



A Health Equity Approach to Support Children and their Families

National Academies of Science, Education and Medicine / October 10, 2019

Angelica Cardenas-Chaisson



Health Equity and Young Children Initiative

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant

Convene programs and practices from around the country with national experts to *highlighting and refine best practices across their work, and broadly share findings, lessons learned and resources developed.*

Health Equity and Young Children

Exemplary Programs and Practices

National Presence

1. **Child First**, *Connecticut National Office*
2. **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems**, *NICHQ National Office; Florida site*
3. **Healthy Steps**, *DC National Office; Illinois site*
4. **Help Me Grow**, *Connecticut National Office*
5. **Project DULCE**, *Center for the Study of Social Policy National Office; Vermont site*
6. **Medical-Legal Partnerships**, *GWU National Office; Chicago site*
7. **Safe Environment for Every Kid (SEEK)**, *University of Maryland*

State and Local Presence

8. **Healthy Development Services**, *San Diego, AAP - California Chapter 3*
9. **Maricopa Integrated Health System Medical Home**, *Arizona*
10. **MYCHILD & Project LAUNCH**, *Boston, MA*
11. **Primary Health Care, Inc.**, *Des Moines, Iowa*
12. **The Children's Clinic, Serving Children and Their Families**, *Long Beach, California*

Health Equity and Young Children

Exemplary Programs and Practices

- Programs have a long history of **engaging directly with diverse families** struggling to address social and economic issues.
- They **collaborate** with health providers and/or social service organization, family support and early care and education to connect with families with young children who are struggling.
- They **intentionally work at connecting families** to resources and linking community resources.

