



COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND RESOURCES



With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, FamilyVoices IMPACT works to develop ways to improve health and wellness for all children and families, and to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. www.familyvoices.org and www.fv-impact.org. This digest is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Health Resources and Services Administration—Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Division of Child, Adolescent, and Family Health UCMC21535.

Bright Futures recognizes that a community contributes to the health and well-being of families who live there.

Communities are more than just the people in your neighborhood. They include health and social services, schools, local government, and other resources. These services affect the quality of life for all who live there.

People: How “connected” are you to others in your community? You can help ensure the health and well-being of your family by building relationships with neighbors, health providers, teachers, coaches, town officials, and others. When you are active in your community, you are more aware of available resources—before you need them. And you will be able to offer support to others. Who can you count on for support? Who can count on you?

Resources: Does your community provide resources your family needs? Is there easy access to medical care? Are there schools, libraries, and safe places to play? Are there community activities for children and teens? Do you know where to buy healthy, affordable food? Are there buses, subways, or trains so you can go where you need to go?

Quality of Life: Does your community feel safe? Are residents and town officials aware of problems? Do people work together to find solutions? Are there fun, safe activities that support healthy lifestyles? These might be outdoor concerts in a park, accessible walking trails for individuals with disabilities, volunteer transportation for those needing rides, and job fairs to help the unemployed. This helps create a sense of community and helps make life better for everyone.

Child and Family

You are the most important resource for your children. But at times, all families can benefit from outside help. That help may come from a resource or service in your community. What supports do you need to be a good parent or family member? Some communities can help you identify childcare. Many schools offer parenting workshops. You might need food assistance or housing. Immigrant families might want help learning the language. Families raising children with special health needs might need support groups. Some communities offer free mental health screenings, legal counseling, or other services.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Ages and Stages

Infancy: Family and other caregivers provide the most support to growing infants. In turn, families and caregivers need support, resources, and information to guide them in their roles. For many families, having good, affordable childcare is very important.

Early Childhood: Help young children learn about their community—the people, places, and resources that are part of daily life. Find out about childcare and early education programs. Visit the library. Explore the parks and playgrounds. These are great places for social and recreational activities for children, as well as opportunities for parents to meet and share with other parents.

Middle Childhood: Five- to ten-year-olds are usually ready to participate in activities outside of their families. They may want to ride bikes or play with friends at other community locations. Are there bike trails and safe places for children to play?

Adolescence: School and spending time with friends are still priorities, but your teen's interests may be changing. Some may want to get part-time jobs. Others will be learning to drive. Work with your community to meet teens' needs. Provide space for them to hang out. Create volunteer opportunities that support healthy lifestyles. Make sure they have access to mental health resources and supports.

Special Health Needs: Many organizations provide information, resources, referrals, and support to families raising children and youth with special health needs. Contact Family Voices (www.familyvoices.org) or P2P USA (www.p2pusa.org) for local contacts.

What Can Families Do to Promote Community Relationships & Resources?

As you identify your family's needs and strengths, think about what you can contribute to the health and well-being of your community. Your family and others benefit when you work to improve the resources in your community.

- Identify resources you need and work to find them.
- Work with others to improve the resources available to your family and others. If you have a need, ask for help. Bringing attention to an issue helps your family, and may help others too.
- Help young children learn about community. Say hello to the mail carrier, smile at the librarians, talk to the grocery store clerk, and wave to the lady next door.
- Look for ways to involve children in the community. Young children might help clean up a park. Older children might join a community sports team. Teens may be interested in working for a political candidate, trying out for a community drama production, volunteering at the local Y, or helping with a community fundraiser.
- Talk to your health care provider about resources you need. Share resources you know about that can help others. For example, if you've found a new support group or funds to help pay for childcare, low interest loans, or equipment swaps or exchanges to help families save money, others will benefit, too!

FAMILY VOICES MISSION

Family Voices aims to achieve family-centered care for all children and youth with special health care needs and/or disabilities. Through our national network, we provide families tools to make informed decisions, advocate for improved public and private policies, build partnerships among professionals and families, and serve as a trusted resource on health care. www.familyvoices.org

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

How Does Your Community Stack Up?

Man-made features like schools, homes, roads, and neighborhood design have an enormous impact on kid's health. How healthy is your community?

Do kids in your community—including those with special health care needs or disabilities—get enough exercise?

1. Can they safely walk or bike to school?
2. Do they have opportunities to be physically active at school?
3. Do they have ample safe, clean places to play, e.g., parks, community center?

Do kids in your community eat a healthy diet?

4. Do they have access to healthy food at school?
5. Are there many fast food restaurants close to schools in your community?
6. Is there a nearby grocery store that sells affordable, fresh foods?

Do kids in your community breathe fresh air?

7. Does your community have bans on smoking in public places?
8. Can people in your community run errands without a car?
9. Is your community free of major air pollution sources (industry or high car traffic)?

Do kids in your community get the health care they need?

10. Is there an affordable, accessible health care facility in your community?
11. Is there a local pharmacy in your community?

Are kids in your community safe from exposure to lead and mold?

12. Are kids safe from exposure to harmful levels of lead at school?
13. Are kids safe from exposure to harmful levels of mold at school?
14. Are kids safe from exposure to harmful levels of lead at home?
15. Are kids safe from exposure to harmful levels of mold at home?

My Community Didn't Score Very Well—Now What?

If you answered more questions with “no” than you'd like, there are things you can do. You aren't the only person in your community who cares about good health! Talk to other parents, your child's teachers and health care providers, and others in your community. Attend a city council meeting and ask for five minutes to state your concerns—and your ideas for improvement. Start with a small project and go from there!

*This quiz is based on a report from the American Public Health Association, *Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy Kids*.

Resources

Family Voices IMPACT Project —Additional resources and *Bright Futures: Family Matters* free e-newsletter www.fv-impact.org

- **2-1-1 Information and Referral** provides free, confidential help with food, housing, employment, health care, counseling, and more at www.211.org
- **Family-to-Family Health Information Centers** help families raising children and youth with special health needs connect with needed services and supports. Find the Center in your state at www.fv-ncfpp.org
- **Maternal and Child Health Knowledge Path**
 - **Community Services Locator:** www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_community.html
- **The Community Tool Box:** Bringing Solutions to Light: <http://ctb.ku.edu/>

Credits

The American Academy of Pediatrics is the home of Bright Futures. This material is adapted for families from Hagan JF, Shaw JS, Duncan PM, eds, 2008. *Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 3rd Edition, Elk Grove, IL See “Promoting Community Relationships and Resources, pgs 193 – 201. See also: <http://brightfutures.aap.org>