

TRAUMA-INFORMED CHILD WELFARE: Putting Science in Action

Pamela L. Abernethy
Marion County Circuit Court
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SCIENCE IN ACTION

- FRAME THE MESSAGE
- IMPLEMENT ACROSS ALL COURT PROGRAMS

Framing the Message 1: The brain as hand.....



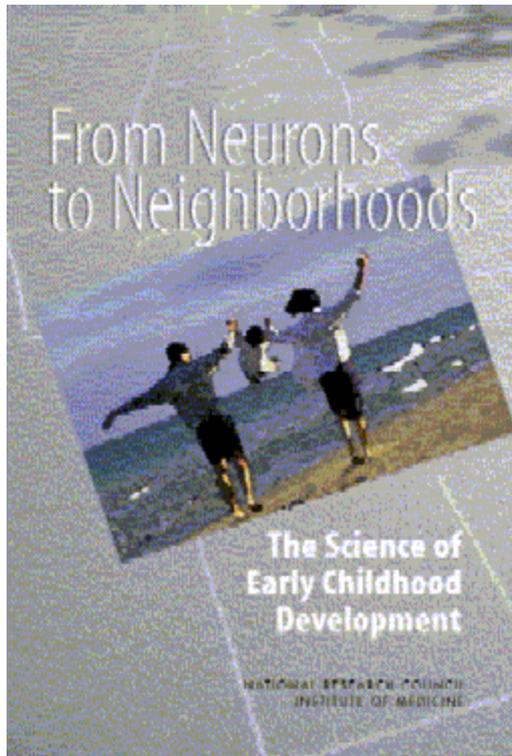
- The brain is the least developed organ at birth.
- 90% of the brain's growth occurs from birth to age five.
- A baby's brain doubles in weight from birth to age three.
- First caregivers have profound effects on virtually every facet of early brain development.
- Healthy childhood experiences plays a critical role in determining future health and productivity.

Dr Jack Shonkoff

The quality and reliability of a child's first relationships forms the physical architecture of the child's brain.



From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development



Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development

Shonkoff, J.P., & Phillips, D. (Eds.)
(2000).

**Board on Children, Youth, and Families
Institute of Medicine
National Research Council**

*Framing the Message 2: “**CRUMBS FROM THE TABLE OF JOY**”*

Loss of Human Potential

HOW MANY OF THE DEPENDENT WARDS OF MY COURT EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT JOY IN THEIR LIVES?

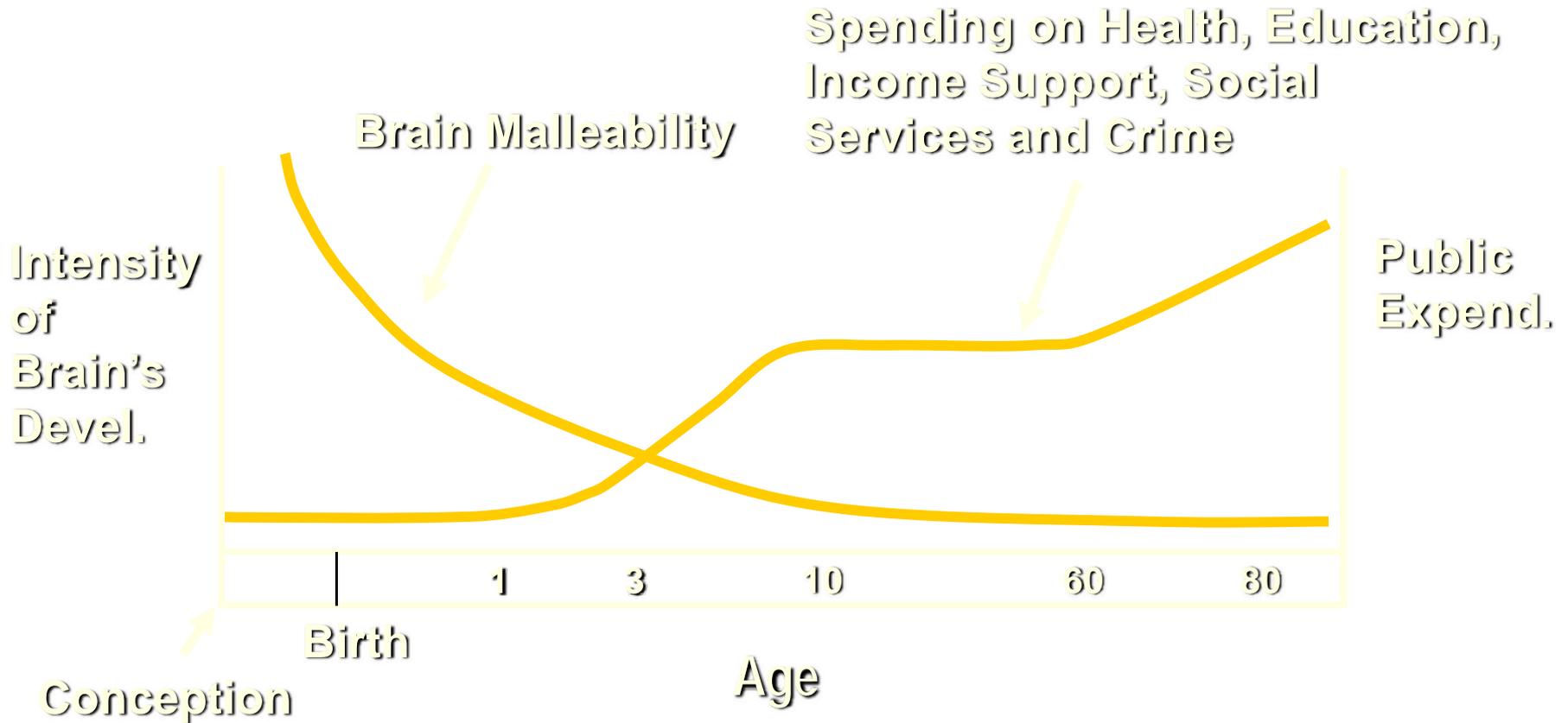
- **PRENATAL DRUG EXPOSURE**
- **YEARS OF CHRONIC NEGLECT FOLLOWED BY YEARS OF FOSTER CARE**
- **LOW TO NO SELF-ESTEEM**
- **NO OR LACK OF AFFECTION**
- **EXPECTATIONS FOR POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND FOR A HAPPY FUTURE ARE NULL**



