AGI-CDF Harvard Parenting Conference

Helping Parents Manage Stress And Promoting Healthy Child Development

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Prevention Window
Mental Health Promotion Aims to:

- Enhance individuals’
  - ability to achieve developmentally appropriate tasks (developmental competence)
  - positive sense of self-esteem, mastery, well-being, and social inclusion

- Strengthen their ability to cope with adversity
Preventive Intervention Opportunities

Interventions by Developmental Phase

Prior to Conception
- Pregnancy prevention

Prenatal
- Prenatal care

Infancy
- Home visiting

Early Childhood
- Early childhood interventions

Childhood

Early Adolescence
- Parenting skills training
- Social and behavioral skills training
- Classroom-based curriculum to prevent substance abuse, aggressive behavior, or risky sex

Adolescence
- Prevention of depression
- Prevention of schizophrenia

Young Adulthood
- Prevention focused on specific family adversities
  (Bereavement, divorce, parental psychopathology, parental substance use, parental incarceration)

Community interventions

Policy
Evidence that Some Disorders Can be Prevented

• Strong endorsement of parenting strength-based interventions for families
• Extensive evidence that interventions for family adversities (bereavement, depression, divorce) are valuable
• Special consideration needs to be given to young children in families
Treatment: Current Evidence

- A variety of safe and effective tools exist for treating adults with elevated symptoms or major depression.
- A variety of strategies to deliver these treatments exist in a wide range of settings.
- Many depressed individuals, including parents, do not receive any kind of treatment.
- Treatments have been shown to be effective in a variety of different cultural, racial and economic settings.
Depression Prevention Examples

1. Family Talk - Beardslee, et al., 2009
2. Prevention of depression - Garber, et al., 2009
4. Parental bereavement - Sandler
5. Home visitation – Putnam
6. *The Incredible Years* – Webster-Stratton
7. Early Head Start – parental depression
8. Mothers’ and babies’ program - Munoz
“One factor lurks in the background of every discussion of the risks for mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders and antisocial behavior: poverty ... Although not the focus of this report, there is evidence that changes in social policy that reduce exposure to these risks are at least as important for preventing mental, emotional and behavioral disorders in young people as other preventive interventions. We are persuaded that the future mental health of the nation depends crucially on how, collectively, the costly legacy of poverty is dealt with.”
“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

~Martin Luther King Jr.
Conclusions

1. There is a strong evidence to support parenting interventions.
2. There are systematic barriers to including families as opposed to individuals in health systems.
3. Health reform offers an important opportunity.
4. Coordinated Federal and state policies across agencies for families at risk are needed.