TOXIC STRESS TOOLKIT
FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS CARING
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR ASSISTING
RHODE ISLAND CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES
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INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR ASSISTING RHODE ISLAND CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

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December 2016

Created with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration to the Rhode Island Department of Health for:
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems: Improving Outcomes for Young Children by Mitigating the impact of Toxic Stress and Trauma

This project is/was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under H25MC00270, Early Childhood Comprehensive System Building (SECCS) at $6000.
This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government
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This toolkit is a collection of resources about toxic stress and screening for toxic stress for primary care providers and their multidisciplinary teams serving young children in Rhode Island. The content is drawn from materials from the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as leading organizations pioneering research on this topic. It contains:

- Information about the negative health impacts of childhood adversity and toxic stress
- Screening tools for identifying those at highest risk for toxic stress and poor developmental and health outcomes
- An outline of resources housed electronically that medical home teams can use to assist their patients and families

It is organized to answer key questions that providers might have related to addressing toxic stress in their practices:

**WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?**

Many young children in Rhode Island are experiencing adversities that could lead to lifelong challenges with physical and mental health. This section includes:

- A definition of toxic stress and explanation of the biology of adverse experiences and trauma
- Rhode Island data showing the magnitude of challenges faced by many of our children

**WHAT RISK FACTORS, SIGNS, OR SYMPTOMS ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

There are risk factors for the development of toxic stress. There are behavioral and physical signs and symptoms that may result from ongoing stress and indicate the presence of toxic stress. This section includes:

- An overview of developmental, behavioral and physical patterns that can be seen in children exposed to significant stress or trauma
- A review of the concept of resilience and protective child and family factors that can combat toxic stress

**HOW DO WE SCREEN FOR AND IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?**

Currently there are no established guidelines for the frequency or interval at which to screen children or their parents for adverse experiences or risk factors for toxic stress. However, many pediatricians around the country have implemented screening for adverse experiences and other risk factors. This section includes:

- Practical considerations for office-based toxic stress screening
- Descriptions and screenshots of screening tools and questionnaires that address adverse experiences and other risk factors for toxic stress

**WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?**

The goal of screening for toxic stress is detection early in childhood to connect children and families with resources that can address risk factors or treat symptoms of stress or trauma. This section contains:

- Resources for acting on positive screening results
- Information about and link to the medical Home Portal services directory online resources
WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?

DEFINING TOXIC STRESS

Stress is a part of everyday life, and most of us do not have long-lasting problems adjusting to stress. To cope with everyday events, children invoke biological, psychological, social, and/or physical-action responses. In the face of frequent or severe adverse or traumatic events, a child’s mobilized responses are more likely to be ineffective, resulting in the stress response remaining active. Such prolonged activation increases the potential for enduring changes in physiologic and neurologic systems. When such enduring changes compromise children’s adaptation, we refer to this long-term series of events as Toxic Stress. (Fig. # 1)

Figure 1: The Toxic Stress Cascade

http://www.health.ri.gov/publications/reports/AddressingToxicStressInRhodesIsland.pdf

A commonly used framework for discussing stress in childhood distinguishes between positive, tolerable and toxic stress as shown in Figure # 2 below. Safe, stable and nurturing relationships with caring adults can buffer children against toxic stress.¹

Figure 2: Responses to Stress.¹
Continuous activation of the stress hormone response is the basis for the physical and behavioral symptoms of toxic stress (Fig # 3).

Stress triggers the release of hormones CRH and ACTH causing adrenal gland release of catecholamines and glucocorticoids and activation of the sympathetic nervous system which cause a variety of physiologic effects.

Prolonged stress can affect gene protein regulation and alter the function of neurons (Fig # 4).

Epigenetic modification occurs when early prenatal or postnatal experiences and exposures influence long-term outcomes by chemically altering the expression of genes.
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Studies of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have shown that adversity in childhood greatly increases the risk for every poor health outcome studied and even for premature death in adults. This pioneering research studied childhood experiences categorized as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (Fig. # 5) and found relationships between ACEs and adulthood unhealthy behaviors as well as chronic physical and mental health problems (Fig. # 6).


WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?

The development of toxic stress includes four distinct but interrelated elements: inputs to the individual, the individual response, consequences for the individual, and family context.

- **Inputs to the Individual**
  - Physical or sexual maltreatment
  - Caregiving neglect
  - Extreme deprivation
  - Witnessing violence
  - Extreme family dysfunction
  - Caregiver substance abuse
  - Caregiver mental illness
  - Environmental pollutants (i.e. lead ingestion)

- **Individual Response**
  - General health
  - Temperament
  - Genetic factors
  - Current and past exposure to stresses
  - Intensity of the events
  - Persistence of the events
  - Supports afforded by caregivers and others

- **Consequences for the Individual**
  - Physical alterations: Brain architecture and connectivity
  - Gene activation and modification
  - Hormone secretion and metabolic processes
  - Cognition and learning
  - Psychological effects: Anxiety, Depression, Social withdrawal
  - Behavioral dysregulation

- **Family Context**
  - Caregiver experiences
  - Caregiver response to experiences
  - Caregiver supports to the child
  - Caregiver promotion of resilience

**What may be unmanageable and threatening for one child may be completely manageable and benign for another child.**

**Toxic stress is not permanent. Safe, stable and nurturing relationships promote resilience.**
WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?

ADVERSE EXPERIENCES OF RHODE ISLAND CHILDREN

Almost half of Rhode Island children experience one or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and nearly one quarter experience two or more ACEs. Figure # 7 shows the proportion of Rhode Island children experiencing adverse circumstances as reported by their parents on the most recent National Survey of Children’s Health. Socioeconomic hardship was the most frequently reported adverse experience (29%).

The following data details the scope of adversity faced by Rhode Island children and their families. Much of the information comes from the 2016 Rhode Island Kids Count Fact Book found at: http://www.rikidscount.org


#### Figure 7: Rhode Island Children Experiencing Adversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>≥ 1 Adverse Childhood Experience</th>
<th>48%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 2 Adverse Childhood Experiences</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Socioeconomic Hardship: 29%
- Parental Separation/Divorce: 19%
- Household Drug or Alcohol Problem: 12%
- Household Mental Illness: 11%
- Victim/Witness of Neighborhood Violence: 9%
- Witness Domestic Violence: 7%
- Parental Incarceration: 5%
- Experienced Racial Prejudice: 3%
- Death of a Parent: 3%

- 19.8 % of RI children live in poverty according to most recent data
- 38.4% of children live in poverty in Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket
- In 2014, 19,151 children in RI lived in extreme poverty (<50% FPL), but only 7,675 received cash assistance through RI Works (Temporary Aid to Needy Families- TANF)
- Since 2008, fewer families can access TANF due to time limits on benefits-no more than 24 months of assistance within 60 months and a 48 month lifetime limit

