



# Early Experiences Matter: Securing the Future for America's Babies

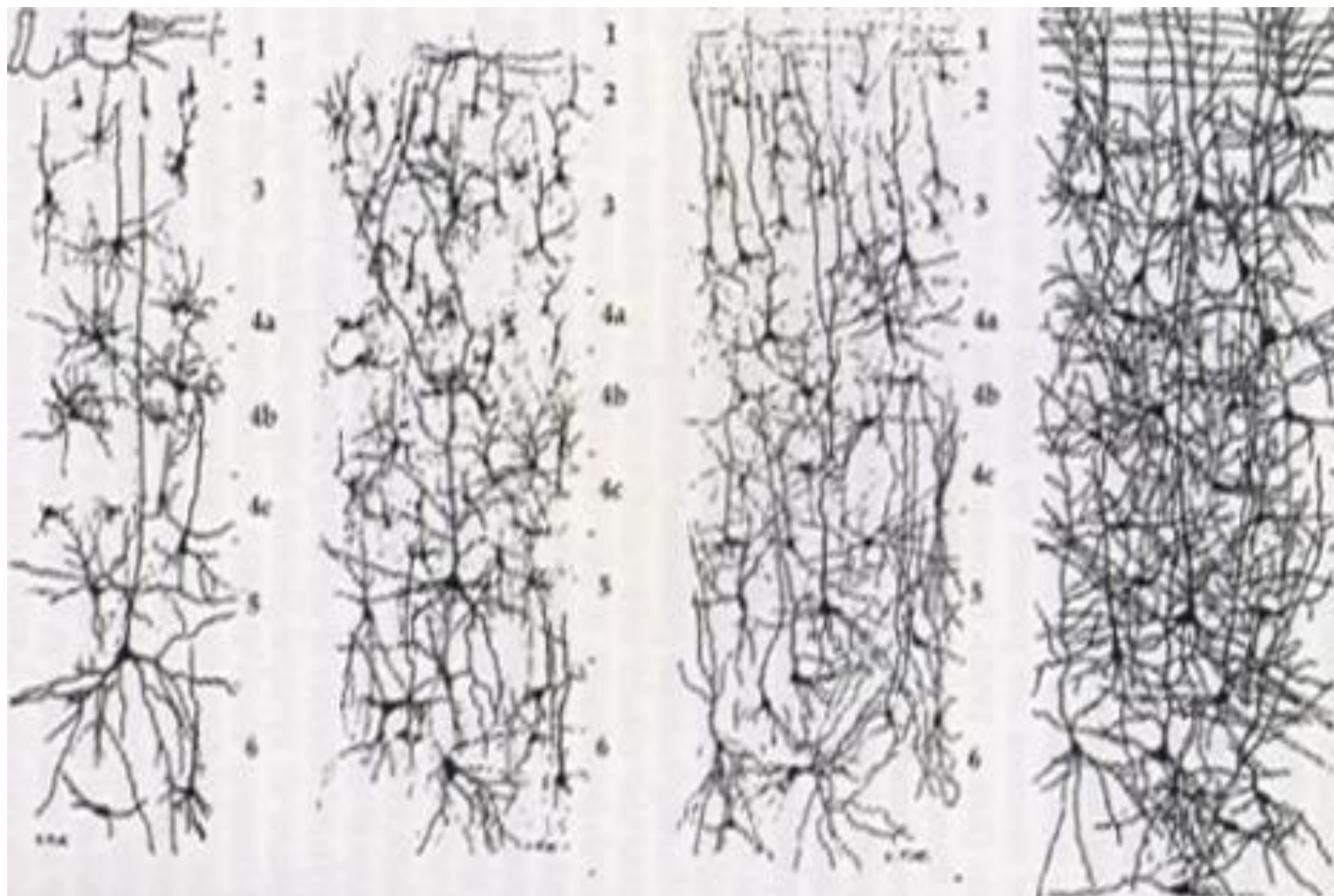
The National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials  
Education Leadership Initiative  
September 26, 2011

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Executive Director  
ZERO TO THREE