Framing the Message 3: Return on Investment

- High risk children are at high risk for poor developmental outcomes
- Early intervention increases the odds for favorable outcomes
- Early intervention saves us thousands of tax payer costs.
- Heckman, J. Grunewald, R. & Reynolds, A., (2006). *The Dollars and Cents of Investing Early: Cost-Benefit Analysis in Early Care and Education*.
- Karoly, L. Kilburn, M.R., & Cannon, J. (2005). *Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Intervention*. Research Brief. Santa Monica, CA:RAND Corporation.
- Karoly, L. (1998). *Early Childhood Interventions: Benefits, Costs, and Savings*. Research Brief. RAND Corporation.

Dr. Bruce Perry M.D. PhD.
OPPORTUNITY AND INVESTMENT
Brain's Wiring and Development



The mismatch between opportunity and investment:

- “These are public health issues. Government has already decided that it is in the public interest to aggressively legislate interventions which decrease destructive and expensive health problems such as infectious diseases. Childhood experiences have no less a critical role in determining the health and productivity of the population – and deserve equal standing in public health policy.”
- www.ChildTrauma.org
- “*How Nurture Becomes Nature: The Influence of Social Structures on Brain Development*” B.D. Perry

THE COURT IN ACTION: INSIDE

- Changes to the court orders
- Referral to Early Intervention
- Referral to Head Start/Early Head Start/Relief Nursery
- Developmentally appropriate Child-Centered Case Plans
- Creation of the Developmental Guide for the Child Well Being
- Create Well-Being Team
- Visitation Practices
- Diligent Relative Search
- Reduce placements
- Concurrent Planning

Initial Placement

- Even children with secure attachments are likely to be harmed by the disruption caused by placement in foster care
- Most critical time period 6 months to 3 years

IDEAL:

Make first placement the last

Find the dad

Do you really have all the relatives?

Visitation

- ▶ Near bioparents
- ▶ Foster parents as untapped resource
- ▶ Kinship care
- ▶ Caveats: boundaries, education, support
- ▶ Medical/therapeutic visits
- ▶ Visit is to enhance relationship
- ▶ How to afford developmentally meaningful visitation for infants
- ▶ Fostering Attachment Treatment Court model
- ▶ Baby bonding group
- ▶ Dyad Therapy

Cancelling/Missed Visits: Reading it right

▶ Get Help

- Infant Mental Health Specialist: Parent- Child Interaction Assessment

▶ Missed

- Diagnose the real cause
 - Substance Abuse
 - Depression
 - Parent's emotional availability

▶ Cancel?

