

Keeping Texas Kids on the Path to Success: A Prevention Strategy for Texas

Josette Saxton
Policy Associate



April 14, 2010

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Charge #2: Related to social service related prevention and early intervention programs at the health and human services agencies, the juvenile and adult criminal justice agencies and other government agencies



TEXANS CARE
for CHILDREN

MISSION

Texans Care for Children is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to the children of Texas. We look to our broad base of community-based experts—our partners who together represent thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our legislative agenda. Our areas of focus are: family economic security; infant, child and maternal health; children’s mental health; child welfare; and juvenile justice.

Stakeholder Groups

- Poverty and Family Economic Security Roundtable
- Infant Health Alliance
- Texas Children's Mental Health Forum
- Partners in Child Protection Reform
- Juvenile Justice Roundtable

*Prevention and early intervention are a priority
across all issues*

Why It Matters

- Prevention and early intervention provide the greatest opportunity to avoid substantial costs to individuals, families and societies
- Mitigates risks and strengthens protective factors

Why It Matters

- Competencies established in one stage of child's life establish a foundation for future competencies
 - *Earliest years are most opportune time to affect change*

Why It Matters

- Interventions provided in one system often have positive effects in other systems....which may not have paid for the intervention.

Examples:

- *Home visiting programs reduce burden on child welfare system*
- *Health screenings improve educational outcomes*

Why It Matters

- Failures in one system can have costs in another system. Example:
 - *One quarter of costs for mental health treatment services among adolescents incurred in education and juvenile justice systems*

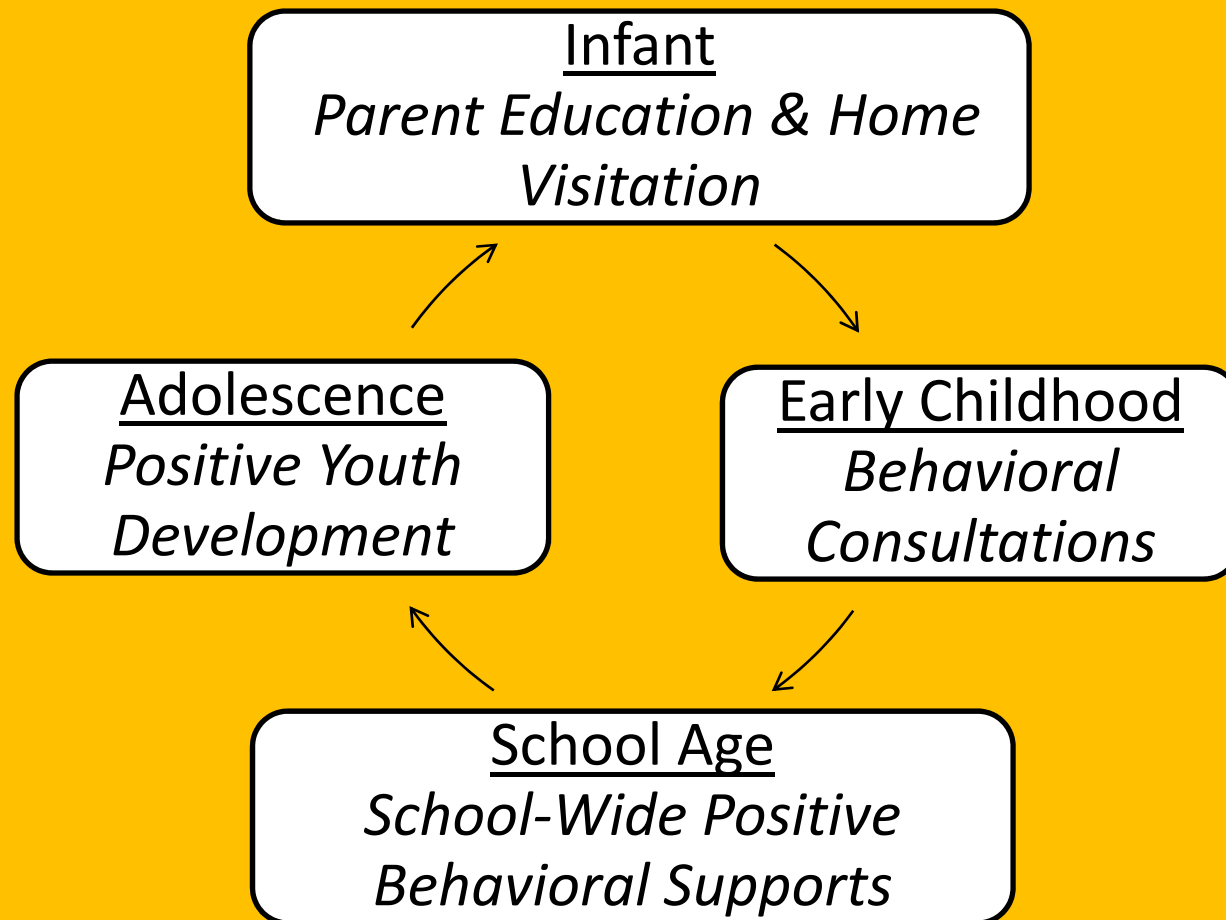
Recommendations

- Provide a **continuum of interventions** that promote healthy social and emotional development from birth through adulthood/parenthood
 - Coordinated approach across systems
 - Use evidence-based and promising practices
 - Appropriate adaptation to meet community needs
 - Ensure fidelity through sufficient funding, training, & monitoring

Recommendations

- Interventions should address child's developmental needs and be provided in context of family, other systems, and communities
 - *Parents*
 - *Schools (including early childhood settings)*
 - *Communities*

Evidence-Based & Promising Practices: *Intervention Points Across Development*



Intervention Opportunity - Supporting Infant Development

- Expand the Nurse Family Partnership program
 - *Funding for home visiting programs included in federal health care reform*
- Provide more at-risk families with access to evidence-based parent education through DFPS's Prevention and Early Intervention Division, such as:
 - *Parents as Teachers*
 - *Incredible Years*
 - *Positive Parenting (Triple P) Program*

Intervention Opportunity: Supporting Early Childhood Development

- Provide child care staff with access to **early childhood behavioral consultations** to avoid removal of children from child care programs.
 - DFPS child care licensing inspectors with specialized training in infant and toddler development to provide technical assistance
 - Competitive grants to community organizations to provide **intensive on-site consultation** to child care providers caring for low-income children

Intervention Opportunity: Supporting School Age Development

- Require the use of evidence-based models such as school-wide *Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS)* by school districts
- School teachers and staff training to recognize potential unmet developmental needs and to make appropriate referrals
 - Utilize Education Service Center Regions as one option to provide these services to teachers and administrators by adopting training modules that assist schools to develop and implement a wide array of prevention-based interventions
 - TEA should oversee ongoing implementation and quality

Intervention Opportunity: Supporting Adolescent Development

- Consistent with the National Juvenile Justice Network's policy platform on Positive Youth Development, we recommend that prevention funding in Texas support programs that:
 - Reorient to using positive, strength-based models and shift away from the traditional deficit based medical model.
 - Integrate PYD principles and strengths-based models into policies, procedures and programming whenever possible.
 - Train staff to assess positive outcomes, provide individualized case planning, collaborate with community providers, and engage youth as active participants in their own service planning.
 - Use effective community-based approaches to encourage asset development in youth.

Josette Saxton
Policy Associate
Texans Care for Children
512-473-2274

jsaxton@texanscareforchildren.org

www.txchildren.org

