



Building a Healthy Community and Family: Concrete Supports for Parents

Many factors affect a family's ability to care for their children. Families who can meet their own basic needs for food, clothing, housing, and transportation—and who know how to access essential services such as child care, healthcare and mental health services to address family-specific needs—are better able to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. When parents do not have steady financial resources, lack health insurance, or suffer a family crisis such as a natural disaster, their ability to care for their children may be at risk.

Exploring Strengths and Needs

Parents need to identify their most critical basic needs and learn where to locate the concrete support(s) they need. This keeps a focus on family-driven solutions when problems arise. Use this checklist to help identify your family's most critical needs. Then, utilize community resources or contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to receive referrals to the essential services, supports and resources from which you may benefit.

In Order to Explore	Ask Yourself
Your view of the family's most immediate need	What do I need to be able to _____ (e.g., stay in my house, keep my job, pay our heating bill)?
Steps you have taken to deal with the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have I handled this? • What kind of response have I gotten? • Why is this working or not working?
Ways your family handles other problems; current connections that might offer help for the new problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has worked well in the past? • Are there community groups or local services that have been or might be able to offer assistance? • What other connections do I have (e.g., faith community, relationship with a pediatrician, local school)?
Other services and supports that would help your family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I thought about _____ (local program that provides housing, food, etc.)? • Do I know of other agencies that provide _____ (free homework help, meals on weekends, low-cost child care)?
Your desire and capacity to receive new services, including completing applications, keeping appointments and committing to the solution process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of help do I need to get to these appointments? • When times are best for me to meet with a social worker or another support person who could help me?

Linking Families With Services

- Parents may not be aware of services that could help. A social worker or counselor can let them know about all available resources, so they may select what is most appropriate for their needs.
- Parents are more likely to use culturally appropriate services. If they can be linked with a service provider who speaks their language or comes from a similar background, parents may feel more comfortable and experience a greater benefit.
- Parents with many needs may be overwhelmed by the different requirements for accessing various services. A *systems of care* approach may be most useful, in which different helping systems work together to support the family.

Building Community Services

- Linking parents with community leaders and others to organize support, advocacy and consulting groups gives parents the opportunity to use their experience to help others.
- Parents who go public with their need or cause usually find that they are not alone. The fact that a parent is willing to publicize a need or cause may mobilize the community.
- Parents who are new to advocacy may need help connecting with the media, businesses, funding and other parts of the community to have their needs heard and identify solutions.

Pathways to Well Being

800.383.1908

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