# Why Babies?



# Neural Connections



*newborn*

*1 month*

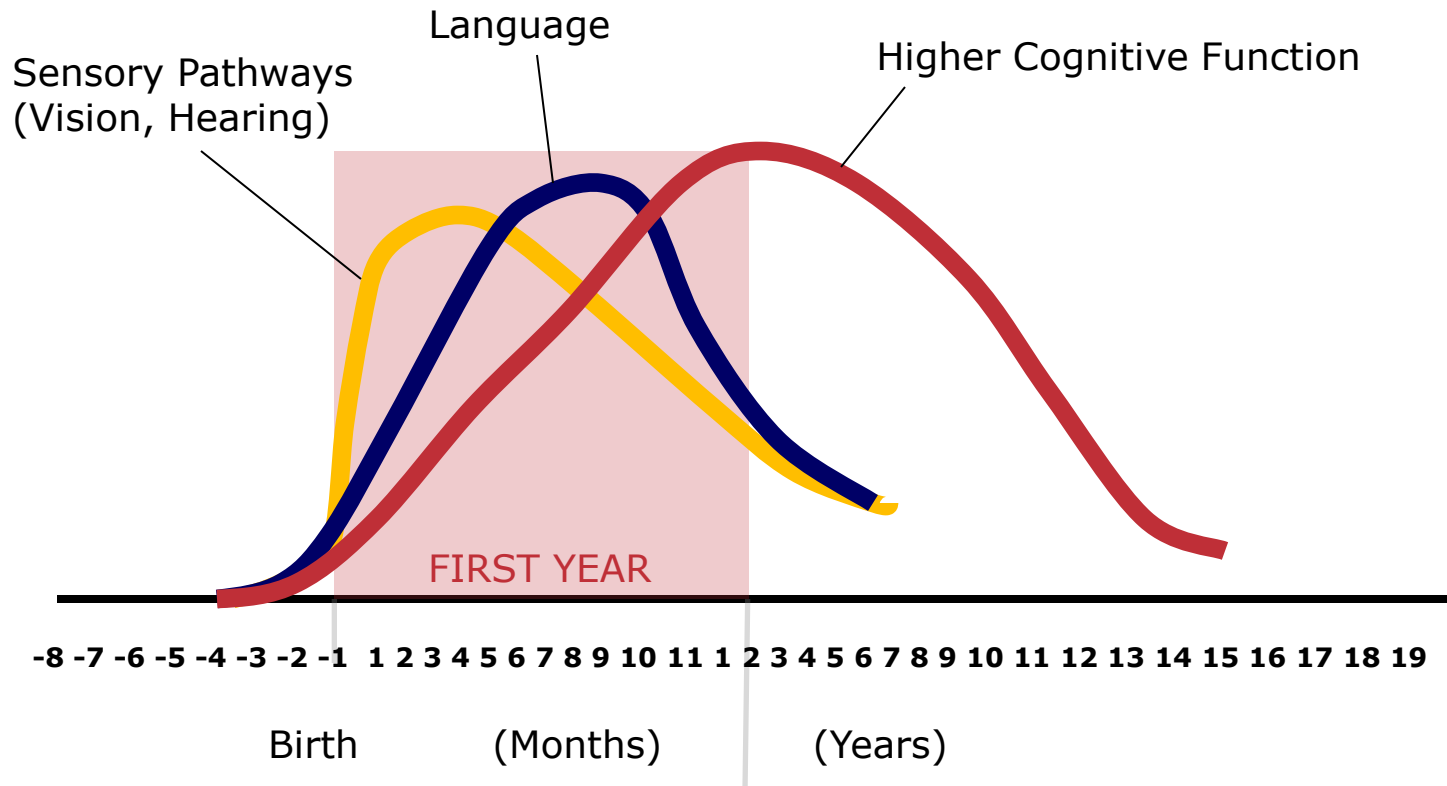
*3 months*

*6 months*

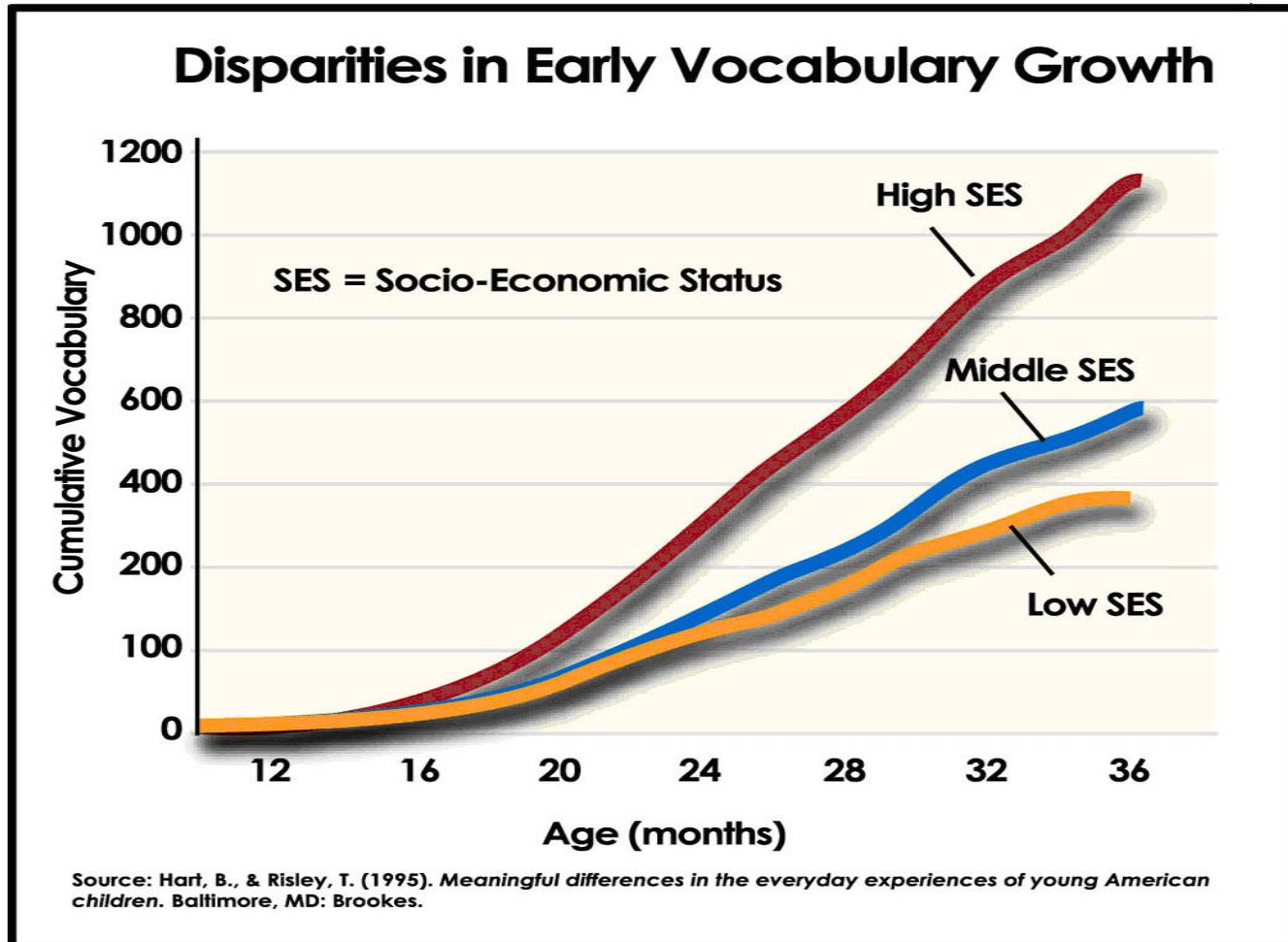


## Human Brain Development

Synapse Formation Dependent on Early Experiences



# Disparities Manifest Early



# “Non-cognitive” Skills Critical for Learning

- Self-confidence as a learner
- Curiosity and motivation
- Self-regulation of attention, behavior, thinking
- Persistence
- Awareness of ability
- Empathy, happiness, hopefulness and resiliency