- During the 2014-2015 school year, RI public schools identified 1,031 children as homeless
- In 2015, 482 families with 988 children stayed at an emergency homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transitional housing facility in Rhode Island. Half (47%) of these children were under age six
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOOD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 2015, 24,227 women, infants, and children in Rhode Island were enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). The program served 59% of the state’s eligible women, infants, and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is available to families with income &lt;185% FPL. In 2015, 60,345 children under 18 received SNAP benefits (approximately 28.4% of the RI child population).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEAD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There has been a significant reduction over the past three decades in the number of young children exposed to lead in Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• However, 8.5% of our state’s children are entering Kindergarten lead exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Significant disparities exist between lead exposure in our poorest communities (12.5%) as compared to the remainder of the state (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chronic school absence (&gt;10% days missed) in the early grades can lead to lower academic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 14% of RI children in grades K-3 were chronically absent in the 2014-2015 school year. Chronic absence was nearly twice as common in the poorest communities with 23% of children missing &gt; 10% of school days in the core cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 3rd grade reading level is a predictor of future academic success and high school graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fewer children living in the core cities are meeting 3rd grade expectations in English Language Arts (17%) as compared to the remainder of the state (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABUSE AND NEGLECT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Almost half (46%) of the victims of child abuse and neglect in Rhode Island in 2015 were young children under age six and almost one-third (33%) were age three and younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 2014, the child abuse and neglect rate for Rhode Island as a whole was 13.8 per 1,000 children under age 18. The rate in the four core cities was 20.3 per 1,000 children, compared to 10.6 per 1,000 in the remainder of the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARENTAL INCARCERATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Of the 3,168 Rhode Island inmates awaiting trial or serving a sentence at the ACI who were surveyed as of September 2015 and answered the question on number of children, 1,870 inmates reported having 4,222 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In the four core cities, there was a higher rate of children with incarcerated parents (25.5/1,000) as compared with the rest of the state (6.5/1,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children are exposed to domestic violence in several ways. They may witness or hear violent events, become directly involved by trying to intervene, or experience the aftermath of violence by seeing their parent’s emotional and physical injuries or damage done to their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In Rhode Island in 2014, there were 5,265 domestic violence incidents that resulted in arrests, up 5% from 5,028 incidents in 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children were reported present in 35% (1,856) of incidents in 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?

- In Rhode Island in 2014, 97 babies were diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome at birth, a rate of 92.0 per 10,000 births, more than double the rate of 37.2 in 2006.
- 88% of babies born with NAS between 2010 and 2014 in Rhode Island were born to white mothers and 34% lived in the four core cities and 85% had Medicaid coverage.

SUBSTANCE EXPOSURE

- 8.8% of Rhode Island mothers were diagnosed with depression during pregnancy and, 11.2% report postpartum depressive symptoms (PRAMS 2009-2011).
- Depression during pregnancy was reported more frequently by mothers with fewer than 12 years of education, those covered by public health insurance, and those participating in the WIC program.

MATERNAL DEPRESSION

Most Rhode Island children are accessing primary care regularly. Primary care providers can play a critical role in identifying toxic stress or its risk factors in young children.

- In 2014, 96.7% of Rhode Island's children under age 18 had health insurance.
- 84.4% of children under 18 in RI had a preventive visit in the past year (NSCH 11/12).

PEDiatric PRIMARY CARE

THE ROLE OF PRIMARY CARE

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Primary care providers in medical homes are uniquely positioned to assist children and their families in identifying and addressing childhood adversity and risk factors for toxic stress.

- Pediatricians have regular contact and long-term relationships with families.
- Pediatricians may be the family’s only contact with a health care provider of any kind.
- Pediatricians have an opportunity to identify problems and link children and families to much-needed resources.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has released recommendations and policy statements addressing toxic stress as well as poverty, child maltreatment, and behavioral and emotional problems.3,4,5,6,7,8

TOXIC STRESS

The AAP encourages pediatric providers to:

- Develop a screening schedule that uses age-appropriate, standardized tools to identify factors that put children at risk for toxic stress that are highly prevalent or relevant to their particular practice setting (e.g., maternal depression, parental substance abuse, domestic or community violence, food scarcity, poor social connectedness).
- Provide anticipatory guidance to support children’s emerging social-emotional-linguistic skills and to encourage the adoption of positive parenting techniques.
- Consider participating in innovative service-delivery adaptations that expand the ability of the medical home to support children at risk.
- Identify local resources that address those risks for toxic stress that are prevalent in their communities.
WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT TOXIC STRESS?

The AAP policy statement Early Childhood Adversity, Toxic Stress, and the Role of the Pediatrician: Translating Developmental Science into Lifelong Health can be found at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/129/1/e224.full.pdf

The accompanying technical report The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress can be found at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/129/1/e232.full.pdf

POVERTY

The AAP recommends that pediatric providers and care teams:

• Screen patients and their families for poverty related risk factors and basic needs such as food, housing, and heat
• Identify community resources to link families for services such as: cash assistance, health insurance coverage, child care assistance and Head Start or Early Head Start enrollment, nutrition support through the WIC program, and home visiting programs

The AAP policy statement Poverty and Child Health in the United States can be found at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2016/03/07/peds.2016-0339.full.pdf

The accompanying technical report Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States can be found at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/03/07/peds.2016-0340

SCREENING FOR BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

The clinical report focuses on the need to increase behavioral screening and offers suggestions for changes in practice and the health system, as well as the research needed to accomplish this. The report includes:

• An outline of steps that practices can take to implement behavioral and emotional screening:
  • Readying the practice
  • Identifying resources
  • Establishing office routines for screening and surveillance
  • Tracking referrals
  • Seeking payment
  • Fostering collaboration
• A table of behavioral and emotional screening measures for use in primary care in the public domain

The AAP clinical report Promoting Optimal Development: Screening for Behavioral and Emotional Problems can be found at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/135/2/384.full.pdf

CHILD MALTREATMENT

This clinical report explains how pediatricians can:

• Identify family strengths
• Recognize risk factors for child maltreatment
• Provide helpful guidance
• Refer families to programs and other resources with the goal of strengthening families, preventing child maltreatment, and enhancing child development

Also included in the report are examples of office-based and community-based prevention and intervention programs and guidance for pediatricians on incorporating child maltreatment prevention into the health supervision visit.

The AAP clinical report The Pediatrician’s Role in Child Maltreatment Prevention can be found at: http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/126/4/833.full.pdf
WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS OR TRAUMA

What does toxic stress look like and how does it present in the pediatric office?

- Significant child or family stress may go undetected if it has not been prolonged or if family supports are buffering the negative effects of stress. Screening early affords an opportunity to address the climate inside a family or household and offer family supports to reduce stress.

