



Wellness-Oriented Trauma-Informed Community (WOTIC) Resilient Youth and Families Guide

A product of the Ardmore Behavioral Health Collaborative in partnership with the National Council for Behavioral Health

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Introduction

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014), individual trauma results from "an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being. In a monumental research study (1997) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente, known as the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study, it was established that adverse childhood experiences, also known as traumatic events, were correlated to poor health, social, mental, emotional and behavioral outcomes as well as early death.

According to America's Health Rankings (2016), Oklahoma is ranked 50 out of 50 in terms of childhood adversity, with 32.9 percent of youth ages 0 -17 having experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences. Carter County, Okla., ranks 64 out of 77 in health outcomes (University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, County Health Rankings 2017), which is likely associated with higher adverse childhood experiences. To improve these health outcomes, the Ardmore Behavioral Health Collaborative was created. The Ardmore Behavioral Health Collaborative partnered with the National Council for Behavioral Health to provide training and consultation to promote a wellness-oriented trauma-informed Carter County.

The goal of trauma recovery is to improve and increase wellness and resilience. Wellness is defined as the presence of purpose in life, active involvement in satisfying work and play, joyful relationships, a healthy body and living environment and happiness (SAMHSA, 2014).

There are eight dimensions of wellness, according to SAMHSA:

1. Emotional – Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.
2. Environmental – Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.
3. Financial – Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.
4. Intellectual – Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.
5. Occupational – Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work.
6. Physical – Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods and sleep.

7. Social – Developing a sense of connection, belonging and a well-developed support system.
8. Spiritual – Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2018), resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences (APA, 2018). A combination of factors contributes to resilience. Many studies show that the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust, provide role models and offer encouragement and reassurance help bolster a person's resilience. According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, these relationships are the foundation for resilience, providing the protection that is needed to buffer developmental disruptions and helping build adaptive skills, e.g., the ability to plan, monitor and self-regulate behavior. Several factors are associated with resilience, including:

- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.
- The ability to mobilize sources of faith, hope and cultural traditions.

Protective factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or the larger society that, when present, promote well-being and reduce the risk for negative outcomes. These factors may “buffer” the effect of risk exposure and help individuals and families negotiate difficult circumstances and fare better in school, work and life (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). Focusing on protective factors offers a way to track progress by increasing resilience in the short term and contributing to the development of skills, personal characteristics, knowledge, relationships and opportunities that offset risk exposure and contribute to improved well-being.

Top 10 Protective Factors with the Strongest Evidence for Children and Youth (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015)

<p>Individual Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self-regulation skills ➤ Relational skills ➤ Problem-solving skills ➤ Involvement in positive activities 	<p>Relationship Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parenting competencies ➤ Positive peers ➤ Caring adult
<p>Community Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Positive community environment ➤ Positive school environment ➤ Economic opportunities 	

Purpose of this guide

The Wellness-Oriented Trauma-Informed Carter County Resilient Youth and Families (WOTIC-RYF) Workgroup of the Ardmore Behavioral Health Collaborative, envisions a Carter County with healthy youth and families that have wrap-around supportive and preventive services.

As such, they identified that all services should be:

- Child-centered and family-focused, with the needs of the child and family dictating the types and mix of services provided.
- Home and community-based, with the majority of services being provided in home and community-based settings.
- Wellness-oriented, trauma-informed, resilience-focused and culturally-competent, and guided by trauma-informed principles of safety, collaboration, trust and transparency, empowerment, voice and choice, peer support and responsiveness to the cultural, gender-specific, racial and ethnic differences of the populations they serve.

The WOTIC-RYF Workgroup also recommended that service systems ensure that:

- All children have access to a comprehensive array of resilience-focused services that address all aspects of the child's wellness, including their physical, emotional, social and educational needs.
- All children receive individualized services in accordance with the unique needs and potential of each child guided by an individualized service plan.
- All children receive services within the least restrictive, most normative environment that is clinically appropriate.
- The families and surrogate families of all children fully participate in all aspects of the planning and delivery of services.
- All children receive services that include links between child-serving agencies and programs with mechanisms for planning, developing and coordinating services.
- All children are provided with an advocate or similar mechanism to ensure that multiple services are delivered in a coordinated and therapeutic manner and they can move through the service system in accordance with their changing needs.
- All children receive services that ensure early identification and evidence-based interventions to enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes.
- All children are assured of smooth transitions to the adult service system as they reach maturity.
- The rights of all children are protected and effective advocacy efforts are promoted for all children and youth.

