

Overarching Competencies 5 and 8 Strengthening Protective Factors to Reduce Health Disparities and Promote Resilience

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What Are These Competencies?

Competency 5: Competency 5 focuses on the personal, social, economic, and environmental factors influencing an individual's or group's health status.

- Understand the risk factors that make some people healthy, and other people unhealthy (e.g., **determinants of health***) that contribute to **health disparities**** among culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

***Determinants of Health:** The range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that influence an individual's health status

[HealthyPeople.gov/determinants-of-health](https://www.healthypeople.gov/determinants-of-health)

****Health Disparities:** The differences in health outcomes and their causes among groups of people. [Disparities](#)

Competency 8: Competency 8 describes how to help children and families identify and use their own strengths to deal with conditions that may lead to poor health.

- Assist children and families to address challenges that affect their well-being, promote **resilience***, and strengthen **protective factors****.

***Resilience:** A person's ability to bounce back from or overcome difficult experiences and events. Helping children and families build resilience can contribute to positive outcomes.

****Protective Factors:** Qualities or conditions in individuals, families, and communities that help people be resilient and more likely to experience better outcomes.

Why are these competencies important?

Select the rings in the stacking toy to learn more.

- **Ring 1 of 6:** Many Head Start children and families experience factors such as poverty and cultural and linguistic diversity that may lead to health disparities.
- **Ring 2 of 6:** Health disparities can have a negative effect on healthy growth and development.
- **Ring 3 of 6:** Children and families are more likely to have poor health outcomes when risk factors outweigh protective factors.
- **Ring 4 of 6:** Head Start health services may increase protective factors that lessen the negative effect of health disparities.
- **Ring 5 of 6:** Head Start health services staff have a unique opportunity to model healthy behaviors and connect children and families to health services and resources.
- **Ring 6 of 6:** Healthy behaviors and access to health services and resources promote health equity*.

*Health Equity: When everyone has access to the health information and health services that they need to be as healthy as possible. [CDC.gov/health-disparities](https://www.cdc.gov/health-disparities)

What are Health Disparities?

- A "health disparity" refers to a higher burden of illness, injury, disability, or mortality experienced by one population group relative to another.
- A "health care disparity" typically refers to differences between groups in health insurance coverage and quality, access to, and use of care.
- Race/ethnicity, country of origin, socioeconomic status, age, language, geographic location, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability status, and family composition may contribute to health and health care disparities.

Why Does Head Start Address Health Disparities?

- From the beginning, health and nutrition services have been an essential part of Head Start comprehensive services to help children overcome these challenges.
- Healthy children are ready to learn and better able to succeed in school and life.

Risk and Protective Factors

Let's learn about risk factors and protective factors as little Johnny moves through his environment.

Select the numbers on the game board to learn more.

1. Risk factors are qualities or conditions in individuals, families, and communities that may increase the likelihood of developing a disease or injury.
2. Protective factors are qualities or conditions in individuals, families and communities that may decrease the likelihood of developing a disease or injury.
3. Some risk factors are fixed. For example, you may be more likely to have an illness because of your family health history.
4. Some protective factors are fixed. For example, mothers who access prenatal care can provide a healthy beginning for their child.
5. Some risk factors can change over time. For example, you may live in unsafe housing conditions that are more likely to lead to injuries.
6. Some protective factors can change over time. For example, families who have access to health information they can understand are more knowledgeable about how to keep their children healthy and safe.
7. It is not necessary to remove every risk factor associated with a particular health condition to prevent it.
8. Protective factors can reduce the impact of some risk factors.
9. Identifying and supporting strengths can reinforce protective factors.

The Relationship Between Risk and Protective Factors

- Risk and protective factors can affect a child's development and health throughout their lifespan.
- It is easier to be and stay healthy when children and adults have more protective and fewer risk factors.

Try Your Hand: Risk Factors

As you read the following story, select the key words or phrases in the paragraph that you identify as being risk factors. Select four risk factors in the story below. In the next section, you will identify protective factors.

Beverly, 3 years old, attends a local Head Start program. Beverly's mother has a full-time, low paying job, so they live with her grandmother and grandfather. Both her mother and grandmother have diabetes. Her grandfather smokes a pack of cigarettes a day. Beverly's grandparents take care of her when she comes home from her Head Start program. The family

lives in an inner city community. There is no supermarket in their neighborhood, so they shop at a convenience store that sells mostly packaged and processed foods. Beverly's grandmother takes her to a local playground in good weather, which limits the amount of time Beverly watches TV when her mother is working. The city is about to launch a new bus route that will cut her mother's commute in half and will give the family easier access to a nearby Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

Try Your Hand: Risk Factors

Did you find the four risk factors in this story? (Answers in bold)

Beverly, 3 years old, attends a local Head Start program. Beverly's mother has a full-time, **low paying job**, so they live with her grandmother and grandfather. Both her mother and grandmother have **diabetes**. Her grandfather **smokes** a pack of cigarettes a day. Beverly's grandparents take care of her when she comes home from her Head Start program. The family lives in an inner city community. There is **no supermarket in their neighborhood, so they shop at a convenience store that sells mostly packaged and processed foods**. Beverly's grandmother takes her to a local playground in good weather, which limits the amount of time Beverly watches TV when her mother is working. The city is about to launch a new bus route that will cut her mother's commute in half and will give the family easier access to a nearby Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

Try Your Hand: Protective Factors

Now, select six protective factors in the story below.