**Imagine this is your brain...**



# Early Experiences Present a Double –Edged Sword

# Babies Need Attention and Connection



# Brain Has to Work 7 Times Harder



# Babies and Stress

**Normative,  
Developmentally  
Appropriate Stress**

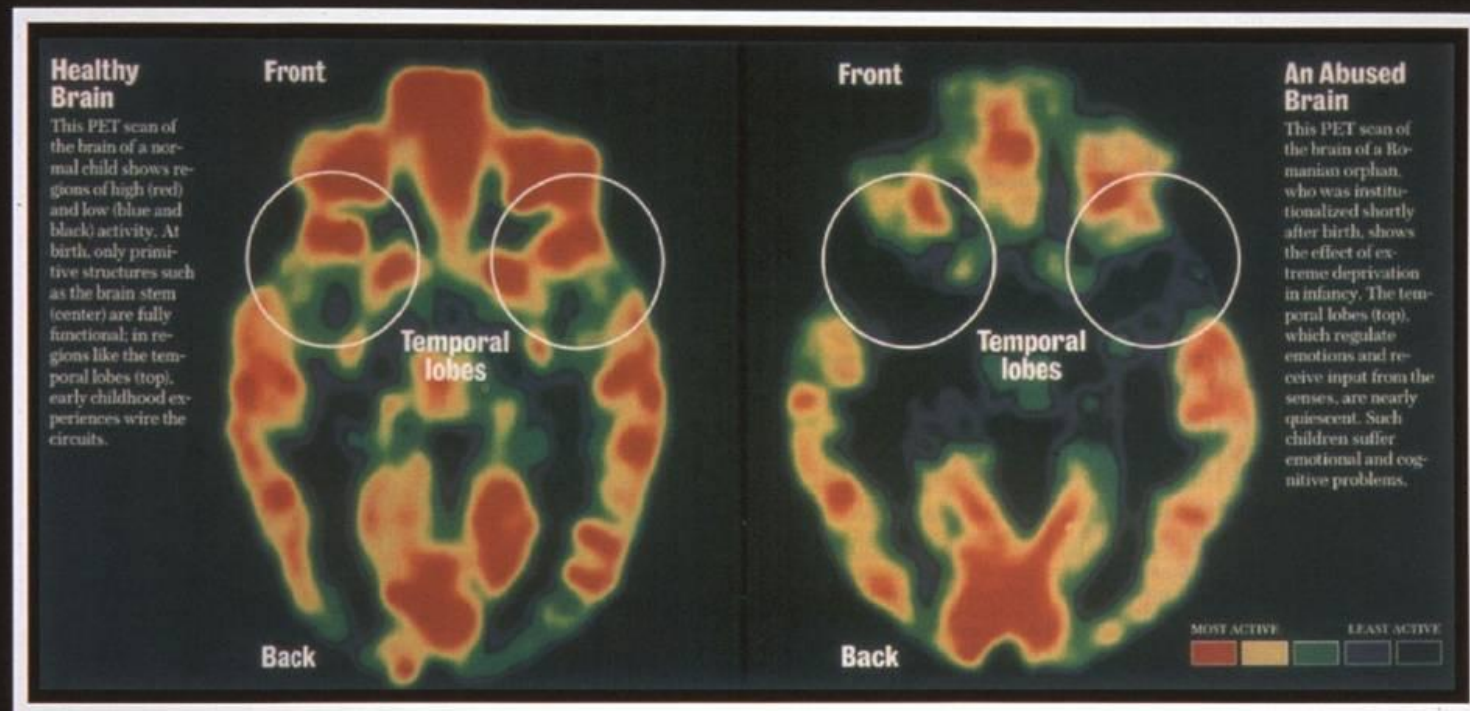
**Emotionally  
Costly Stress**