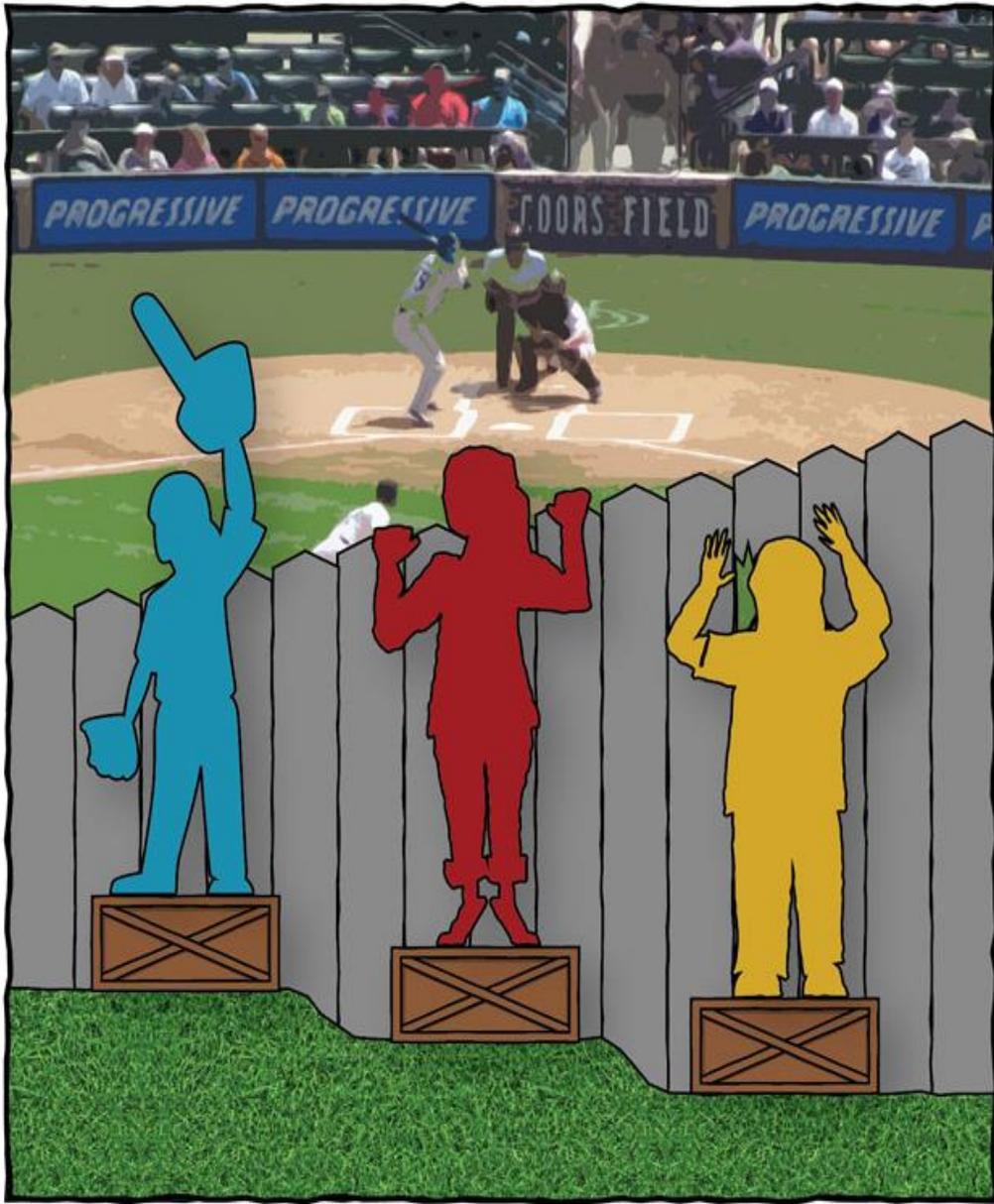
Health Equity and Young Children

Exemplary Programs and Practices

- All share four common elements:
 - **Health Equity Approach**
 - Family Engagement
 - Care Coordination
 - Community Linkages

Defining Health Equity

- Health disparities are defined as **differences that are systematic and plausibly avoidable**. They may reflect socioeconomic, racial-ethnic, or other social disadvantages and discriminations.
- Achieving the highest level of health for all people health equity entails focused societal efforts to **address avoidable inequalities** by equalizing the conditions for health for all groups, especially for those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage or historical injustices.
(Healthy People 2020)

