GUIDED QUESTIONS

MODULE 1

Building Better Brains:
The Core Story of Early Brain and Child Development

Overview

These guided questions are designed to expand on the content provided in module one and to encourage learners to think about how the core early brain and child development information can be used in their practice and/or training.

These questions can be used in either large group discussions or in small breakout groups by giving each group a question or set of questions and asking them to report back to the larger group.

Please note: These questions are provided to serve as a starting point for your teaching and presentation use. You are encouraged to adapt these questions as you see fit to meet your learner’s needs and/or add your own questions to the list. Sample responses are provided. However, the responses provided should not be viewed as the only way to answer the questions.
1. **What is the role of the pediatrician in helping a child thrive?**

- Apply an ecobiodevelopmental framework and recognize that adverse psychosocial factors (poverty, domestic violence, parental mental illness or substance abuse) are no less biological than lead poisoning or poor nutrition.

- Collaborate with families and local service providers to improve early childhood ecology, both to improve life-course trajectories and to address the biologic mediators underlying disparities in health and education.

- Pediatricians need to assist families in recognizing and encouraging rudimentary yet foundational skills as they emerge. The social smile at 6 weeks sets the stage for cooing conversations, which in turn leads to babbling and, eventually, spoken language.

- Pediatricians must work with families and daycare centers to ensure that the brain’s wiring is “right” the first time. Remediation, while possible, is much more difficult.

- Pediatricians must be advocates for “whole child” development and education. Efforts to improve social-emotional skills increase cognitive test scores.

- Pediatricians must advocate for a public health/prevention approach to address toxic stress, including
1) “common messaging” to prevent or minimize toxic stress (campaigns to discourage corporal punishment and to encourage Reach Out and Read)

2) screening families and children for common precipitants of toxic stress (poverty, domestic violence, parental mental illness or substance abuse)

3) collaborating with local resources to address the consequences of toxic stress.

2. **What local resources do you have or that you could get to help a family similar to the one in the case study?**

- Access to resources that provide high quality early childhood education. Do you know if your community has a resource that provides information on high quality child care programs? Does your state have a Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care?
- The name of early intervention and early childhood screening programs in your community
- The contact information for Head Start, Early Head Start, and at-risk pre-school programs
- The contact information for respite and other support programs/services for parents
3. **Think about the child in the case study or a child that has experienced an adverse childhood event(s). What might the child be like 5 or 10 years from now? What are some key things that could change their story?**

- The child could be a thriving, healthy child especially if the following take place as the child grows and develops:
  - The child is enrolled in a high quality early childhood education center and/or a high quality school that provides the type of environment and interactions needed for healthy development.
  - The child has a medical home and routinely accesses it.
  - The child and family are screened for common precipitants of toxic stress (poverty, domestic violence, parental mental illness or substance abuse.
  - The child’s family knows about and uses resources that help to mitigate or minimize the effects of stressors on the family.

- If nothing is done for the child (or even despite our best efforts), the child could be experiencing:
  - Relationships with adults that do not mitigate or lessen the efforts of stressors that the family is experiencing including adults in the home that are substance abusers.
  - Enrollment in after school care that is not high quality
  - Significant behavioral, emotional, and learning difficulties in school

*Source: Many of the answers to the questions above were adapted from materials and information on the AAP Early Brain and Child Development web site at [www.aap.org/ebcd](http://www.aap.org/ebcd)*