



Promoting Protective Factors for Populations Served by ACYF

Caryn Blitz, PhD, ACYF Office on Data, Analysis, Research and Evaluation

Melissa Brodowski, PhD, MSW, MPH, ACYF, Children's Bureau

Resa Matthew, PhD, ACYF, Family and Youth Services Bureau



Presentation Outline

- Review the protective factors project and purpose.
 - Summarize literature review findings
 - Discuss the “top ten” protective factors across all ACYF populations.
 - Present the conceptual models for each of the five ACYF populations.
 - Hear about future directions for the ACYF protective factors work
- Understand how protective factors are being incorporated into the work of ACYF programs, especially for vulnerable populations served (e.g., runaway and homeless youth, adolescents at risk for pregnancy)

The ACYF Protective Factors Project

Caryn Blitz, PhD

Office of the Commissioner

Office on Data, Analysis, Research & Evaluation



ACYF PF Project: Purpose and Goals

- Follow-up to the 2009 NRC/IOM Report:
Preventing Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People: Progress and Possibilities.
- To investigate the research literature on protective factors relevant to populations served by ACYF:
 - 1) Children and adolescent victims of, or at risk for, child abuse and neglect;
 - 2) Runaway and homeless youth;
 - 3) Youth in or transitioning out of foster care;
 - 4) Children and youth exposed to domestic violence; and
 - 5) Pregnant and parenting teens.

Purpose and Goals (cont.)

- To develop a *protective factor conceptual model* that organizes the protective factors for which there is evidence
- To develop products for dissemination about the protective factors and supportive evidence for use by practitioners, policymakers, and researchers
- The literature review and appendices are available at:
<http://www.dsgonline.com/ACYF>
 - Search methodology
 - Population crosswalks
 - Conceptual models
 - Expert panel members
 - Research brief

Activities

- Conducted a review of the research literature through a systematic process with expert panel and practitioner input.
- Developed an overarching conceptual model with protective factors organized at three levels – *individual, relationship, and community*.
- Identified protective factors based on levels of evidence yielding 10 factors with significant evidence across all five ACYF populations.
- Created population-specific conceptual models.
- Creating products to increase practical application of the protective factors.

Literature Review: Key Findings

- Research on protective factors is relatively new compared to the research literature assessing risk factors for children and youth – definitions and measures are therefore less well developed.
- For purposes of a conceptual model, protective factors are organized into three levels: *individual, relationship, and community*.
- Empirical evidence for protective factors varies by ACYF population, but exists at all three levels of influence for all five populations.

Literature Review: Key Findings (cont.)

- The strongest empirical support for protective factors is found at the individual level of influence, followed by relationship and community levels.
- However -- the lack of findings at the community level may be due to the relatively small number of studies aimed at identifying and examining community protective factors.
- Currently, there are few studies assessing the relationship of factors across levels. This is an area for further research.

Levels of Evidence

- **** **Strong Evidence:** One or more experimental or well conducted Quasi-experimental studies that demonstrate a significant effect on a protective factor and an outcome (e.g., findings demonstrate that the experimental effect on an outcome is mediated by the effect of a protective factor).
 - *** **Moderate Evidence:** Consistent finding that are generated by two or more longitudinal studies (significant finding with small, medium, or large effect sizes).
 - ** **Limited Evidence:** Preponderance of findings generated by a single longitudinal study (significant findings with small, medium, or large effect sizes).
 - * **Emerging Evidence:** Preponderance of findings generated by cross-sectional studies, case studies, or qualitative investigations with non-representative samples.
- No Evidence (no star):** No studies were identified that provided evidence to support the protective factor for the population

Protective Factors Summary

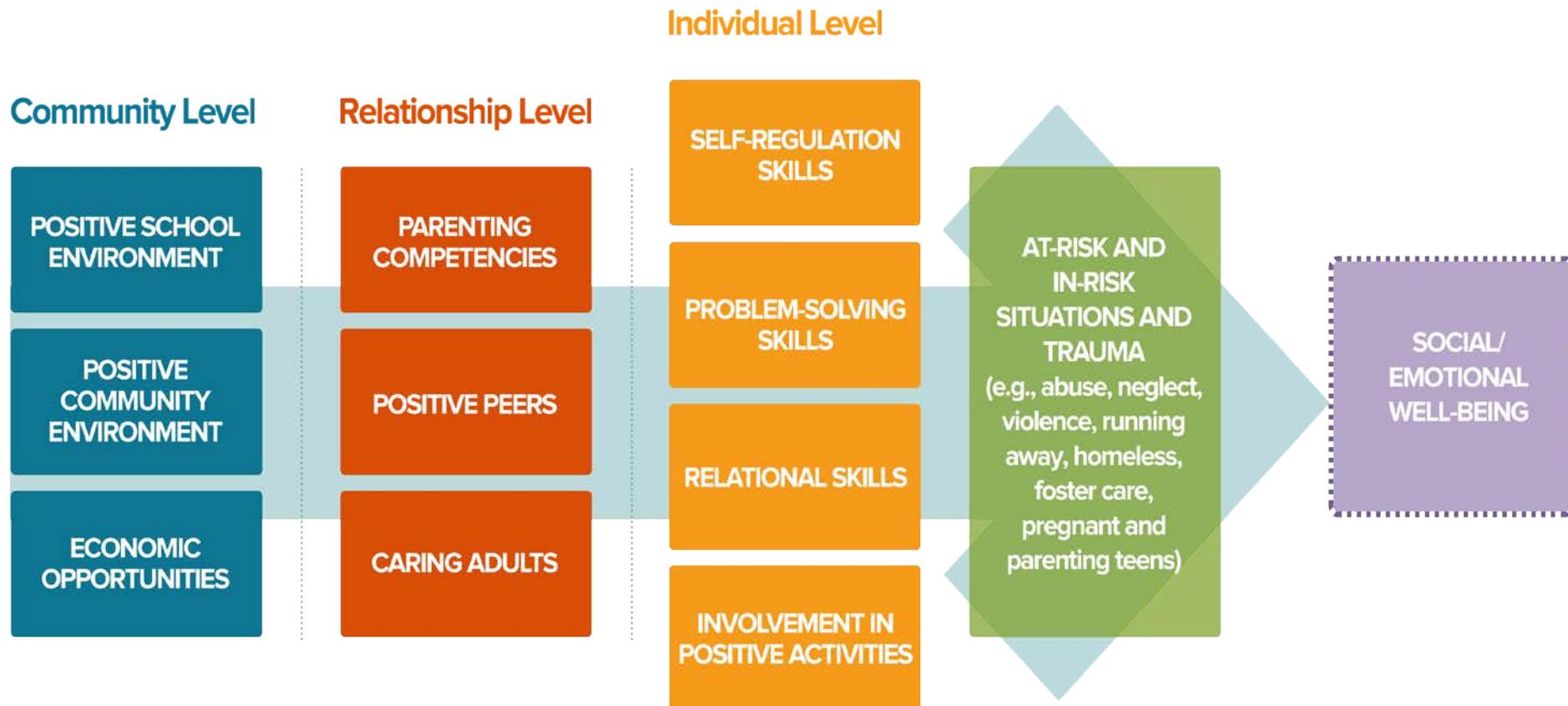
Protective Factor	Runaway & Homeless Youth	Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence	Youth in or Transitioning Out of Foster Care	Victims of Child Abuse and Neglect	Pregnant and Parenting Teens
Individual Level					
<i>Characteristics</i>					
Positive self-image	*			*	**
Sense of purpose	*	*	*	***	**
Sense of optimism	*	*	*	**	***
Agency (self-efficacy)	*		*	***	***
Cognitive ability (intelligence)			**	**	***
<i>Skills and Developmental Tasks</i>					
Self-regulation skills	*	***	****	****	*
Relational skills	*	**	****	****	***
Problem-solving skills	*	***	**	****	***
Academic skills			***	*	***
Involvement in positive activities			**	***	****
Relationship Level					
Parenting competencies	*	****	****	****	****
Parent or caregiver well-being	*	***	**	****	*
Positive peers	**	*	*	****	****
Caring adult(s)	*		***	*	****
Living with family members			****		****
Community Level					
Positive school environment		***	***	***	****
Positive community environment	*		*	***	****
Stable living situation			***	****	
Economic opportunities	**		**	*	****