- All children receive services without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, physical disability or other characteristics, and services are sensitive and responsive to cultural differences and special needs.

With these things in mind, the WOTIC-RYF Workgroup created a guide for individuals working with children, youth and families to ensure that all children have access to the services and supports they need to lead productive lives. The WOTIC-RYF approach can be used in any setting serving children and families, typically without making huge changes in daily practice. Programs seeking to align their practice with WOTIC-RYF will find concrete recommendations within this guide on implementing the seven individual and relationship-level protective factors. The Ardmore Behavioral Health Collaborative is working on three community-level protective factors and, therefore, those factors will not be addressed in this guide. The WOTIC-RYF Workgroup highly recommends that programs elicit ideas and recommendations directly from the youth and parents/caregivers they serve. Engaging youth and parents/caregivers in leading or participating in identifying resilience-building factors that will improve the process and outcomes and increase buy-in.

Individual Protective Factors

The individual protective factors that follow have been correlated to positive outcomes such as resiliency, having supportive friends, positive academic performance, improved cognitive functioning and better social skills. These protective factors have also been shown to be connected to reductions in trauma-related disorders, stress, anxiety, depression and delinquency.

Self-Regulation Skills

Self-regulation skills refer to a youth’s ability to manage or control emotions and behaviors, which can include self-mastery, anger management, character, long-term self-control and emotional intelligence.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH?	EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth are able to demonstrate self-control, e.g., being able to stay at their desk or walk in the line in the hallways. • Youth are able to monitor and control behavior, attention, motor output, emotions and social interactions. • Youth are able to maintain their composure, even in environments that have high stimuli. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach and infuse calming techniques into your interactions with youth, e.g., grounding techniques or breathing exercises. • Teach and utilize self-awareness exercises into your interactions with youth. • Introduce and utilize mindfulness activities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth are able to problem solve or ask for help when needed. • Youth are able to attend to assigned tasks and testing situations within and outside of the classroom. • Youth are able to effectively manage difficult relationships with teachers, school leaders, staff and other students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use games and therapy tools that support planning, problem-solving, memory, attention, motor control and sequencing. • Coach youth through difficult situations. • Provide validation and teach self-validation. • Allow for breaks or time-outs if a child needs to self-regulate.
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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Are there strategies or techniques you use to manage your behaviors or emotions? Can you share one or two?
- Are there particular strategies you use to block out noise or stimuli that help you to better concentrate? Can you describe the strategies you use?
- What strengths do you have that help you manage your emotions in difficult situations?
- Is there a role model in your life: A parent/caregiver, teacher, friend who you look to as an example for how to manage behaviors and emotions?
- As a parent/caregiver, what are the strategies or techniques you teach your child to help them manage their behaviors or emotions? Can you describe one or two?

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Zones of regulation.
- Play games, e.g., Red Light, Green Light; Musical Chairs; Simon Says; Freeze Tag; Duck, Duck Goose; or Hide and Seek.
- Encourage families to have a family fun night when they play games together that model self-regulation skills, e.g., Bop It, Simon, Operation, Jenga, dancing, etc.
- Engage in reset activities.
- Mindfulness activities.
- Breathing exercises.
- Brain breaks.
- Infuse exercise into your time with youth and families, e.g., walking while talking.
- Grounding techniques.

Relational Skills

Relational skills refer to a youth’s ability to form positive bonds and connections (e.g. social competence, caring for others, forming prosocial relationships) as well as demonstrate effective interpersonal skills (e.g., communication skills and conflict-resolution skills).

