Promoting Resilience for Young Children in Families Experiencing Homelessness

Overview

- Developmental risks associated with homelessness
- Roots of resilience in early childhood
- Resilience in the context of homelessness
- Implications for practice and policy

Risk factors linked to homelessness

- **In parents**
  - Adverse childhood experiences
  - Recent negative life events
  - Poverty and sociodemographic risk
  - Incarceration
  - Domestic violence
  - Substance abuse problems
  - Low social support

Frequency of specific ACEs in homeless parents vs MN adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homeless Parents</th>
<th>MN Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse and Neglect</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Dysfunction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce/Seperation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Incarceration</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MN data from Minnesota Department of Health (2011)

ACE scores in homeless parents compared with national data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total ACEs</th>
<th>ACEs in Homeless Sample</th>
<th>ACEs in National Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National data retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/ace/prevalence.htm

Risk factors linked to homelessness

- **In children and youth**
  - Adverse childhood experiences
  - Poverty and sociodemographic risk
  - Incarceration of parents
  - Maltreatment
  - Family violence and family instability
  - School mobility
Homelessness and developmental risk

Developmental risk to
• Physical health
• Mental health
• Achievement

High cumulative risk
• Acute current risk on top of ongoing chronic risk
• More problems when cumulative risk is high

Cumulative risk

Risk Factors
• Low education
• Single parent
• Parent died
• Parents divorced
• Foster care
• Maltreatment
• Saw violence

Yet there also is variation within risk level

Reading scores 2005 to 2009

Data collected by schools
• Attendance
• Sociodemographic risk indicators (such as free lunch)
• School mobility
• School readiness (such as MPSI-R scores)
First grade reading skills

- Predict later achievement and growth in math, reading
- Show protective effects for high-risk students
  - Both free lunch and HHM identified

Herbers et al 2012 Educational Researcher

The short list: Hints from research on resilience

- Capable caregiving
- Other close relationships
- Problem-solving skills
- Self-regulation skills
- Self-efficacy
- Motivation to succeed
- Faith, hope, optimism
- Purpose/belief life has meaning
- Effective schools
- Well-functioning communities

Parallel Protective Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Resilience</th>
<th>Family Resilience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing, sensitive caregiving</td>
<td>Nurturing care of vulnerable members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment, security, belonging</td>
<td>Family cohesion, sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled parent management, discipline</td>
<td>Maintaining family boundaries, rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency, motivation to adapt</td>
<td>Active coping, mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving, planning</td>
<td>Collaborative problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation, emotion regulation</td>
<td>Co-regulation, family balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope, faith, optimism</td>
<td>Hope, faith, optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning making, life has meaning</td>
<td>Coherence, family meaning making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive views of the self or identity</td>
<td>Positive views of family/family identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines and rituals</td>
<td>Family routines and rituals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Masten 2018 Journal of Family Theory and Research

Roots of resilience in early childhood

- Prenatal health and well-being of mother
- Healthy growth and brain development of child
- Nutrition and health care (2 gen)
- Quality of caregiving and stimulation
- Early childhood education, opportunities for learning
- Family resilience
- Community support of families
- State and national policies that support families

Early childhood examples of malleable targets

- Food/nutrition/hunger
- Housing/homelessness
- School mobility
- Medical care
- Premature birth
- Income
- Toxic stress
- Parenting quality
- Access to quality ECE
- Quality of ECE
- Teacher-child relationships
- Child executive function

Families matter in multiple ways

- Nurture body, mind and spirit
- Secure base (emotional security)
- Economic security
- Regulate stress
- Influence gene expression
- Monitor environment for safety
- Foster learning and self-regulation skills
- Facilitate achievement of developmental tasks
- Broker resources (social capital)
- Transmit cultural capital
Roles of families in adversity exposure

- Gatekeeping and shielding
  - Preventing or reducing exposure
  - Monitoring exposure

- Preventing family stress spillover
  - Cascading effects of stress on family function
  - Terrified parents are terrifying to children

Parenting quality moderates risk in homeless families

- See Herbers et al. 2011, 2014

Parenting Resilience

"the capacity of parents to deliver competent, quality parenting to children despite adverse circumstances”
- Gavidia-Payne, Denny, Davis, Francis, & Jackson, 2015

- Social connectedness
- Family functioning
- Psychological well-being
- Self-efficacy

Child skills

- EXAMPLE Executive function skills (EF)
  - Neurocognitive processes that we use to direct attention, thoughts, or actions to achieve goals
  - Self-control

- Important for school success
  - pay attention, listen to teacher
  - control emotions and impulses
  - wait turn, sit on the circle
  - follow instructions
  - switch activities

Why EF?

