



# BRIGHT FUTURES IMPLEMENTATION TIP SHEET

## Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

The *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 3rd Edition*, is based on the belief that effective health supervision involves an ongoing partnership between health care professionals and families. The success of Bright Futures health supervision depends on creating and nurturing a true partnership through which children and adolescents, families, and health care professionals all work together to establish both short- and long-term goals. Working in partnership with the family, health care professionals can be remarkably effective in promoting health. By eliciting parental strengths and needs, the health care professional is creating opportunities for thoughtful dialogue between families and health care professionals.

Bright Futures views health as contextual (ie, the child is viewed within the context of the family and community). Most families want to learn how to help their children reach full potential. Eliciting parental strengths and needs promotes this learning and affirms and strengthens the role of the family as primary partner in health promotion. Since families most often are responsible for implementing next steps and recommendations, it is important that health care professionals listen to and learn from their perspectives.

Systematically eliciting parent and family strengths and needs can

- Improve communication between parents and health care professionals by increasing the likelihood that concerns will be addressed during the visit. When parents note that their concerns are considered important by the health care professional, their satisfaction with the quality of care improves.
- Help build rapport with parents by demonstrating respect and creating a partnership between the health care professional and parent that is focused on identifying and meeting the child's and family's needs. A strong relationship between health care professional and family can serve as an important foundation from which to address specific problems should they arise later.
- Build parental confidence by eliciting concerns and honoring their importance.
- Allow health care professionals to prioritize needs and issues for discussion and follow-up and facilitate early detection of potential problems.
- Identify needed referrals or community resources that will enhance a family's ability to maximize their child's development.

### ABOUT BRIGHT FUTURES

Bright Futures is a national health promotion and prevention initiative, led by the American Academy of Pediatrics and supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration. The Bright Futures Guidelines provide theory-based and evidence-driven guidance for all preventive care screenings and well-child visits. Bright Futures content can be incorporated into many public health programs such as home visiting, child care, school-based health clinics, and many others. Materials developed especially for families are also available. Learn more about Bright Futures and get Bright Futures materials by visiting [brightfutures.aap.org](http://brightfutures.aap.org).



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## Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

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- Offer opportunities for parents to share triumphs and challenges of child rearing. Health care professionals can use this information to help parents devise strategies to address issues in the future.
- Support patient-centered approaches to care.

### Bibliography

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Glascoe FP, Dworkin PH. The role of parents in the detection of developmental and behavioral problems. *Pediatrics*. 1995;95:829-836.

### Implementing a System for Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

#### 1. Form your improvement team.

Select a team to work together to plan and test improvements in the area of eliciting parental strengths and needs in your office. Team members should be enthusiastic and willing to test new ideas.

- Discuss the challenges your team anticipates facing in implementing approaches to elicit parental strengths and needs.
- Consider involving parents in your team—their insights are likely to be especially helpful.

#### 2. Define parental strengths and needs for your office.

It may be easier to focus on a particular group of patients as you adopt new strategies for eliciting parental concerns. It often is easier to start with a small, focused population, such as newborns or preschool-aged children, when testing new approaches. After your system is in place, your office can expand the focus to address other ages.

- Discuss the challenge of balancing recommended anticipatory guidance and preventive services with addressing family strengths and needs with your office staff.
- Different approaches may lend themselves to different ages. Several strategies and tools exist to elicit parental concerns during office visits effectively. When children are younger, much of the visit is focused on obtaining information from parents so strategies for adults, such as motivational interviewing, can be effective (eg, see [Search Institute](#) to access a framework of 40 Developmental Assets® by age: for early childhood, ages 3-5; grades K-3, ages 5-9; middle childhood, ages 8-12; and adolescents, ages 12-18).
- Gather information on a range of approaches. There are varieties of strategies that practice staff and providers can use to elicit parental concerns. The Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status is a tool designed to help identify developmental issues as well as to elicit parental needs effectively.



## Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

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- Other approaches to consider are HEEADSSS (for adolescents), Motivational Interviewing, GIMB (Generosity, Independence, Mastery, Belonging), and The Helping Skill, among others. Identify strategies that your office can test out with several patients before adopting throughout the office.
- Determine topics you will address during the visit and topics for which you will refer to outside resources.  
For those topics that can be addressed effectively through a clinic-based encounter (eg, toilet training), provide counseling, use patient education materials, recommend appropriate resources (eg, book, video), and schedule a follow-up appointment as needed. Topics such as domestic violence or substance abuse may require outside referrals and/or a series of follow-up appointments.
- Consider what new resources or referrals your practice may need.  
Identify new community resources or referrals for issues that are best handled outside the office. Gathering data about the most common concerns of your patients may help you decide which referrals and community resources are the most likely to be needed and used by your patients. (See Community Resources.)

