

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION BRIEF

Concrete Support in Times of Need: A Protective Factor

Inequality, an eroding safety net, and the impact of community and childhood trauma call for the support of skilled professionals, responsive organizations, and connected service systems. Research shows that many families living in poverty experience symptoms of trauma that extend into adulthood and future generations.



Insecure housing, violence in the home, and food insecurity are all examples of adverse childhood experiences that are exacerbated by poverty (Murphy et al., 2016). Families in poverty are at high risk of experiencing chronic stress which can significantly reduce their ability to meet the basic necessities for healthy growth and development.

Connecting parents to concrete supports in times of need (e.g. food, homelessness, healthcare, safety) is a known protective factor used to increase the probability of positive outcomes (CSSP, 2018). Family strengthening professionals can effectively support families going through challenging times by taking a trauma-informed approach when helping parents identify and find concrete supports.

Families in poverty are at high risk of experiencing chronic stress which can significantly reduce their ability to meet the basic necessities for healthy growth and development.

A recent study found Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients who received financial education *AND* trauma-informed peer support had significantly improved outcomes in areas of depressive symptoms, self-efficiency, economic hardship, and childhood developmental risks (Booshehri et al., 2018). While financial education helped families become more self-sufficient, the trauma-informed component made the intervention significantly more effective and impactful.





The impact of poverty for families can be worsened when trauma is also a factor. As such, it is important for family and community strengthening professionals to be knowledgeable about how poverty alleviation efforts can be elevated by trauma-informed approaches.

Take Action

1. Encourage individuals working in the family strengthening field to ask parents “to identify one concrete need that, if met, would lighten his or her burden” and brainstorm solutions on how to get that need met (CSSP, 2018, p. 8).
2. Learn how to integrate trauma-informed perspectives into your organization by signing up for the Strategies 2.0 Trauma-Informed Care training, Introduction to Protective Factors training, or complete the Family Strengthening Certificate Program.
3. Advocate for local and state policies that increase and strengthen services and programs (e.g. CalWORKs) to alleviate the traumatizing aspects of poverty.

Resources

Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services. acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit

MyBenefits CalWIN page on calculating eligibility: mybenefitscalwin.org/#eligible

References

Booshehri, L. G., Dugan, J., Patel, F., Bloom, S., & Chilton, M. (2018). Trauma-informed Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): A randomized controlled trial with a two-generation impact. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*.

Center for the Study of Social Policy [CSSP]. (2018). About strengthening families and the protective factors framework. <http://cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about/body/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf>

Child Poverty. (2018). Retrieved from <http://nccp.org/topics/childpoverty.html>

Murphy, A., Steele, H., Bate, J., Nikitiades, A., Allman, B., Bonuck, K., ... Steele, M. (2015). Group Attachment-Based Intervention. *Family & Community Health*, 38(3), 268-279.

The logo for Strategies 2.0 features a stylized green plant with three leaves and a small orange flower-like shape at the top, positioned above the text "Strategies 2.0" in a blue, sans-serif font.

Strategies 2.0

Strategies 2.0 is a multi-dimensional initiative to help professionals and organizations make a bigger impact.

We train, support, and link professionals and organizations together to more effectively support families as well as build power to advance equity and opportunity in our communities.

