

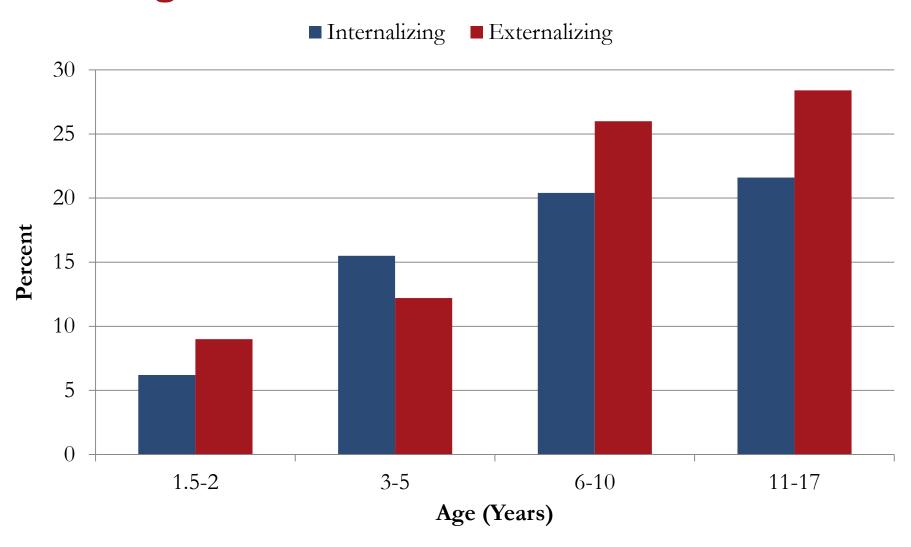


# Optimizing Health: Addressing Social & Emotional Needs of Children in Child Welfare

Bryan Samuels, Commissioner Administration on Children, Youth and Families



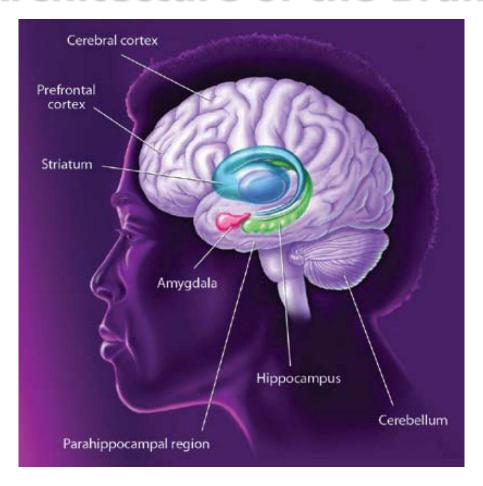
### Clinical-Level Behavioral Problems among Children Known to Child Welfare



### Behavioral Problems: Internalizing vs. Externalizing

- Internalizing: "Over control" of emotions, including social withdrawal, demand for attention, feelings of worthlessness or inferiority, and dependency. The Child Behavior Checklist has three scales for internalizing behavior: anxious, withdrawn, and somatic complaints.
- Externalizing: "Undercontrol" of emotions, including difficulties with interpersonal relationships, rule-breaking, and displays of irritability and belligerance. The Child Behavior Checklist has two externalizing scales: delinquent behavior and aggressive behavior.

#### Emotional, and Social Capacities Are Inextricably Intertwined Within the Architecture of the Brain



#### **Three Levels of Stress**

#### **Positive**

Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

#### **Tolerable**

Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

#### Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

### Toxic Stress in Home of Children Involved in Child Welfare

History of domestic violence against caregiver

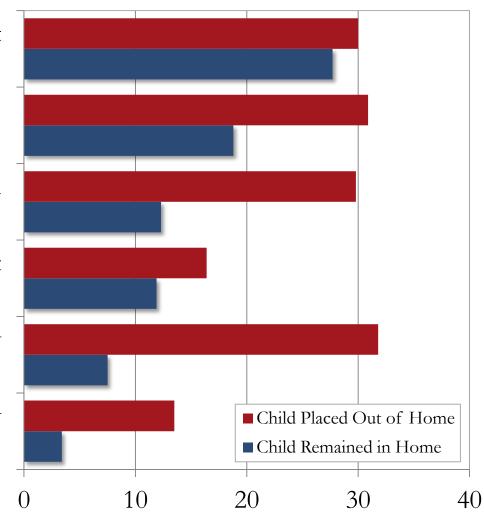
History of abuse or neglect of primary caregiver

Primary caregiver had serious mental health problem

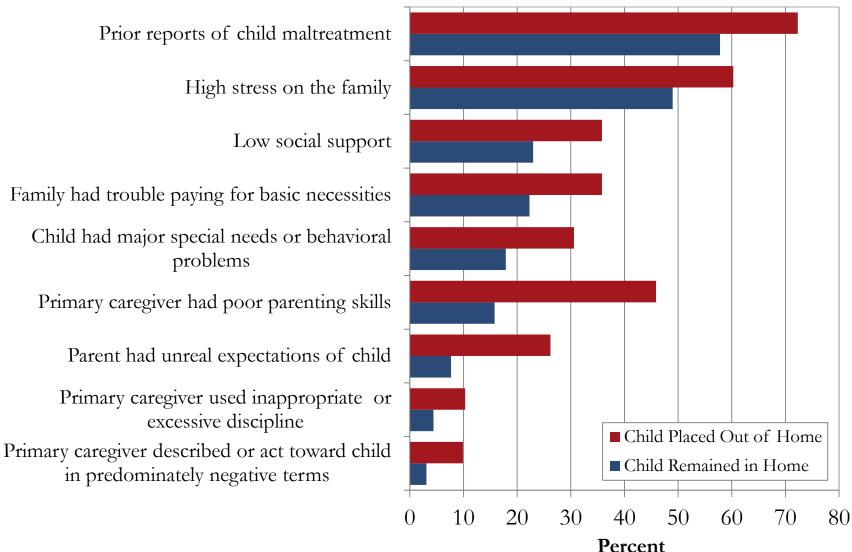
Active domestic violence against caregiver

