Promoting Strong Families Through Parenting Education

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Parenting Is An Essential Skill

- Fundamental skill from pre-historical times:
  - Families taught children how to hunt and prepare food
  - Parents concerned with educational attainment in and out of the home (Berger, 2000)

  - Parenting influenced by:
    - Culture and values
    - Climate
    - Location
    - Economics
    - Religion
    - Parental education and resources

- World War II study (Freud & Burlingham, 1943)
  - Children who were separated from parents more traumatized than the ones who stayed with parents in bombarded city
  - Laid the foundation for conceptualizing family bonds as a protective factor for children in times of mass trauma, long before concepts of resilience and protective factors had been developed.

Critical Role of Parenting in Family Functioning

- "Parenting styles rather than family structure has been found to be the main determinant of effective family functioning and adolescent well-being" (McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman, 1995).

- Research indicates warm, nurturing parenting behaviors protect children from the consequences of economic distress and contribute to positive outcomes for children in high-risk situations

- Parenting practices impact not only the physical, cognitive, and emotional development of children but also the overall functioning of the family unit (Manzeske & Dopkins Stright, 2009)

- Intergenerational: development of supportive and stable romantic unions in next generation

Dilemmas in Contemporary Family Life

- Diversity of family structures and effects on children

- Work-life negotiation across socio-economic spectrum

- Traumatic conditions including violence, extreme poverty, immigration, refugee status

- Tension in culturally heterogeneous societies between what is taught at school and at home

Black and Hispanic parents are more likely to see kids' successes and failures as a reflection of their parenting

% saying their children's successes and failures mostly reflect ...

- ■ The job they're doing as parents
- ■ Their children's own strengths and weaknesses

	The job they're doing as parents	Their children's own strengths and weaknesses
All parents	46	42
White	40	47
Black	54	36
Hispanic	57	33

Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Voluntary responses of "Both," "Neither," "Depends" and "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of parents with children under 18, Sept. 15-Oct. 13, 2015

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Parents with higher and lower incomes don't always share the same concerns

% saying they worry that each of these might happen to their child/any of their children at some point

	Family income		
	$75,000+	$30,000-$74,999	<$30,000
	%	%	%
Be bullied	61	62	60
Struggle with anxiety or depression	55	55	55
Be kidnapped	44	51	59
Get beat up or attacked	38	44	55
Get pregnant/Get a girl pregnant as a teenager	43	40	50
Have problems with drugs or alcohol	44	36	41
Get shot	22	29	47
Get in trouble with the law	21	25	40