- Avoidance, engagement, distress pattern

Concurrent Planning Checklist

- **Concurrent Planning Milestones Checklist**
- By **30 days** of substitute care, the following concurrent planning tasks should be completed:
 - _____ Birth and Medical Records requested for each child
 - _____ Relative search request filled out thoroughly and submitted to admin unit
 - _____ Fathers Questionnaire filled out by a trained staff with each child's mother
 - _____ ICWA (1270) form filled out by each parent of each child
 - _____ Parent search initiated if necessary
 - _____ Ongoing Safety Plan and Visitation Plan
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____ Relative search completed

Creating a Trauma-Informed System

- Create shared community trauma profile and assessment for Child welfare, mental health, addiction Rx, school, foster parent, court, CASA.
 - Foster parent and other caregivers get full information about child's trauma history
 - Comprehensive assessment at first truancy or run: view each as a predictable indicator of past abuse and neglect.
 - School support team or educational advocate at Juvenile
 - MOU between DA, Juvenile Dept, DHS, School District to created criteria for diversion of dually adjudicated kids to avoid inappropriate criminalization of predictable acting out due to trauma
 - Annual training for all partners

Creating a Trauma-Informed System

- Assess for trauma-related symptoms immediately upon removal and indentify specific interventions. (EI, Well-Being Team)
- Train CW / foster parents to recognize behavioral indicators of trauma: see kids through trauma lens / reduce use of LE (low risk to offend / high needs kids)
- Provide Foster parents with on-going support to manage a child's trauma-related behavior: Strength-based approach
- Create procedures to avoid re-traumatization
- Ensure school awareness and support, including at childcare, early care and K – 12.

Marion County School Trauma Protocol

- The District would install a dedicated phone line at the Secondary Education office at the Lancaster Professional Center. Child Welfare and Police could call this line 24 hours a day to report that a student has been removed from his/her home and placed in foster care or another traumatic event has occurred. The line would be answered between seven-thirty and five during the week day and go to an answering machine at other hours. At 7:30 am staff would take messages and call the office manager at the school where the student would be attending. The office manager would notify staff within the school according to a system designed by the school.
- School records would be transferred within the district in 24-48 hours and out of district within 48 hours.
- Child Welfare would provide a letter for foster parents to take to the school to help the school staff understand the role of the foster parent with the student.
- Staff at participating agencies would be trained in the new protocol.
- Child Welfare would work with the Homeless Program at the District to provide transportation for the student, if necessary.
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- Training of staff was completed in May 2007 and the protocol was launched.

Sample Problems

- Foster parents frequently arrive without the Child Welfare letter.
- When the school has the letter, it makes a copy and fill out a new registration form.
- Foster parents have dropped off children in the parking lot, so the school has no information about the child or his situation. It has happened that the child does not even know the foster parent's last name. In case of illness or emergency, the school has no information.
- Sometimes the school only knows a child has been taken from his home and put in foster care when they read it in the paper.
- Child Welfare workers are very reluctant to share information.
- There are many occasions when Child Welfare workers remove children but staff is not aware of it.