Active drug abuse by primary caregiver

Active alcohol abuse by primary caregiver



## Toxic Stress in Home of Children Involved in Child Welfare



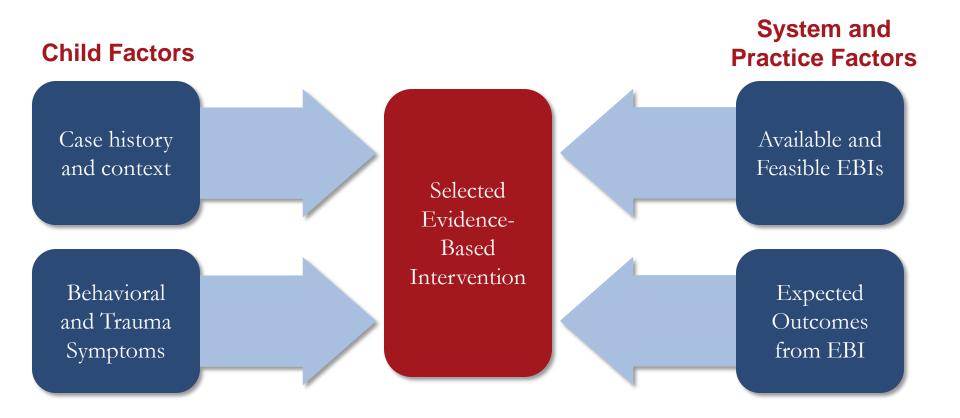
"Simply removing a child from a dangerous environment will not by itself undo the serious consequences or reverse the negative impacts of early fear learning. There is no doubt that children in harm's way should be removed from a dangerous situation. However, simply moving a child out of immediate danger does not in itself reverse or eliminate the way that he or she has learned to be fearful. The child's memory retains those learned links, and such thoughts and memories are sufficient to elicit ongoing fear and make a child anxious."

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development: Working Paper No. 9. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu (emphasis added)

"Traditional child welfare approaches to maltreatment focus largely on physical injury, the relative risk of recurrent harm, and questions of child custody, in conjunction with a criminal justice orientation. In contrast, when viewed through a child development lens, the abuse or neglect of young children should be evaluated and treated as a matter of child health and development within the context of a family relationship crisis, which requires sophisticated expertise in both early childhood and adult mental health."

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004). Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships: Working Paper No. 1. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.developingchild.harvard.edu">www.developingchild.harvard.edu</a> (emphasis added)

### Optimizing Health: Building Capacity to Matching Needs with Interventions



Optimizing Health: Addressing Social & Emotional Well-being

Addressing secondary trauma

Build capacity to deliver EBPs

Knowledge building for staff and foster parents Traumainformed screening and assessment

Developmentally specific approach

Trauma-First Child Welfare Approach

Cross-system
partnerships with
Medicaid &
Mental Health

### Practice Elements of Trauma-First Approach

Monitor progress for reduced symptoms and improved child/youth functioning

Promotion of healthy relationships

Proactive approach to addressing social and emotional needs

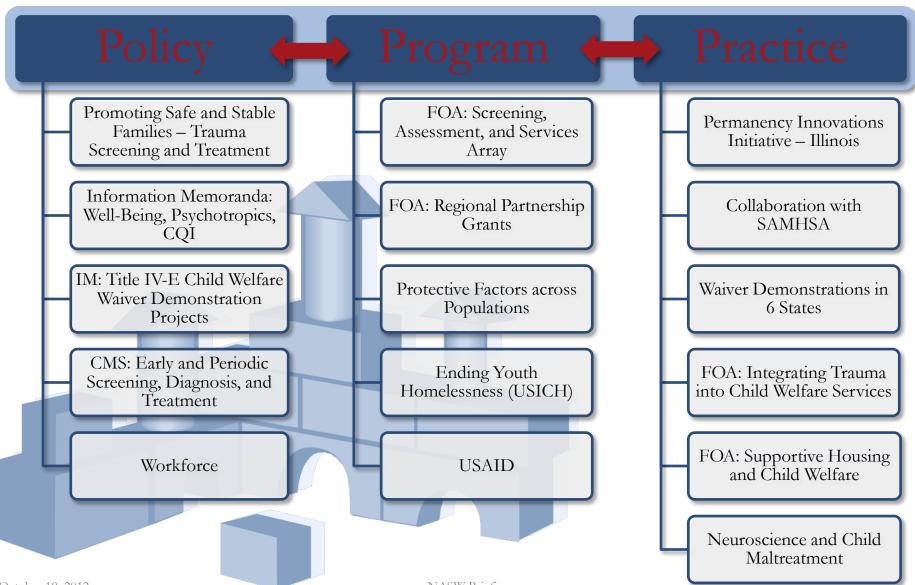
Focusing on child- and family-level outcomes (as opposed to process outcomes alone)

Trauma-First Child Welfare Approach

Trauma-informed case planning and management

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### Optimizing Health: Addressing Social & Emotional Well-being



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