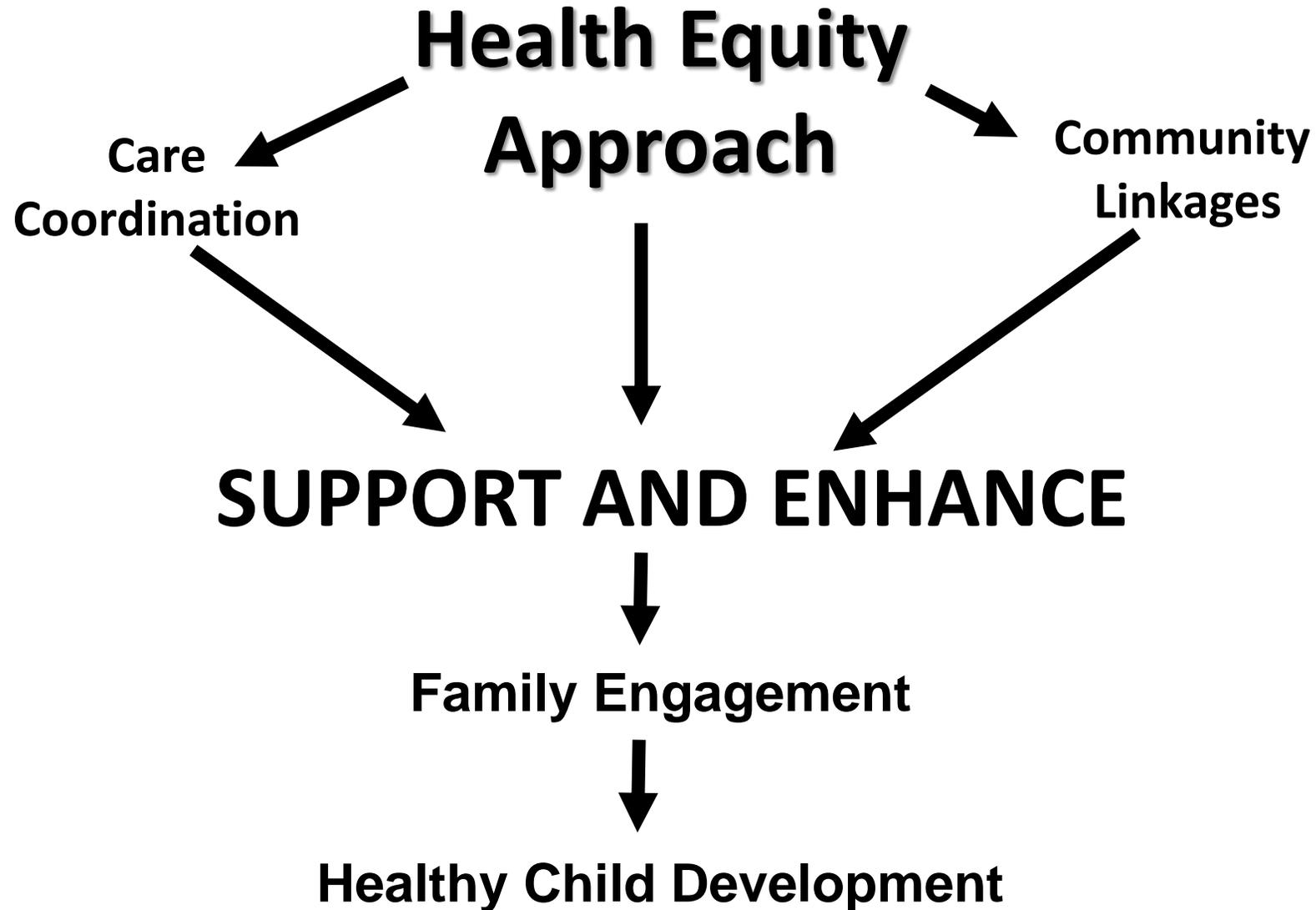


EQUALITY



EQUITY

Supporting Healthy Child Development





Health Equity Approach

Importance of a Comprehensive Health Equity Approach

- Children don't live in a vacuum – they are part of a family, culture and community around them.
- A child's culture is formed by language, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and socioeconomic status.
- Experiences they have in their family and environment, good or bad, affect their health trajectory.
- A comprehensive equitable service approach assesses child and family needs in the context of their cultures and provides services to the whole family.

Importance of a Comprehensive Health Equity Approach

- Any approach can only be effective if it takes into account the family's:
 - **culture/race**
 - socio-economic status
 - access

Health Equity Strategies

Moving Away from a “Cookie Cutter” Approach

- **Data collection:** know how all families in your community is doing (ongoing process as community changes)
- Hire **staff from diverse backgrounds** – represent the community
- Staff **training on cultural competency** – ongoing process
- Build **family input** into policies and programming to be more effective.
- **Build processes** regularly that inform how effective policies and strategies are in supporting all families



Perspective of the State of
Mental, Emotional, and
Behavioral Health for
Children and Youth

Strengths

- **Significant research** in the area of neuroscience and the social sciences that support a systemic equitable approach to engaging and supporting families.
- The value of using a health equity approach is **evidence based** and **shared across fields**.
 - education, juvenile justice, health ...
- There has been development of a critical understanding that effective health equity approaches are **interdisciplinary and cross systemic** – when working with children, there needs to be a comprehensive approach – **comprehensive view of what child health means**.

Weakness

- While many people agree on the value of a health equity approach in supporting children's mental, emotional and behavioral health, some decision makers have not bought into it – despite data and research.
- Lack of action to move beyond looking at data on how specific populations in communities are doing.
- Paralysis – waiting for better data or data that will never be available.
- Data used without connecting it to real stories, real children and their families – minimizes the true impact and reduces the urgency.

Opportunities

- Increased awareness of health equity – most organizations that work with families and children are talking about it.
- More trainings available on the topic.
- Part of core competencies requirements for staff and organizations.
- Increased interest on data and the story that data tells about a community, a state or the nation.
- **Increased understanding that all policy is health policy and that good health policy must be equitable and serve fairly children and their families - families and children get what they need to succeed.**

Threat

- Current political environment.
- Increase (or at least more open) pushback on equity-based approaches. E.g.; increase tolerance for white supremacy; decrease support for restorative approaches.
- Dismantling of federal civil rights mechanisms to address disparate impact e.g.; health equity policies (defunding of civil rights compliance)

“There’s an ingrained societal suspicion that intentionally supporting one group hurts another. That equity is a zero sum game. In fact, when the nation targets support where it is needed most — when we create the circumstances that allow those who have been left behind to participate and contribute fully — everyone wins. The corollary is also true: When we ignore the challenges faced by the most vulnerable among us, those challenges, magnified many times over, become a drag on economic growth, prosperity, and national well-being.”

— **Angela Glover Blackwell, “The Curb-Cut Effect”**

acardenas@cfpciowa.org

Child and Family Policy Center

505 5th Ave., Ste. 404 / Des Moines, IA 50309 / (515) 280-9027

Let's stay in touch



www.cfpciowa.org



A Deeper Dive



@childfampolicy



cfpciowa