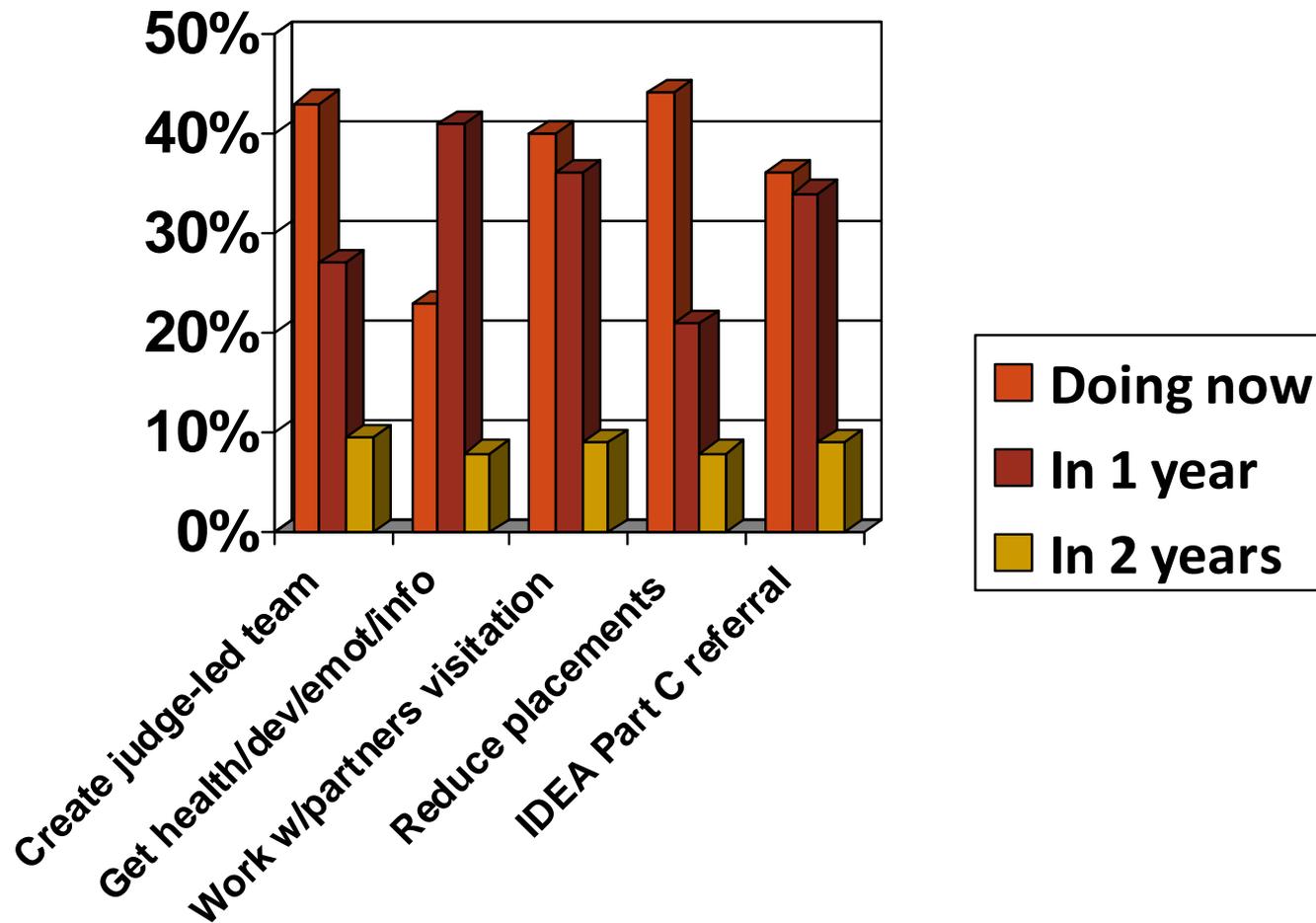
Recommendations

- Record keeping should continue for the hotline and for number of children being taken from their homes and placed in foster care. Child Welfare can then compare their records against who is making or not making calls to the hotline and encourage their workers to comply with the protocol.
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- Further training is needed for counselors. Not all counselors attend the monthly counselors meeting, so other methods of informing them of the protocol should be used.
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- Schools which do not yet have formal procedures for sharing hotline information among key staff should develop such procedures.
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- Foster parents need further training in registering foster children at school, even if they remain in the same school.
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- The District and Child Welfare need to work out clear guideline for transportation of students to their home schools and should commit needed monetary and staff resources.
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- The steering committee should continue to meet in the fall to track the progress of the protocol.

THE COURT IN ACTION: OUTSIDE -- WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Criminal Court: *“Project B.O.N.D”*
- Dependency Court:
 - *“Fostering Attachment Treatment Court”*
 - *“T.O.T”* drug court for pregnant moms
- Domestic Relations Cases: Zero to Three Protocol
- Court / Community Collaboration: *“Great Beginnings: Building the Foundation for Learning”*

KEY FINDINGS SYSTEMS CHANGE: NCJFCJ/ZTT 2008 Survey



Resources: Infants and Toddlers

- ▶ Dicker, Sheryl and Elysa Gordon, (January, 2004). *“Ensuring the Healthy Development of Infants in Foster Care: A Guide for Judges, Advocates and Child Welfare Professionals,”* ZERO TO THREE;
- ▶ Osofsky, Joy et.al, (Dec. 2002), *“Questions Every Judge and Lawyer Should Ask About Infants and Toddlers in the Child Welfare System,”* National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Technical Assistance Brief.
- ▶ Smariga, Margaret, (July, 2007) *“Visitation with Infants and Toddlers in Foster Care”* American Bar Association and ZERO TO THREE.
- ▶ Goldsmith, Douglas F., David Oppenheim, and Janine Wanlass. *“Separation and Reunification: Using Attachment Theory and Research to Inform Decisions Affecting the Placements of Children in Foster Care.”* *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 55(2), 2004, 1-13.

Resources

www.ncjfcj.org

www.zerotothree.org

Resources: School-age and Teens

- The National Child Traumatic Stress

Network, www.NCTSN.org

- EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE
 - Trauma facts for educators
 - Psychological and Behavioral Impact of trauma on:
elementary students, middle-school students, high school students
 - Coping with Trauma Reminders: Facts for Resource Parents