Conceptual Models

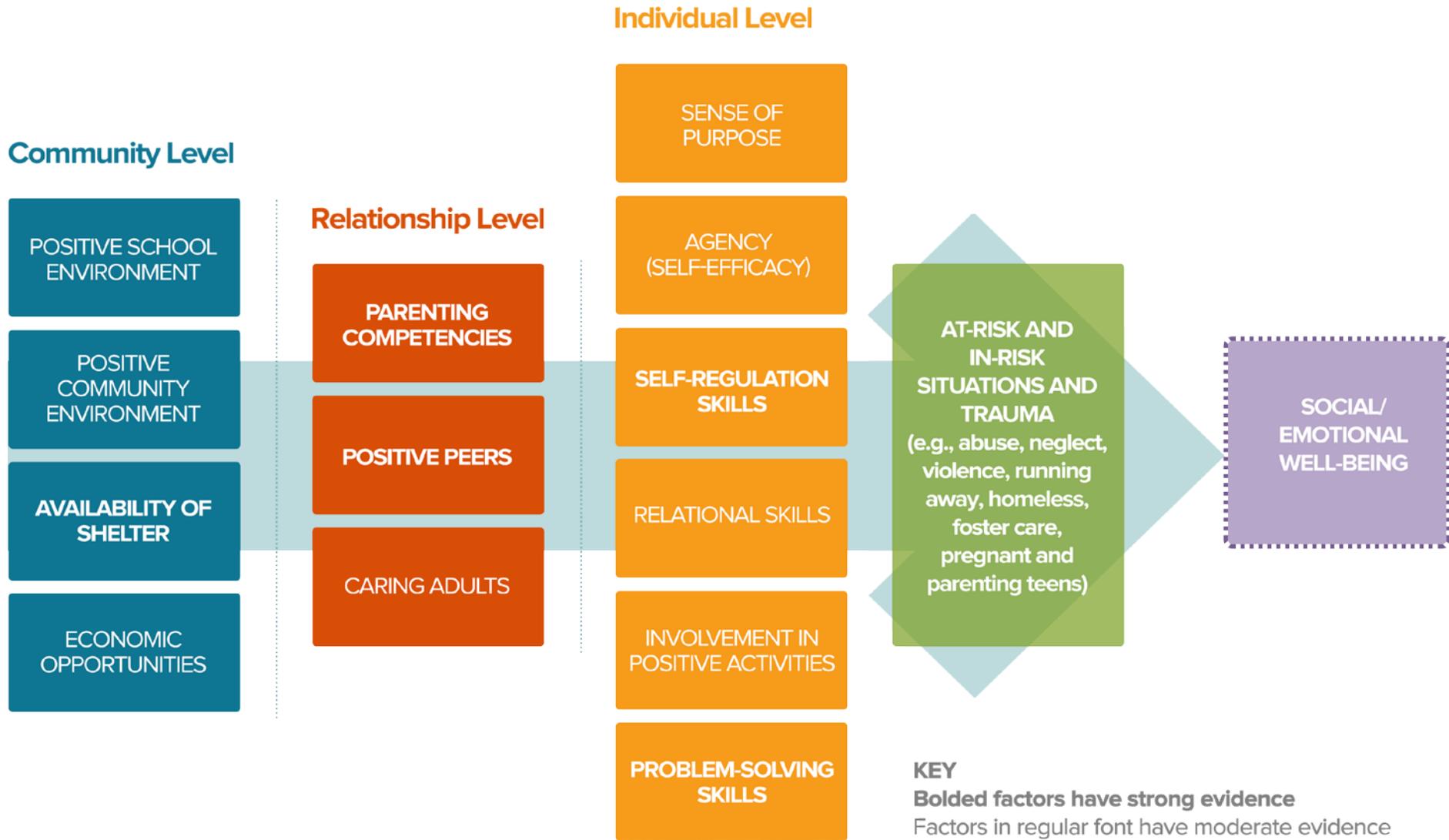
- Models have been developed that show evidence-based protective factors for *each* of the five ACYF populations, arrayed by level.
- The model structure is still at the conceptual model stage – strongly suggested by the research review with support from the expert panel, but with limited evidence at this point on the relationship between factors at different levels (there is ongoing research assessing such relationships).
- General and population-specific conceptual models are shown in the next slides...

"Top 10" Protective Factors

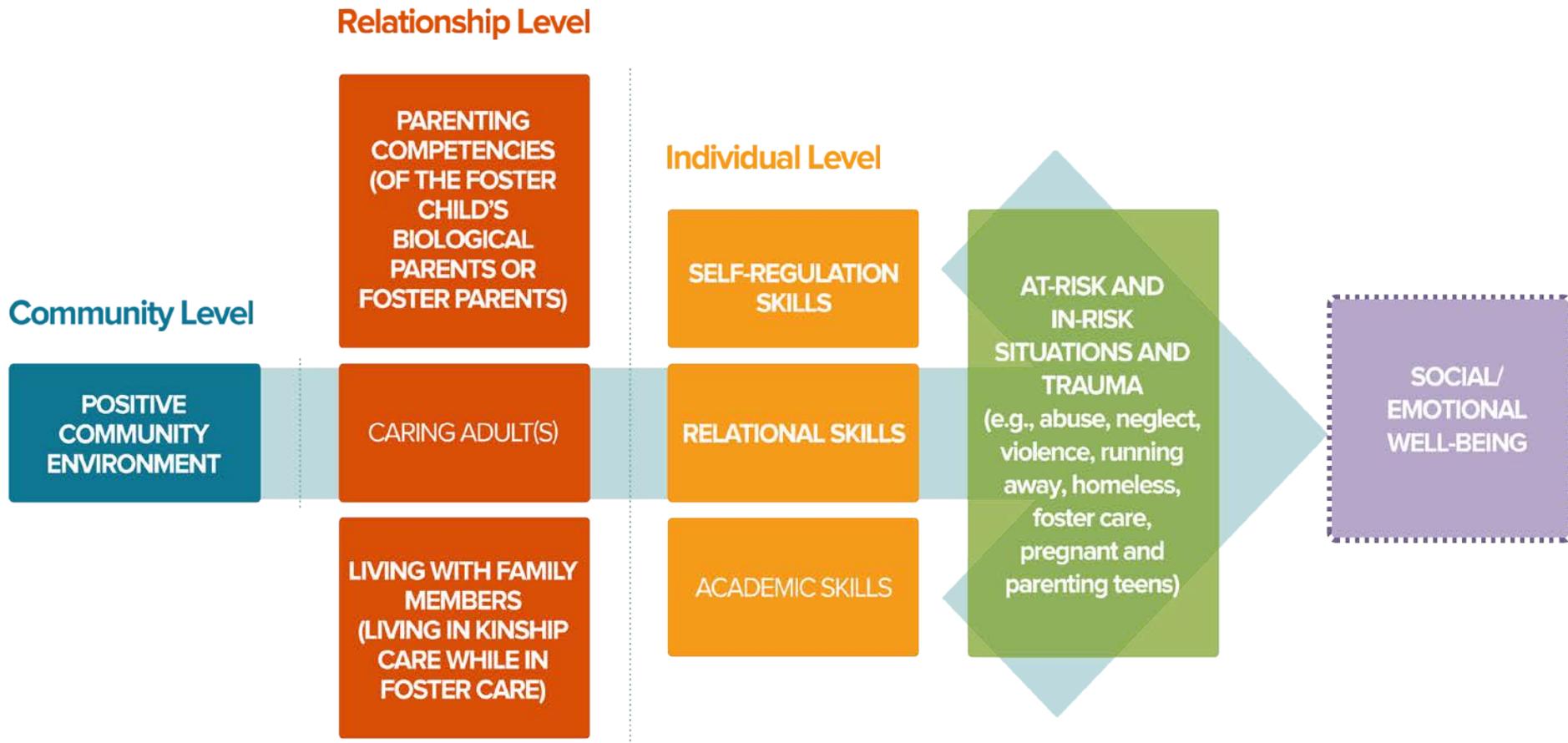
CONCEPTUAL GENERAL MODEL: PERSONAL-ENVIRONMENT DYNAMIC



CONCEPTUAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT



CONCEPTUAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR YOUTH IN OR TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

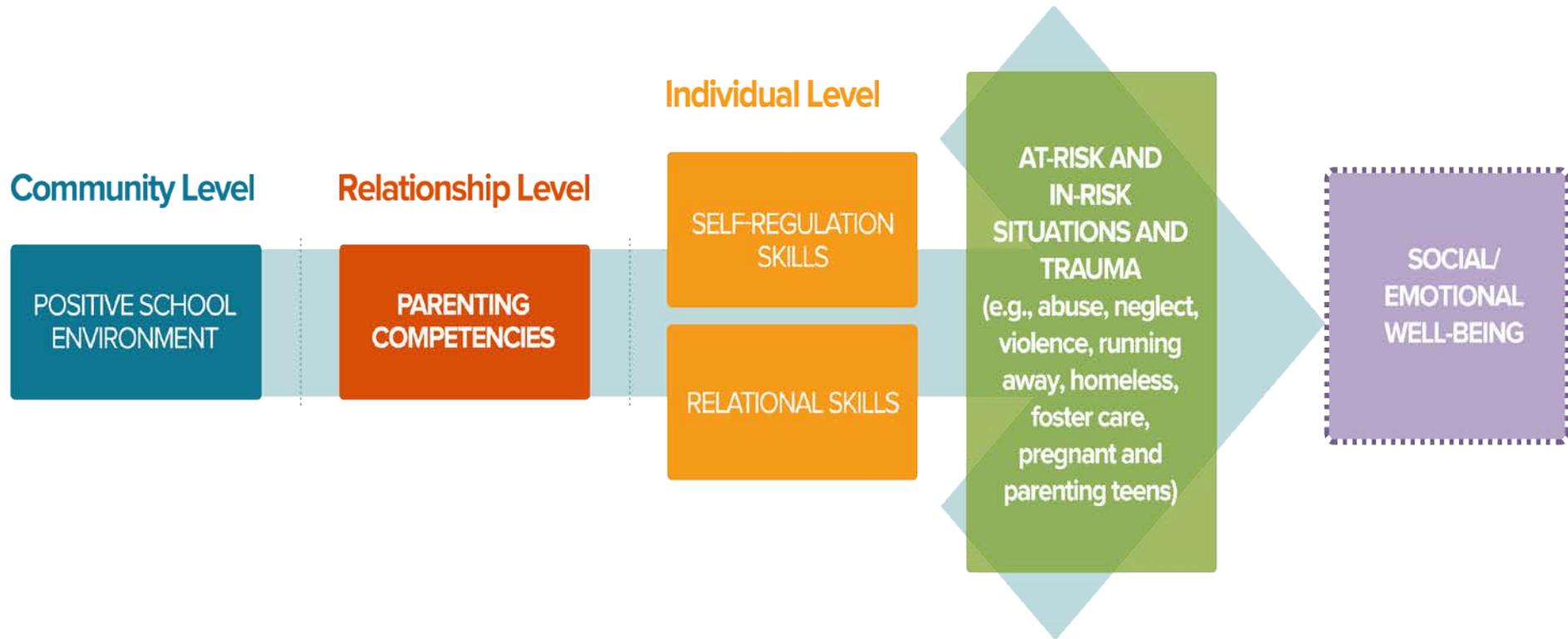


KEY

Bolded factors have strong evidence

Factors in regular font have moderate evidence

PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

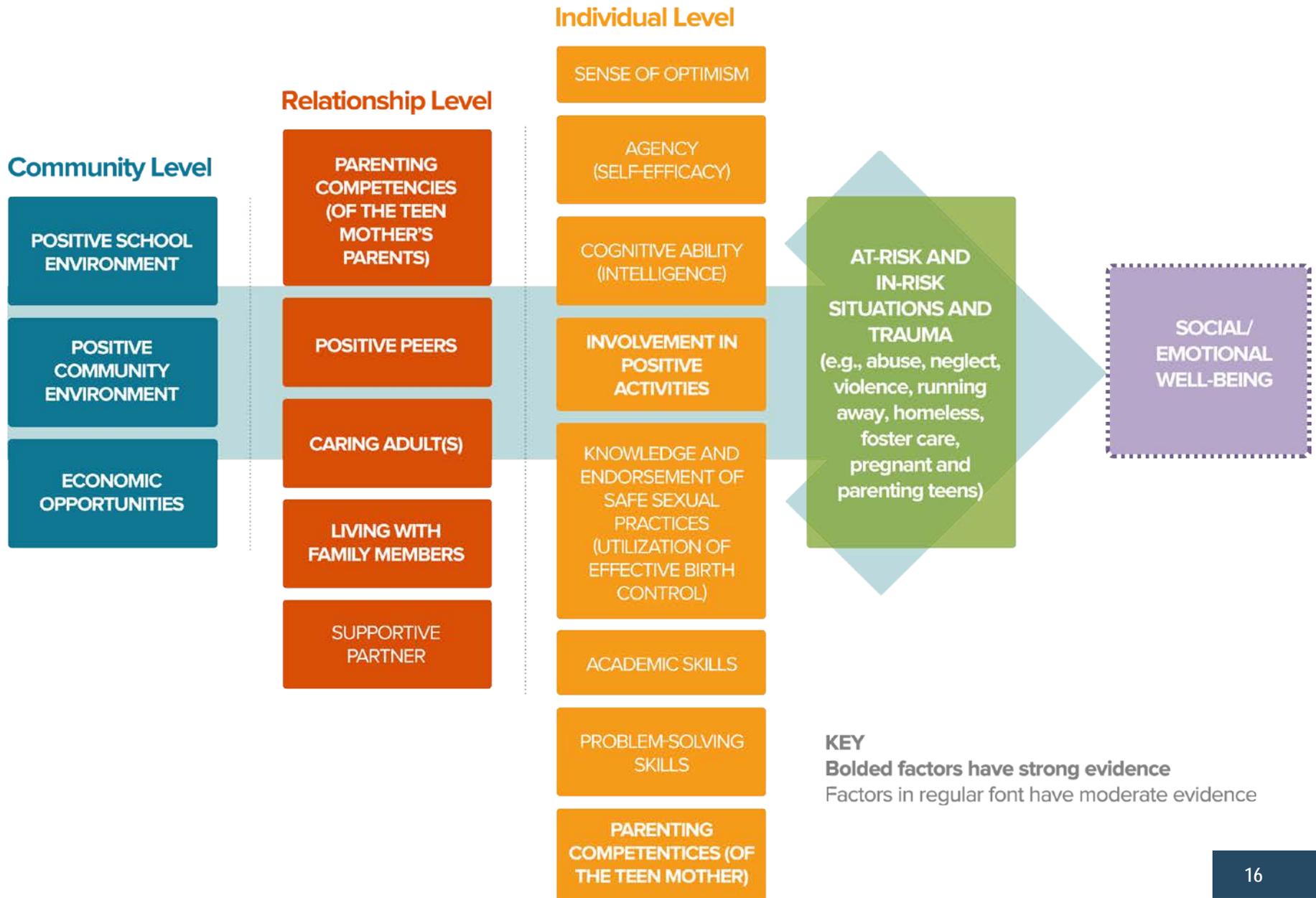


KEY

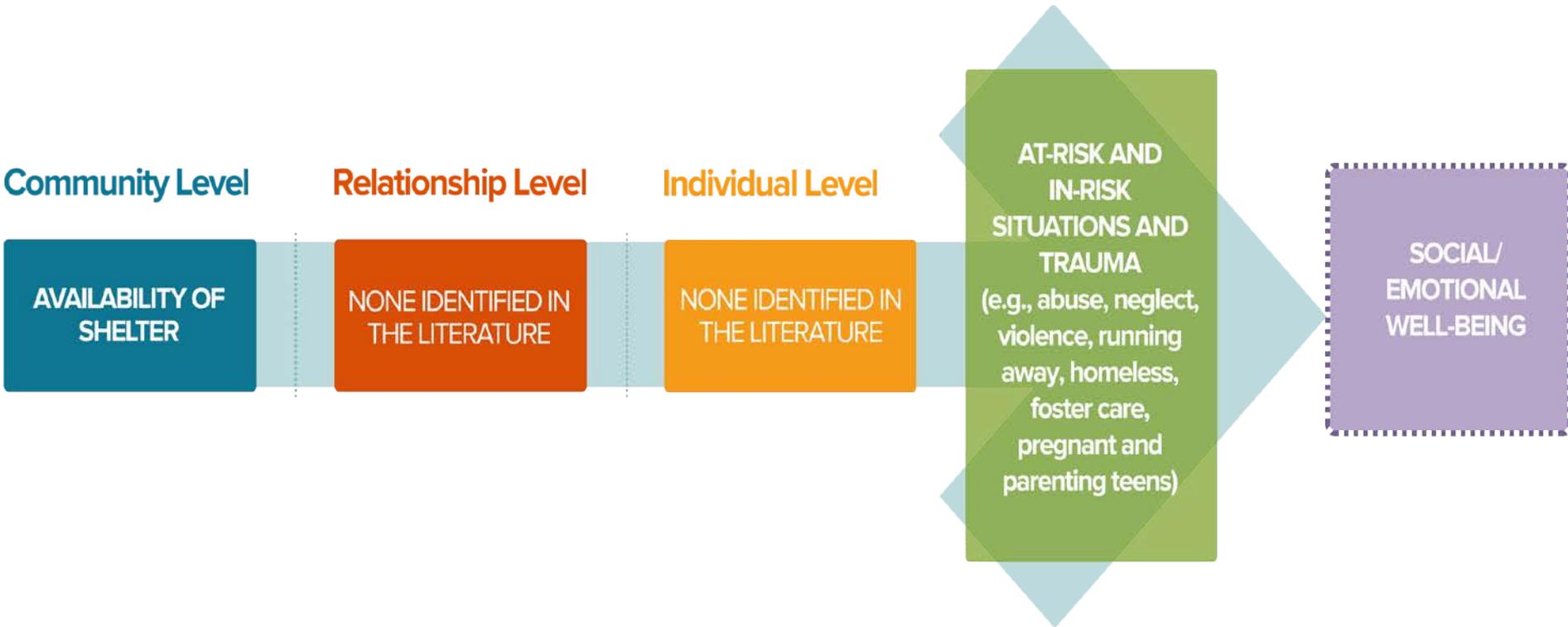
Bolded factors have strong evidence

Factors in regular font have moderate evidence

CONCEPTUAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR PREGNANT AND/OR PARENTING TEENS



CONCEPTUAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH



KEY

Bolded factors have strong evidence

Factors in regular font have moderate evidence

Findings: Developmental Stage

- Protective factor evidence strongest for adolescence – the period most commonly addressed in the research.
- Literature increasingly suggests that developmental stage is an important consideration for which protective factors are most salient or most responsive.
 - Infancy/early childhood: neurological and cognitive factors
 - Early/middle childhood: family, community (affect stability of children's living situations)
 - Adolescence/young adulthood: supportive relationships and availability of economic resources and opportunities

Findings/Themes: Practitioner Focus Groups

- There are potential protective factors for which the evidence is still anecdotal or practice based, but are mentioned enough to merit attention.
 - Based on practitioner and parent focus groups, two of promising/emerging factors are *positive peer support structures* and *parental resource skills*.
 - Also promising/emerging are a group of factors – *protective*. For children/youth exposed to domestic violence, these include: *optimism, relationships, community resources, and positive parent/partner relationship*.

Challenges/Areas for Further Research

- Definitions, applications, and measures of protective factors are inconsistent across studies, and studies have focused on some factors far more than others.
- Most studies of protective factors among young people have been conducted with *at-risk* youth or focused on the onset of individual problems. Few studies of *in-risk* children/youth, where the need is coping with or transitioning through problem situations.