- Prolonged or significant stress can lead to behaviors or symptoms in pediatric patients and/or in their caregivers. When parents are struggling to meet basic needs, survive and/or have experienced a lifetime of stress, the social-emotional needs of young children can go un-prioritized and often unmet.

- Responses to maltreatment and other significant events can present immediately (behavioral indicators, emotion regulation problems, physical well-being) or can have longer term impact (e.g., relationship problems, substance dependency, etc.)

- Risks, when manifested, become significant for future generations via parenting practices, presence of risk factors, emotional climate, or chronic illness

Table 1 displays some of the symptoms which can be associated with traumatic experiences. When a child presents with such symptoms, eliciting a medical or social history of significant or prolonged stress can assist in developing an optimal treatment plan. Conversely, if it is known that a child has endured significant stress or trauma, asking about symptoms affecting sleep, appetite, or toileting are particularly relevant. Discussing the link between stress and bodily functions in children can help caregivers understand and feel better equipped to address these symptoms.

Table 1: Response to Trauma: Bodily Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Central Cause</th>
<th>Symptom(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>Stimulation of reticular activating system</td>
<td>1. Difficulty falling asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Difficulty staying asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Nightmare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>Inhibition of satiety center, anxiety</td>
<td>1. Rapid eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lack of satiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Food hoarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toileting</td>
<td>Increased sympathetic tone, increased catecholamines</td>
<td>1. Constipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Encopresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Enuresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Regression of toileting skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


EFFECTS OF TRAUMA ON LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

How is screening for toxic stress related to developmental screening?

To have the greatest impact, screening for toxic stress, like developmental screening, should begin in early childhood during windows of opportunity – crucial periods when significant brain development is occurring. Developmental screening aims to identify potential areas of concern in domains of milestone acquisition. Screening for toxic stress can identify factors impacting developmental progress (including environmental exposures like lead), especially if there are concerns for developmental delay.

Stress and trauma can impact development and learning by interfering with working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility (Table 2). These “executive function” skills are acquired at a critical time in early childhood and lay the foundation for future learning and academic achievement. Identifying challenges early offers the best opportunity for providing effective resources and supports.
Table 2: Response to Trauma: Development and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Impact on Working Memory</th>
<th>Impact on Inhibitory Control</th>
<th>Impact on Cognitive Flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant / toddler / pre-schooler</td>
<td>- Difficulty acquiring developmental milestones</td>
<td>- Frequent severe tantrums</td>
<td>- Easily frustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Aggressive with other children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Attachment may be impacted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-aged child</td>
<td>- Difficulty with school skill acquisition</td>
<td>- Frequently in trouble at school and with peers for fighting and disrupting</td>
<td>- Organizational difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Losing details can lead to confabulation, viewed by others as lying</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Can look like learning problems or ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent</td>
<td>- Difficulty keeping up with material as academics advance</td>
<td>- Impulsive actions which can threaten health and well-being</td>
<td>- Difficulty assuming tasks of young adulthood which require rapid interpretation of information: ie, driving, functioning in workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Trouble keeping school work and home life organized</td>
<td>- Actions can lead to involvement with law enforcement and increasingly serious consequences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Confabulation increasingly interpreted by others as integrity issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


RESILIENCE

How is resilience related to toxic stress?

The American Academy of Pediatrics defines resilience as: the process by which a person moves through a traumatic event, utilizing various protective factors for support, and returning to “baseline” in terms of an emotional and physiologic response to the stressor. Resilience provides a buffer between the person and the traumatic event, mitigating the negative effects that could result, such as physical, emotional, and behavioral health issues that can last even into adulthood. (AAP - The Resilience Project)

- Resilience can be fostered and developed through the cultivation of one’s protective factors. The presence of protective factors can mitigate the negative effects of toxic stress.
- For children, protective factors include parental resilience, social connections, concrete/tangible help in times of need, parent knowledge of child development, and social and emotional competence of the child.
- 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.

A goal in identifying risk factors for toxic stress is to also identify child and family strengths and other sources of family and community supports that can foster resilience and thriving.
HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

WHO TO SCREEN AND WHEN?

Optimal timing and intervals for screening for adverse experiences and toxic stress in children and families have not been established. Screening tools or questionnaires can identify risk factors for toxic stress. Some screening tools can also identify behavioral or physical symptoms that may be indicative of toxic stress or trauma. Pediatricians across the country are utilizing a variety of approaches in addressing toxic stress in their practices. Some practices are screening for parent ACEs while others are screening pediatric patients exclusively. While screening for difficulties early in infancy makes sense intuitively, providers may prefer to screen later in infancy based on the workflow of the well visit. Also, screening tools vary in the types of questions included. Some tools focus on basic needs, some on traumatic events, and some address resiliency and protective factors.

In planning an approach to screening for toxic stress, providers might want to consider some practical issues:

- How to explain concepts like ACEs and toxic stress and the rationale for screening to families
- Who to screen: parents, patients, or both
- When to screen: first visit, or a visit after parents have adjusted to the routine of a new baby and have established a relationship with the provider or, at particular ages
- Screening frequency: only once, annually, or some other interval
- What resources are available to address identified needs

CPT code 99420: Administration and interpretation of health risk assessment instrument (eg, health hazard appraisal) is applicable to screening for toxic stress. Insurance payment may vary, but coding is an important way to track the number and outcome of screenings. This practice data can help make the case to insurers of the importance of and need for payment for this important screening.

CPT code 96127 Brief emotional/behavioral assessment with scoring and documentation is for use only with standardized screening tools (e.g. Vanderbilt Assessment Scales, Pediatric Symptom Checklist, PHQ-9 Depression screening tool)

The following are brief descriptions of screening tools or questionnaires that address poverty related factors, social determinants of health, or other risk factors for toxic stress. Some also address protective factors and resilience. This list is not exhaustive and is meant to provide examples of available screening tools. For specific scoring and interpretation instructions as well as how to obtain copies please refer to the developer website.

