GUIDE

3

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S HEALTHY

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Part of a series on Growing Healthy Readers:
Taking Action to Support the Health
Determinants of Early School Success

The Campaign for
GRADE-LEVEL
READING

Growing Healthy Readers

TAKING ACTION TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH DETERMINANTS OF EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS

INTRODUCTION

When children are healthy and developing on track, they are more likely to be successful in school. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading recognizes the important interconnections of health and learning, known as *the health determinants of early school success.*

Children from low-income families have more frequent challenges that affect their health and well-being than more affluent children. The Campaign's Healthy Readers Team has identified five Children's Health and Learning Priorities: health-related issues with a demonstrated relationship to one or more of the Campaign's community solutions. They include prenatal care and infant development; comprehensive screenings, follow-up and early intervention; oral health; asthma management; and nutrition and physical activity. The team has developed materials to help community stakeholders incorporate strategies that can strengthen positive impact on children's health and learning. *Growing Healthy Readers: Taking Action to Support the Health Determinants of Early School Success* is a set of seven guides to assist Sponsoring Coalitions in incorporating the Children's Health and Learning Priorities into Community Solutions Action Plans (CSAPs) to achieve the Campaign's community solutions and improve grade-level reading.

These Healthy Readers Resource Guides will help community- and state-level Sponsoring Coalitions identify priority issues that affect children's health and determine how to take action. The priority issues and corresponding guides — each with a research-based connection to success in learning — include:

Prenatal Care and Infant Development

Resource Guide: Supporting Healthy Births and Infancy

Comprehensive Screenings, Follow-Up and Early Intervention

Resource Guide: Ensuring Early and Appropriate Screenings and Intervention

Resource Guide: Supporting Children's Healthy Social-Emotional Development

Oral Health

Resource Guide: Ensuring Oral Health

Asthma Management

Resource Guide: Controlling Environments and Managing Asthma

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Resource Guide: Promoting Healthy Food Choices

Resource Guide: Increasing Physical Activity

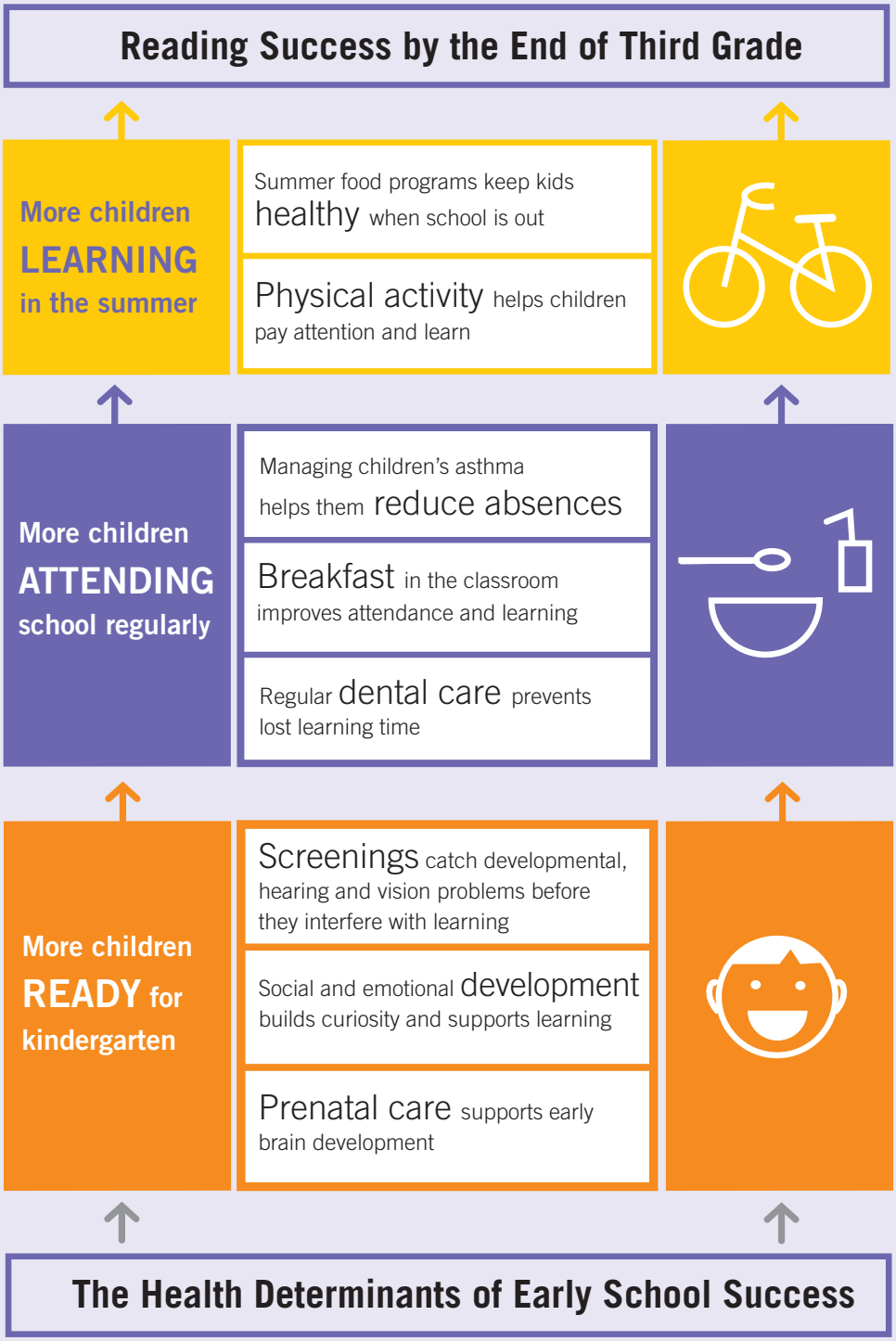
Sponsoring Coalitions will want to consult available local data and gather information to help determine which priorities to address to improve children's health and learning. The Resource Guides include valuable resources and recommendations about how to proceed. Each guide is organized to:

