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.
- 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.

Downloaded from: [http://brightfutures.aap.org/](http://brightfutures.aap.org/)
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.
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.

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 (e.g., toilet training), provide counseling, use patient education materials, recommend appropriate resources (e.g., 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.
  - 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.**

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank You!
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I do well as a parent</th>
<th>Things I would like to discuss today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeding my child</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding what to expect next from my child</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing my child’s behavior</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping my child sleep</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a safe environment for my child</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using resources in the community to help my child</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting my child’s speech and language development</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping my child fit into our family; get along with others</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping my family handle stress</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping my child learn through play and be physically active</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing my child’s moods</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing my child’s special health care needs</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 40 Developmental Assets™ for Early Childhood (Ages 0-5)

Prototype Early Childhood Assets Framework

External Categories and Assets

Support

Family Support – Primary caregivers, at least one of whom is a member of the child’s immediate family, consistently and predictably provide high levels of love, physical care, attention, and nurturing in a way responsive to the child’s individuality.

Positive Family Communication – Primary caregivers communicate positively, openly and respectfully, expressing themselves in a language and style appropriate to children’s age, developmental level, and individuality.

Other Adult Relationships – With the support of their family, children experience interactions and relationships with non-familial adults, including caregivers, relatives, older people, and community figures. These interactions are characterized by investment, enrichment, consistency, and caring.

Caring Neighbors – Young children know neighbors that extend both the child’s network of relationships and sense of safety and protection.

Caring Alternative Care and School Climate – Alternative caregivers and teachers, whether within or outside of the home, are nurturing and accepting, and provide stability and security.

Parent Involvement in Early Care & Education – Parents, teachers, and caregivers communicate with each other in order to attain a consistent and understanding approach to young children. Parents play various roles in the childcare and educational setting.

Empowerment

Community Cherishes and Values Young Children – Communities are responsive to issues relevant to the wellbeing of young children, offering an array of activities and quality resources, including those that promote physical health, appropriate to their developmental characteristics and needs.

Young Children Receive and Are Seen as Resources – Communities show their caring and investment in young children’s futures through community system building and by providing families what they need to function as a “child rearing system” and alternative caregivers and child care programs with adequate financial subsidy.

Young Children are Able to Make a Contribution – Young children are provided opportunities to offer assistance and help with simple chores that bring pleasure and order to their environment, and enable them to feel valued.

Young Children Feel and Are Safe – Adults, including parents, caregivers, and neighbors are able to reassure young children that their safety and well-being are a high priority, and that they are protected. The community provides physical safety, opportunity for physical development, and access to adequate health care.

Boundaries and Expectations

Family Boundaries – The family makes reasonable, developmentally appropriate guidelines for acceptable behavior by young children in ways that are understandable and attainable by young children.

Alternative Care or Out-of-Home Boundaries – Alternative care and early education programs use positive ways of implicitly and explicitly teaching young children acceptable behavior; they avoid inappropriate and punitive methods that confuse, shame and isolate.

Neighborhood Boundaries – Neighbors encourage positive and acceptable behavior in young children in a supportive, non-threatening way.

Adult Role Models – Adults serve as role models by showing the same kind of self-regulation, empathy, acceptance of others and engagement with learning that they would expect and value in young children.
Positive Peer Relationships – Young children’s peers offer inclusion and acceptance, opportunity for having fun in constructive play, and opportunity for developing and practicing pro-social skills.

Positive Expectations – Adults expect young children to behave appropriately, undertake challenging tasks with their assistance, and to do well at an activity within the child’s capacity to perform by giving encouragement; and avoid negative labeling if the child does not succeed.

Constructive Use of Time

Play and Creative Activities – Young children have daily opportunities to play with a variety of developmentally appropriate materials both structured and unstructured, that allow self-expression, physical activity, and interaction with others.

Out of Home and Community Programs – Young children are exposed to developmentally appropriate, out of home programs staffed with competent adults that offer a variety of well maintained, suitable materials. Children are periodically taken to community settings such as parks, museums, and theatres that offer stimulating experiences.

