



Social Determinants of Health

Why Early Child Development is the Foundation

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the conditions in which people are born, work, live, learn, and play. These conditions directly affect our quality of life and include the following: (1) healthcare access and quality; (2) education access and quality; (3) social and community context; (4) economic stability; (5) neighborhood and physical environment.



There are 10 action steps adapted from the World Health Organization, which, if implemented, will systemically change the inequities that exist in our communities and ensure we all attain economic and social benefits for generations:

- 1. Create the conditions for children (gestation - eight years of age) to thrive in their physical, socio-emotional, and language/cognitive development.*
- 2. Ensure three critical elements of healthy child development: (1) stable, responsive, and nurturing caregiving; (2) safe, supportive environments; (3) appropriate nutrition.*
- 3. Educate on the rapid brain development in the first few years of a child's life and the ongoing interchange between genes and their environment.*
- 4. Make certain young children are exposed to stable, caring, responsive, and interactive relationships with adults to mitigate toxic stress.*
- 5. Construct safe, cohesive, and child-centered neighborhoods and communities to support healthy development.*

6. *Provide access to quality early learning experiences as the foundation for a successful life.*
7. *Build family resilience by providing programs and services which develop self-efficacy and self-sufficiency, offering flexible work schedules, providing resources to choose high-quality childcare which best fits family needs, and providing parent education on child development and positive parenting.*
8. *Educate the public on how early child development is the cornerstone of human development and should be central to how we judge the success of societies.*
9. *Prioritize developmental screenings and early intervention to ensure children reach their full developmental potential.*
10. *Mitigate exposure to physical, biological, emotional, and chemical risks during the early years.*

A Call to Action

Early Childhood OC is committed to ensuring that young children reach their developmental potential; adults are knowledgeable, nurturing, and responsive; environments that impact children are safe, supportive, stable, and healthy; and our communities attain economic and social benefits by prioritizing children and families.

Orange County's Early Childhood Policy Framework outlines policies and strategies for action which support early child development as a social determinant of health through its three pillars: (1) Resilient Families; (2) Quality Early Learning; (3) Comprehensive Health and Development. To create systemic change and positively influence the SDOH, we must collectively implement these policies and practices at the institutional, local, state, and federal levels with a laser focus on ensuring access, quality, and equity of these services.

For more information on how to implement the Early Childhood Policy Framework, please visit our sector-specific Early Childhood Policy Framework Toolkits at <https://earlychildhoodoc.org/communityaction/>.

Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html>

World Health Organization:

https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/child/development/10facts/en/

Early Childhood Policy Framework: <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.35/igb.c62.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Final-Early-Childhood-Policy-Framework.pdf>