- Resilience
- Learning
- Stress
- Good parenting
- Develop rapidly in preschool
- Malleable

EF skills predict school success

- Obradović 2010
- Masten et al. 2012
- Kalstabakken 2016

Academic Functioning

Cumulative Risk
Teachers and schools matter in multiple ways

- Basic needs
- Nurturing human and social capital
- Relationships with competent, caring adults
- Security and stability
- Opportunities for building self-efficacy
- After war/disaster…powerful symbols of return to normal
- Build resilience for the future in many ways

Communities matter

- Supports for families
- Supports for education
- Parks, libraries, recreation
- Health care
- Emergency services and disaster preparedness
- NGO + government services
- Policies and laws that support children & their families
- Traditions and rituals for overcoming stress
- Support for cultural practices and celebrations

“Sense of community” moderates link of ACEs to adult well-being

Nurius et al 2015

2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System BRFSS for Washington State (random dialing) N over 13,000

Resilience science has transformed practice in many fields

- Clinical psychology
- Pediatrics, Psychiatry
- School psychology
- Counseling
- Social work
- Family social science

Shifting the focus

- Positive outcomes
- Strength-based
- Promotive & protective processes
- Building capacity at multiple levels

Resilience Framework for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Frame positive goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Models</td>
<td>Include positive influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Assess assets &amp; positive goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Prevent - promote - protect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Multiple levels &amp; disciplines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 basic strategies to promote resilience

- Reduce or mitigate risk
- Boost resources and opportunities
- Mobilize power of “ordinary magic” resilience factors
Examples of Risk-focused strategies
- Prenatal care to prevent premature birth
- Reduce stress of pregnant women
- Screen and treat depression in mothers
- Reduce child maltreatment
- Avoid multiple foster care placements
- Reduce family violence
- Reduce school and neighborhood violence
- Clean up toxins
- Dig up landmines
- Prevent homelessness

Examples of Asset-focused strategies
- Food, water, shelter, medical care, dental care
- Educate parents, teachers, and traditional “first responders”
- Add financial resources
- Provide books or a tutor
- Quality childcare & early education programs
- Build schools, playgrounds, libraries
- Build or restore community services
- Stabilize housing, schooling, case managers
- Scholarships from early childhood to adulthood

Adaptive system focused strategies
Engage powerful engines of change
- Foster secure attachment relationships
- Promote bonds with competent/caring adults
- Support healthy family life and function
- Protect and nurture brain development
- Facilitate school bonding and engagement
- Foster friendships with prosocial peers
- Integrate systems of care
- Provide opportunities to succeed, develop talents...
- Support cultural traditions
  - To provide children with adaptive tools & connections with prosocial adults

Example
How can we promote school success in children from very high-risk homeless or highly mobile families?

Interventions to consider
- Reduce risk & stress
  - Reduce family stress; screen & treat depression in parents
  - Prevent homelessness episodes & school changes
  - Reduce hunger and food insecurity
  - Prevent family and community violence
- Increase resources & access
  - Financial supports, housing
  - Health care and mental health services
  - Quality childcare, early education, schools
  - Tutors, summer programs, computers, high speed internet
  - Family advocates
- Promote protective processes
  - Effective parenting, teaching, mentoring
  - Sleep
  - Self-regulation skills in children and parents
  - Opportunities to succeed and develop talents
  - Support families & cultural traditions that promote resilience

Promoting Sleep
- Parents and children function better with adequate sleep
- Education and trouble-shooting for parents
- Collaborative pilot project on sleep
  - Simpson staff, Dr. Andy Barnes, Masten students
  - Relaxation training, actigraphers
  - See Labella et al 2017 for highlights
- Podcast on this article also available (see resources last page of handout)
Parenting support and education

- Research is limited specific to homeless families
- Interests of parents
  - Stress reduction in the family
  - Access to good childcare and schools
  - School readiness and success
  - Promoting brain development
  - Child self-control

Ready? Set. Go! Intervention

Collaborative

- Developed in context
  - Focus groups with local educators
  - Insight and expertise from cooperating teachers
  - Focus groups and feedback from parents
- Design team
  - Teachers & researchers from U of M, community
  - Pooled expertise
- Community Advisory Board

Multiple components

- Curriculum and teacher training
- Parent training in family fun sessions
- Individual child coaching

Grand Challenge: End Student Homelessness

- Homework Starts with Home Research Partnership

Take-home messages

- Homelessness indicates academic & developmental risk
- Resilience can be promoted in children at risk
- Resilience of students depends on resilience of parents, families, schools, & communities
- All of our futures depends on nurturing resilience and mitigating risk
- Invest early in child development
Resources by Ann Masten (Selected)

RESILIENCE

Book

PopTech talk on resilience
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBMet8olvXQ

MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development (on line free material) topic on resilience
There is a summary and also articles by leading researchers. Masten edited this topic. http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/resilience/introduction (free to download complete topic)

Summary of the case for investing in young children globally

Articles (open access)

HOMELESSNESS

EDtalk on resilience in students experiencing homelessness given in Minneapolis Sep 25, 2017
https://www.achievempls.org/edtalks


***For additional articles and books search Google Scholar for Ann Masten***