- At the same time, the distinction between *at-risk* and *in-risk* youth is not always clear.

Challenges/Areas for Further Research

- Knowledge of change mechanisms, mediating/moderating roles at an early stage.
- Recent, significant increase in research addressing neuroscience related to abuse, trauma, and violence exposure. Much of this research has examined these as risk factors, and the implications for intervention are not always clear.
- Current research on protective factors and resilience does not sufficiently account for cross-cultural and gender-specific factors, processes, or mechanisms.

Conclusions

- Findings provide a foundation for understanding protective factors among children and youth considered to be in-risk (served by ACYF programs and initiatives).
- Findings point to common and unique factors for ACYF populations.
- Findings suggest that the strength of evidence for protective factors among in-risk children and youth varies considerably by type of factor and specific population.
- Review results highlight areas for further research, as well as useful guidance for practitioner application.

Future Directions for ACYF

- Disseminate ACYF PF Project results to practitioners to promote use of evidence-based factors.
- Continue to integrate protective factors into the agency's work
- Emphasize commonalities among existing protective factor frameworks/models:
 - *Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare:*
https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue_briefs/protective_factors.pdf
- Respond to the needs of the field: What do you need to incorporate protective factors into your work? Tools? Technical Assistance?

TELL US! WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!

Protective Factors for Runaway and Homeless Youth and Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention

Resa Matthew, PhD

Division of Adolescent Development and Support
Family and Youth Services Bureau



RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH



Thousands of Youth Served

- Street outreach workers made contact with homeless or at risk young people more than 772,000 times.
- Basic Centers provided emergency shelter for almost 37,000 youth on the streets.
- Transitional Living Programs helped 3,880 homeless youth transition to life on their own.

(Data from RHYMIS)

