



## IDENTIFYING FAMILY STRENGTHS – PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR CLINICIANS

Screening for the social determinants of health – **both protective factors and those that cause risk** (eg, food insecurity, inadequate or unstable housing) – with the intent of helping to address identified needs for children and their families could yield significant improvements in population health. However, screening needs to be done in a way that preserves patients' dignity. Chung et al recommended that clinicians connect families with community resources *while building on identified family strengths and assets*. Garg et al suggests using a strength-based approach that helps families identify protective factors such as concrete support in times of need, social connections, and resiliency. ***Screening for adverse social determinants should therefore be accompanied by identifying the strengths and assets of each family.***

Using *Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework*, as outlined by Harper Browne in her excellent monograph, we have attempted to operationalize the 5 protective factors with questions that clinicians could use with parents to elicit these family strengths. The questions included in the attached grid are merely suggestions, and experienced clinicians would be able to modify them based on the circumstances of their individual patients and families. Consider this a conversation that could happen over time, rather than set questions that must be asked at each visit. In addition, we have suggested feedback that could be provided for each strength, as many people who are in difficult circumstances often do not see themselves as having strengths. Pointing out someone's strengths can be a very powerful and empowering experience.

These examples have been designed specifically for the clinicians participating in the AAP PreSIPS2 Bright Futures Quality Improvement Project.

<b><u>FAMILY STRENGTHS</u></b>	<b><u>QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS</u></b> <b>(9 month Visit)</b>	<b><u>QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS</u></b> <b>(2 year Visit)</b>
<p><b>Parental Resilience:</b> Managing both general life and parenting stress and functioning well when faced with stressors, challenges or adversity; the outcome is positive change and growth.</p>	<p>Having a new baby is stressful. Who supports you? How are you taking care of yourself? How have you solved the issue of child care and getting back to work? <b>Feedback:</b> Taking care of yourself is so important – your mood can really affect your baby.</p>	<p>Parenting a 2 year old is stressful. How do you take time for yourself? Who supports you? Are there any problems you are dealing with now? <b>Feedback:</b> Taking care of yourself is so important – a lot of stress in the family can really affect your toddler.</p>
<p><b>Social Connections:</b> Having healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community, or a force greater than oneself.</p>	<p>Being a parent can be a difficult job. Do you have someone you can talk with when you are feeling lonely or frustrated? Where do you look to for strength when you need it? <b>Feedback:</b> Sounds like you are close with your sister and your church. Did you know that there is a story hour at the local library for babies and mothers?</p>	<p>Being a parent can be a difficult job. Do you have someone you can talk with when you are feeling lonely or frustrated? Where do you look to for strength when you need it? <b>Feedback:</b> Sounds like you are close with your mother-in-law and your church. Did you know that there is a play group for toddlers and dads at the YMCA?</p>
<p><b>Knowledge of Parenting &amp; Child Development:</b> Understanding the unique aspects of child development: implementing developmentally and contextually appropriate best parenting practices.</p>	<p>What do you enjoy doing with your baby? How can you figure out how to do more of that? Where do you go when you have questions about your baby’s feeding, sleeping or behavior? Thinking about how you were raised, what would you do that’s the same? Or different? <b>Feedback:</b> Those are all good ideas. Did you know that there is a website you can go to with questions (healthychildren.org)?</p>	<p>What do you enjoy doing with your toddler? How can you figure out how to do more of that? Where do you go when you need more information about language, toilet training or temper tantrums? Thinking about how you were raised, what would you do that’s the same? Or different? <b>Feedback:</b> Those are all good ideas. Did you know that there is a website you can go to with questions (healthychildren.org)? (If family has internet access.)</p>

<p><b>Concrete Support in Times of Need:</b> Identifying, seeking, accessing, advocating for, and receiving needed adult, child, and family services; receiving a quality of service designed to preserve parents' dignity and promote healthy development.</p>	<p>If your family suddenly had a crisis (needed money for a car repair or rent, child care fell through, serious illness) would you have someone you could count on for help? Where else could you go for help? <b>Feedback:</b> Great. Did you know that you could also call our office or 211 if you needed help right away?</p>	<p>If your family suddenly had a crisis (needed money for a car repair or rent, child care fell through, serious illness) would you have someone you could count on for help? Where else could you go for help? <b>Feedback:</b> Great. Did you know that you could also call our office or 211 if you needed help right away?</p>
<p><b>Social &amp; Emotional Competence of Children:</b> Providing an environment and experiences that enable the child to form close and secure adult and peer relationships, and to experience, regulate, and express emotions.</p>	<p>What is the best way you can soothe your baby when she is upset? What routines (like meal time, bedtime) are you starting as a family? How can you protect your baby from stress (in your family or neighborhood)? <b>Feedback:</b> You really understand your baby and what she needs – see how she looks to you for approval before she explores the room!</p>	<p>What is the best way you can calm your toddler when she is upset? What routines (like mealtime, bedtime) does your family enjoy? How are you protecting your toddler from stress (in your family, neighborhood or on TV)? <b>Feedback:</b> You are really in tune with your toddler – see how she ran to you for comfort when I came into the room!</p>

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**References:**

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