**The Experience Screen:** Developed by the Rhode Island Toxic Stress project team, this tool includes questions about basic needs and past experiences for both children and parents. The screening tool has been piloted by the First Connections family visiting program. It is freely available for use. http://www.health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm_id=1075

**The Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children (SWYC):** is a freely-available, comprehensive screening instrument for children under 5 years of age used widely in RI. It includes sections on developmental milestones, behavioral/emotional development, and family risk factors such as household tobacco, alcohol and drug use, food insecurity, caregiver depression, and household conflict. https://sites.google.com/site/swycscreen/home

**ACE Q:** The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE Q) and User Guide (CYW ACE-Q) is freely available to pediatric offices however, it does require log-in for ascertainment. The CYW ACE-Q is administered by a health care professional and is completed confidentially by parents and caregivers of children from 0 to 19 years old or by adolescents ages 13 to 19. The User Guide offers background information on the original ACE study findings, the rationale for screening in children, along with suggestions on how to present and score the CYW ACE-Q. http://www.centerforyouthwellness.org/healthcare-professionals/

**SEEK PQ:** The Safe Environment for Every Kid Parent Questionnaire (SEEK PQ) screens for common problems that are risk factors for child maltreatment: maternal depression, alcohol and substance abuse, intimate partner (or domestic) violence, harsh parenting, major parental stress, and, food insecurity. For those interested in implementing SEEK, the University of Maryland requires a signed User Agreement which describes the University’s copyright ownership and terms for using the copyrighted information. http://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/frames/seek.cfm
HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

WE CARE: This screening tool is a component of the Well-child Care Visit, Evaluation, Community Resources, Advocacy, Referral, Education project. The tool screens for ten family psychosocial problems: lack of high school education, unemployment, smoking, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, depression, intimate partner violence, child care need, homelessness, and inadequate food supply. http://api.ning.com/files/JXndiEzV63s0hiZerJdlVgjYIdXI*yaMqRYwjupbr58TTZ1ggm8ihfcTv7g8kSD8nKFYOJkbpsdKIAXVzklpdW92BeC7Ny9d/Pediatrics2007Garg54758.pdf

Family Psychosocial Screen: The Bright Futures™ Pediatric Intake Form, also known as the Family Psychosocial Screen, as a whole can help the primary care health professional develop a general understanding of the history, functioning, questions, and concerns of each family. Areas of the screener can be scored to provide further insight into specific areas of a family's functioning: parental depression, parental substance use, domestic violence, parental history of abuse, and family social support. http://brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/pdf/professionals/ped_intake_form.pdf

I HELLP Social History Questions: Adapted from the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership, screens for family income, housing, education, legal status, literacy, and personal safety. This screening tool is being promoted by the AAP FACE poverty campaign which encourages pediatricians to screen for social determinants of health. http://www2.aap.org/sections/ypn/r/advocacy/facepoverty.html http://www2.aap.org/sections/ypn/r/advocacy/IHELLPPocketCard.pdf

Protective Factors Survey: An instrument to assess protective factors in high-risk families is available through the FRIENDS National Resource Center. The Protective Factor Survey is used to assess current status as well as change over time in family resiliency, social connectedness, quality of attachment, and knowledge of child development. http://friendsnrnrc.org/protective-factors-survey

Resilience Questionnaire: This tool developed by Dr. and Mrs. Burtt and Gladys Richardson from Resilience Trumps Aces assesses for parental resilience and support systems. http://www.healthycommunitiesme.org/assets/files/Healthy%20Start/ARCPamphlet(1).pdf
HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

SAMPLE SCREENING TOOLS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Experience Screen

This is a questionnaire about life events that can be very stressful. These life events can affect families and young children. If you have experienced any of these and are concerned about them, we will try to help.

- First, please check if you have experienced any of the below items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever...</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Had difficulty with (worried about, no money for, felt unsafe)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- heat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- getting help when you were sick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- work or school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lived in a house that had lead, cockroaches, mice, or tobacco smoke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Experienced a serious accident, injury, or disaster (such as a car accident, house fire, near drowning, animal attack, or something else)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Experienced a serious loss or separation from a family member or person close to you (such as the person died, divorce, left the country, incarceration, foster placement, or something else)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Drunk alcohol or used drugs more than you or anyone else in your home meant to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Witnessed violence or physical abuse other than on TV (such as seeing a person hit, beat-up, shoot, or injure another person)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Experienced violence or physical abuse (such as being hit, beat-up, shot, or being injured in another way)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Witnessed sexual abuse or sexual assault (such as saying someone else receive an unwanted sexual act, raped, attempted rape, or some other form of sexual assault)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault (such as an unwanted sexual act, rape, attempted rape, or some other form of sexual assault)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do any of the above experiences continue to upset you or cause you to be afraid of being hurt?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you often feel under extreme stress?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Next, please check if any of your children have experienced any of the below items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have any of your children ever...</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Not had good enough (worried about, no money for, felt unsafe):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- heat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- getting help when they were sick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- work or school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lived in a house that had lead, cockroaches, mice, or tobacco smoke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Experienced a serious accident, injury, or disaster (such as a car accident, house fire, near drowning, animal attack, or something else)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Experienced a serious loss or separation from a family member or person close to them (such as the person died, divorce, left the country, incarceration, foster placement, or something else)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Drunk alcohol or used drugs more than they or anyone else in their home meant to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>6. Witnessed violence or physical abuse other than on TV (such as seeing a person hit, beat-up, shoot, or injure another person)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8. Witnessed sexual abuse or sexual assault (such as saying someone else receive an unwanted sexual act, raped, attempted rape, or some other form of sexual assault)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault (such as an unwanted sexual act, rape, attempted rape, or some other form of sexual assault)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do any of the above experiences continue to upset your child or cause them to be afraid of being hurt?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you think any of your children are often under extreme stress?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhode Island Toxic Stress Screening Tool
Tool in Development, 09/2015 Draft
HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

SWYC: 2 months
1 month, 0 days to 3 months, 31 days
V1.03, 10/7/15

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES
These questions are about your child’s development. Please tell us how much your child is doing each of these things. If your child doesn’t do anything more, choose the answer that describes how much he or she used to do it. Please be sure to answer ALL the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makes sounds that let you know he or she is happy or upset</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems happy to see you</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows a moving toy with his or her eyes</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turns head to find the person who is talking</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds head steady when being pulled up to a sitting position</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings hands together</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughs</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps head steady when held in a sitting position</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes sounds like “pa,” “ma,” and “ba”</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks when you call his or her name</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BABY PEDIATRIC SYMPTOM CHECKLIST (BFSQ)
These questions are about your child’s behavior. Think about what you would expect of other children the same age, and tell us how much each statement applies to your child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your child have a hard time being with new people?</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child have a hard time in new places?</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child have a hard time with change?</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your child mind being held by other people?</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Does your child cry a lot? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| Does your child have a hard time calming down? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| Is your child fussy or irritable? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| Is it hard to comfort your child? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

| Is it hard to keep your child on a schedule or routine? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| Is it hard to put your child to sleep? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| Is it hard to get enough sleep because of your child? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |
| Does your child have trouble staying asleep? | ( ) | ( ) | ( ) |

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*Please continue on the back*
Table 3 is the Symptom Checklist used at the Center for Youth Wellness when administering the ACE-Q.

**Table 3: Symptomatology Accompanying Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Screening**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptomatology check-list</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep disturbance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight gain or loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to thrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enuresis, encopresis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor control of chronic disease (e.g. asthma, diabetes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School failure or absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor impulse control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted affect or numbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained somatic complaints (e.g., headache or abdominal pain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

The Parent Screening Questionnaire

Dear Parent or Caregiver: Being a parent is not always easy.

