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Effective Strategies for Supporting Priority Populations

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A photograph of a baby's head from the chest up. The baby has dark skin and large, dark eyes, looking slightly upwards and to the left. Instead of hair, the top of the baby's head is covered by a large, yellow, porous sponge. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

It's amazing what they absorb before they're five.



Who are priority populations?

- Children of teen parents
- Children in homeless families
- Children in families in poverty or deep poverty
- Children/families with Department of Children and Family Services involvement
- Children with disabilities
- Children with disabilities not currently served
- Children in family, friend & neighbor (license-exempt) child care
- Linguistically isolated families and other families that experience significant barriers based on language
- Children of migrant or seasonal workers



Impact of priority population recommendation

- Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge—Innovation Zones
- Preschool Expansion Grant
- Early Learning Council committees

What are the needs of the Priority Populations?

- ▶ Same as other families....
 - ▶ Desire the best for their children
 - ▶ Consistency & flexibility, patience, etc.
- ▶ Additionally they need...
 - ▶ Extreme flexibility, response to basic needs (food, shelter, clothing)
 - ▶ Increased awareness of trauma and its impact
 - ▶ Understanding of their increased distrust of systems
 - ▶ Awareness that they are survivors

High needs, vulnerable populations

- ▶ Child welfare involvement (past or present)
- ▶ Young moms (18-25)
- ▶ Several children under the age of 5
- ▶ Maternal history of mental illness addressed or unaddressed
- ▶ Significant history of trauma (intergenerational, community, complex trauma)
- ▶ Housing instability (shelter stays, couch surfing)
- ▶ Limited educational opportunities

What can be done with awareness?

Recognize the impact on the service delivery expectations

- ▶ *Be sensitive to triggers that will cause the families to flee*
- ▶ *Meet families where they are*

What do all children need to thrive?

- ▶ Stable and loving family
- ▶ Safe & secure housing
- ▶ Learning opportunities (quality education)
- ▶ Access to healthcare and nutrition

Complex Trauma Disorder exposure to multiple traumatic events*

- ▶ Hyper vigilant
- ▶ Impaired cognitive and physical development
- ▶ Negative affects on physical and mental health
- ▶ Impacts ability to learn
- ▶ Particularly damaging in childhood

*National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Harm Reduction Values

- ▶ Building rapport & trust
- ▶ Seeing small changes as success
- ▶ Recognize ambivalence as success
- ▶ Being nonjudgmental is essential
- ▶ Avoid preconceived goals
- ▶ Provide choices
- ▶ Value the individual's information and input

System Cultivation/Integration for the target population

- ▶ Value in helping to organize systems to:
 - ▶ Implement integrated services
 - ▶ Reduce barriers
 - ▶ Decrease/eliminate gaps

Questions and discussion

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