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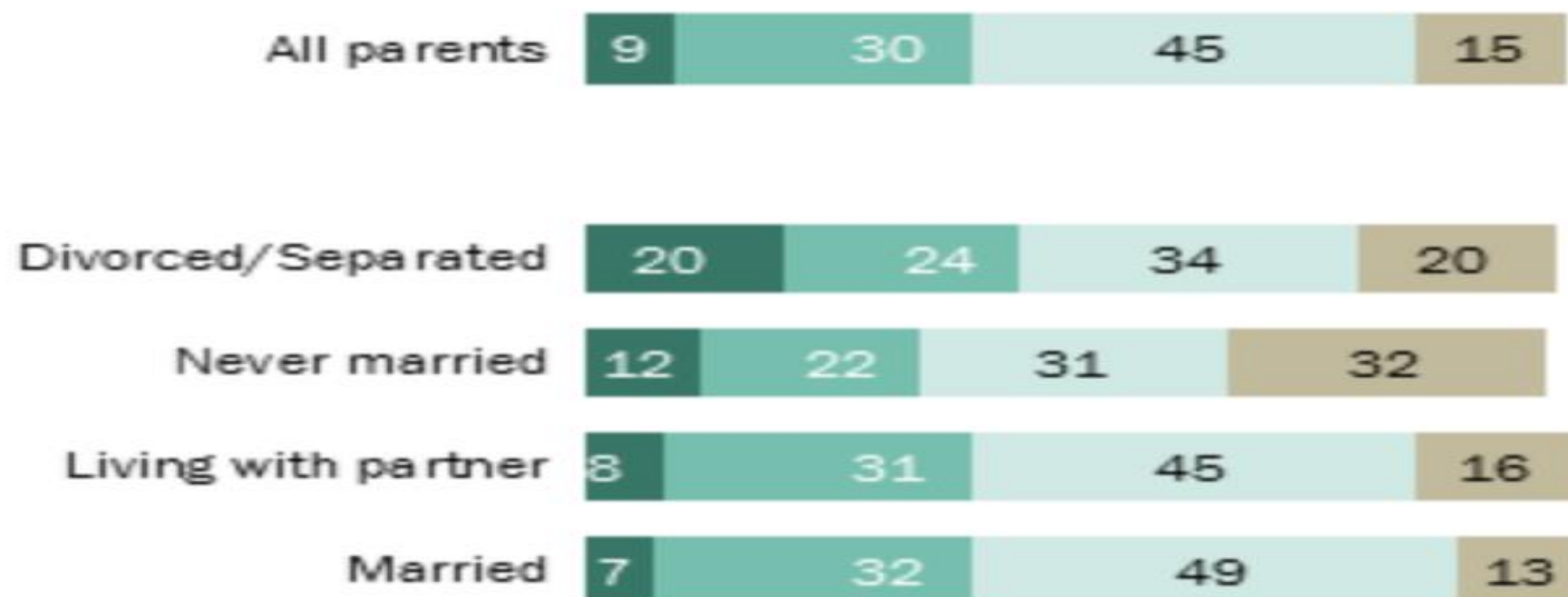# Risk Factors for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Children

- Poor parenting

- Lack of warm and positive parent–child relationships

- Inadequate supervision

- Lack of parental involvement

One-in-five separated or divorced parents say they disagree with children's other parent often

% saying they _____ disagree with their spouse, partner, or children's other parent about child rearing

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
All parents	9	30	45	15
Divorced/Separated	20	24	34	20
Never married	12	22	31	32
Living with partner	8	31	45	16
Married	7	32	49	13

Positive Parenting is Key

- Research indicates: impact of positive parenting practices on children's social, emotional, and intellectual development, (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2016)

  - Enhanced sense of security

  - Ability to focus attention

  - Behavioral health

Parent Education Strengthens Families

- Individuals vary with respect to parenting depending on a multitude of factors

- Parent education programs are designed:
  - To help parents and caregivers understand their children's individual needs and development, as well as their own roles and responsibilities

  - Provide parents and caregivers with knowledge, resources and support to develop parenting skills to support child and family well-being

  - Assist parents and caregivers learn the strategies to create a positive and nurturing home environment that helps their children thrive

Parent Education Programs Support Strong Families

- Enhanced social connections as parents exchange ideas, provide and obtain support, and share resources

- Improved child behavior, as children whose parents participate in these programs show greater prosocial behaviors and less negative externalizing behaviors

- Better quality parent-child interactions as a result of parents learning how to engage with their children (Wilder Research, 2016)

Parent Education Takes Many Forms

- Social Learning focus on encouraging positive behavior through building the parent-child connection.

- Skills-based interventions and family system approaches that address trauma and other challenges.

- Training and consultation that aim to help families better understand:
  - Children's emotions and needs
  - Improve attachment between caregiver and child,
  - Reduce problem behaviors in children
  - Enhance placement stability

Effective Parent Education Programs

- Provide parents with an opportunity to network and receive support from other parents

- Engage fathers

- Treat parents as equal partners in determining services

- Tailor programs to specific needs of families

- Offer programs that are culturally relevant to meet the needs of diverse populations

Parent Education is Key to Promoting Strong Families

- Parenting programs promising in terms of strengthening family resources and providing mechanisms through which families not only can improve their parenting practices, but build on their own strengths and resources

- Examples include:
  - Parenting interventions that target infant mental health through mother-infant relationship
  - Home visitor programs
  - Parenting programs as intervention for children with emotional and behavioral difficulties
  - Parental involvement in schools
  - Work of IFFD

- Race / ethnicity / gender / social marginalization / social class need to be accounted for

Thank you!!