<p>WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth have attachment to at least one healthy adult. • Youth have at least one good friend. • Youth have good connections with teachers and other school personnel, babysitters, relatives and others in their environment. • Youth are able to resolve conflict in a healthy way. • Youth are able to express their emotions either verbally or in writing. 	<p>EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model good communication and conflict-resolution skills. • Model trauma-related universal precautions. • Explore friendships. • Provide empathy. • Provide unconditional positive regard. • Allow youth to vent or express their emotions in a safe place. • Build natural supports.
<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you typically spend your free time: with friends, engaging in outdoor or sports activities, inside on your phone or playing video games? • What do you think is a “good friend?” • Would you say you have a good friend? How do you know they are a good friend? • If you had a problem or concern, is there someone you could talk with about it? • Do you feel like there is a teacher at school who believes in you and wants you to succeed? • As a parent/caregiver, are there ways you support your child in relationships and engagement in social activities? 	
<p>ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative justice practices, including care circles. • Introduce journaling. • Introduce and encourage family game night. • Introduce and encourage no cell phone meals. • Practice different communication skills and games. • Practice conflict resolution skills through games, therapy, etc. • Teach and practice trauma-related universal precautions. 	

Problem-Solving Skills

Problem-solving skills refer to a youth’s adaptive functioning skills and ability to solve problems.

<p>WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth has supportive friends. • Youth has positive academic performance. • Youth has good cognitive functioning. 	<p>EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach problem-solving skills using role play and other interactive techniques. • Use examples of real-life situations to teach problem-solving skills.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth has good social skills. • Youth has the ability to come up with solutions to problems. • Youth utilizes creative and critical thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your confidence in the child’s abilities to do well. • Teach brainstorming. • Use open-ended questions to continue to promote thinking. • Promote child’s self-confidence, connectedness to others, commitment to people and tasks and engagement in activities. • Teach parents/caregivers to establish clear standards and boundaries. • Teach parents/caregivers how to appropriately discipline and nurture the child. • Teach parents/caregivers self-care and wellness strategies.
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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES

- When you are faced with a problem to solve, what do you do?
- Do you have a friend or friends you can rely on for support?
- How would you describe your performance in school?
- Can you rely on one or both of your parents/caregivers for support and guidance?
- Who do you look to when you have a problem to solve?
- What do you think is your biggest strength when faced with a difficult situation?

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Chores.
- Home schedules.
- Escape rooms.
- Treasure hunts.
- *Parenting with Love and Logic* (loveandlogic.com) trainings, books and techniques.
- Obstacle courses.
- Game night (provide specific games that use problem-solving strategies).
- Logic puzzles.
- Puzzles.
- Educate families and providers on age appropriate expectations.
- Brainstorm barriers to problem-solving.

Involvement in Positive Activities

Involvement in positive activities refers to school connectedness, commitment and engagement.

<p>WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH/FAMILIES?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth has identifiable interests and involvement in school, sports, theatre or other extracurricular activities. • Youth enjoys spending time with family or friends engaging in various activities, e.g., playing board games or video games, going to the movies, watching sports, bowling, hiking, going to the park. • Youth has an after-school job or volunteer work. • Youth has the ability to stick with a project, sport or other positive activity they are interested in. • Parents/caregivers are engaged and supportive of the youth's extracurricular activities. • Parents/caregivers and youth engage in healthy, fun activities together. • Parents/caregivers model a healthy lifestyle. 	<p>EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a variety of activities offered by the school and in the community for referral purposes. • Thoroughly explore the interests of the child to identify potential positive activities. • Teach parents/caregivers how to explore the youth's interests and encourage engagement in family or friend-focused activities. • Teach youth and parents/caregivers about the value and benefits of engaging in positive activities. • Help parents/caregivers and youth understand the benefits of participating in group activities and of maintaining a commitment to tasks and activities such as sports. • Work with parents/caregivers toward improving their wellness.
<p>QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you participate in any in-school or after-school activities? If so, which ones? If not, why not? • Are there activities in your community you would like to participate in? • What are the barriers to getting involved in enjoyable activities? • Do you have friends you connect with during in-school or after-school activities? • How do you usually feel after participating in a group activity? • What do you think the benefits are of participating in group activities? • As a parent/caregiver, what types of activities do you engage in to relieve stress? • As a parent/caregiver, what activities do you find enjoyable? • What activities does your child find enjoyable and how often do they engage in these? • What fun activities do you like to do with your parent/child? • How often do you engage in those fun activities together? • Are you familiar with the benefits of engaging in positive family activities and is your child easily engaged in these? 	
<p>ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service hours. • Mentor programs. • School ambassadors (welcome new students). 	