We want to help families have a safe environment for kids. So, we’re asking everyone these questions. They are about problems that affect many families. If there’s a problem, we’ll try to help.

Please answer the questions about your child being seen today for a checkup. If there’s more than one child, please answer “yes” if it applies to any one of them. This is voluntary. You don’t have to answer any question you prefer not to.

Child’s Name: ___________________________ Today’s Date: __/__/____
Child’s Date of Birth: __/__/____

PLEASE CHECK
☐ Yes ☐ No Do you need the phone number for Poison Control?
☐ Yes ☐ No Do you need a smoke detector for your home?
☐ Yes ☐ No Does anyone smoke tobacco at home?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the last year, did you worry that your food would run out before you got money or Food Stamps to buy more?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the last year, did the food you bought just not last and you didn’t have money to get more?
☐ Yes ☐ No Do you often feel your child is difficult to take care of?
☐ Yes ☐ No Do you sometimes find you need to hit/spank your child?
☐ Yes ☐ No Do you wish you had more help with your child?
☐ Yes ☐ No Do you often feel under extreme stress?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the past month, have you often felt down, depressed, or hopeless?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the past month, have you felt very little interest or pleasure in things you used to enjoy?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the past year, have you been afraid of your partner?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the past year, have you had a problem with drugs or alcohol?
☐ Yes ☐ No In the past year, have you felt the need to cut back on drinking or drug use?
☐ Yes ☐ No Are there any other problems you’d like help with today?

Please give this form to the doctor or nurse you’re seeing today. Thank you!

Resilience Score

Please answer the questions below using the following scoring guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Definitely Not True</td>
<td>Probably Not True</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>Definitely True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Score: ____________
WE CARE SURVEY

Our goal at the Harriet Lane Clinic is to provide the best possible care for your child and family. We would like to make sure that you know all the resources that are available to you for your problems. Many of these resources are free of charge. Please answer each question with an "X" and hand it in to your child’s doctor at the beginning of the visit. Thank You!

1. Do you have a high school degree?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If NO, would you like help to get a GED?

2. Do you have a job?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If NO, would you like help with finding employment?

3. Do you smoke cigarettes?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help to quit?

4. Do you or does anyone else in your home use drugs?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help with it?

5. Do you or does anyone else in your home have a problem with alcohol?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help with it?

6. Are you feeling sad or hopeless a lot of the time?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help with it?

7. Does your partner hit or verbally abuse you?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help?

8. Do you need daycare for your child?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help finding it?

9. Do you think you are at risk of becoming homeless?
   YES ☐
   NO ☐ If YES, would you like help with this?

10. Do you need help in getting food by the end of the month?
    YES ☐
    NO ☐ If YES, would you like help with this?

In case your child’s doctor cannot address all these issues at this visit, please rank the 3 items that you wish to talk about in order of importance.
1. 
2. 
3. 

Most important

Least important
### Pediatric Intake Form

Our practice is dedicated to providing the best possible care for your child. In order for us to serve you better, please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential as part of your child’s medical record. Ongoing evaluations of our care may involve chart reviews by qualified persons, but neither your name nor your child’s name will ever appear in any reports.

Circle either the word or the letter for your answer where appropriate. Fill in answers where space is provided.

#### Child’s Name  
Today’s Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you the child’s: A. Mother D. Foster parent G. Self (Are you the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Grandparent F. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many times have you moved in the last year?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. House or apartment C. Shelter with family D. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides you, does anyone else take care of the child if yes, no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has child received health care elsewhere? If yes, no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the child have any allergies or any medications? If yes, no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the child received any immunizations? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the child ever been hospitalized? Yes No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate this child’s health in general? A. Excellent B. Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Fair D. Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your concerns about your child?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you: A. Single D. Divorced C. Separated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the highest grade you have completed? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or vocational school College graduate Postgraduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FAMILY MEDICAL HISTORY

- Do the child’s mother, father, or grandparents have any of the following? If yes, who?
  - Yes No High blood pressure
  - Yes No Diabetes
  - Yes No Lung problems (asthma)
  - Yes No Heart problems
  - Yes No Miscarriages
  - Yes No Miscarriages
  - Yes No Nervous system problems
  - Yes No Drug problems
  - Yes No Mental illness (depression)
  - Yes No Other

### FAMILY HEALTH HABITS

- How often does your child use a seatbelt (car seat)?
  - A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
  - Does your child ride a bicycle?
    - Yes No
  - Do you feel that you live in a safe place?
    - Yes No

### WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD

- Did either parent have a drug or alcohol problem?
  - Yes No
  - Would you like to talk with other parents who are dealing with alcohol or drug problems?
    - Yes No

### HELP AND SUPPORT

- Whom can you count on to be dependable when you need help (just write their initials and their relationship to you)?
  - A. One B. Two C. Three D. Four E. Five F. Six G. Seven H. Eight
  - How satisfied are you with their support?
    - A. Very satisfied C. A little satisfied E. Fairly dissatisfied F. Very dissatisfied
    - How satisfied are you with your support?
      - A. Very satisfied C. A little satisfied E. Fairly dissatisfied F. Very dissatisfied

HOW DO WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

PROTECTIVE FACTORS SURVEY

Part I. Please circle the number that describes how often the statements are true for you or your family. The numbers represent a scale from 1 to 7 where each of the numbers represents a different amount of time. The number 4 means that the statement is true about half the time.

1. In my family, we talk about problems.
   Never | Very Rarely | Rarely | About Half the Time | Frequently | Very Frequently | Always
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

2. When we argue, my family listens to “both sides of the story.”
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

3. In my family, we take time to listen to each other.
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

4. My family pulls together when things are stressful.
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

5. My family is able to solve our problems.
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

Part II. Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

6. I have others who will listen when I need to talk about my problems.
   Strongly Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Neutral | Slightly Agree | Mostly Agree | Strongly Agree
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

7. When I am lonely, there are several people I can talk to.
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

8. I would have no idea where to turn if my family needed food or housing.
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

9. I wouldn’t know where to go for help if I had trouble making ends meet.
   1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

10. If there is a crisis, I have others I can talk to.
    1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

11. If I needed help finding a job, I wouldn’t know where to go for help.
    1     | 2           | 3      | 4                  | 5          | 6              | 7

This survey was developed by the FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention in partnership with the University of Kansas Institute for Educational Research & Public Service through funding provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services.
### IHELLP® Social History Questions

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#### Domain | Example Questions
--- | ---
Income |  
General | Do you ever have trouble making ends meet?  
Food Income | Do you ever have a time when you don’t have enough food? Do you have WIC? Food Stamps?  
Housing |  
Housing | Is your housing ever a problem for you?  
Utilities | Do you ever have trouble paying your electric/heat/telephone bill?  
Education |  
Appropriate Education Placement | How is your child doing in school? Is he/she getting the help to learn what he/she needs?  
Early Childhood Program | Is your child in Head Start, preschool, or early childhood enrichment?  
Legal Status |  
Immigration | Do you have questions about your immigration status? Do you need help accessing benefits or services for your family?  
Literacy |  
Child Literacy | Do you read to your child every night?  
Parent Literacy | How happy are you with how you read?  
Personal Safety |  
Domestic Violence | Have you ever taken out a restraining order? Do you feel safe in your relationship?  
General Safety | Do you feel safe in your home? In your neighborhood?  

