

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
Community Forum Notes
December 14, 2018

“Reimagining How We Support Children in Our Community”

*The notes below are from workgroup conversations where attendees discussed the individual protective factors as a group.

*It is also important to note that these workgroup conversations were held after watching a video of interviews with children (4-12 years of age) and within the context of defining a healthy family as having each of the protective factors and not defining a healthy family as a family unit with no challenges or problems.

The 5 Protective Factors:

Children’s Social & Emotional Development

“Parents help their children learn how to communicate”

- Parents model accountability and being authentic with their children
- Including children in conversation is important
- Positive reinforcement of good communication skills, for both children & parents, is important
- Community support to families and connecting families to each other to help build and reinforce positive communication and relationships
- Practice modeling kindness to both children & parents
- Parents and community can introduce and reinforce the concepts of resilience and emotion/body awareness

Social Connections

“Parents Need Friends”

- Supporting parents in building their “network” of support
- Resources and services are important, social networks must extend beyond providers to be sustainable and healthy
- Communities can provide safe and accessible events, spaces, and opportunities for families to connect with one another
- Communities can provide accessible transportation options for families to get around
- Trust is key to social connections and trust is hard to develop when parents have been hurt or treated poorly in the past

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

“Being a Parent is part natural & part learned”

- Our children understand that their own parents have learned about how to be a parent from watching their parents while they were growing up.
- It is important for parents to have age appropriate expectations of what a child can do and is supposed to do, the community can help reinforce what is appropriate through education and conversation with parents.
- Kids NEED to play....it is how they learn.

- Making sure that parents have the opportunity to access informational classes and groups to learn about parenting... the community can support this through the normalization of the need to learn how to be a parent.
- Helping parents to understand that they are raising “another parent”.

Parental Resilience

“Being strong & flexible”

- Children need to feel safe in times of trouble and have confidence that their parents are able to handle the situation.
- Parents communicating, in an age appropriate way, the challenges that the family may be facing to include the children and help them understand what is going on.
- Children’s perspective is that parents, when handling major challenges and stressful situations, “keep things normal” is important...parents being consistent despite the circumstances.
- Communities can help support parents in their ability to be resilient by providing concrete supports when needed and by developing strong “neighborhoods” for families to live in where they feel connected and supported.
- Communities being trauma informed will help parents and children to be successful in developing resilience.

Concrete Supports in Times of Need

“We all need help sometimes”

- Building human connections within a community is key.
- Communities and families know what a “concrete support” is and using asset based parent-education and skill building.
- Helping parents to take steps to access and utilize resources, building their skills and helping change to be sustainable and successful.
- Providing opportunities for parents, within the community, to access help when needed and reciprocate to help others.
- Communities can normalize the need to ask for help, by recognizing that everyone, regardless of economic or social status, asks for help in different ways and that is OK.