**Traumatic Stress**



***Abused and Neglected Babies***

# Healthy vs. Abused Brain



# Impacts of Adverse Early Experiences (ACE)

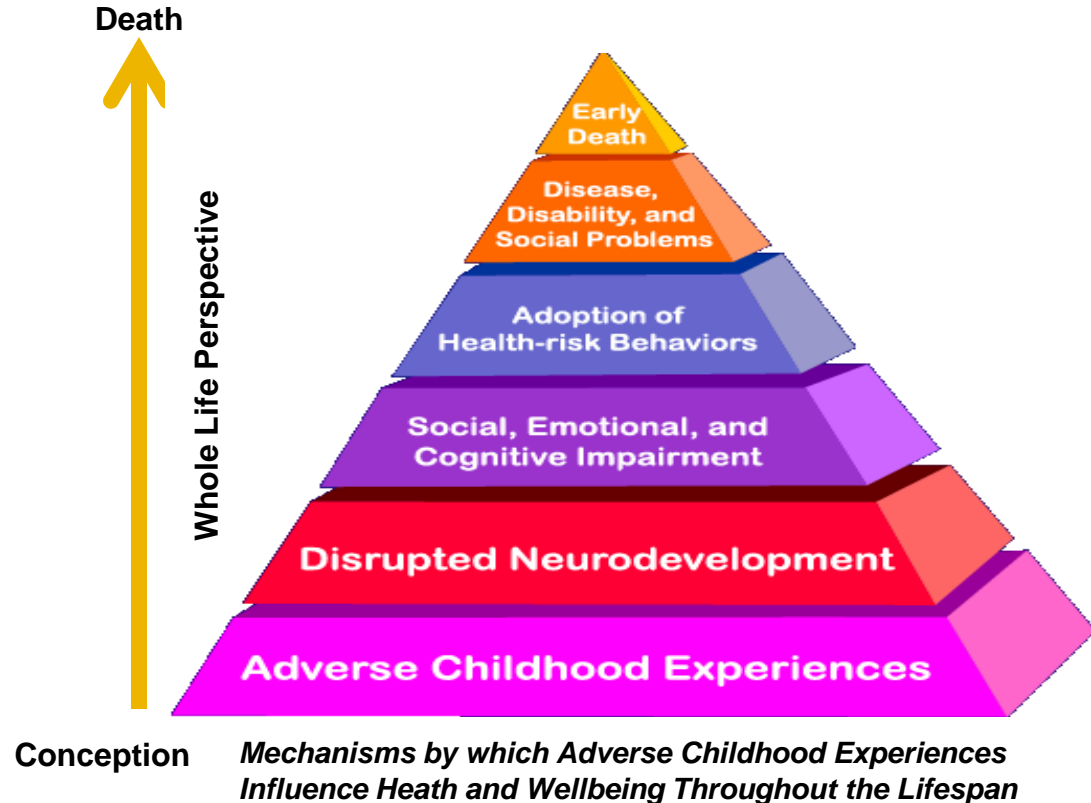
## Extensive Scientific Evidence Indicates Adversity Can Literally “Get Under Our Skin”

*Excessive Elevations in:*

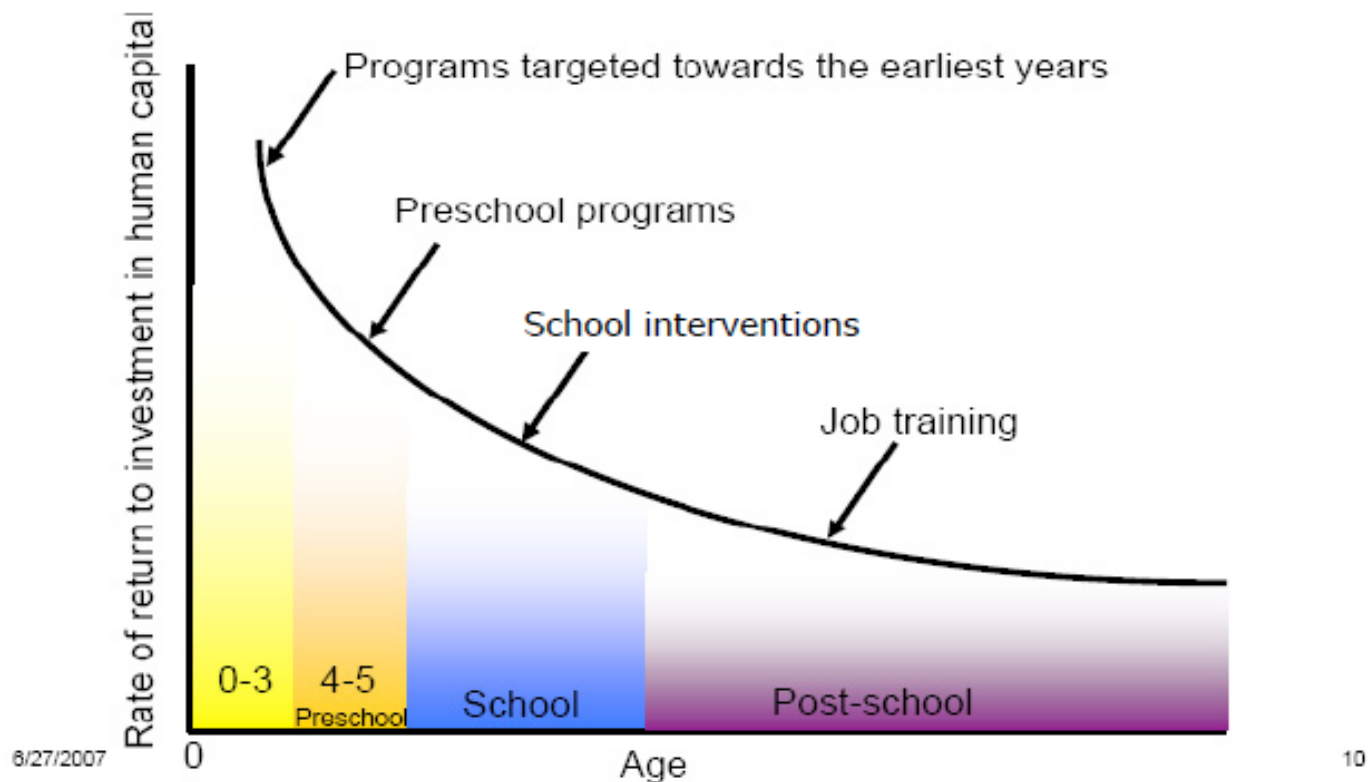
- *Heart Rate*
- *Blood Pressure*
- *Stress Hormones*