Religious Experiences – Young children participate in age appropriate spiritual activities that reflect the family’s faith and beliefs such as the role of faith in building feelings of security, optimism, and caring for others; and that address their own emerging interest in religious issues.

Time at Home – Young children spend a major portion of their time at home where they receive individual attention from primary caregivers, participate in family activities, play with a variety of materials, interact with non-family visitors of all ages, and view TV minimally.

Internal Assets and Categories

Engagement in Learning

Motivation to Mastery – Young children respond to novelty and new experiences with interest, curiosity and energy reflective of physical wellbeing, leading to successful and pleasurable experiences.

Active Participation in Learning Experiences – Young children are engaged and invested in developmentally appropriate materials and experiences.

Bonding to Alternative Care Programs – Young children feel positive about their ongoing attendance in and out-of-home care and educational programs, and after an initial period of adjustment, attend willingly.

Home-School Connection – Young children experience security, connection and consistency between home and school or other out-of-home program as a result of mutual concern by adults at each site, and through sharing information about concerns, interests, and activities.

Early Literacy – Young children increasingly show interest in print material and representational symbols (pictures, letters, numbers) as a result of being involved in language rich activities particularly being read to frequently and being exposed to print materials.

Positive Values

Caring – Young children begin showing empathy, understanding and awareness of others’ feelings, and make comforting and accepting gestures to peers and others in distress.

Equality and Social Justice – Young children show concern for people who Integrity – Young children express their world views in various ways, which include asking questions, making comments, and enacting play episodes. They are also increasingly able to stand up for their own sense of justice.

Honesty – Young children come to understand the pro-social value of honesty and are truthful to the extent their construction of and perception of reality permits it.

Responsibility – Young children can carry out or follow through on simple tasks that help or benefit others.
Social Competencies

Interpersonal Skills – Young children have “friendship skills.” They can play harmoniously with their peers through cooperation, give and take of ideas, increasing ability to share, and by showing interest in and awareness of the feelings of others.

Self-Regulation – Young children increasingly can identify the emotions they are feeling, are able to regulate their emotions in conflictual and stressful situations, and can focus their attention when needed on a matter at hand.

Planning & Problem Solving – Young children can intentionally plan for the immediate future, make a choice among several options, and attempt to solve problems or surmount frustrations.

Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity – Young children show positive and accepting attitudes toward people who are racially, physically, culturally or ethnically different from themselves.

Resistance Skills – Young children have an increasingly accurate sense of danger appropriate to their expanding sense of self and environmental knowledge, seek protective help from trusted adults and resist pressure from peers to participate in unacceptable behavior.

Conflict Resolution – Young children are increasingly able to mediate harmonious responses to conflicts by being helped to see the other person's perspective and learning how to compromise in a mutually respectful way.

Positive Identity

Personal Power – Young children have a sense of being able to make something happen that matters to them and to others.

Positive Self-Esteem – Young children have a growing sense that they are valued and that their presence and activities gain positive responses from others.

Positive View of Personal Future – Young children feel a sense of optimism—that life is exciting and enjoyable, and that they have a positive place within it.

Sense of Purpose – Young children look forward to appropriate milestones that will energize and confirm their growth such as upcoming birthdays, holidays, kindergarten and school entrance.
40 Developmental Assets® for Early Childhood (ages 3 to 5)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young children grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

**External Assets**

**Support**
1. Family support—Parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) provide the child with high levels of consistent and predictable love, physical care, and positive attention in ways that are responsive to the child's individuality.
2. Positive family communication—Parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) express themselves positively and respectfully, engaging young children in conversations that invite their input.
3. Other adult relationships—With the family's support, the child experiences consistent, caring relationships with adults outside the family.
4. Caring neighbors—The child's network of relationships includes neighbors who provide emotional support and a sense of belonging.
5. Caring climate in child care and educational settings—Caregivers and teachers create environments that are nurturing, accepting, encouraging, and secure.
6. Parent involvement in child care and education—Parent(s), caregivers, and teachers together create a consistent and supportive approach to fostering the child's successful growth.