- Sister school programs.
- Community projects.
- Pen pal projects.
- Brainstorm barriers to involvement in positive activities.

Relational Protective Factors

Each of the relational protective factors that follow have been shown to have positive impacts on numerous well-being outcomes. For example, parenting competencies have been linked to increases in self-esteem, lower risk of antisocial behavior, lower likelihood of running away and teen pregnancy, reductions in child behavior problems, increases in social skills, better psychological adjustment and reductions in internalizing behaviors.

Parenting Competencies

For youth of all ages, the competencies of the parent/caregiver include parenting skills (e.g., establishing clear standards and limits, discipline and proper care), positive parent-child interactions (e.g., sensitive, supportive or caring parenting and close relationships between parent and child) and resilience and well-being of the parent and other caregivers. These competencies are related to increased resilience in children, fewer conduct problems, better social relationships and better behavioral health outcomes for their children. The well-being of the parent refers to the parents/caregivers' own positive psychological functioning (e.g., lower rates of depression and other mental health problems of mothers), well-being and social supports.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH/FAMILIES?	EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/caregivers exhibit strength and flexibility to general life stress. • Parents/caregivers recognize and value their unique strengths. • Parents/caregivers identify themselves as hopeful, optimistic and confident. • Parents/caregivers have strong problem-solving skills. • Parents/caregivers practice regular self-care to keep stress from interfering with nurturing their child. • Parents/caregivers identify realistic expectations for their child's development. • Parents/caregivers practice positive discipline techniques to effectively manage their child's behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honor each family's race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting. • Encourage and support parents/caregivers ability to manage stress effectively. • Support parents/caregivers as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills. • Provide a welcoming and supportive environment. • Build relationships with parents/caregivers. • Involve parents/caregivers in decisions about their children and program.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/caregivers recognize and respond appropriately to their child’s specific developmental needs. • Parents/caregivers encourage and reinforce their child’s positive social skills and set limits in a positive way. • Parents/caregivers help their child manage and communicate their feelings. • Parents/caregivers teach and encourage their child to solve problems in age-appropriate ways. • Parents/caregivers provide regular routine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help parents/caregivers understand how to support and protect their child during stressful times. • Provide information and resources on parenting and child development. • Provide information and resources on building resilience in children. • Encourage parents/caregivers to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies. (What helps? What hurts? What do parents/caregivers need to stop doing, start doing and do more of?) • Address parenting and caregiving issues and try out new strategies. • Share observations with parents/caregivers about the child’s strengths and their strengths. • Teach parents/caregivers about the power of utilizing the language of resilience. • Make information available in parent’s or caregiver’s home language. • Help parents/caregivers understand developmentally appropriate social and emotional skills and behaviors. • Educate parents/caregivers how to encourage children to express feelings through words, artwork and expressive play. • Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society. • Respond proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support. • Create an environment where children feel safe to express their emotions. • Provide child care and food for parents/caregivers at events at school. • Provide outlets for parents/caregivers (through school sanctioned events) for parenting education, positive engagement activities with other parents and caregivers in their community to develop support networks.
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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Where does your strength come from? Describe how this helps you parent?
- What are your aspirations for yourself and family?
- What do you find most stressful on a daily basis? How do you typically manage life stressors?
- In what ways does your partner, spouse or closest friend support you? Who and what helps you reduce stress?
- How can you challenge negative thoughts using the four critical thinking questions? What is the evidence this belief is true? What is the evidence this belief is false? What is the worst that could happen if things don't go the way they want them to go? What good could come of this?
- What is your child's favorite thing to do? What do you like most about it?
- What do you like about being a parent/caregiver?
- How and where did you learn about parenting?
- What has been most helpful to you as a parent/caregiver?
- How do you continue to learn about parenting skills and your child's development?
- How do you like to receive new information: reading articles on your phone, printed materials, attending a training, watching a video?
- Are there things that worry you about your child's development or behavior?
- What are some things you find challenging as a parent/caregiver?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your child?
- How would you describe the emotional relationship between you and your child?
- How does your child know that you are expressing love and affection?
- Do you know your child's love language? Do you express your love and affection for them in that language? If so, how?
- How would you describe the situations when it is hard to deal with your child's emotions?
- Is home a safe environment and is it safe for your child to express their emotions?
- How do you know when your child or teen is happy, sad or hurt?
- How do you talk to your child about feelings? How do you comfort your child?
- Do you have clear expectations and limits (e.g., people in our family do not hurt each other)?
- How many people provide care for your child? How well do you know them and how often do these people change?
- How does your child's ability to manage emotions and get along with peers compare to other children the same age?

