

The Four Building Blocks of HOPE

for medical providers

Research shows that positive childhood experiences (PCEs) help children grow into healthy, resilient adults. The HOPE framework centers around the Four Building Blocks of HOPE, key types of PCEs that all children need to thrive. This resource is designed to help medical providers increase access to the Building Blocks for the children they serve

Relationships



Safe and supportive relationships within the family and with other children and adults

Being in nurturing, supportive relationships are critical for children to develop into healthy, resilient adults. Individuals that recall having these types of relationships during childhood experience significantly lower rates of depression and poor mental health during adulthood.

What kinds of relationships are we talking about?

- Foundational relationships with parents who respond to a child's needs and offer warm, responsive reactions.
- Adults outside of the family who take a genuine interest in a child and support their growth and development.
- Healthy, close, and positive relationships with peers.

How can providers promote access to safe and supportive relationships?

- Ask caregivers about the types of positive relationships they may recall from childhood. Celebrate those with them! Encourage them to think about which components of those relationships they want to offer to their children.

- Share information about parent-child attachment. Validate and reflect back when you see warm reactions between parent and child.
- Ask about the positive adults in the child's life - coaches, teachers, pastors, mentors. Celebrate those with them and encourage them to think about which of the components of those relationships they want to offer their children.

Environments



Safe, stable, and equitable environments where children can live, learn, and play.

Children who live, learn, and play in safe, stable, and equitable environments are less likely to experience poor mental and physical health as adults.

What do we mean by safe, stable, and equitable environments?

- A safe, stable environment secure in meeting a child's basic needs, including adequate food, shelter, and health care.
- A nurturing home where a child is emotionally secure.
- A stable school environment where children feel valued and receive high-quality education.
- A community environment to play and interact with other children safely and equitably.

How can providers promote access to safe, stable, equitable environments?

- Ask about guns in the home. Have a conversation about gun safety and asking about guns in friends' homes.

- Ask about habitability of homes. Consider a partnership with a local legal aid clinic to draft a template letter for remediations that families can offer to their property owners if rentals are not meeting health codes.
- Provide information on local subsidized preschools, Early Head Start, and Head Start programs.

Engagement



Opportunities for social and civic engagement to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Children need to feel connected to their communities, loved, and appreciated. Involvement in social institutions and environments, awareness of cultural customs and traditions, and a sense that they matter and belong helps them develop into secure and resilient adults.

What are some examples of social and civic engagement?

- Being involved in projects, peer mentoring, or community service through one's school or religious organization.
- Participating in family and cultural traditions.
- Joining a music, art, or sports group.

How can providers promote access to social and civic engagement?

- Ask about what families do outside of school and work and delight with them around those activities.
- Have fliers available for Community Centers, after-school activities, and mentoring programs in your community.
- Suggest families create new after-school activities

Emotional Growth



Opportunities for emotional growth where children feel supported through difficult events and emotions.

Children need to have a lot of opportunities to develop their sense of self-awareness and social cognition, learn how to self-regulate emotions and behavior, and acquire skills needed to respond functionally and productively to challenges. Many of these skills arise during child-centered play.

Some children will pick up these skills naturally, but others may need adults to help them name and understand their own feelings. Either way, these skills are critical for children to be able to become resilient, emotionally healthy adults.

What do we mean by opportunities for social and emotional growth?

- Developing a sense of emotional and behavioral self-regulation.
- Having the ability to respond to challenges in a productive way.
- Developing key social and culturally-appropriate communication and interpersonal skills.

How can providers support social and emotional growth?

- Help a child name their feelings as they arise and talk about what that feeling feels like in the child's body.
- Proactively normalize disagreements in peer groups and share information about how to disagree respectfully and productively.
- Encourage social connection like you would encourage eating healthy foods or exercising.