*Can Impair:*

- *Brain Architecture*
- *Immune Status*
- *Metabolic Systems*
- *Cardiovascular Function*



## Rates of Return to Additional Investments in Human Capital for Disadvantaged Children



Heckman, J. "Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children Is Good Economics and Good Public Policy,"  
Testimony before the Joint Economic Committee, Washington D.C., June 27, 2007

# The Importance of the First Three Years



- Period of most rapid brain growth: 700 neural connections formed each second!
- Early experiences impact gene expression shaping brain architecture, identify, behavior, learning and health
- Physical, cognitive, language and social/emotional development are “inextricably linked”
- High numbers of Adverse Early Experiences can create toxic stress leading to increased developmental delays, adult depression, heart disease, early death
- Investments in early childhood programming: 10% annualized ROI through increased personal achievement and productivity

# ZERO TO THREE's Policy Agenda

## Health:

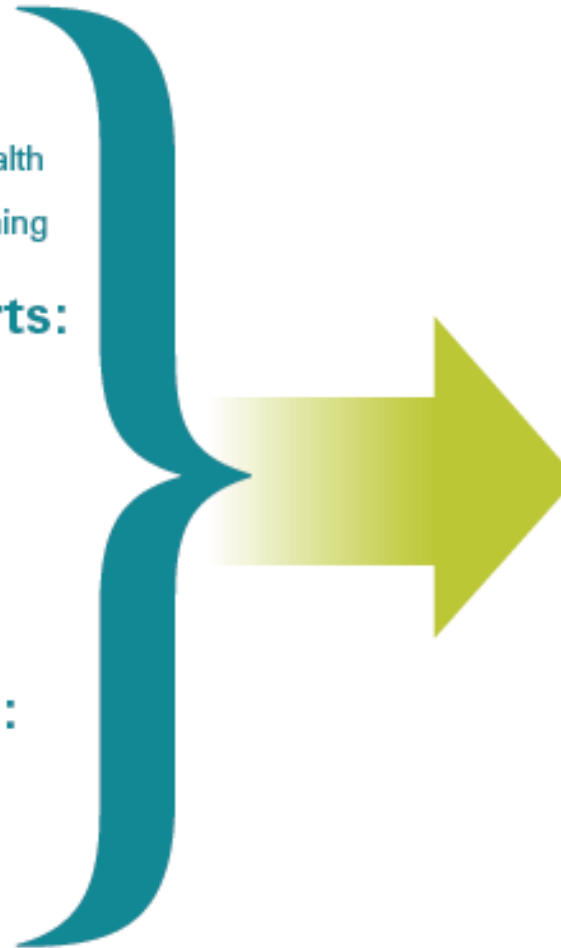
- Physical Health
- Social & Emotional Health
- Developmental Screening