**FACE POVERTY**

Screen for social factors impacting your patients’ health

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Section on Medical Students, Residents, and Fellowship Trainees
A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

A critical aspect of implementing a screening process for toxic stress involves planning for conversations about results with families and gathering the resources that will be needed to address issues identified. From a population or public health standpoint, screening all children can over time raise the collective community awareness of the importance of environmental and social influences on child well-being.

Because the essence of toxic stress is the absence of buffers needed to return the physiologic stress response to baseline, the primary prevention of its adverse consequences includes those aspects of routine anticipatory guidance that strengthen a family’s social supports, encourage a parent’s adoption of positive parenting techniques, and facilitate a child’s emerging social, emotional, and language skills.

Figure # 8 displays one possible population health approach to toxic stress screening.

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

RESOURCES FOR PRACTICES

Identifying families experiencing Toxic Stress can be unsettling since finding solutions isn’t always clear cut and each family has unique needs and strengths. Helping families identify supports is critical. Pediatricians cannot be expected to have all of the answers but can be supportive in partnering with families to explore solutions to their needs. A discussion around survey results or toxic stress symptoms is an important opportunity for providers to build relationships, educate families and provide resources. Providers can join with families by acknowledging “You are not alone, it is not your fault, and I will help.”

EXPLAINING TOXIC STRESS SCREENING AND RESULTS TO FAMILIES

Practices choosing to screen for toxic stress may want to have printed materials or scripts for office staff that can be used to explain to caregivers the concepts of toxic stress and its impact on healthy development. Below are examples of how practices can frame toxic stress screening for their families:

Sample Script
New research has shown that children’s exposure to stressful or traumatic events can lead to increased risk of health and developmental problems, like asthma and learning difficulties. As a result, at this clinic we now screen all of our patients for Adverse Childhood Experiences. Once again, you don’t have to tell us which ones your child experienced, only how many. I’d like to take a moment to review your responses.

(Caregiver answers no and that the patient is doing fine)

We now understand that exposure to stressful or traumatic experiences like the ones listed here may increase the amount the stress hormones that a child’s body makes and this can increase their risk for health and developmental problems. At this time, it doesn’t seem like [Child’s Name] is experiencing those issues, but if, in the future, s/he does start showing symptoms, please let us know because early intervention can lead to better outcomes.

FIGURE 9: EXAMPLES OF HOW TO EXPLAIN TOXIC STRESS SCREENING TO FAMILIES

To the parents in my practice,
None of us grew up in a perfect family. Some of us, however, grew up in very dysfunctional or unsafe homes. As your pediatrician, it is helpful for me to know specifically what you experienced while growing up. It helps me to better think about how to support your own parenting skills through what might be challenging times or experiences. For example, if you grew up in a household where you did not have enough to eat, will that make it harder to know how much your child should eat at any given age? If you were physically abused as a child how will you feel or react when your toddler hits you out of frustration or anger?

AND, it is also very important to know that an unsafe or dysfunctional home is only part of anyone’s story. We also know that resilience, the ability to ‘bounce back’, is just as important as adversity. On the reverse side of this letter is a questionnaire asking about your own Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) followed by a questionnaire about resilience. Thank your for sharing this information with me. Your personal information will be kept confidential. We will track overall information in order to make decisions about services to offer within the clinic. For more information about ACEs and the importance of resilience, the following websites may be helpful: acestudy.org; resiliencetrumpsaces.org
WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

MATERIALS FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

The following is a list of materials and handouts for families and information about types of interventions for Toxic Stress for primary care providers. It is adapted from materials created by the AAP Early Brain and Child Development (EBCD) Initiative.

Universal, Primary PREVENTIONS for Toxic Stress

- **Connected Kids** includes a Clinical Guide and 21 handouts for parents and teens topics such as bullying, discipline, interpersonal skills, parenting, suicide, and television violence [https://www2.aap.org/connectedkids/](https://www2.aap.org/connectedkids/)
- **Bright Futures** anticipatory guidance [https://brightfutures.aap.org/about/Pages/About.aspx](https://brightfutures.aap.org/about/Pages/About.aspx)
  - “Face” time and Caregiver Mental Health (initial visit)
  - Emotions are the First Language (9 month visit)
  - Tantrums, Time Out, and Time In (18 months)
  - Building Emotional Intelligence (36 months)
- **Books Build Connections Toolkit** to promote early literacy includes information for pediatric providers and handouts for parents keyed to each well child visit [https://littoolkit.aap.org/Pages/home.aspx](https://littoolkit.aap.org/Pages/home.aspx)

Targeted, Secondary INTERVENTIONS for Toxic Stress

- **Safe Environment for Every Kid (SEEK):** This program offers a practical approach to the identification and management of targeted risk factors for child maltreatment for families with children aged 0-5, integrated into pediatric primary care. By addressing these problems, SEEK aims to strengthen families, support parents, and thereby enhance children’s health, development, and safety, while helping to prevent child maltreatment. [http://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/frames/seek.cfm](http://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/frames/seek.cfm)
- **Video Interaction Project (VIP):** a study that videotapes parent/child interactions and analyzes them to improve the child’s cognitive, language, and social development [http://www.videointeractionproject.org/](http://www.videointeractionproject.org/)
- **Evidence Based Family Home Visiting Programs:** Programs to help pregnant women and families of children from birth to age three find resources, and develop skills needed to raise physically, socially and emotionally healthy children. Rhode Island has Nurse Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, and Parents As Teachers. [http://health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm_id=176/](http://health.ri.gov/programs/detail.php?pgm_id=176/)

Indicated, Tertiary TREATMENTS for Trauma and/or Toxic Stress

- **Parent-Child Interaction Therapy:** Empirically-supported treatment for conduct-disordered young children that places emphasis on improving the quality of the parent-child relationship and changing parent-child interaction patterns
- **Child-Parent Psychotherapy:** A dyadic, relationship-based treatment for parents and young children, which aims to help restore normal developmental functioning in the wake of domestic violence and trauma
- **Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy:** An evidence-based treatment approach shown to help children, adolescents, and their caregivers overcome trauma-related difficulties

See more at: [http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/EBCD/Pages/Vertical-Integration.aspx#sthash.lqeDCuA0.dpuf](http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/EBCD/Pages/Vertical-Integration.aspx#sthash.lqeDCuA0.dpuf)

In addition, the Florida AAP chapter has created materials about toxic stress for professionals and families: American Academy of Pediatrics: Florida Chapter Tip Sheets [http://cpeip.fsu.edu/mma/pediatrician/pediatrician_resources.cfm#pedetipsheets](http://cpeip.fsu.edu/mma/pediatrician/pediatrician_resources.cfm#pedetipsheets)
WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE IDENTIFY TOXIC STRESS?