- Address the important link between health and learning
- Identify evidence-based and promising models and strategies
- Help coalitions understand how to begin to take action
- Identify content and funding resources specific to that topic

Improving health and learning for children from low-income families is important work, but it need not be daunting. No matter which strategies a Sponsoring Coalition undertakes, it is useful to include representatives from Head Start, physician offices, the Health Department and a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) if there is one in your community. These individuals can help Sponsoring Coalition members understand the context for children's health in the community and reach out to others who can support the work.

The Campaign's Healthy Readers Team and state and regional Campaign leads can provide support as well. In the coming months, we expect to establish state-level pilot projects to link communities that are working in the same focus area, support peer learning, and provide additional information and support.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Ann Rosewater, Senior Consultant, Healthy Readers Team: arosewater@gradelevelreading.net.


Reading Success by the End of Third Grade
More children LEARNING in the summer
Summer food programs keep kids healthy when school is out
Physical activity helps children pay attention and learn
More children ATTENDING school regularly
Managing children's asthma helps them reduce absences
Breakfast in the classroom improves attendance and learning
Regular dental care prevents lost learning time
More children READY for kindergarten
Screenings catch developmental, hearing and vision problems before they interfere with learning
Social and emotional development builds curiosity and supports learning
Prenatal care supports early brain development
The Health Determinants of Early School Success

SUPPORTING HEALTHY SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children's Health and Learning Priority	Which community solution(s) does it support?
Comprehensive Screenings, Follow-Up and Early Intervention	SCHOOL READINESS; SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

DEVELOPING AWARENESS

What is healthy social-emotional development?

- Healthy social-emotional development can be seen in children's growing ability to form positive relationships; express and manage a range of feelings; get along with adults and peers; and experience well-being, curiosity and deep involvement in learning. Behaviors that reflect social-emotional skills include:
  - An infant's loud babbling to get a parent's attention
  - A toddler's happy exploration of pots and pans in a kitchen cupboard
  - A preschooler's offer to help a friend build a block tower
  - A kindergarten child's persistence in completing a challenging puzzle
  - A first grader's cooperation with peers and the teacher during a group project
- From birth on, young children's healthy social-emotional growth requires consistent support from caring, responsive adults. Young children need adults to help them practice using social-emotional skills in play with other children and in independent activities.

Why is it important for communities to implement this solution?

