

# Improving Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Along the Continuum



## Across the Continuum:

- Acknowledge the structural barriers that lead to challenging circumstances and avoid blame.
- Codesign strategies with the community and people with lived expertise.
- Emphasize a family-centered approach that recognizes and values the contributions of all family members.
- Engage a wide range of community partners and stakeholders to ensure coordination across systems.



**Prevention:** Create systems changes where families are not afraid of the consequences of asking for help. Offer supportive, trustworthy, and non-punitive responses to family challenges and crises.

- Find ways to engage in anti-poverty initiatives, such as using flexible funds or guaranteed income programs (see [\*Providing Cash to Families in Poverty Reduces Risk of Family Involvement in Child Welfare\*](#) for more details).
- Utilize the convening power of judges and courts to bring together partners and motivate systems change.
- Fight against isolation by building recovery-supportive communities, creating safe spaces for social interaction, fostering connections among residents, and ensuring access to resources.
- Implement public service campaigns and announcements encouraging positive parenting and promoting resources, like parent education, informational websites, and “warm” lines (see [\*Working Across the Prevention Continuum to Strengthen Families\*](#) for more details).



**Early Intervention:** Recognize, assess, and engage the family to establish a helping relationship. Get parents into quality substance use disorder (SUD) treatment as soon as possible.

- Assess and attend to concrete needs *first*, including food, housing, and childcare.
- Separate poverty from neglect by examining all aspects of child welfare decision-making and policies that perpetuate increased surveillance of families living in poverty (see [\*Separating Poverty from Neglect in Child Welfare\*](#) for more details).



## Early Intervention *continued*

- Implement a preventative legal advocacy program that helps families avoid unnecessary involvement with the child welfare system.
- Identify and screen for SUD as early as possible and make timely referrals to treatment (see [\*Engagement and Safety Decision-Making in Substance Use Disorder Cases\*](#) for more details).
- Utilize recovery specialists and peers with lived experience who can help parents access and engage in services and overcome barriers to recovery (see [\*The Use of Peers and Recovery Specialists in Child Welfare Settings\*](#) for more details).



**Intervention:** Work as part of a collective to meet needs and make resource connections. Break down silos through collaboration, communication, and coordination.

- Implement benefit navigator services that help families understand the complex array of safety net programs.
- Improve access to transitional and permanent supportive housing that combines on-site SUD treatment and wraparound services (see [\*Why Housing Matters for Family Recovery, Stability, and Public Safety\*](#) for more details).
- Remove barriers to obtaining health care, including transportation, affordability, need for health insurance, and disjointed coordination of care.
- Ensure access to family-centered treatment services that include inpatient treatment for parents—combined with services for their children—and ensure provision of services to family members.
- Utilize Family Conferencing and Decision-Making Models to help families identify their strengths and needs, set goals, develop case plans, and make decisions jointly with caseworkers and service providers.



**Aftercare:** Help parents create a stronger safety net for their family. Questions include: Who's in their corner, and who could/should be in their corner? Who's following up? What are the safety plans? Is strong recovery capital in place for those recovering from a SUD?

- Identify and incorporate opportunities for children, parents, and families to weave healthy, pro-social behaviors, relationships, and activities into treatment plans, phase structures, and aftercare plans.
- Increase access to aftercare support, including peer and mutual self-help groups, educational programs on addiction, and alumni groups.
- Help families build recovery capital and protective factors that sustain recovery, family wellness, and permanency after case closure. See [\*Beyond Compliance: Empowering Families to Build Recovery Capital for Sustained Recovery and Family Wellness\*](#) for more details.

