

The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative: *Where science meets real life to improve outcomes for children and families*

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Core concepts

- Connection between early brain development & addiction and mental health outcomes
- Brains can change – contexts, experiences, relationships
- Safe, stable, supportive environments for all children, youth and families – intergenerational factors
- Quality addiction and mental health care for adults is primary prevention for children
- Knowledge will shift our beliefs



The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (AFWI)

- Created in 2007 by the Palix Foundation; ~\$80M investment to date
- Knowledge mobilization and community engagement platform to catalyze improved (mental health and addiction) outcomes for all children and families based on brain and child development knowledge (ie. "the brain story")
- Networks of knowledgeable change agents are key

Core concepts

The Foundations of Lifelong Health are Built in Early Childhood

(Source: National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010)



What is the knowledge base?

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child - synthesized and condensed body of knowledge



FrameWorks Institute



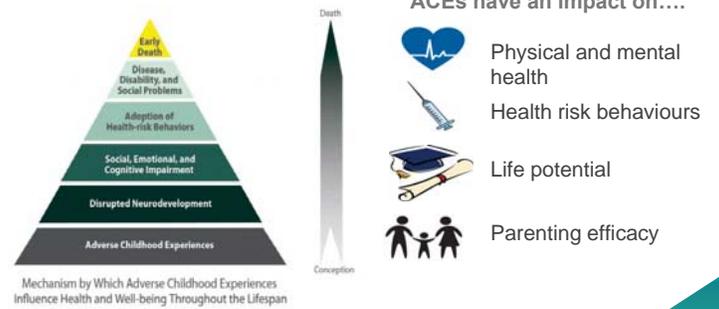
The core story of brain development:

- Brain architecture
- Serve and return
- Toxic stress
- Air traffic control
- Resilience



Toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences

(Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>)



What is the knowledge base?



Embedding the knowledge

So what - can one story change everything?

- Common language
- Common beliefs
- Common framework of understanding
- Innovation and integration in policy and practice to achieve better outcomes
- Professional development and training
- Resource allocation / reallocation

Individual ↔ organizational ↔ system



Brain Story Course feedback - Charlton Weasel Head



Many free and accessible resources



Building brains is child play



Conclusions

- Early experiences effect lifelong health and well-being
- Healthy brain development requires protection from toxic stress
- Achieving breakthrough outcomes for children facing adversity requires supporting the adults who care for them

(Source: Shonkoff J. Capitalizing on advances in science to reduce the health consequences of early childhood adversity. JAMA Pediatrics, August 22,107)

WHERE SCIENCE
MEETS REAL LIFE.



Conclusions

Based on what we know we need knowledge based collective action to prevent and buffer toxic stress and ACEs and promote healthy development for all children and families:

- Become knowledgeable and create awareness
- Build the foundations of resilience through healthy relationships and safe and caring environments
- Develop and test new protective interventions based on the brain story concepts

