

Using Data to Improve Services
and Strengthen Outcomes
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Policy research that benefits children, families, and their communities

Key concepts

- Review the historical role research has played in guiding child abuse prevention planning
- Identify promising prevention strategies and their outcomes
- Examine the conceptual and adaptive challenges facing efforts to expand and replicate prevention efforts on a community-wide level
- Explore the role “learning partnerships” can play in advancing the prevention agenda

Prevention's Continuous Evolution

- Wave 1: Definition and Awareness (1962-1980)
- Wave 2: The Service Continuum (1980's)
- Wave 3: The Developmental Paradigm (1990's)
- Wave 4: The Community Paradigm

Wave 1: Definition and Awareness

- Objective: Determine scope, cause, and impact
- Research Strategies:
 - Clinical studies
 - Epidemiologic studies
- Typical service response:
 - Reporting laws
 - Public child welfare agencies
 - Professional education

Wave 1 Lessons

- Child abuse is more complex, frequent and difficult to define than first imagined
- The “battered child” is a small proportion of all reported cases
- Reporting system is insufficient in case identification and leading to services
- Abuse is a function of multiple personality, environmental and cultural challenges

Wave 2: Expand Service Options

- Objective: Provide a diverse array of interventions
- Research Strategies:
 - General population surveys
 - RCT and quasi-experimental evaluations
 - Refinement of causal theories
- Typical service response:
 - Clinical demonstration programs
 - Diverse parenting strategies targeting at-risk parents
 - Children's Trust and Prevention Funds

Wave 2 Lessons

- Change is possible but not universal
- Child abuse is one of many factors contributing to adverse child outcomes
- Not all programs should be replicated – selection must be strategic and based on evidence
- Early intervention with new parents/young children offer great promise

Wave 3: The Developmental Paradigm

- Objective: Reach *ALL* new borns
- Research Strategies:
 - Developmental research
 - More rigorous program evaluations
 - Neighborhood-based research
- Typical service response:
 - Intensive home visitation services
 - Interagency early education and support

Wave 3 Lessons

- Programmatic evidence supports home visitation but underscores its limitations
- Parental capacity is influenced by context and normative standards
- Community matters but how parents draw on community resources (both formal and informal) remains unclear

Wave 4: The Community Paradigm

- Objective: Create supportive communities
- Planning parameters:
 - Early intervention
 - Evidence-informed practice
 - Universal outreach

Examples of Primary Prevention

- Home visitation services (both universal and selected)
- Parenting training
- Strengthening Families via child care system
- Public education and awareness efforts
- Educating children around safety issues

Proximate Outcomes of Primary Prevention

New Parents/Infants

- Better birth outcomes
- Enhanced parent-child interactions
- Positive maternal choices
- More efficient use of health care services
- Enhanced child development and early detection of developmental delays

Toddlers

- Early literacy skills
- Social competence
- Parent involvement in learning

Characteristics of Effective Interventions

- Theoretical integrity
- Intervention targets the earliest stages
- Systematically examines the needs of the target population across a number of domains
- Employs persistent, but respectful outreach
- Builds relationships
- Builds a context that offers ongoing support and access to other interventions