RESOURCES ABOUT CHILD TRAUMA


The scripts and anticipatory guidance may be helpful in educating office staff as well as families of children who have endured significant trauma. Creating an environment where the needs of traumatized children are understood and addressed are elements of trauma informed care.

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripts for Helping Families Understand Trauma and Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirmation that trauma response is a healthy response to unhealthy threat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Symptoms (sleep difficulty, aggression, acting out, etc) are the body's way of protecting itself from threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe Pathophysiology of trauma response</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Our bodies are made to help us live in the wild where being able to deal with danger, like a hungry tiger, is how we protect our bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Our bodies and brains are wired to fight, run or hide at times of threat, NOT to learn to remember facts about the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- These responses are meant to be strong, but in short bursts. After the threat, the body is supposed to be able to relax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Help caretaker recognize feeling of trauma</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parents and older children should be told to remember a time when they felt threatened or anxious (car accident, fight), and remember how their bodies felt. The heart raced, muscles were ready to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- While they may remember very well the minutes before the accident or threat, they may have little memory of the actual scary time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Help caretaker extrapolate own experience to situation of toxic stress</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parents should think about what it is like if “the tiger” is in the house. This causes the fight, run, or hide response, but instead of lasting for just a short time, it keeps going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brain Response</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When a baby is learning to walk, they practice over and over and then one day they can walk without thinking about it because the brain links are so strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Response to trauma is the same. Once the brain links are made and strengthened, something little causes a strong response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parts of the brain that respond to trauma grow larger and grow connections. Parts of the brain used in learning and logic get smaller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you will see</th>
<th>Why it occurs</th>
<th>How Families can respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traumatized children will respond more quickly and more forcefully than other</td>
<td>Areas of the brain responsible for recognizing and responding to threats are turned on. This is called hypertrophied.</td>
<td>Do not take these behaviors personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children to anything they think is a threat.</td>
<td>Brain does not recognize that this new situation does not contain the same threats</td>
<td>Helping the child understand your facial expression or the tone of your voice will help lessen the chance of the child’s behavior escalating in situations that otherwise do not seem threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatized children are more likely to misread facial and non-verbal cues and</td>
<td>Responding with aggression will trigger the child’s brain back into threat mode.</td>
<td>Avoid yelling and aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think there is a threat where none is intended.</td>
<td>Logic centers shut down; fight, flight, or hide response takes over.</td>
<td>Lower the tone and intensity of your voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatized children need to be redirected or behavior may start to escalate</td>
<td>Emotion and language centers are not well connected. Memory centers that hold words are blocked.</td>
<td>Comedown to the child’s eye level, gently take hold of the child’s hand, and use simple, direct words. Give directions without using strong emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children don’t always know how to say what they are feeling. Often they are</td>
<td>Children have had to constantly be watchful for danger. Parts of the brain that keep us alert stay turned on, but the parts of</td>
<td>Give the child the words to label her emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not told that how they feel is okay.</td>
<td>their brains used for self-regulation and calming have not grown with the child.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatized children do not have the skills for self-regulation or for calming</td>
<td>Children come with negative beliefs and expectations about themselves (worthless, powerless) and about the caregiver (unreliable, rejecting)</td>
<td>Develop breathing techniques, relaxation skills, or exercise that the child can do when getting upset. Praise the child for expressing feelings or calming down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>down once upset</td>
<td>Children often reenact or recreate old relationships with new people. They do this to get the same reactions in caretakers that they experienced with other adults because these lead to familiar reactions.</td>
<td>Guide the child at first, then just remind the child to use his skills when you start to see the child getting upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatized children will challenge the caretaker, often in ways that threaten</td>
<td>These patterns helped the child survive in the past, prove negative beliefs, help the child vent frustration, and give the child some sense of mastery</td>
<td>Give messages that say the child is safe, wanted, capable, and worthwhile and that you as the caretaker are available, reliable, and responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Praise even neutral behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be aware of your own emotional responses to the child’s behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correct when necessary in a calm unemotional tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat, repeat, repeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do not take these behaviors personally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

Screening for adverse experiences and toxic stress will identify children and families who can benefit from various types of assistance. Emphasizing the connection between child or family stress and child development can be an effective motivator for families wanting to take action. However, there may be instances when families are not ready or willing to accept help. Exploring and accepting family preferences are important to building a trusting relationship. Partnering with families and allowing them to determine next steps is an essential, but sometimes difficult, role for the primary care team.

A common and often effective technique for assisting patients and families to create a plan for addressing a health concern is motivational interviewing (MI). It is a patient-centered approach incorporating empathy and nonjudgmental support. This conversational style facilitates patient or family problem solving. Elements of MI include asking open-ended questions, reflective listening, sharing the agenda setting, eliciting pros and cons of change, and summarizing the conversation.

Below are resources to learn more about MI including video examples.


LINKING FAMILIES TO SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Navigating resources to meet complex family needs is challenging and not all issues can be addressed from within the primary care practice.

Page 32 includes an outline of the resources in a new resource guide of community and state resources to assist primary care providers in connecting families to the services and supports they may need.

This resource guide can be found at the Medical Home Portal web site under the Services Directory tab: https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/
IMPLEMENTING TOXIC STRESS SCREENING

The following checklist, adapted from the AAP clinical report on screening for behavioral and emotional problems, may be useful to practices in planning for and implementing screening for toxic stress.10

1. **READYING THE PRACTICE**
   - Describe and evaluate current efforts already in place
   - Identify a practice champion
   - Train all staff
   - Consider incremental screening and actively monitor implementation
   - Develop a screening roadmap from providing the screen through the referral process
   - Problem solve challenges that arise across the entire practice
   - Determine how to best publicize new screening practices to families
   - Consider additional costs for procuring screening tools, etc
   - Prepare for psychiatric emergencies that may present in the office

2. **IDENTIFYING RESOURCES**
   - Identify referral resources that include the following:
     - Areas of expertise
     - Hours of operation
     - Payment methods
     - Ability to treat non-English speakers
   - Develop a plan for bidirectional communication
   - Learn about emergency mental health services
   - Partner with adult providers and community resources to help parents with identified psychosocial risk