**Empowerment**
7. Community cherishes and values young children—Children are welcomed and included throughout community life.
8. Children seen as resources—The community recognizes that children are valuable resources by investing in a child-rearing system of family support and high-quality activities and resources to meet children's physical, social, and emotional needs.
9. Service to others—The child has opportunities to perform simple but meaningful and caring actions for others.
10. Safety—Parent(s), caregivers, teachers, neighbors, and the community take action to ensure children's health and safety.

**Boundaries & Expectations**
11. Family boundaries—The family provides consistent supervision for the child and maintains reasonable guidelines for behavior.
12. Boundaries in child care and educational settings—Caregivers and educators use positive approaches to discipline, and natural consequences to encourage self-regulation and acceptable behaviors.
13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors encourage the child in positive, acceptable behavior, as well as intervene in negative behavior, in a supportive, nonthreatening way.
14. Adult role models—Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults model self-control, social skills, engagement in learning, and healthy lifestyles.
15. Positive peer relationships—Parent(s) and caregivers seek to provide opportunities for the child to interact positively with other children.
16. Positive expectations—Parent(s), caregivers, and teachers encourage and support the child in behaving appropriately, undertaking challenging tasks, and performing activities to the best of her or his abilities.

**Constructive Use of Time**
17. Play and creative activities—The child has daily opportunities to play in ways that allow self-expression, physical activity, and interaction with others.
18. Out-of-home and community programs—The child experiences well-designed programs led by competent, caring adults in well-maintained settings.
19. Religious community—The child participates in age-appropriate religious activities and caring relationships that nurture her or his spiritual development.
20. Time at home—The child spends most of her or his time at home participating in family activities and playing constructively, with parent(s) guiding TV and electronic game use.

**Internal Assets**

**Commitment to Learning**
21. Motivation to mastery—The child responds to new experiences with curiosity and energy, resulting in the pleasure of mastering new learning and skills.
22. Engagement in learning experiences—The child fully participates in a variety of activities that offer opportunities for learning.
23. Home program connection—The child experiences security, consistency, and connections between home and out-of-home care programs and learning activities.
24. Bonding to programs—The child forms meaningful connections with out-of-home care and educational programs.
25. Early literacy—The child enjoys a variety of pre-reading activities, including adults reading to her or him daily, looking at and handling books, playing with a variety of media, and showing interest in pictures, letters, and numbers.

**Positive Values**
26. Caring—The child begins to show empathy, understanding, and awareness of others' feelings.
27. Equality and social justice—The child begins to show concern for people who are excluded from play and other activities or not treated fairly because they are different.
28. Integrity—The child begins to express her or his views appropriately and to stand up for a growing sense of what is right and fair.
29. Honesty—The child begins to understand the difference between truth and lies, and is truthful to the extent of her or his understanding.
30. Responsibility—The child begins to follow through on simple tasks to take care of her- or himself and help others.
31. Self-regulation—The child increasingly can identify, regulate, and control her or his behaviors in healthy ways, using adult support constructively in particularly stressful situations.

**Social Competencies**
32. Planning and decision making—The child begins to plan for the immediate future, choosing from among several options and trying to solve problems.
33. Interpersonal skills—The child cooperates, shares, plays harmoniously, and comforts others in distress.
34. Cultural awareness and sensitivity—The child begins to learn about her or his own cultural identity and to show acceptance of people who are racially, physically, culturally, or ethnically different from her or him.
35. Resistance skills—The child begins to sense danger accurately, to seek help from trusted adults, and to resist pressure from peers to participate in unacceptable or risky behavior.
36. Peaceful conflict resolution—The child begins to compromise and resolve conflicts without using physical aggression or hurtful language.

**Positive Identity**
37. Personal power—The child can make choices that give a sense of having some influence over things that happen in her or his life.
38. Self-esteem—The child likes her- or himself and has a growing sense of being valued by others.
39. Sense of purpose—The child anticipates new opportunities, experiences, and milestones in growing up.
40. Positive view of personal future—The child finds the world interesting and enjoyable, and feels that he or she has a positive place in it.