



Prepares for School

Every section on the Family Map is supported by research to be important in preparing children to be ready for school.



Family Map Section (item)	Why it matters in preparing children for school
Self-Support	
English Language Learner (S1)	Communication between program staff and families is a key step in family partnerships. Language may affect parents' involvement in school and community activities and services. Often, but not always, a second language spoken in the home is an indication that the parents are recent immigrants.
Education & Past Program Experience (S2-S5)	Education is the foundation that supports families in providing for their children. Parental education is a strong predictor of later child educational success. Parents with more education also tend to provide a more interesting and educational home environment for their children. A question is asked about prior involvement with a similar program because building on these past experiences can help to empower a parent.
Employment (S6)	Lack of money often causes stress for parents and interferes with their ability to parent effectively. On the other hand, too much time spent working can have a cost to the family.
Others who Help Parents (S7)	Many families share parenting. The child usually benefits when both parents play a role. Research has shown that children with co-parents feel less torn between parents and feel their family is more stable. Having a good relationship with both parents will help children adjust and have fewer behavior problems.
Routines	
Moving, Homelessness, Household Transitions (R1-R7)	Children without stable housing or parents who move in and out are often confused and distressed. Compared to children living in stable homes, children who move often have four times the rate of development delays, three times the rate of behavior problems, and are more often sick.
Daily Routines (R8)	Routines help children develop their internal clock and promote self-regulation. Overall, during infancy and pre-school, children are healthier and behave better when they live in a home with predictable routines. The lack of consistent rules around the use of TV and sleep arrangements – can interfere with children’s development.

Adequate Sleep (R9) Not getting enough sleep is harmful for children and adults. Children who do not get enough sleep in preschool are more often identified as being hyperactive in kindergarten. Preschoolers getting too little sleep are more impulsive than children getting the recommended hours of sleep. Too little sleep in children under 5 has also been linked to obesity in adolescence. Too much sleep – more than 16 hours – may mean the child has a health problem.

TV—Quality and Quantity (R10-R12) Overuse of TV is associated with a variety of problems for young children including being overweight, having health problems, and exposure to poor parenting. The amount of time children spend watching TV prevents them from engaging in other learning activities. The content of many TV shows is harmful to children.

Organization Observational Questions Learning is easier when there are few distractions. This means that parents need to keep the home calm when children are trying to learn. In general, children’s development is influenced by how parents organize the physical environment and the schedules of the home.

Early Learning and School Readiness

Learning Materials Children learn by exploring the world around them. Materials that are in the home but not in a place the child can explore are not very helpful. The materials that are interesting and exciting are not always store bought. It is important that they find a variety of materials that engage all of their senses.

Literacy Materials and Reading (L2-L5) The number of books in a home is an important indicator of the family understanding of literacy. When children have access to at least 10 books, research shows the best language development, literacy skills, and early achievement. Reading at least 3 times a week has been linked to school readiness.

Informal Teaching (L6) Parents often think of play as fun but not important for later school success. For young children, playing IS learning. Playing with a parent also builds a special bond between parents and children.

More Formal Teaching (L7) Most parents teach basic concepts such as colors, shapes, alphabet, and numbers to preschool children. Parents may not consider themselves to be teachers when they do things like sing a rhyming song or comment on the number of balls a child holds, but they are! In these ways, the parent is a powerful teacher.

Outside the Home Activities (L8-L9) Family activities in the community have many benefits. Children see a new and wider range of exciting things and people. Being a part of a community can also have many benefits as children transition into school.

Monitoring

Daily Supervision (M1) Keeping track of the child’s whereabouts and activities is an important parenting task. Parents tend to underestimate the risk that they will be distracted when monitoring from outside the immediate area of the child’s play. Too often the parent gets busy with household chores and the child is not supervised closely enough to prevent injury.

Childcare by Others (M2-M3) Most states have clear regulations for child care provider qualifications. However, many families need informal, unregulated care, because of costs. Leaving a child with a person not well known to the family can lead to more dangerous results.

Environmental Safety

Neighborhood Safety (E1-E4 & Observation) Dangerous neighborhoods are often described as having drug activities and crime. Sometimes these activities are not easy to see, but people who live in the neighborhoods are uncomfortable. Unfortunately, children living in low-income areas are often unhealthier and have poorer development than those who don't live in low-income areas. Low-income neighborhoods often lack many typical resources such as community centers, parks and libraries.

Seeing or Being Hurt (E5) When there is violence in the home or nearby, children usually know about it. They often see it or hear it when parents think they do not. Even for very young children, witnessing violence or family conflicts can cause life-long problems.

Family Cohesion

Family Cohesion (F1-F7) Young children – even infants – are usually aware when conflict occurs among people living in their home. Often family conflict is expressed by yelling or emotional tension when certain adults are together. Distressed parents are less able to attend to and care for the child. Some parents may even turn to the child to fulfill their emotional needs during a time of conflict in the family.

Parenting Stress (F8-F14) Stress related to parenting often leads to poor behavior in children. Parents who report high parenting stress often also report conflict among family members, depression, and less effective parenting practices.