3. **ESTABLISHING OFFICE ROUTINES FOR SCREENING AND SURVEILLANCE**
   - Implement screening in the first year of life and at intervals determined by the practice
   - Incorporate screening for family psychosocial risks and strengths
   - Partner with parents to formulate a plan when there is a failed screen
   - Identify strengths of the child and communicate these to the family
   - Screen when the child, family, or provider has concerns
   - Establish a registry of children with positive screens and family psychosocial risk
   - Monitor children with significant risk factors with heightened surveillance and more frequent screening

4. **TRACKING REFERRALS**
   - Develop a mechanism to track progress of children referred for assessment or treatment (e.g., successful referral, evaluation or initiation of treatment)
   - Collect information about families’ experience with referral resources

5. **SEEKING PAYMENT**
   - Familiarize the practice with appropriate CPT codes for screening, care plan oversight, face-to-face and non-face-to-face services and reimbursement by different insurance companies
   - Track billing and reimbursement for screening efforts

6. **FOSTERING COLLABORATION**
   - Explore co-located or other innovative models of care and partnerships with mental health professionals
# Guide to Resources for Children and Families

## Outline of Resources on the Medical Home Portal Website

To access this list of resources, go to [www.medicalhomeportal.org](http://www.medicalhomeportal.org), select Rhode Island from the list of available states, then click on the Services Directory tab.

### Adoption/Foster Care
- Adoption Agencies
- Adoption Information
- Foster Care

### Advocacy
- Child Advocacy
- Community Advocacy Agencies
- Disability/Diagnosis-Specific Advocacy
- Educational Advocacy
- Family Advocacy
- State Advocacy Agencies
- Victim Advocacy

### Breastfeeding
- Breastfeeding Information & Support

### Care Coordination
- Care Coordination Agencies

### Child Abuse/Neglect/Violence
- Child Abuse/Neglect
- Child Abuse Prevention

### Child Care and Respite
- After School Programs
- Child Care, Special Needs
- Crisis/Emergency Respite
- Day Care
- Respite Care

### Child Development
- Developmental Evaluation
- Early Intervention Programs

### Community Cultural Activities
- Community Cultural Organizations

### Disability Services
- Disability Employment
- Residential Services, Disability
- State Disability Agencies

### Education/Schools
- Alternative Schools
- Community & Adult Education
- Education About Disabilities/Diagnoses
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Parent/Family Education
- Preschool/Early Childhood Education
- School Districts
- Special Needs Schools
  - Public Schools
  - Schools for Children with Autism
  - Special Needs Schools, Other
  - Tutoring
  - Vocational Education

### Equipment
- Assistive Technology
- Durable Medical Equipment

### Financial Assistance
- Day Care Assistance
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Financial Assistance, Other
- Food & Nutrition
  - Food Assistance
  - Food Banks
  - WIC Clinics
## Financial Assistance (continued)
- Housing, Assistance & Special
  - Housing Repar
  - Housing, Other
  - Utility Assistance

## Health Insurance/Funding
- Health Insurance Advocacy
- Health Insurance, Other
- Medicaid
- Medicare Special Needs

## Healthcare, Dental
- Dental Care Expense Assistance
- General Dentistry for Children
- Pediatric Dentistry

## Healthcare, Medical
- Adult Care Physicians
  - Adult Specialists, CSHCN-related
  - Family Medicine
- CSHCN Clinics
- Clinical Trials Research
- Clinics, Other
  - Clinics, Pediatric Condition-Specific
    - Brain Injury Clinics
    - Diabetes Clinics
    - Muscular Dystrophy Clinics
    - Spina Bifida Clinics
    - Community Health Centers (CHC)
- Emergency Medical Care
- Hospitals
- Pediatric Medical Homes
- Pediatric Sub-Specialists
  - Developmental - Behavioral Pediatrics
  - Developmental Pediatrics
  - Pediatric Cardiology
  - Pediatric Endocrinology
  - Pediatric Gastroenterology
  - Pediatric Metabolic Genetics
  - Pediatric Nephrology
  - Pediatric Neurology
  - Pediatric Physical Medicine & Rehab
  - Pediatric Pulmonology
  - Pediatric Sleep Medicine
  - Pediatric Surgery
    - Pediatric Ophthalmology
    - Pediatric Orthopedics
    - Pediatric Urology
  - Pregnancy-related Services
    - Genetics, Prenatal

## Healthcare, Related Services
- Autism Treatment/Behavioral Specialists
- Departments of Health, State
- Genetic Counseling
  - Pediatric Genetic Counseling
- Hearing Services
- Home Health, In-home Services
- Home Visiting
- Music Therapy
- Neuropsychology
- Nutrition, Metabolic
- Nutrition/Dietary
- Occupational Therapy, Pediatric
- Physical Therapy
- Recreation Therapy
- Social Skills
- Social Work
- Speech/Language Therapy
- Vision Services

## Information & Referral
- Information & Referral/Hotlines
- Information Services, Phone
- Information Services, Web
LEGAL/LAW SERVICES
- Crime Victims
- Legal Services, General

MENTAL HEALTH/COUNSELING
- Behavioral Programs
- Bereavement Counseling
- Clinical Social Worker (LCSW, MSW)
- Crisis Intervention Mental Health
- Family Counseling
- Mental Health Counselors (LPC, CMHC)
- Mental Health Evaluation
- Mental Health Infant/Preschool
- Mental Health, Other Services
- Neuropsychological Evaluation
- Psychiatrist, Child-18
- Psychologist, Child-18
- Residential Treatment Facilities, Children/Adolescent
- Sexual Abuse Counseling
- Substance Abuse - Inpatient Facilities
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment

RECREATION
- Adaptive Recreation
- Art Programs
- Community Service Opportunities
- Community Youth Groups
- Recreation Programs/Activities

SUPPORT SERVICES/SUPPORT GROUPS
- Ethnic, Religious, Cultural Support
- Family Support Organizations
- Family Support, General
- Mentoring
- Support Groups, Local
  - Local Support Groups, Addiction
  - Local Support Groups, Disability/Diag
  - Local Support Groups, General

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD
- Career Counseling
- Group Homes
- Independent Living
- Social & Recreational Opportunities

TRANSPORTATION
- Emergency Medical Transportation
- Transportation, General
- Travel Information & Assistance
The following list of resources includes excellent sources of information for pediatricians wanting to learn more about toxic stress and its health effects on children.


Center for Youth Wellness. Based in the Bay Area of California, this medical home has led the way in screening pediatric patients for ACEs and toxic stress. http://www.centerforyouthwellness.org/


Inspirational TED talk from Dr. Nadine Burke Harris of the Center for Youth Wellness. https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en

Addressing Trauma and Toxic Stress through Pediatric Practice. Materials for pediatricians developed by the Florida chapter of the AAP including tips sheets for pediatricians and for parents: http://cpeip.fsu.edu/mma/pediatrician/pediatrician_resources.cfm


REFERENCES


