

# Bringing Out the Best in Parenting: Translating Community-Engaged Research on Adversity and Parenting to Policy

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## What Is the Purpose of the Study?

- This qualitative study engaged parents of young children enrolled at a Head Start center to explore how the social environment influences parenting.
- This study also translated research findings into community advocacy to support positive parenting.

## What Is the Problem?

- Positive parenting is harder for families dealing with stress and trauma that come with poverty.
- Increasing positive parenting is an important way to help children grow up healthy and thrive in the face of adversity.
- Interventions to improve parenting do not always address how stress and trauma affect parenting.
- To make our parenting interventions more effective, we need to understand how the social environment affects parenting, especially among families living in poverty.

## What Are the Findings?

- The parents who participated in this study reported positive parenting attitudes, values, and goals.
- Parents encountered barriers to effective parenting in their social environments, from dangerous neighborhoods to conflict with their children's educators, that stemmed from systemic inequity.
- Challenges existed not only in the present, but also in the past, with parents explaining how intergenerational trauma and racism shaped their parenting decisions.

## Who Should Care Most?

- Families with young children who are living with adversity such as poverty and violence.
- Professionals who work with families exposed to adversity, especially those who receive services at Head Start centers, including:
  - Teachers
  - Healthcare providers
  - Social workers

## Recommendations for Action

- When delivering parenting interventions, consider natural protective factors such as parents' goals and aspirations for their children.
- Directly address how discrimination, oppression, and historical trauma affect client's parenting behaviors.
- Enact policy changes to support low-income families, such as increasing affordable housing in safe neighborhoods.
- Train service providers working with children and families in cultural humility and trauma-informed practices.