Beverly, 3 years old, attends a local Head Start program. Beverly's mother has a full-time, low paying job, so they live with her grandmother and grandfather. Both her mother and grandmother have diabetes. Her grandfather smokes a pack of cigarettes a day. Beverly's grandparents take care of her when she comes home from her Head Start program. The family lives in an inner city community. There is no supermarket in their neighborhood, so they shop at a convenience store that sells mostly packaged and processed foods. Beverly's grandmother takes her to a local playground in good weather, which limits the amount of time Beverly watches TV when her mother is working. The city is about to launch a new bus route that will cut her mother's commute in half and will give the family easier access to a nearby Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

Try Your Hand: Protective Factors

Did you find the six protective factors in the story below? (Answers in bold)

Beverly, 3 years old, attends a local **Head Start program**. Beverly's mother has a **full-time**, low paying job, so they live with her grandmother and grandfather. Both her mother and grandmother have diabetes. Her grandfather smokes a pack of cigarettes a day. Beverly's grandparents **take care of her when she comes home** from her Head Start program. The family lives in an inner city community. There is no supermarket in their neighborhood, so they shop at a convenience store that sells mostly packaged and processed foods. Beverly's grandmother **takes her to a local playground in good weather, which limits the amount of time Beverly watches TV** when her mother is working. The city is about to launch a **new bus route** that will cut her mother's commute in half and will give the family **easier access to a nearby Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)**.

Try Your Hand: Summary

Notice on this summary scale the relationship between protective and risk factors and positive and negative health outcomes.

Positive Health Outcomes (Heavier side of scale)

- Public transportation
- Affordable healthcare
- Full-time employment
- Quality early care and education program
- Decreased screen time/increased outdoor play opportunities
- Family support

Negative Health Outcomes (Lighter side of scale)

- Family history of diabetes
- Low socio-economic status
- Exposure to second-hand smoke
- Limited access to affordable, fresh foods

Summary

Select the buttons to review the main concepts covered in this course.

- **Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from or overcome difficult experiences and events. Building resilience can contribute to positive outcomes.
- **Health Equity:** When everyone has access to the health information and health services that they need to be as healthy as possible
- **Protective Factors:** Qualities or conditions in individuals, families, and communities that help people be resilient and more likely to experience better outcomes
- **Determinants of Health:** The range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that influence an individual's health status
- **Risk Factors:** Qualities or conditions in individuals, families, and communities that may increase the likelihood of developing a disease or injury
- **Health Disparities:** The differences in health outcomes and their causes among groups of people

Learn more about resilience from the [Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#).

Learn more about social determinants of health from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

Learn more about building health equity from this [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report](#).

Connecting with Others

- If you have more questions, contact NCECHW at health@ecetta.info or (toll-free) 1-888-227-5125.
- Join [MyPeers](#): a collaborative platform for the early care and education community
- Subscribe to the American Academy of Pediatrics Early Childhood [listserv](#)

Congratulations! You have reached the end of this module.

Module Resources

Resources throughout the module:

- [Determinants of Health](#)
- [Health Disparities](#)
- [Health Equity](#)
- [Overcoming Obstacles to Health in 2013 and Beyond](#)
- [Resilience](#)
- [Social Determinants of Health](#)

Health Disparities Resources

- [Disparities in Health and Health Care: Five Key Questions and Answers](#)
- [Mediators and Adverse Effects of Child Poverty in the United States](#)
- [Understanding Disparities in Child and Adolescent Injury: A Review of the Research](#)
- [Social Determinants of Health Resources](#)
- [Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants in Promoting Health and Health Equity](#)
- [Social Determinants of Health 101 for Health Care: Five Plus Five](#)
- [Social Determinants of Health: Thoughts on Neighborhood and Built Environment](#)

Health Equity Resources

- [Achieving Behavioral Health Equity for Children, Families, and Communities: Proceedings of a Workshop](#)
- [Culture of Health Tools & Resources](#)
- [Early Childhood Is Critical to Health Equity](#)
- [Health Equity: Start Where You Are Webinar](#)
- [What Is Health Equity, and Why Does It Matter?](#)

Resilience Resources

- [Breaking Through: Understanding Stress and Resilience in Young Children](#)
- [The Road to Resilience](#)
- [Tipping the Scales: The Resilience Game](#)