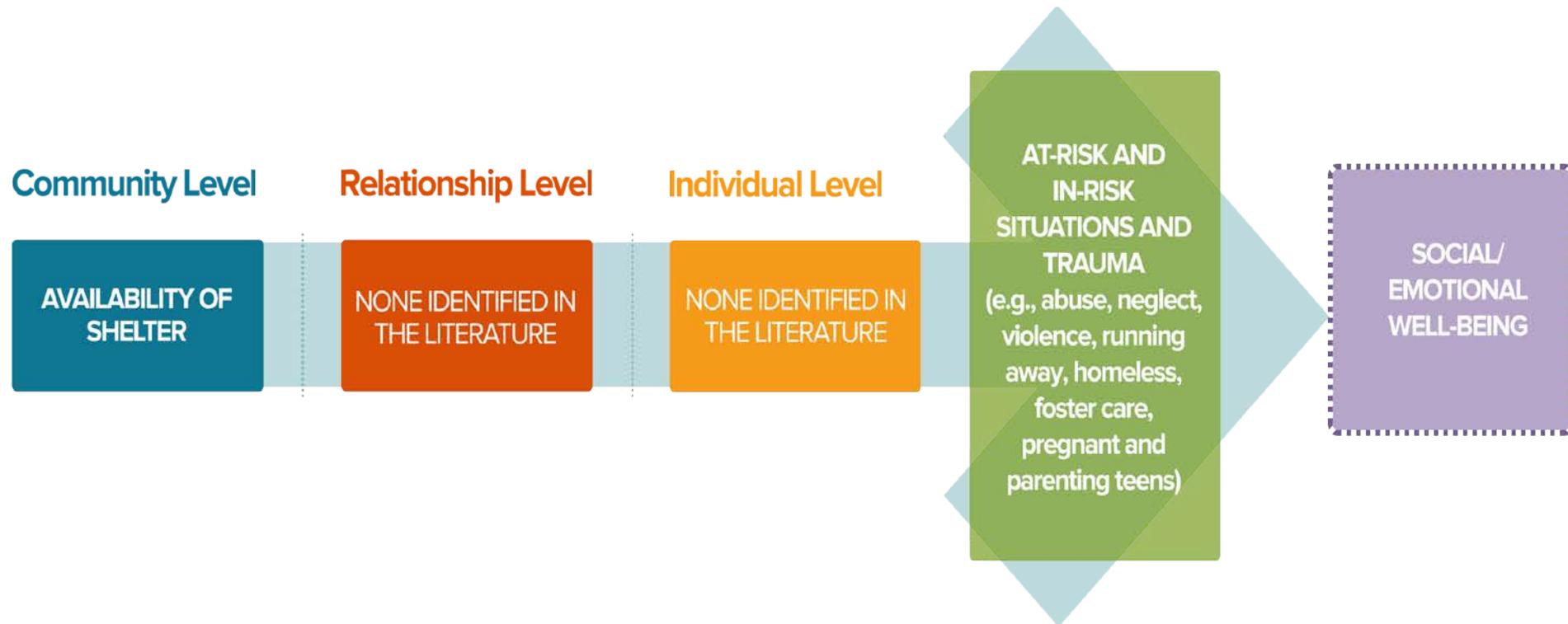
Plus:
National
Communications System



RHY Training and
Technical Assistance



CONCEPTUAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH



KEY

Bolded factors have strong evidence

Factors in regular font have moderate evidence

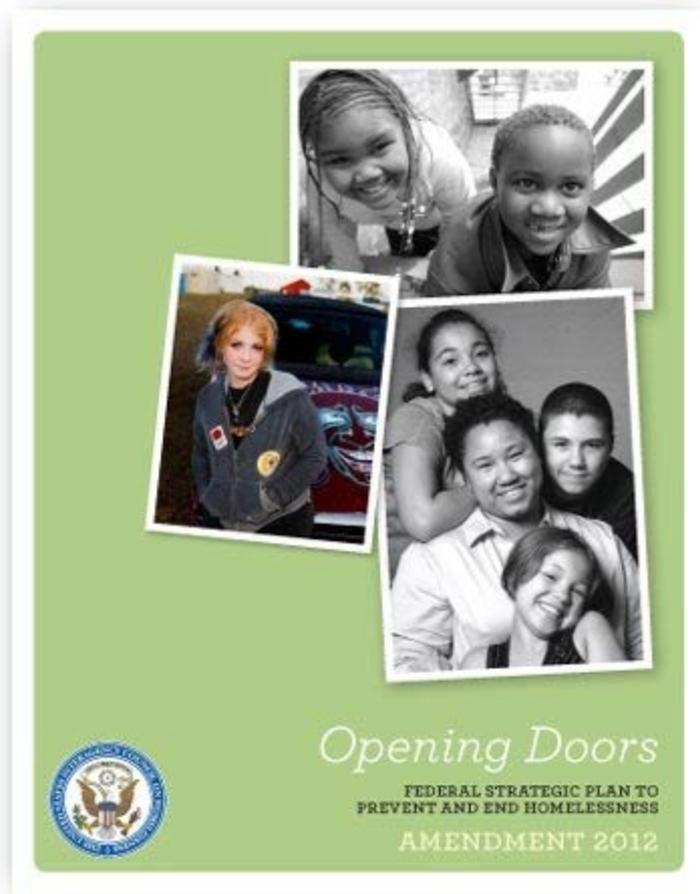
Positive Youth Development (PYD)

- RHY programs are strongly encouraged to reflect a PYD approach through FOAs

- PYD supports developmentally appropriate milestones and positive interactions across the ecological systems.

- PYD objectives include:
 - Fostering resilience.
 - Fostering self-efficacy
 - Promoting social and emotional competence
 - Fostering prosocial norms

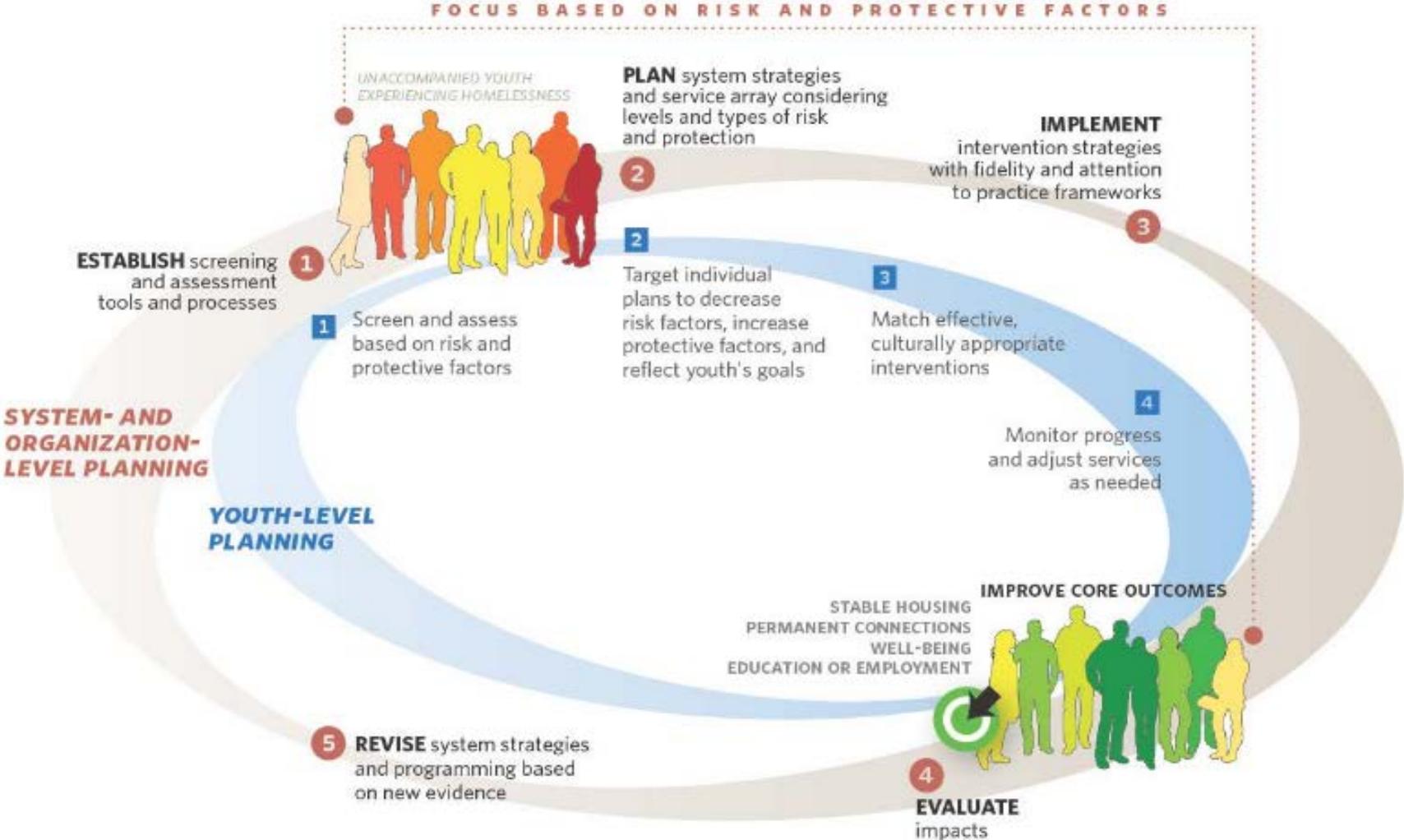
Vision: Ending Youth Homelessness



RHY is an instrumental part of the Federal strategy to end youth homelessness by 2020.