- Healthy social-emotional development fuels children's learning; sense of well-being; positive relationships with adults and peers; and ability to meet challenges and to learn from others (parents, teachers, peers) and on their own. (Denham, 2006; Fantuzzo et al., 2007)
- Children with lags in social-emotional development often show distress and disruptive behavior that interfere with learning. (Ladd et al., 2006) Research has shown that behavior problems are common in young children (Huaquing Qi et al., 2003):
  - Rates of behavior difficulties range from 9 to 14 percent among all young children and approach 30 percent among poor children.
- Failure to prevent or treat troubling behavior at an early age places children at high risk of mental health issues that impede their learning and school success. (Blandon et al., 2010; Izard et al., 2008; and Ursach et al., 2012)

The Healthy Readers Team is grateful for the expertise and partnership of the National Center for Children in Poverty in developing this guide.

How can communities provide supports for healthy social-emotional development?

Effective supports for healthy social-emotional development include:

- Support and guidance for parents to provide sensitive, responsive caregiving, address parenting challenges and find satisfaction in parenting.
- Professional development and consultation for early care and early grades teachers to help them promote children's social-emotional learning.
- Screening children and parents for mental health issues in a variety of community venues (including pediatric and adult health care settings, home-visiting and early care and education programs) and providing supports for practitioners to help them connect families to programs or resources that fit their needs.
- Practitioners trained to deliver evidence-based interventions that can address children's mental health concerns and parenting challenges, such as maternal depression.
- Opportunities for parents and community members to offer each other social support, share information about children's social-emotional development and community resources, and help shape community supports for young children's school success.

What are some strategies for promoting healthy social-emotional growth?

Strategies with Results

1st Five in Iowa helps pediatricians in 13 counties reduce the risk of child mental health problems. Since 2007, nearly 5,000 families with children birth to age 5 have been referred to 1st Five and connected to community services.

- 1st Five helps pediatricians use standardized tools to assess children's development and social-emotional growth, family stress and maternal depression.
- Based on the assessments, pediatricians refer families to a 1st Five coordinator who contacts the parent and helps connect the family to appropriate community services.
- The following were among the reasons that families were referred to 1st Five: developmental concerns, family stress, caregiver depression, social and behavioral concerns, and family resource needs.
- Depending on a family's needs, community services might include early intervention, parent mental health treatment, and assistance with food, family stress and housing concerns.
- 1st Five regularly checks in with families and monitors their progress.

State funding has supported 1st Five's site coordinators' activities since 2006 at a level of about $327,000 with a $1 million increase set for 2014; Medicaid funds care coordination for enrolled children (awarded to the state's Title V program through an

What are some strategies for promoting healthy social-emotional growth? (cont.)

EPSDT administrative agreement). Primary care providers bill Medicaid for developmental screens. In 2014, 1st Five sites will use state funding to claim a 50 percent federal Medicaid match for provider and community education and outreach (activities approved through an administrative agreement).

Results

- Increase in pediatricians who use comprehensive developmental assessments of children from 33 percent to 93 percent
- On average, each family referred to 1st Five received help connecting to over three community services

Help Me Grow is a national model that is currently being implemented in 18 states. All *Help Me Grow* communities make it easy for families to obtain screening of young children that can identify developmental and behavior challenges and to connect with appropriate community programs and services. Three southeastern Michigan counties provide the following *Help Me Grow* supports to families with children age 2 to 5:

- Free online screening of children for general development using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, third edition (ASQ-3), and for social-emotional issues using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE);
- Training to help health care providers use reliable screening tools;
- Work with 120 community partners (health care, family support and early care and education) to promote the screenings and assist families in obtaining appropriate services; and
- A centralized regional telephone number to ease families' and providers' access to *Help Me Grow* resources.

Communities draw on diverse sources to fund *Help Me Grow,* including private foundations, Medicaid, the federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems initiative, Maternal and Child Health Home Visiting Program, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Project LAUNCH and Department of Education Race to the Top projects.

Results

- Improvements in parent-child relationships
- Improvements in parents' understanding of and ability to meet children's needs
- Improvement in parents' ability to obtain advice and emotional support
- Hard-to-reach families gain access to needed community services

What are some strategies for promoting healthy social-emotional growth? (cont.)

