

# Translating Life Course Messages Into Family-Friendly Language

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## GOAL

Translate life course health development knowledge and research into messages that are meaningful to and empowering for families.

## PROBLEM

Health messages have the potential to be empowering, to inspire parents and their children to make good choices. They also have the potential to be dismissed, especially if the recommendations are unrealistic or not culturally comfortable.

***"Important as medical advances and care are, the family setting is where most health happens."***

## AIMS

- Find out and share what families know about existing health and wellness recommendations (using Bright Futures recommendations) and how these recommendations fit into their daily lives
- Find out and share what families know about Life Course health development theory and how it fits in their daily lives
- Empower families to become partners in the Life Course discussion and research agenda-setting efforts
- Identify meaningful language that families recommend be used to talk about life course/health and wellness across the life span

## APPROACH

Engage multi-cultural, diverse families and national family organizations in focus groups, expert input, and surveys to access family wisdom and recommendations about health and wellness/life course practices and barriers.

## METHODS

- Focus groups in 4 States, 4 Sites (NC, UT, NJ, IN) to date
- Meeting of the National Bright Futures Family Network - Expert input
- Web based survey (2013)
- Journal article draft written and reviewed by families: Living Life Course: Family Roles, Reactions and Recommendations

***"Start where you are now to improve your family's health in the future."***

## FINDINGS - THE WISDOM OF FAMILIES!

- ❖ Families set priorities based on their culture, income, family circumstances, and environment
- ❖ A holistic approach to health is preferred by many families: encompassing the whole person—physical, mental, and spiritual
- ❖ Recognize the strength in families and build on those strengths
- ❖ The use of peer-to-peer, trained mentors to communicate health and wellness recommendations and implications across the life course is highly desired and recommended
- ❖ Nutrition is of major interest to families, regardless of which health promotion theme they talk about in their focus groups
- ❖ Social determinants of health are still the largest barrier for families
- ❖ Family-centered workplaces would improve health and wellness at home
- ❖ For military families, deployment places a huge burden on health and wellness
- ❖ Messages about life course need to be individualized for each family
- ❖ Include youth, parents and fathers in policy and program development
- ❖ Involve children with special needs and disabilities and culturally diverse children in school health and wellness activities

## BARRIERS FACED BY FAMILIES

- Time constraints—juggling multiple responsibilities between home and work
- Balancing the needs of family members, including children with special health care needs and disabilities
- Convenience and affordability of fast food versus fresh food
- Neighborhoods that are not designed for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Lack of safe and accessible parks and recreation areas
- Inadequate support for breastfeeding, especially in public places and the work place
- Limited experience cooking healthy food
- Schools and workplaces that do not offer healthy food and physical activity opportunities
- Screen time—overuse of cell phones, computers, television

## WHO ARE FAMILIES?

- ♥ We all come from families. Families are big, small, extended, nuclear, multi-generational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents.
- ♥ We live under one roof or many.
- ♥ A family can be as temporary as a few weeks, as permanent as forever.
- ♥ We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support.
- ♥ As family members, we nurture, protect, and influence each other.
- ♥ Families are dynamic and are cultures unto themselves, with different values and unique ways of realizing dreams.
- ♥ Together, our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity.
- ♥ Each family has strengths and qualities that flow from individual members, and from the family as a unit.
- ♥ Our families create neighborhoods, communities, states, and nations.

(Developed and adopted by the Young Children's Continuum of the New Mexico State Legislature, June 20, 1990)

## TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- Health and wellness starts with the family; families make health decisions every day based on their knowledge, experience, resources, and capacities
- Health and wellness recommendations work best when they are culturally comfortable, holistic, and respect the feelings, concerns, realities, and priorities of the family
- Involve families as partners at all levels (state, local and national) and across sectors (home, school, workplace, community, government) to achieve effective health and wellness policies and practices

***"Even if you work 9-5, have no time to cook, no fresh food—you can still find healthy things to do."***

***"It is absolutely true that the choices we make today determine our health and wellbeing for the rest of our lives, and impact future generations. Given this, families ask questions and share thoughts about what is the best approach for them to take when it comes to making daily health decisions."***

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