- Data Strategy
- Capacity Building

Framework to End Youth Homelessness



1 SYSTEM- AND ORGANIZATION-LEVEL CONSIDERATIONS

LIKELIHOOD OF RISK

Time Experiencing Homelessness and Disconnection



LOWER RISK
HIGHER PROTECTION

HIGHER RISK
LOWER PROTECTION

RISK AND PROTECTION GROUPS

RISKY 
High risk factors, low protective factors

AT-RISK 
High risk factors, some protective factors

LOWER RISK 
Low-to-medium risk factors, high protective factors

2 TARGETING PLANS TO FACTORS

RISK FACTORS

Problematic symptoms, behaviors, associations

- Trauma
- Emotional distress
- Sexual risk behavior
- Family problems
- Criminal or delinquent behavior
- Substance abuse

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Positive skills, attitudes, behaviors, associations

- Family cohesion and support
- School engagement or employment
- Survival skills
- Positive connections
- Positive future expectations
- Decision-making skills
- Self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Health

3 IMPLEMENT

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- Housing
- Treatment
- School and community programs
- Family supports

PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

- Positive youth development
- Trauma-informed

Wellbeing



Stable Housing

**Education/
Employment**

Core Outcomes

Permanent Connections



Build Capacity to Serve LGBTQ Youth

- Systematic review of the literature
- What are the factors that make LGBTQ homeless youth more or less likely to experience certain outcomes?
- What are the effects of interventions for youth experiencing homelessness?

ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY PREVENTION



Personal Responsibility Education Program



State PREP: Provides grants to states to help them meet their adolescent pregnancy prevention goals and teach youth skills that prepare them for adulthood.

Competitive PREP: In FY 2012, organizations in states and territories that had not applied for PREP formula grants were eligible for competitive funding.

PREIS: Funds organizations that are using innovative strategies to prevent pregnancy among high-risk youth

Tribal PREP: Funds Tribes' and Tribal communities' efforts to develop and implement comprehensive teen pregnancy prevention programs

Core Components of PREP Programs

- **Evidenced-Based Programs**

- Abstinence and Contraceptive Education
- Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections
- **Replicate evidence –based** effective programs or substantially incorporate elements of effective programs

- **Adult Preparation Subjects**

- Adolescent Development, Healthy Life Skills, Healthy Relationships, Educational and Career Success, Financial Literacy, Parent-Child Communication

- **Target Vulnerable Populations**

- Youth in and aging out of foster care
- Youth in the juvenile justice system
- Runaway and Homeless Youth
- Latino and other Minority Populations
- Alaska Native/American Indian Youth

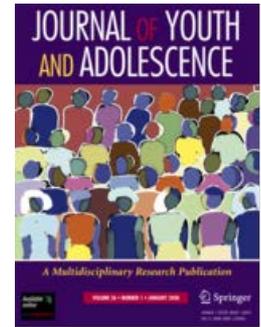
Title V Abstinence Education Program

State Abstinence: Enables states and territories to support abstinence education, mentoring, counseling and adult supervision in order to prevent teen pregnancy

Competitive Abstinence: In FY13, **19 projects** across the country were awarded **\$9 million** to further build our knowledge of effective and promising approaches to reducing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections

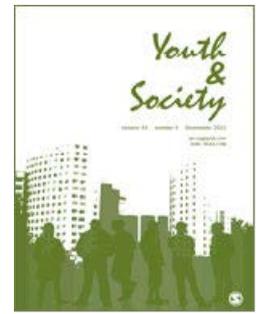


Ecological Systems and Risk & Resiliency Framework



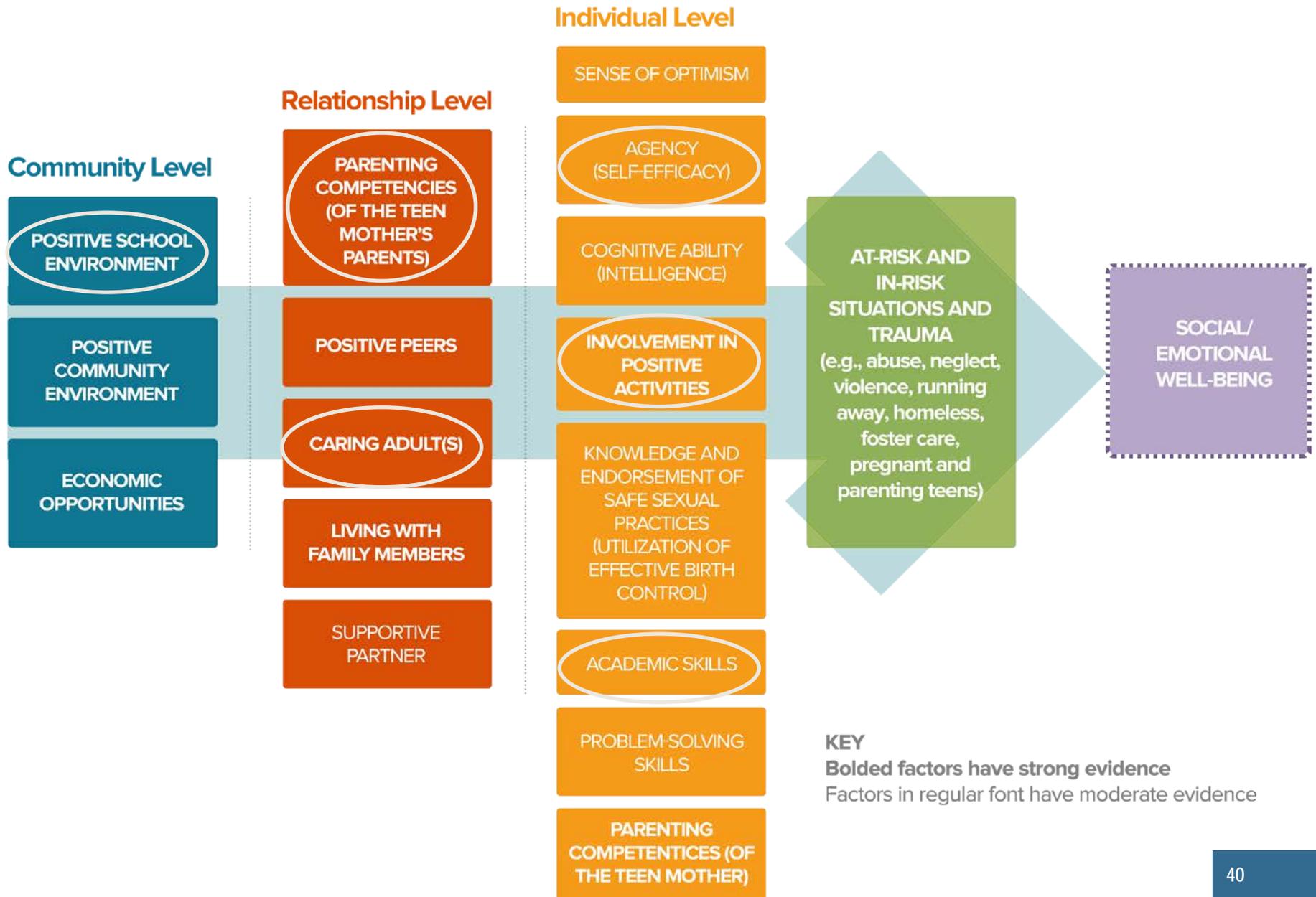
- Most appropriate for grounding adolescent pregnancy prevention work.
- Combines ecological systems theory with a risk and resiliency framework.
- Ecological model highlights the interaction between the individuals/participants served and their environments such as family, peers, programs, community, and culture.
 - Expands our understanding of youth to include the youth's personal characteristics and behaviors in the context of relationships and interactions with others.
 - Youth develops and interacts in the context of his or her relationships.

Ecological Systems and Risk & Resiliency Framework

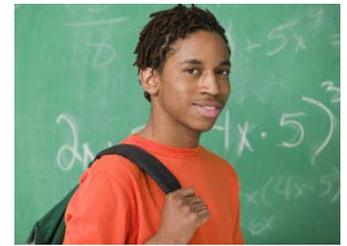


- The resiliency framework focuses on risk and protective processes for each ecological system (i.e., the individual, family/peers, community, and culture).
- Factors in several domains have been identified as possible risk and protective factors for the onset of risk taking behaviors
- Risk factors are defined as those conditions that are associated with a higher probability of negative outcomes such as teen pregnancy.
- Protective factors as those resources that promote competence and successful development decreasing the likelihood of risky behaviors.

CONCEPTUAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR MODEL FOR PREGNANT AND/OR PARENTING TEENS



Individual Level Protective Factors

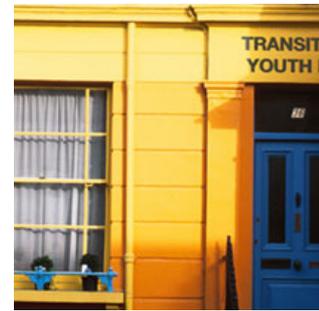


- Self-esteem—favorable attitudes towards self (positive self regard)
 - Rosenberg self-esteem scale, Coopersmith self-esteem inventory, Hudson index of self-esteem
- Locus of control—ownership of one’s power and actions (e.g., internal belief their actions determine their life events)
 - Internal/external locus of control scale, Locus of control scale for children
- Self-efficacy—person’s belief can perform behaviors even under difficult circumstances
- Academic skills—school grades
- School orientation—school goals
 - Importance and likelihood of graduating from high school, doing well in school, going to college
- Childbearing attitudes—likelihood of having a child while a teenager
 - I want to have a child of my own soon. The sooner I have a child of my own the better.

Family Level Protective Factors

- Parenting competencies—vigilant parenting, parental involvement, authoritative parenting style, parental high educational expectations
- Parental educational values (perceived)—parents commitment to education
 - “My mother thinks education is important for girls/boys.”
- Communication—positive parent/child communication
 - “How acceptable is it to talk about a difficult topic with an adult you trust?”
- Family cohesion—bond and level of commitment shared by family members
 - Family environment scale (Form R), FACES II, Family satisfaction

Community Level Protective Factors



- School connectedness—feels close to people at school, teachers treat students fairly, feels part of the school
- Social support—support received from the school system
 - Adolescent perceived microsystems scale
- Community competence—capacity of a community to build resiliency
 - “Competent communities support families and schools and encourage social networks and provide resources for healthy development.”

Highlight of Findings

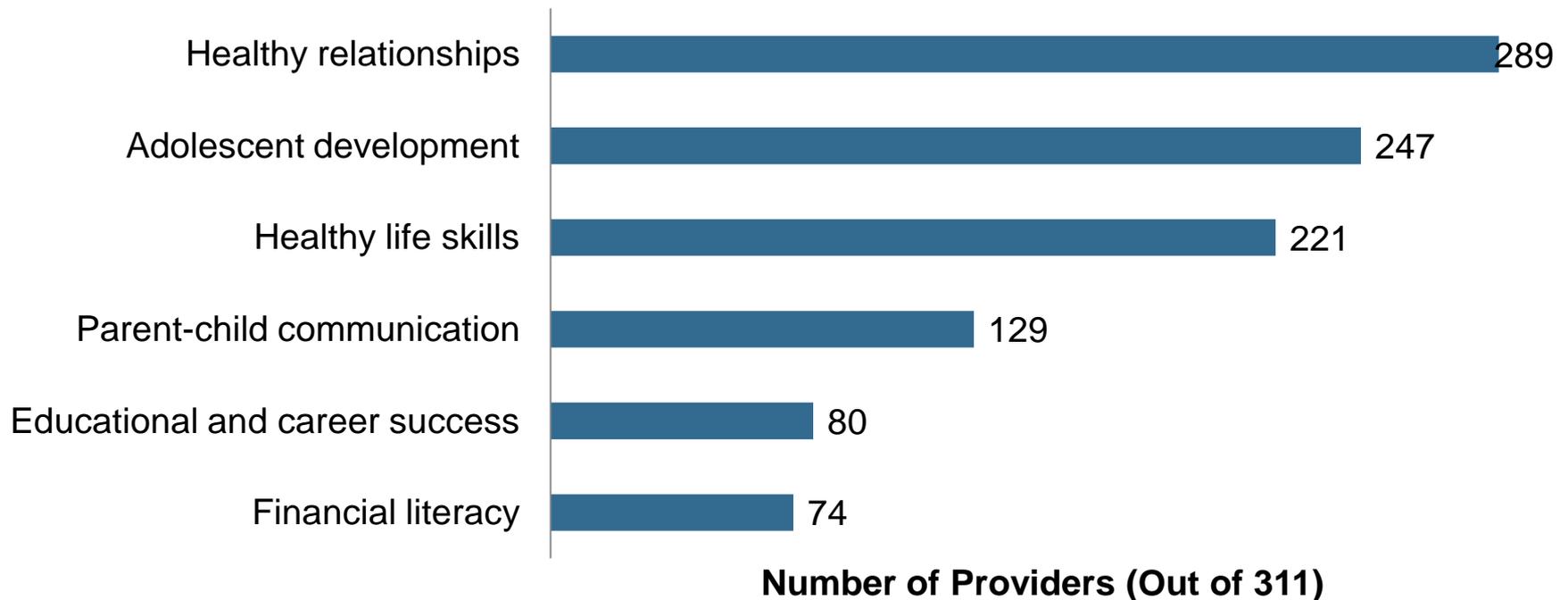
- There are buffering effects of protective factors in reducing the likelihood of teen pregnancy.
- Higher self-esteem decreases the odds of a teen pregnancy and is an important protective factor.
- Protective parenting moderated the relation between family risks and teen pregnancy.
- Parents high educational expectations is associated with reduced rates of teen pregnancy.
- Childbearing attitudes is associated with a reduced likelihood of a teen pregnancy.

Protective Factors: The PREP Program

- Projects adapt evidence based interventions to address target risk behaviors and selected APS
- APP Staff offers technical assistance and guidance on adaptation
 - Adaptation process can include working with curriculum developers
 - By addressing the core components of pregnancy prevention curricula the constructs of interest for both “protection” and “prevention” are aligned

PREP—Adult Preparation Subjects (APS)

- Projects must address at least three APS
- Providers are capable of addressing APS



Promote Behavioral Health Through PYD

- Strengths based PYD approach to address social and emotional well-being and behavioral health.
- Increasing research on protective factors highlight important roles that behaviors, relationships, and environments have in predicting problem behaviors like early sexual activity.
- Growing body of research indicates that PYD programs target not only early sexual activity, but also the risk and protective factors in young people's lives that are known to influence sexual activity.

Implications for Practice

- Youth may benefit from discussions with staff clarifying their childbearing desires.
- Programs in school settings may have the opportunity to promote strong school orientation, which may fluctuate across teen age ranges.
- Programs have the ability to assess for both risk and protective factors and address/enhance protective factors (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, communication)

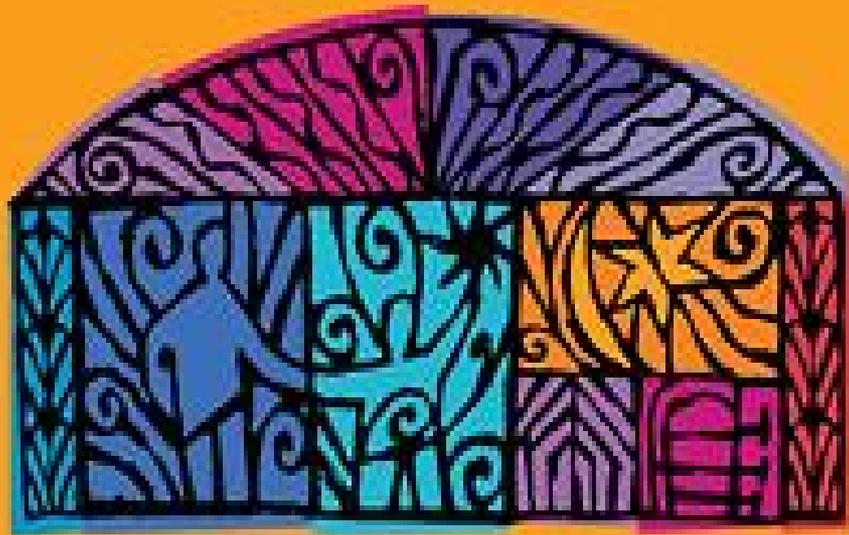
Incorporating Protective Factors for Child Welfare and Foster Care Populations

Melissa Brodowski, PhD, MSW, MPH
Office on Child Abuse and Neglect
Children's Bureau



Children's Bureau Background

- Dedicated exclusively to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families
- Areas of focus:
 - Child abuse and neglect
 - Foster care
 - Adoption
 - Guardianship
 - Child welfare services
 - Tribes



2014 Prevention Resource Guide and Website

Making meaningful connections
2014 Prevention Resource Guide



- Chapter 1: Protective Factors Approaches to Promoting Well-Being
- Available online on the Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov)



Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare

This issue brief provides a succinct overview of protective factors approaches to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. It is designed to help policymakers, administrators, child welfare and related professionals, service providers, advocates, and other interested individuals understand the concepts of risk and protective factors in families and communities and learn ways in which building protective factors can help to lessen risks for child abuse and neglect.

