

Integrating Social Determinants of Health Into Health Supervision Visits

Health starts in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. We know that taking care of ourselves by eating well and staying active, not smoking, getting the recommended immunizations and screening tests, and seeing a doctor when we are sick all influence our health. Our health is also determined in part by access to social and economic opportunities; the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships. The conditions in which we live explain in part why some Americans are healthier than others and why Americans more generally are not as healthy as they could be.¹

Bright Futures Guidelines promote the lifelong health of children and families by considering the many contexts in which people live. By integrating the social determinants of health into health supervision visits, health care practices can take a broad view of the circumstances in a family's life and offer strategies that enhance its health and wellness.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

Social determinants of health are the web of interpersonal and community relationships experienced by children, parents, and families. They can include strengths and protective factors and risk factors.

Strengths and protective factors and risk factors emerge from parents, families, and communities (see table on page 2).

Children exposed to stable, safe, and nurturing environments can typically develop into resilient and healthy adolescents and adults. However, children who are exposed to excessive and repeated stress in their family and social relationships are at elevated risk for disrupted development and long-term negative consequences. These adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) harm both physical and mental health.

Although social determinants are not new to health care professionals, new science underpins their importance and provides evidence for effective interventions. For example, abuse and neglect have long-term effects on brain development and increase the likelihood of behavioral disorders in the child. In addition, families with less access to healthful food (food insecurity) are more likely to buy

and consume less expensive foods, which are often lower in nutritional value but more calorically dense than more expensive foods.

SUPPORT FAMILIES BY ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The Bright Futures health supervision visits provide opportunities to identify and address the social determinants of health through screening and anticipatory guidance for

ABOUT BRIGHT FUTURES

Bright Futures is a national health promotion and prevention initiative, led by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration. The *Bright Futures Guidelines* provide theory-based and evidence-driven guidance for all preventive care screenings and well-child visits. Bright Futures content can be incorporated into many public health programs such as home visiting, child care, school-based health clinics, and many others. Materials developed especially for families are also available. Learn more about Bright Futures and get Bright Futures materials by visiting brightfutures.aap.org.



	Strengths and Protective Factors	Risk Factors
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to access concrete support in times of need • Social connections • Knowledge of parenting and child development • Personal resilience • Ability to enhance social and emotional competence of children • Ability to foster nurturing and attachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental dysfunction, separation, or divorce • Few social or community connections • Limited knowledge of parenting • Difficulty with nurturing or fostering attachment
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing adults who sensitively and consistently respond to their children's needs • Stable, predictable, and consistent physical, social, and emotional family environments • Freedom from fear and protection from physical or psychological harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few adults who can provide a nurturing and responsive environment • Family tobacco, alcohol, or drug use • Abuse or neglect • Unstable physical, social, and emotional family environments
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe neighborhoods • Safe and high-quality schools • Stable and safe housing • Access to nutritious food • Access to job opportunities and transportation • Access to medical care, including behavioral health and wellness care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Food insecurity • Housing insecurity • Unsafe neighborhoods • Unsafe and low-quality schools • Limited employment and transportation opportunities • Lack of access to medical care and social services

family members. By using the tools and steps identified for health supervision visits, health care professionals can comprehensively support patients and their families.

Identify and address strengths and protective factors and risk factors

- Ask about strengths and protective factors, such as strong family relationships, good connections with friends and community, supportive cultural traditions, and availability of quality child care. Provide positive feedback on what families are doing well and offer additional suggestions, as appropriate.
- Ask about risk factors, such as lack of personal or community safety; housing, food, or job insecurity; transportation problems; prenatal history that may pose risks (including maternal malnutrition; intrauterine exposure to toxins; prenatal alcohol, drug, or tobacco use; and birth trauma). Consider family tobacco use, maternal depression, family substance abuse, and mental health issues. Consider ACEs that may affect an adult's ability to be a responsible parent. Provide suggestions to help families cope and offer referrals for assistance, as needed.

Establish shared decision-making and use motivational interviewing, as appropriate

- When beginning the process, identify goals for the family:
 - Greet each member of the family by name.
 - Allow child and parents to state concerns without interruption.
 - Acknowledge concerns, fears, and feelings.
 - Show interest and attention.
 - Demonstrate empathy.
 - Use plain language; avoid medical jargon.
 - Query patient's and family's level of understanding and allow sufficient time for response.
 - Encourage questions and answer them directly and completely.
- Jointly develop a simple and achievable plan of action based on the stated goals:
 - Make sure that each participant helped develop the plan.

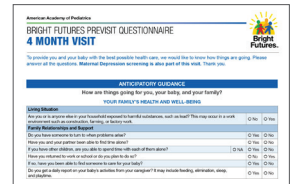
- Use family-friendly negotiation skills to reach an agreement.
- Set measurable goals with a specific timeline.
- Develop a follow-up plan.

MAKE THE MOST OF HEALTH SUPERVISION VISITS BY USING THE *BRIGHT FUTURES* TOOL & RESOURCE KIT

Provide effective coordination of care by identifying and referring to services in the community

- Learn about the family's community, understand its cultures and resources, and collaborate with community partners. Consider establishing a designated practice care coordinator who can establish and maintain collaborative partnerships in the community.
- Recognize the special needs of certain groups (eg, people who have recently immigrated to the United States, families of children with special health care needs).
- Link families to needed services.
- Establish relationships and partnerships with organizations and agencies that serve as local community resources, including schools, early care and education programs, community food programs, and medical-legal partnerships.
- Encourage adoption of referral networks that have demonstrated effective partnership with the medical home and parents of young children.
- Consult with and advocate for groups and organizations that serve the community such as schools, community recreation agencies, businesses, and faith-based groups.
- Encourage parents to find support in family, friends, and their neighborhood.
- Encourage families and all children, especially adolescents, to become involved in local activities to improve the health of their communities.
- Consider co-locating mental health, care coordination, oral health, legal, social service, or parenting education professionals in the medical home to address unmet needs of families.
- Describe successful medical home partnerships with community professionals and programs that have demonstrated effectiveness with specific populations (eg, home visiting).
- Work with community education and mental health professionals to ensure access to family-focused prevention programs that have been demonstrated to be effective in both reducing risk factors and enhancing protective factors for behavioral health. These could be integrated into medical homes or be represented in the community.

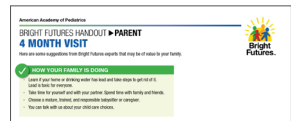
The *Bright Futures Tool & Resource Kit*, 2nd Edition, provides the tools and materials health care professionals need to conduct preventive health supervision and health screening for infants, children, and adolescents. The toolkit's Core Tools are the **Previsit Questionnaire, Visit Documentation Forms, and Parent-Patient Handouts**. In almost every visit, these tools inquire about social determinants of health; this information gives clinicians and families an entry point for conversation and shared decision-making, gives clinicians a way to monitor families' risk and protective factors, and gives families an avenue for additional education.



Example: 4 Month Visit Previsit Questionnaire



Example: 4 Month Visit Documentation Form



Example: 4 Month Visit Parent Handout



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [STAR Center](#). This AAP website provides resources and training about screening for social determinants of health for the entire practice team, including [Screening-time.org](#)—an interactive e-learning course.
- [AAP Community Pediatrics](#). This AAP website promotes and integrates the positive social, cultural, and environmental influences on children's health.
- Bright Futures/AAP [Periodicity Schedule](#). This schedule is an easy way for health care professionals to stay up to date with AAP recommendations for health supervision screenings and assessments.

REFERENCE

1. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2020: [Social Determinants of Health](#)*. Last updated April 24, 2019.



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