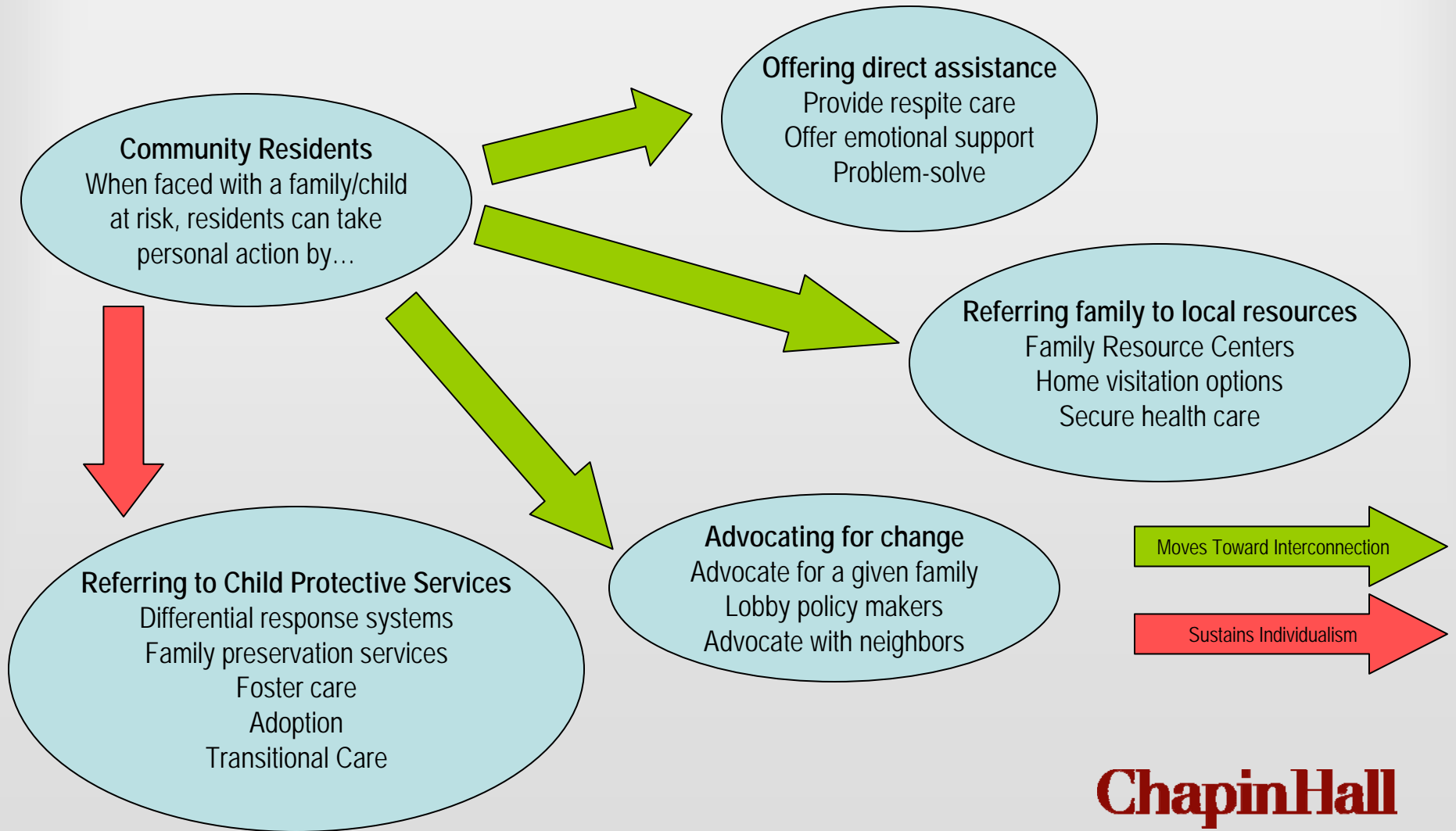
Quality Services As *Leverage* Not Solution

- Technical solutions to strengthening community
 - Creating diverse programs and supportive services
- Adaptive challenges to strengthening community
 - Altering institutional structures and openness to collaboration and shared responsibility for common objectives
 - Creating a culture which promotes individual responsibility for resolving social problems
 - Altering the political process to embrace investment in prevention

Strategies to Alter Context

- Planning
- Collaborative Capacity
 - Operations
 - Communications
 - Fiscal Strategies
- Workforce Capacity
- Public Engagement

Expanding Community Capacity for Change



Creating “Learning Environments”

- **Better programs**
 - Utilize a diverse array of evaluation designs
 - Craft implementation as well as outcome studies
 - Integrate findings into ongoing program and policy planning
- **Better theory**
 - Link program efforts to realistic outcomes
 - Articulate models linking proximate and distal outcomes
- **Better synthesis**
 - Meta-analytic techniques
 - More critical assessments of the available research
 - Draw on findings from other disciplines