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Seek partners in the community that offer programs to help families manage stress and deal with crises. Ask if these programs can offer discounts or free counsel to some of your families.
- Identify competencies of potential growth and brainstorm ways in which these can be achieved.
- Highlight simple and fun "stress-busters" each month or visit, e.g., relaxation techniques while driving, exercises you can do before bed to unwind, scents associated with relaxation, breathing or grounding techniques to be used at any time.

- Create a large mural using sticky notes where parents/caregivers and staff can share their own self-care strategies with each other. Compile regularly and share the compiled list with staff and parents/caregivers.
- Have parents/caregivers create a list of stressors and identify ways to reduce stress and stay calm in each of these scenarios.
- Ask families to give ideas on activities they would find most helpful to do around resilience and how the program or community could help facilitate those activities.
- Provide concrete tools for reducing stress such as goal setting worksheets, budget forms, journals, daily planners and other organization tools.
- Help parents/caregivers identify their unique character strengths and how they can use them when managing stress.
- Validate strengths and good decisions to build parents/caregivers confidence and help motivate them to learn new skills when needed.
- Work with and view parents/caregivers as partners and solicit their knowledge and expertise in how they have dealt with daily stressors in their lives to help other parents/caregivers in similar situations.
- Seek partners in the community, including places of worship, schools and community groups, that offer parenting programs, local parenting groups or parent coaching. Ask if these programs can offer discounts or free counsel to some of your families.
- Highlight simple and fun parenting tips each month or visit, e.g., positive discipline techniques for the grocery store or going out to dinner. Connect why children exhibit these behaviors and the importance of teachable moments.
- Train staff how to approach parents/caregivers when the expectations of the child do not line up with the child's developmental phase. Training should engage parents/caregivers in a strengths-based discussion about the developmental milestones and age-appropriate expectations.
- Display materials the program uses when working with their child so parents/caregivers can replicate the activity at home.
- Discuss any worries parents/caregivers have about ensuring their hopes and dreams for the child are met. Then discuss what the parents/caregivers are doing today or want to do to help achieve those hopes and dreams. Provide parents/caregivers a way to track these goals and where possible align program benchmarks to these goals.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to see the world from their child's point of view. For example, you might explore a room together on hands and knees to help the parent understand how to childproof for their toddler.
- Have parent/caregiver events and play games to learn what children can typically do at different ages. Family-friendly information about developmental milestones from 2 months to 5 years can be found on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>
- Have parents/caregivers identify a certain parenting topic they are interested in learning more about and host a "parent café" or parent training around this interest area with child care and food.
- Screen youth and families using the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 child development screeners.
- Model appropriate ways to deal with stress and respond to stressful situations, e.g., tantrums and back-talking.
- Share ideas with parents/caregivers on social and emotional learning tools, e.g., books, songs and articles.