The Incredible Years (IY) parenting program is offered in more than 20 North Carolina communities that are home to a mix of black, Hispanic and white families. In Winston-Salem, IY is offered free to parents with children age 3 to 6 at the County Public Health Department. Components include:

- 14 two-hour sessions to strengthen parenting skills and young children's social-emotional development and early learning, and teach about the benefits of parents' positive play with their children and effective discipline.
- Supports such as dinner, child care and transportation incentives.

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina (PCANC) helps family-serving organizations throughout North Carolina implement IY Parenting Programs.

Funding sources for these organizations to implement IY Parenting Programs include: the federal Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CCAP) grant program (through the state Department of Social Services); state funds (Smart Start and Public Health); and private foundation funds. The Duke Endowment and CCAP provide funding for program implementation supports provided by PCANC.

Results

- Increase in positive parenting practices that support children's social-emotional development
- Decrease in harsh parenting practices
- Increase in children's social-emotional skills
- Decrease in children's behavior problems
- Hard-to-reach families gain access to needed community services

Playworks is a strategy that supports positive, inclusive play during recess and classroom games in elementary schools with low-income students.

- Trained coaches engage children in play that encourages physical activity and positive social interactions.
- During coach-led play, children learn valuable social-emotional skills, such as cooperation and conflict resolution.
- Children who tend to sit on the sidelines and feel isolated have a chance to enjoy play with peers and build confidence and social skills.

Playworks is being implemented in 23 cities nationwide. Funding for Playworks comes from Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I, foundation grants, parent organizations and school district funds.

What are some strategies for promoting healthy social-emotional growth? (cont.)

Results

- Large reduction in bullying and excluding peers from play
- Increased feelings of safety among students reported by teachers
- More rapid transition from recess to learning activities

The **Second Step** program promotes the social-emotional growth of children in prekindergarten through the early grades in the Austin (Texas) Independent School District (AISD), where 60 percent of the students are Hispanic and more than 60 percent are economically disadvantaged. Currently, about half of AISD pre-K through grade 3 classrooms are implementing Second Step. AISD's Department of Social Emotional Learning provides:

- Teacher training and coaching to use Second Step lessons in classrooms and to make the classroom an engaging place to learn;
- Parent workshops and send-home resources to promote parents' positive engagement with children; and
- Training for child care providers and after-school and summer camp staff in Second Step.

Second Step is part of Austin's community-wide initiative offering supports across settings to promote children's healthy social-emotional growth. AISD is one of eight districts in a national initiative of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

The program is supported by federal ESEA Title I and Title II funds, private foundations and AISD.

Results

(based on evaluations of Second Step with children ranging in age from prekindergarten to the early grades)

- Improvements in children's social skills
- Decrease in aggressive behavior
- Increase in children's knowledge about positive social behavior

Strategies to Build Public Awareness

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, usually set in May, is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's premier activity to raise awareness about the fact that positive mental health is essential to a child's healthy development from birth. The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health sponsors and observes the first full week in May as Children's Mental Health Awareness Week.

MOVING TO ACTION

How would a Sponsoring Coalition begin to implement this strategy?

Determine what actions the team could take now to strengthen children's health and development to support improved grade-level reading outcomes. Often simple no-cost or low-cost actions are a way to build momentum and gain early enthusiasm and support for the work.

1. **Contact** local early education partners, schools, health care providers, community organizations and parent groups to understand existing community supports for children's social-emotional development and gaps in programs and provider training.
   - Does the local child care resource and referral program provide training and support for providers?
   - Are there opportunities for peer learning and exchange for parents who are interested in social-emotional development?
   - Where do parents go for information and support concerning children's social-emotional development?
2. **Gather information** about indicators of need for services.
   - Are there waiting lists for children's mental health intervention and family support programs?
   - Are children suspended or expelled from early care and early grades programs?
   - Do pediatricians see a high rate of behavior issues?
3. **Identify** strategies to integrate supports for children's literacy/reading and social-emotional growth with other supports and activities.
   - Do programs that give parents books to read with children offer guidance about teaching children emotional vocabulary and positive social behavior during story-book reading?
   - Is information about screening and interventions for child and parent mental health concerns widely available in a variety of settings, including WIC clinics, preschools, elementary schools, libraries and summer reading programs?
4. **Engage** leaders in community organizations, schools, public agencies and health networks to promote interest and generate ideas for implementing strategies in your community.
   - Are there visible champions for this work?
   - Can a community-wide organization, such as the United Way, take the lead in convening key leaders from several sectors?
   - Is there a need to raise public awareness about the importance of social and emotional learning?
5. **Learn about** effective programs in other communities. See the information above.
6. **Determine** what financing strategies are available in your community.