What Are Risk and Protective Factors?

Risk factors refer to the stressful conditions, events, or circumstances (e.g., maternal depression, substance abuse, family violence, persistent poverty) that increase a family's chances for poor outcomes, including child abuse and neglect. Protective factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate risk and promote healthy development and well-being. Put simply, they are the strengths that help to buffer and support families at risk.

WHAT'S INSIDE

What are risk and protective factors?

Why is a protective factors approach important?

Using protective factors in child maltreatment

Mapping connections across protective factors approaches

Individual protective factors

Relational protective factors

Societal or community protective factors

Putting protective factors into practice

Conclusion

Resources

Protective Factors Approaches in Child Welfare: Issue Brief

- Overview of protective factor approaches to the prevention and treatment of child abuse
- Available online on the Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov)

Quality Improvement Center ON EARLY CHILDHOOD



Zero to Three Journal-Special Issue

- Focusing on work of the Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood
- Will include article: “Building a Lasting Foundation for Promoting Protective Factors across Children’s Bureau Programs”
- Scheduled for publication in November 2014

Measures of Protective Factors

- **FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey**
 - Evidence-based pre-post evaluation tool used with caregivers receiving child maltreatment prevention services
 - Developed with input from and piloted by CB's Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Grantees
 - Specifically measures the five protective factors in the CBCAP Conceptual Framework
- **Caregiver's Assessment of Protective Factors (CAPF)**
 - Currently being tested by the Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood
- Need for additional measures in the field

Current Discretionary Grants

- **Child Welfare-Early Education Partnerships to Expand Protective Factors for Children with Child Welfare Involvement**
 - Requirements include promotion and use of multi-disciplinary interventions that build on PFs and mediate the effects of adverse experiences
- **Supportive Housing for Families in the Child Welfare System**
 - Focus on improving the well-being of vulnerable children and families through incorporation of PFs
 - Use of Strengthening Families framework and other curricula that promote PFs

Future Discretionary Grants

- Grants in Child Maltreatment Using Innovative Approaches
- Fellowships for University-Based Doctoral Candidates and Faculty for Research in Child Maltreatment
- National Quality Improvement Center for Adoption/Guardianship Support and Preservation

Promoting Protective Factors for Domestic Violence

Shawndell Dawson, MSW

Family Violence Prevention and Services Program

Family and Youth Services Bureau



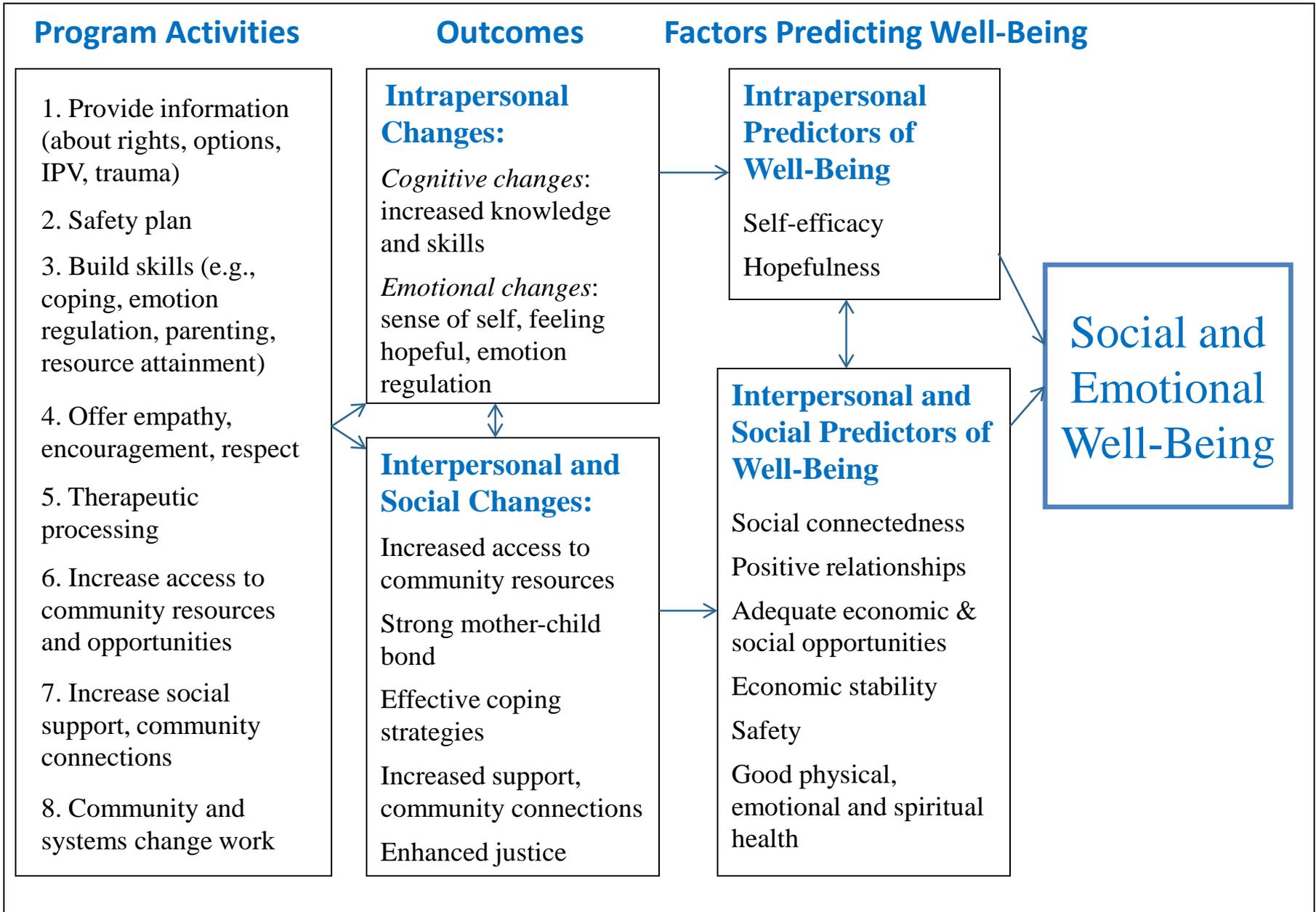
Examining the Work of Domestic Violence Programs within a “Social And Emotional Well-Being” Conceptual Framework

Cris M. Sullivan, PhD

Consultant to the National Resource
Center on Domestic Violence

THEORY OF CHANGE - DV PROGRAMS

- 1) The desired long-term change is social and emotional well-being of survivors and their children.
- 2) Well-being is predicted by factors that have often been negatively impacted by the abuse:
 - *Intrapersonal factors*: self-efficacy, hope
 - *Interpersonal and social factors*: social connectedness and positive relationships; safety; emotional, physical and spiritual health; possessing adequate resources; social, political and economic equity





THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO!!!

Melissa Lim Brodowski, PhD, MSW, MPH
lauren.fischman@acf.hhs.gov

Caryn Blitz, PhD
caryn.blitz@acf.hhs.gov

Resa Matthew, PhD
resa.matthew@acf.hhs.gov

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/acyf>