### 3. Test new ideas.

Your team can conduct small tests to check your new system, to determine how to integrate the tools into practice flow, and to identify further refinements needed before expanding to the entire office. Include health care professionals and staff in this process.

- Map the office flow.  
Develop a flow chart that includes steps for administering tools and integrating them into the office routine. The office flow chart often will help clarify roles and responsibilities of team members.
- Use prompts and reminders.  
Build reminders and prompts into new routines whenever and wherever possible. It is particularly easy to forget new steps when the day is busy. Be sure to get input from staff performing new routines about what types of prompts might be helpful (sticky notes, signs, stickers, materials, etc).
- Be thorough when testing new strategies.  
Do not forget to check seemingly minor details, such as where in the chart a screening tool should be placed or how to document information gathered from the patient. This may require some planning and experimentation.

For new strategies and tools you want to spread throughout your office,

- Check in regularly on how changes are affecting staff.
- Communicate with staff about new system.  
Seeking ideas and input from staff will help you develop the right approach or approaches for systematically eliciting parental concerns.
  - Inform staff members that tools and resources are now available so they can use them with patients.
  - Share information about how using these tools and approaches will improve patient care.



## Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

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- Describe how materials will be organized so that staff can easily access materials and information as needed.
- Train health care professionals and staff.
  - Consider holding informal training sessions for all staff to present the rationale for using new tools. Include scientific evidence that supports their use. Provide opportunities for questions and review the new tools and how they will be used.
  - Discuss new roles or responsibilities for staff or health care professionals.
  - Staff might welcome a session on how to talk about sensitive topics or how to handle difficult situations that may arise as a result of using the new tools (eg, maternal depression, violence).
  - It can be important to raise awareness among care team staff about how cultural issues such as beliefs and values can affect a patient's openness. It may be helpful to discuss staff experiences with those issues and develop strategies for addressing them.

### 4. Solicit parent and staff feedback about the system.

- Ask parents their opinion of new tools or approaches.
  - Do parents find the new approach helpful?
  - Are there particular tools or processes that are especially helpful to parents?
  - Do they have questions about why you are doing things differently?
  - Keep track of whether language, literacy, and cultural norms are creating barriers for your patients in sharing strengths and needs.
- Ask staff their opinion of the new approach, including the tools.
  - What do staff report about their experiences using the new approach?
  - Do they feel the tools are uncovering important issues and information?
  - Does using the new tools interrupt the office flow?
  - What are the benefits and costs to using this new approach?
  - Has staff received comments from patients about the new tools and approaches?
- Gather system data to assess your strategy.
  - Review charts to track documentation of assessment of strengths and needs.
  - Formally survey parents to gather feedback at the practice level.
  - Determine if the new approach lengthens visit time.
  - Summarize findings and disseminate them throughout your practice.

### Suggested Tools

See the following pages.



### Understanding Your Needs for Today's Visit

Dear Parent,

Our practice is always looking for opportunities to improve our care for your child and your family. To help us learn about your needs as a parent and those of your child, please take a moment to answer the following questions:

#### I. Special Health Care Needs

Does your child have any *special health care needs* (including chronic medical problems, such as asthma, learning or behavior problems, or other health problems, for which he or she receives special services, such as counseling, therapy, or frequent medical tests)?

Yes  No

#### II. At today's visit, I would like to

1. Better understand my child's development and what to expect next.  Yes  No
2. Discuss any concerns I have about my child.  Yes  No
  - a. Sleep
  - b. Discipline
  - c. Feeding
  - d. Other
3. Discuss and build on my strengths as a parent.  Yes  No
4. Share values or traditions that are important to my family and me.  Yes  No
5. Take home print resources about things with which I need help.  Yes  No
6. Learn about community resources that may be helpful to my family and me.  Yes  No

#### III. Please list any other specific questions or concerns you would like to discuss today.

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Thank You!

Practice Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MR Number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

**Patient Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Today's Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-visit Checklist

Our practice wants your input! We have created this form to help focus your visit on those topics you find most important. Please check the items you would like to address today as well as those items that you feel you do well as a parent.

	Things I do well as a parent	Things I would like to discuss today
Feeding my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding what to expect next from my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing my child's behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping my child sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creating a safe environment for my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using resources in the community to help my child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting my child's speech and language development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping my child fit into our family; get along with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping my family handle stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping my child learn through play and be physically active	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing my child's moods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing my child's special health care needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Eliciting Parental Strengths and Needs

### Do you have a story to tell about how you've implemented Bright Futures in your practice?

Please contact us today so that we can feature your implementation story on our Web site or in a future edition of the *Bright Futures eNews*.

Jane Bassewitz, MA, Manager, Bright Futures National Center

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