## Family Supports:

- Basic Needs
- Parent Education
- Home Visiting
- Child Welfare
- Paid Family Leave

## Early Learning:

- Child Care
- Early Head Start
- Early Intervention



**Good  
Health**

**Strong  
Families**

**Positive  
Early Learning  
Experiences**

## INTEGRATED PLANNING & ACTION

**Services + Infrastructure = System**

Accessible  
Affordable  
High Quality  
Culturally Responsive

Regulations & Standards  
Quality Improvement  
Professional Development  
Accountability & Evaluation  
Public Engagement  
Political Will Building  
Governance & Leadership  
Financing

# Policy Opportunities



- Access to high-quality early care and education programs
- Evidence-based home visiting services
- Developmental needs of infants and toddlers in the child welfare system

# High-Quality Early Care and Education



- 6 million children under age 3
- Scientific link: High-quality care is a predictor of improvement in children’s communication, cognitive and behavioral skills
- Over 40% of infants and toddlers are in poor quality care
- Limited supply of high-quality infant-toddler care
- Federal EHS funding serves only 3% of all eligible

# High-Quality Early Care and Education



- Strategies for promoting high-quality, accountable programs:
  - Increase the supply
  - Include infants and toddlers in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
  - Develop I/T Early Learning Guidelines
  - Offer focused professional development

# Home Visiting

- Home visitation is a delivery system
- Studies show that home visiting can:
  - Increase children’s school readiness
  - Improve child health and development
  - Reduce child abuse and neglect
  - Enhance parenting skills

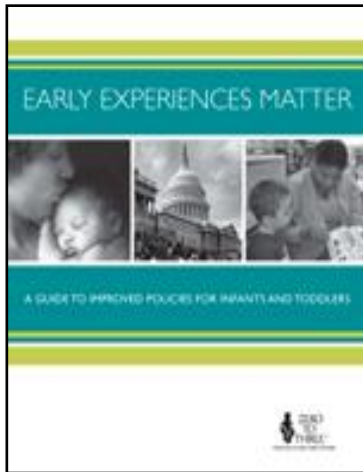
# Home Visiting

- New federal program granted \$224 million to states
- Home visiting services are most effective when they are:
  - Integrated into a broader early childhood system and infrastructure
  - Coordinated with other child development and family support services in the community
  - Linguistically and culturally appropriate
  - Support rigorous ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement efforts

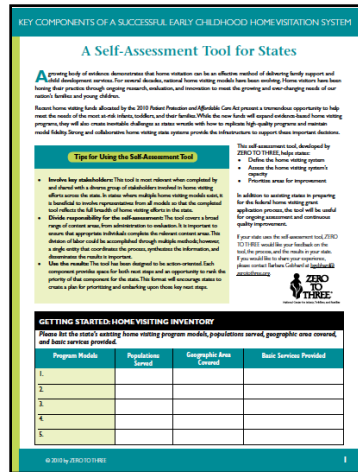
- 25% of abused and neglected children are infants and toddlers
- Infants and toddlers are the largest age group entering foster care
- Once in the system
  - Stay in 50% longer
  - 1/3 of those who are reunified will reenter the system
- Child welfare policy and practice: A developmental disaster

- How to fix the system:
  - Developmentally appropriate services and supports
  - Promote stable, caring relationships
  - Accessible early intervention services
  - Families and communities are key partners
  - Specific focus on infants and toddlers

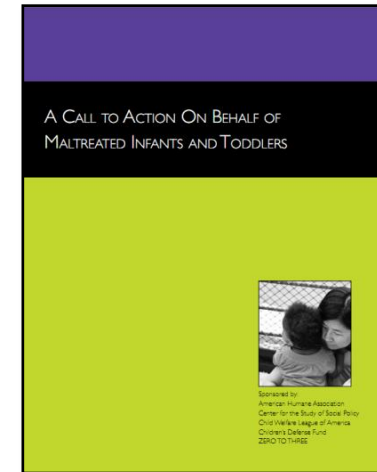
# ZERO TO THREE Resources



[www.zerotothree.org/policyguide](http://www.zerotothree.org/policyguide)



[www.zerotothree.org/homevisitingtool](http://www.zerotothree.org/homevisitingtool)



[www.zerotothree.org/calltoaction](http://www.zerotothree.org/calltoaction)

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