



**Newborn Study Group (NSG)
Strategic Framework for Newborn Initiative
September 2016**

Opportunity Statement

Mounting brain science is clear—the first 1,000 days of a child’s life are critical for establishing a strong foundation for lifelong health, learning, and well-being. Evidence is also clear that a child’s family and caregiver relationships play an essential role in promoting healthy brain development during this time period. Unmitigated stress within the family is strongly associated with negative impacts on child development, while positive nurturing relationships buffer children from stress and promote optimal development of brains and bodies. Strengthening caregiver capacity and skills is critical and builds both success in parenting and the workforce. Across Washington State, many communities have recognized the importance of supporting families with young children, so that families can provide the safe, nurturing experiences and environments that children need during early development. Washington State and its communities are working to increase access to family services and supports and to make local systems easier to use. The opportunity remains to create systematic universal approach to identify risks as early as possible and connect families with supports to prevent and/or mitigate the stress as early as possible.

Theory of Change: *Children will have better health, educational, and social emotional outcomes if their families are strong, stable, and supported by systems, policy, and communities informed by the science of early childhood.*

Overview of Proposed Initiative

The *Newborn Initiative* will focus on enhancing local systems of services and supports for families during the prenatal to infancy/toddler period (up to child age 2) in two selected communities.¹ The initiative will involve a unique learning collaborative model, pairing state level Frontiers of Innovation (FOI) partners with local community partners and families using brain science to both identify and mitigate stress for vulnerable families.

Goals and Outcomes

Specific goals are to:

- 1) Improve population level early identification, coordinated response, and support for common family stressors
- 2) Strengthen parent-child relationships to buffer young children from stress and promote healthy development
- 3) Inform future state and local policy and system efforts designed to support families with young children.

Expected outcomes are:

- 1) More accessible and responsive systems and supports families with children
- 2) Reduced parental stress, anxiety, and depression
- 3) Increased caregiver capacity and skill to support the developmental needs of young children
- 4) Decreased child maltreatment
- 5) Improved developmental progress for children

¹ While this initiative focuses on families in prenatal to infancy/toddler period, NSG acknowledges the need for complementary efforts focused on adolescents and reproductive age adults prior to pregnancy as well as additional efforts focused on early child development in the first 5 years of life. Further, while this work aims to increase the proportion of families who are able to provide the nurturing care and safe environments that young children need to thrive, NSG recognizes that some parents have insurmountable barriers to providing safe care for their children warranting involvement of Child Protective Services and out-of-home placement.

Approach

The initiative will include the following features:

- Establish a learning collaborative between participating communities and state partners, incorporating rapid cycle “Plan-Do-Study-Act” learning processes
- Use population-based and systems-based interventions that link existing efforts
- Address exposure to common family stressors through universal family risk identification and a tiered, family-centered, community response
- Measure the resulting system, family, and child outcomes
- Incorporate learnings into strategic policy development and systems change

Key Components of Initiative

SYSTEM INTERVENTIONS	FOCUS AREAS	SPECIFIC ISSUES/ MEASURES
Develop and implement universal family risk screening and tiered response for...	Housing and economic stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family with safe place to live • Family able to meet basic needs
	Parental mental health and substance use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents or caregiver sad or anxious • Parents or caregivers with excessive use of alcohol or other substances/signs of addiction
	Family relationships and social support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive partner or family violence • Network of family and friends
Identify opportunities for innovation around caregiver skill building and capacity	Targeted linking to existing services and supports, Identifying areas where we need more Identify areas where a new solution may be needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver responsive to child needs • Parent-child “Serve-and-Return” • Child attachment and bonding
Measure and monitor desired outcomes related to...	System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System/service capacity and coordination • System ease of use • Earliest identification of problems
	Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental stress, anxiety, and depression • Parenting knowledge and skill
	Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child abuse and neglect • Child developmental progress (social-emotional, cognitive)

Expectations of FOI Partners

- 1) Identify and select two partner communities through collaborative process.
- 2) Convene, facilitate, and support community planning sessions using existing agency staff.
- 3) Provide data support and facilitate data exploration with communities.
- 4) Map existing state initiatives and help define community connections.
- 5) Provide resource development assistance including grant-writing .
- 6) Develop a fundable project proposal and seek public and private funding to implement a multi-year learning proposal.
- 7) Facilitate linkages to Harvard University’s Center on the Developing Child researchers and other state and national research resources.

Selection of Pilot Communities

Process TBD

- Criteria
- Outreach

Timeline

- Stakeholder engagement and project refinement: *July-September 2016*
- Community outreach and selection: *September-December 2016*
- Community planning and strategy meetings: *January-June 2017*
- Community implementation: *July 2017-December 2018*
- Resource alignment and project support: *Ongoing*
- Project evaluation: *January-March 2019*