

## HOPE-Informed Recommendations for Challenging Conversations



There are many conversations you might need to have with families that can be hard to engage in- conversations about suspected child abuse, co-sleeping, or even low engagement in services. We're going to walk through a three-step process that includes preparing the family or individual for the challenging conversation, actually engaging in the conversation, and then closing out the process.

### **Preparing for the conversation**

- Let the family know, clearly and directly, what you will be discussing
- Share your goal for the conversation; ask if they have goals
- Find a private space to talk
- Create room for breaks as needed

### **Engaging in the conversation**

- Briefly review the power of the brain to change
- Review the science of positive childhood experiences (PCEs) and the power to offset health outcomes
- Ensure you maintain a safe space to talk
- Engage in the conversation; remember, clear is kind

### **After the conversation**

- Recap what you heard and your understanding of next steps
- Review PCEs that you have seen in the family
- Celebrate with the parent the work they are already doing to create resilience and health for their children
- Ask the parent if they are interested in brainstorming more ways to create PCEs for their children
- Close with a positive, HOPE-Informed messaging

## HOPE-Informed Example of a Challenging Conversation



During the last several visits, you notice your client has placed her swaddled baby on a pillow with a bottle propped up on a towel when it's time to feed him. She has two other children under four in the home, and she uses this time to tidy the house, get some food, or play with her other children.

### Preparing for the conversation. You might say something like:

I'd love to talk about how you're feeding the baby. I know you have a lot on your plate right now. My goal is to help figure out how we can get you some more support around the house so you can do all of the things on your list while still being able to have that skin-to-skin connection during feeding time. Would that be something you'd be up for talking about?

I know it's just about time for the baby to be fed again. I can get the older kids started on a puzzle and then meet you on the couch for the feeding, if that works for you.

### Engaging in the conversation: You might say something like:

It's really inspiring to watch how important it is for you to stay connected to your older kids as they adjust to having a new baby in the house. I can see how hard you're working to help them feel connected and engaged in the family. I also see you hustling to make sure they have a safe and clean space to play. All of those things, your attention to your relationship with them, the way you keep them engaged, the focus on ensuring a safe environment at home, they all help those kids be healthier well into adulthood! It's amazing! AND ... the baby wants those things from you too! I see how quickly he soothes when you pick him up and pat his back. That relationship is growing so quickly. Can we brainstorm together about how we can help you have that important 1:1 time with him during more of his feeds?

### After the conversation: You might say something like:

It sounds like we have a plan that you're going to try over the next week. For at least two of the baby's feedings, you'll hold him, skin-to-skin, while you put on music for the older kids to have a little dance party or play a game like "I spy". The relationships you are deepening with each of your kids will help them grow into more resilient youth and adults! I'm always up for brainstorming more ways to create access to those key types of positive childhood experiences that help kids thrive, too. Maybe we can focus on other ideas next visit.