- Help parents/caregivers recognize that effects of trauma can have a lifelong impact on their child’s social-emotional, behavioral and health development. Explain how some behaviors may seem extreme because the child feels overwhelmed and lacks the capacity to cope with the situation. Explain that behavior communicates an unmet need.
- Encourage and reinforce social skills such as saying help, saying thank you, taking turns and being kind. Use role play with the child and parents/caregivers to practice these skills.
- Help parents/caregivers set clear expectations and limits using behavior modification tools such as behavior charts that also include tokens for rewarding good behavior. If possible, connect home and school behavior with token system – so behaviors in one environment also supports rewards in another environment. This allows children to see the connection between the settings and experience consistency.
- Teach parents/caregivers how to create an environment where children can express their emotions by setting up a regular time for family meetings. Show how staff within your agency use visuals, social stories and other tools to help children understand and express emotions safely.
- Have parents/caregivers write out an interaction with their child. Begin with an experience that typically makes the child happy, sad, frustrated or angry. Then have them describe what the child does when they feel those emotions, how the parents/caregivers respond and how the child responds. Identify and talk through positive or negative patterns in the interaction.
- Use character strengths, feelings, emotions and social skills vocabulary as central themes for lesson plans, monthly newsletter and parent/caregiver events. For example, instead of summer theme of camping, try “curious and caring campers” and build in ways to educate parents/caregivers and children about what it means to be curious and caring.
- Provide parents/caregivers with age appropriate social and emotional expectations. Help parents/caregivers set appropriate social and emotional goals for their child.
- Host a parent/caregiver café related to the theme of challenging behaviors, with child care and food whenever possible.
- Ask two-to-three parents/caregivers and their children to be greeters once a month or during group events. Have them hold the door open and welcome families as they enter. Add cute hats, treats, etc. to make the experience more fun.

Positive Peers

Positive relationships with peers are another source of protection for at-risk populations and include both support from peers and positive peer norms. Having friendships and support from positive peers is related to reductions in depressive symptoms, more empathetic parenting attitudes (especially among teen mothers) and higher self-esteem. Ensuring that children and youth have positive peers can be achieved by creating groups with positive attitudes and values.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH?	EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth maintain multiple friendships and supportive relationships with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate in multiple ways that youth are valued.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth feel respected and appreciated in their role as youth. • Youth accept help from others and give help to others. • Youth establish connections and a sense of belonging with other youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support youth as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills. • Help youth value, build, sustain and use social connections (other than social media). • Facilitate mutual support. • Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities. • Arrange youth field trips and activities.
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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Do you have friends you are close to? Tell me about them.
- Who do you specifically call on to help you once in a while?
- Who can you count on to advise you when you have a concern?
- Is it hard or easy for you to make friends? What makes it difficult for you?
- What has helped you feel close to some people?
- Can you turn to your friends in times of need?
- What kinds of things do you like to do for fun or just to relax? Would you be interested in meeting some other youth who have similar interests?
- Would it help you to know more youth dealing with _____?

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Set aside a welcome place for youth to mingle and talk. Offer a motivational quote or prompt to guide conversation
- Provide classes and workshops that are of interest to youth, e.g., healthy cooking, communication.
- Work with and view youth as partners and solicit their knowledge or expertise in how they have built a strong social network of friends to help other youth in similar situations. Lessons learned should be shared anonymously or develop a confidential process for partnering youth with similar challenges.
- Create an ambassador program where youth leaders reach out to new youth in the program. Ambassadors could have various roles such as leading certain orientation steps, delivering welcome baskets or inviting the new youth to a youth social event during their first few weeks. Be creative and seek youth input on ideas for how youth would have appreciated being welcomed into the program.
- When bringing youth together, always use name tags and when possible add fun facts to help them break the ice. Ask youth leaders to host ice breaker activities or suggest creative ways to help youth interact.
- Provide training to staff on how to identify and respond to youth living in social isolation.
- Offer opportunities for youth to share resources and supports with each other. For example, designate a bulletin as a “Give and Get Board” where youth can ask questions.

