

BEYOND MEDICINE: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Reach
Out
& Read®



CAROLINAS

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Strengthening Families is a research-based approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.

Strengthening Families changes how service providers interact with families to support them in building protective factors, and provides a set of resources and tools for supporting parents. Children with high social and emotional competence skills are better able to handle life's challenges, communicate more clearly, recognize and regulate emotions, establish and maintain relationships with others, and engage in problem solving and conflict resolution.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MEDICAL PROVIDER

During well-child exams, primary care providers use clinic-based interventions, like Reach Out and Read, to talk about the importance of reading aloud and interacting with their child from birth, demonstrate how best to look at books and talk about the stories, and encourage them to cuddle up and read together at home and build routines around books. Providers engage parents as partners, and empower them to achieve good outcomes for their children, become their child's first teacher and a leader in their family. Parents learn how early experiences and parenting impacts young children's brain development. Parental resilience is built as providers focus on strengths and supportive relationships that foster a parents' capacity to respond to stressful situations in productive ways.

Primary care providers give a new developmentally appropriate book as a tool to help parents bond with their child, enhancing social and emotional competence and buffer the effects of stress, potentially mitigate trauma. Reading aloud exposes children to stories that show differences in ability, appearance, and circumstances. Through stories children learn empathy as caregivers discuss these differences in a positive or neutral way.

HOW CAN REACH OUT AND READ HELP

Reach Out and Read offers a two- generational approach addressing parents' needs, children's needs, and attending to the parent-child interaction and relational health. Parents and children reading together builds strong social-emotional bonds that help children learn. When parent-child relationships are mutually rewarding, there is greater enjoyment, increased responsiveness, and decreased likelihood of maltreatment. Temperament, or the way we approach and react to the world, is part of social and emotional development and is biologically based. When there is a challenging relationship between caregiver and child due to differences in temperament, the risk of maltreatment increases.

Reach Out and Read focuses on the critical factors in developing a strong foundation for executive function skills and supports the quality of relationships in the home from birth. Reading aloud helps children cope during times of stress or anxiety; taking children to places and times they have never been – enlarging and enhancing their worlds.

RESOURCE: <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies>

To learn more about the value of Reach Out and Read in Pediatric Primary Care, please visit www.rorcarolinas.org.

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