

# Applying *Developmental Science*

to the Child Welfare System



Part 2 of 2

## 3 Mutually-Reinforcing Strategies to Improve Outcomes

### Reduce Sources of Stress for Adult Caregivers

→ Caregivers improve core capabilities to make better long-term plans



Assist caregivers in addressing basic needs and urgent housing or financial problems.



Streamline services and information, e.g. simplify and combine forms, present information readably and limit the number of activities caregivers are expected to participate in.



Create an orderly environment that gives caregivers a sense of control e.g. limit exposure to chaotic places and provide checklists and timelines for them to track their progress.



Have you seen Part 1 on key concepts of child development?

*Did you know?*  
Early childhood experiences are important! 700-1000 new neural connections form every second in the first few years after birth.

Improved executive function enables adult to create a less stressful environment for him/herself and the child.

Better core capabilities improve adults' ability to give children "serve-and-return" care.

Reduced stress and orderly environments facilitate the development of responsive relationships.

### Strengthen Core Capabilities

→ Adults and children develop their self-regulation and executive function



Use a skill-building approach. Discuss with caregivers the real-life applications of the skills they learn from the programmes they attend.



Develop and record service plans in a way that helps caregivers break planning down into small steps. Give them reminders and feedback.



Create an orderly environment that gives caregivers a sense of control e.g. limit exposure to chaotic places and provide checklists and timelines for them to track their progress.

### Encourage Responsive Relationships

→ Healthy brain development for children in the child welfare system



Provide caregivers with opportunities to learn how to give responsive and supportive "serve-and-return" care.



Model responsive relationships. Case-worker training can, emphasise skills for building relationships with adult and child clients.



Minimise number of foster care placements a child has to go through. Enable important relationships to continue even after a change in caregivers.

Responsive relationships facilitate the development of the young child's self-regulation.

### Frontline workers are also susceptible to toxic stress.

Their ability to help clients make good decisions may thus be compromised.

Build support systems for staff e.g. empirically validated risk assessment methods and input from colleagues under less stress. Give attention to frontline staff who experience secondary trauma.

### Outcomes



Children

Healthy Development



Adults

Safe and responsive caregiving

*Did you know?*

Genes aren't "set in stone"! Early childhood experiences and environments determine whether positive or negative genetic potential is activated.