Caring Adults

The presence of a caring adult is particularly important for teens and young adults. These caring adults are often program staff or home visitors but can also be mentors, advocates, teachers or extended family members. The presence of a caring adult is related to numerous positive outcomes, including greater resilience, lower stress, less likelihood of arrest, reductions in homelessness, higher levels of employment, less delinquent conduct, favorable health, less suicidal ideation, reductions in rapid repeat pregnancies and better outcomes for the children of teen mothers.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOUTH?	EVERYDAY ACTIONS FOR PROVIDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth have resources to meet their basic needs. • Youth feel safe in the community. • Youth know how to have information and connections to services in their community. • Youth feel supported and valued when reaching out for help. • Parents/caregivers respond to their child with warmth and consistently build a strong and secure attachment. • Parents/caregivers help their child to trust their environments are safe. • Parents/caregivers recognize and embrace their child's strengths and individuality. • Parents/caregivers teach their child how to form and keep healthy relationships with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond immediately when youth are in crisis. • Provide information and connections to services in the community. • Help youth develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports. • Build relationships with youth so they feel comfortable sharing challenges. • Create family education and skill building opportunities that promote attachment. • Model nurturing and consistent care to children and families. • Support children and families by understanding the impact of loss or trauma and how to respond appropriately.
<h3>QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUTH/FAMILIES</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your greatest need right now? How have you dealt with the problem in the past? Did you have a successful outcome? • What has held you back from having access to a caring adult in the past? • Who can you count on to help you? • Do you feel safe and supported at home? What makes you feel unsafe/safe? • What is an immediate need and what is an immediate want? • How do you engage your child or teen during everyday activities? • How do you let your child know you love them? What do you do when your child does something great? • How do you deal with your child's emotional difficulties? • How does your child do when they are _____ (insert emotion)? • What do you do when you feel like your child's emotions become too difficult to deal with? • How would you describe your emotional relationship with your child? 	

- What do you and your child like to do together?
- What five adjectives would you use to describe your child? Your parent?

ACTIVITIES TO DO WITH YOUTH/FAMILIES

- Explore whether there are any barriers or stigma associated with talking with adults.
- Find opportunities to advocate for the youth and help them navigate complex social systems which may be overwhelming to them.
- Encourage the parents/caregivers to share any positive contacts they have had with the youth to help build their confidence.
- Create a confidential and easy process for youth to request help or concrete supports.
- Listen to the youth and the parents/caregivers. Link them to services based on the expressed needs or wishes to assist with communication between the youth and parents/caregivers.
- Set goals with youth to address wellness and concrete adult supports as part of the service plan.
- Have the parents/caregivers and child make a list of everyday acts that lets the child know they are loved.
- Demonstrate positive reinforcement using specific behavioral descriptions rather than just saying “good job!”
- Identify activities the parents/caregivers and child can do together to build and strengthen emotional bond/attachment.
- Provide resources for free family events, family meal programs, etc.
- Create mini-activities during drop-off and pick-up that give parents/caregivers the time and space for one-on-one bonding with their child. For example, once a month create a wall mural prompt where parents/caregivers and youth can interact such as “Our family’s favorite dinner is...” or “A favorite bedtime story in our house is...”
- Encourage family time by offering parents/caregivers materials for simple crafts and creating a board game library. Loan games for parents/caregivers to play with children. Remind them that even young children can play board games on an adult’s team.
- Help parents/caregivers create a “no phone, TV or internet policy” for one-to-two hours each night. During this block of time encourage parents/caregivers to talk with their children, cook dinner together or help do nightly chores as a family.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to have regular family meetings to encourage healthy, open and honest communication with children.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to answer any questions asked by children in an honest, age-appropriate way.
- Have parents/caregivers and children complete the five love languages and five love languages for children and discuss the results.
- Have parents/caregivers complete a free “strengths survey” at www.viacharacter.org to learn more about their own personal character strength and begin identifying strengths of their children.
- Teach parents/caregivers basic infant massage. Encourage parents/caregivers to make eye contact and name each body part as they rub lotion on their baby.
- Encourage parents/caregivers to talk to and read to babies, toddlers and children each day.

- Help parents/caregivers identify their child’s “nurturing network” which includes all important adults in a child’s life, including fathers, grandparents, other caregivers and extended family. Refer to this nurturing network when applicable and in ways that can support building other protective factors.
- Partner with local recreational departments.
- Offer community resources for possible healthy adult relationship (mentoring, youth engagement activities, Big Sister/Big Brother, etc.),
- Link with the school (teachers, programs and resources).

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