MOVING TO ACTION (CONT.)

What funding sources may be available to support this strategy in your community?

Every community is different, and funding sources vary by state for child and parent mental health programs.

- In some states, mental health consultation in home visiting programs is funded through the federal Maternal and Child Health Program. Mental health consultation for early care and education settings can also be funded by the quality improvement dollars in the federal Child Care and Development Fund.
- Parenting programs can sometimes be supported by state funds available through Departments of Social Services, Health or Education. Public-private partnerships should be explored with leadership from local foundations.
- Sources of funding for child and parent mental health screening include Medicaid and the state's health insurance program for low-income children and families.

RESOURCES

- See a research-based online tutorial, Recognizing and Supporting the Social and Emotional Health of Young Children Birth to Age Five from Georgetown University's Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/social-emotional/index.html
- Nurturing Change: State Strategies for Improving Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/webinars-conference-calls/nurturing-change-state-strategies.html
- Building Strong Systems of Support for Young Children's Mental Health: http://nccp.org/publications/pub_1016.html
- Help Me Grow: www.helpmegrownational.org/ and http://helpmegrow-mi.org/?page_id=2. For report on results, see: http://helpmegrownational.org/includes/research/HMGProtectiveFactorspolicybrief02_2013b.pdf. For a study of a pilot in Hartford, CT see: www.ct.gov/ctf/lib/ctf/HMG_Report_2007-2008.pdf
- Child & Family Policy Center evaluation of 1st Five Healthy Mental Health Initiative in Iowa: www.cfpciowa.org/. Information on state funding for the initiative: www.idph.state.ia.us/1stfive/
- The Incredible Years Parenting Program North Carolina pilot: www.preventchildabusenc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1007. For other research on IY: www.incredibleyears.com/. See also: www.co.forsyth.nc.us/publichealth/parenting_education.aspx and www.preventchildabusenc.org/?fuseaction=cms.page&id=1007
- Playworks: www.playworks.org/. Evaluation information: www.mathematica-mpr.com/education/playworks.asp
- The Social-Emotional Learning Initiative in Austin's Independent School District. See www.austinisd.org/academics/sel and http://casel.org/about-us/news-and-events/casel-forum/. For evaluation information on Second Step see: www.cfchildren.org/second-step.aspx
- Information about National Children's Mental Health Day and Week is available from SAMHSA's Caring for Every Child's Mental Health Campaign team at: www.samhsa.gov/children/ and National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health at: www.ffchm.org
- The Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning provides resources for early childhood teachers, parents and program administrators that can be used to strengthen supports for young children's social-emotional growth. http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu
- Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, Inc. has developed two guides for parents, available in English and Spanish, addressing health and safety as well as healthy social and emotional development. Revised second editions will be available soon. To see the early editions, go to: www.chdi.org/caringforctschildren-vol1 and www.chdi.org/caringforctschildren-vol2
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning offers reviews of effective programs and practices that promote social-emotional learning for children in kindergarten and the early grades, and tools to help school administrators incorporate SEL learning into school activities. http://CASEL.org
- *Establishing a Level Foundation for Life: Mental Health Begins in Early Childhood:* http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/reports_and_working_papers/working_papers/wp6/

- *Promoting the Social-emotional Wellbeing of Infants and Toddlers in Early Intervention Programs: Promising Strategies in Four Communities:* www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_946.pdf
- *Social and Emotional Learning in Schools: From Programs to Strategies:* www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/spr_264_final_2.pdf
- *What Works? A Study of Effective Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Programs:* http://gucchdtacenter.georgetown.edu/publications/ECMHCStudy_Report.pdf

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