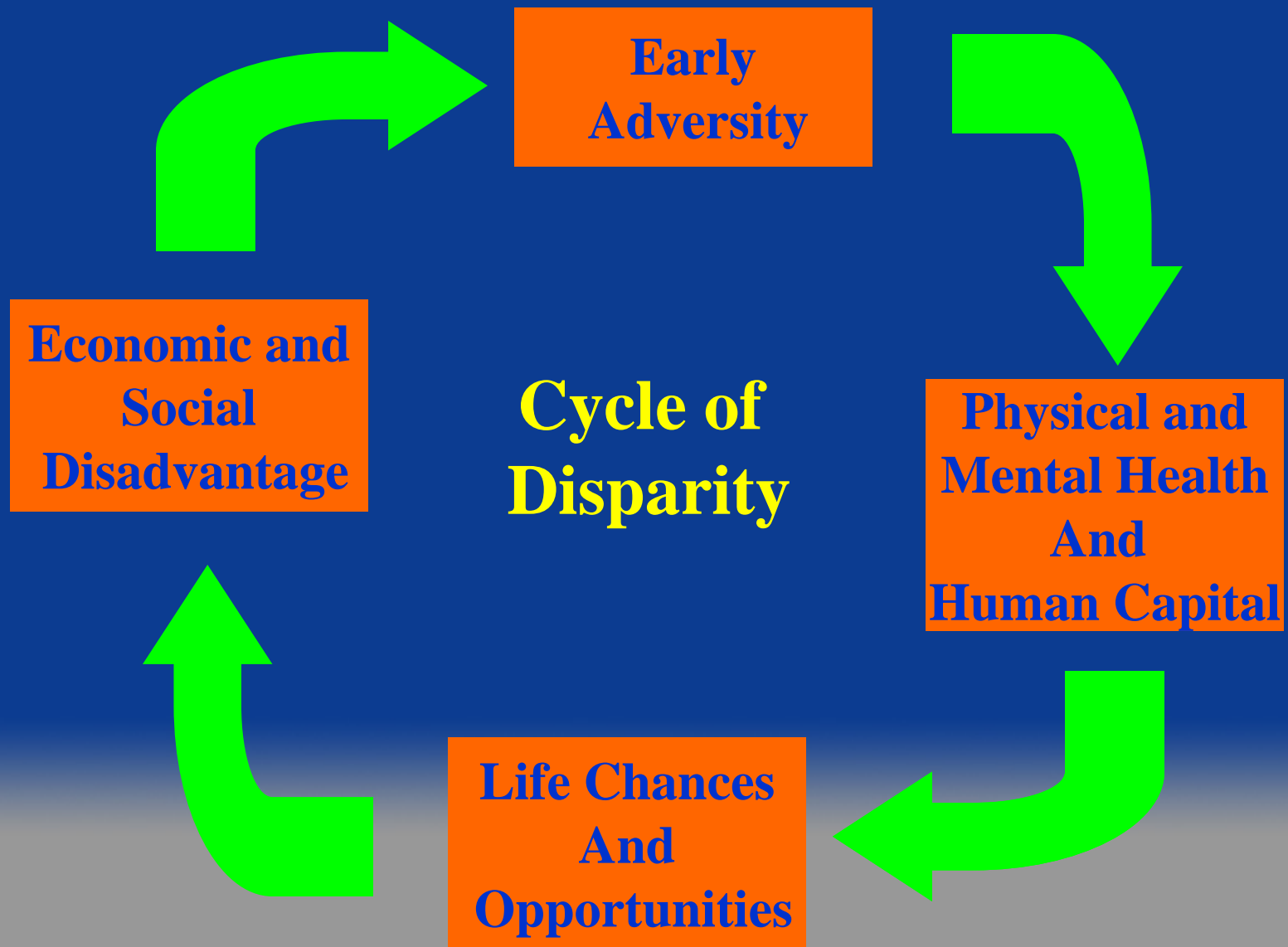
**Safety:** The extent to which a child is free from fear and secure from physical or psychological harm within their social and physical environment

**Stability:** The degree of predictability and consistency in a child's social environment

**Nurturing:** The extent to which a parent or caregiver is available and able to sensitively respond to and meet the needs of their child

# A Tale of Two Paths: The Relationship Between Care Giving and Health over the Life Course





# Priority Should be Given to Policies and Programs that Intervene Early in the Life Cycle

- The plasticity of the nervous system and the ability to change behavior patterns decrease over time as brain circuits stabilize and the energy costs of altering circuits increase
- Example: The program costs of remedial education grow with increasing age
- It's easier and more efficient to get it right the first time than to try to fix it later

# SSNR Focus Helps us Move from a Reactive to a Proactive Vision of Child Maltreatment Prevention

	Reactive Approach to Child Maltreatment Prevention	Proactive Approach to Child Maltreatment Prevention
What is the real problem?	Bad parents	Lack of formal/informal societal support of parents & access to new information
What created it?	Genetics, upbringing, drugs, parental choice	Society w/short-term vision, outdated theories on raising children, declining communities
Who solves it?	Police, CPS, foster parents, parents fixing themselves	Community leaders w/vision, friends & neighbors, healthcare system, faith groups, doctors, schools, etc.
How?	Rescue children, punish parents, children heal themselves (baby bootstrap)	New info about development, more social interaction and parent support, reinforcement of positive behaviors

# Examples of SSNR-related Prevention Strategies

## Strategies Focused on Caregiver-Child Relationships:

- ◆ Home visitation (Nurse-Family Partnership)
- ◆ Promoting close physical contact between mother and infant
- ◆ Parent training

## Community Focused Strategies:

- ◆ Child Care Respite Services
- ◆ Parent-Child Centers
- ◆ De-concentrating Poverty (Housing Vouchers)

## Societal Strategies:

- ◆ Parental Leave Policies
- ◆ Social Marketing Campaigns to Change Social Norms

## Cross-Cutting Strategies:

- ◆ Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)

# Promoting SSNRs Early in the Life Cycle is Strategic (A Lever)

Promoting SSNRs is strategic because it:

- viable programmatic and policy options exist
- can reduce child maltreatment and other adversity
- can influence many different health outcomes over the life course
- has a substantial cumulative impact on health
- will help to reduce health disparities
- will influence other desirable outcomes (e.g., human capital formation)
- is proactive
- is scientifically grounded
- is politically feasible

# Sources of Information

- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (NSCDC)  
[www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)
- From Neurons to Neighborhoods – Report of the IOM/National Research Council Committee on integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development
- Preventing Child Maltreatment Through the Promotion of Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Relationships Between Children and Caregivers (<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/overview/strategicdirections.html>)

# **Disclaimer**

**The findings and conclusions of this presentation have not been formally disseminated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and should not be construed to represent any agency determination or policy.**

# For more information

Visit CDC's National Center for  
Injury Prevention and Control web site:

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention)



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