Discipline

Frequent and Effective Discipline Practices (D1-D2) A goal of this section is to identify families that lack an effective discipline practice or have inconsistent discipline practices. These families often report the frequent use of several practices and/or frequent discipline using the same practice. When many recommended practices are used it means that the parent recognizes these as 'good' but they are not clear when or how to use them.

Parenting Strategies (D2) One goal of this section is to identify parents who are at risk of using discipline practices that may be abusive – what is often referred to as harsh parenting. Harsh parenting can contribute to many later psychological and behavioral problems in children.

Health

Chronic Health – Health Literacy (H1-H3) Good self-management of chronic health conditions help prevent medical emergencies and even death. Most chronic conditions can be managed by following medical best practice guidelines and monitoring the condition. Compared to families with more income, low-income families are more likely to be taking care of other family members with a chronic condition. Having extended family living together can enrich the family in many ways. However, it may limit the time and energy the parent has to spend with their young child.

Health Care Access and Use (H4-H12)	When children have routine well-child visits and immunizations they are more likely to stay healthy. Children with poor health do not do well in school and can have poorer long-term development. Preventive care can not only prevent health issues from occurring, but also can prevent health issues from becoming too serious.
Exercise and Sleep (H13-H14)	Getting regular exercise and enough sleep are two of the most important health habits.
Mental Health (H15-H17)	Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety can make it difficult to be a good parent. Mental health problems in parents are barriers to healthy child development and school readiness. Parents with mental health problems are often less emotionally available to their infants and young children and less able to provide a high quality home environment.
Chronic Health – Alcohol and Drug (H18-H24)	Estimates suggest that about 3.4 million children – 5.1% of children under age 18 – live with a mother who over-used drugs or alcohol. Children of substance abusing parents are considered at high risk for a range of health, developmental, and behavioral problems. Parental substance abuse affects children in different ways. Sometimes a child is impacted by drug use during the pregnancy. Other times it is because of the home and parenting of a parent abusing drugs. Unfortunately, substance abuse is associated with other problems such as mental illness, violence, poverty, and unstable housing. All of these problems make it harder to parent. When children live in a home with parental substance abuse, their risk for developing problems - like behavior problems, development problems - increases dramatically.

Basic Needs

Basic Needs (B1-B9)	Parents having difficulty keeping up with monthly bills, transportation, repairs, food costs, and other necessary expenses often experience high levels of stress that could affect their ability to do the things they want to do for themselves and their child.
Food Assistance (B10-B11)	Food security is defined as the access to enough food for an active, healthy life.
Nutrition (B12 or B12-B14)	Many children suffer from poor nutrition and poor eating habits resulting in health problems. Many children suffer vitamin and mineral deficiencies. These deficiencies increase the likelihood of poor health and abnormal brain growth. Dealing correctly with these nutritional problems requires different types of parental efforts such as offering children good food choices, setting a good example of healthy choices.

Home and Car Safety

Car and Vehicle Safety (C1-C4)	More children are killed in motor vehicle accidents from any other cause. The use of child safety seats prevents most such deaths and reduces the risk and severity of injury. Children 3 to 5 years of age are at double risk of fatal and nonfatal injury when riding without restraints.
Home Safety (C5-C11)	Children may be exposed to dangers in the home, including cigarette smoke, fires, hot water, and lead paint. Children are more likely than non-smoking adults to be around second-hand and third-hand smoke.

Infant Safety (C12-C14)
This section is only on IT form

Children younger than 12 months have unique safety concerns. As infants grow and become mobile many other safety concerns become apparent such as reaching for dangerous items and climbing. The transitions from crib to bed can create a new found freedom for the young child and parents may choose to use an infant monitor during this important transition.

Access to Dangerous Things
(C15 or C12)

The list of common poisons for young children is a list of things often used in the home: washing powder, medicines, cleaners, bleaches, plants, yard chemicals. Some parents misjudge the ability of children to get to things and places in the home. Parent often need help seeing the home from the child's point of view. Things that are not dangerous for adults, like an iron falling from the ironing board, are serious for children. The job of a child is to explore! The job of the parent is to make the world the child explores safe.

Social Integration

Family and Friends Support (I1)

Parenting requires knowledge of many things. Having a friend or expert to ask questions about child health can reduce the need for doctor visits. Many single parents just need extra hands sometimes. Parents often need advice from others to help make good decisions and feel more comfortable.

Community and Program
Involvement (I2)

How someone connects with and experiences their community changes over time. Parents who are involved in their community often report less stress and loneliness than parents not connected to their community. As children get older, parents are a role model. Parents who are involved with a hobby or sport to help reduce stress are showing children an example of a good way to cope. When parents put children in places to meet other adults like church or a sports team, they are showing children how to find other caring adults.

Observation

Observation of Child with Parent

Children learn self-control when parents respond and communicate well with them. It is difficult to ask a parent about parenting behaviors around affection and warmth; but it is easy to observe. Parents who have loving feelings toward their child will often use several actions which you may notice. These include touching, facial expressions, and warm voice tones.

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