



Planning with Purpose

October 25, 2025

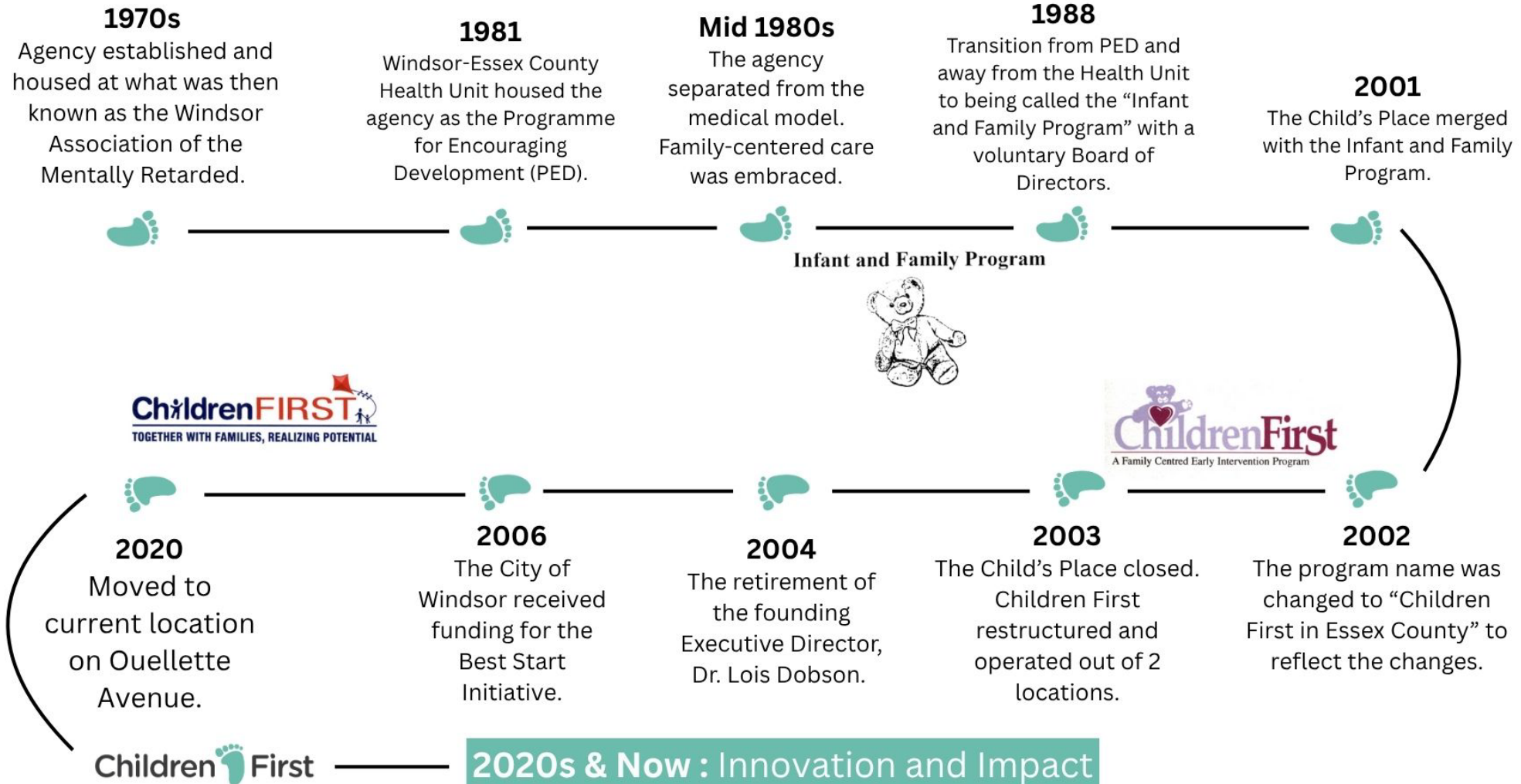




Children First in Essex County provides services for families with children from birth up to six years of age who are at risk for or experiencing mental health challenges or developmental concerns.



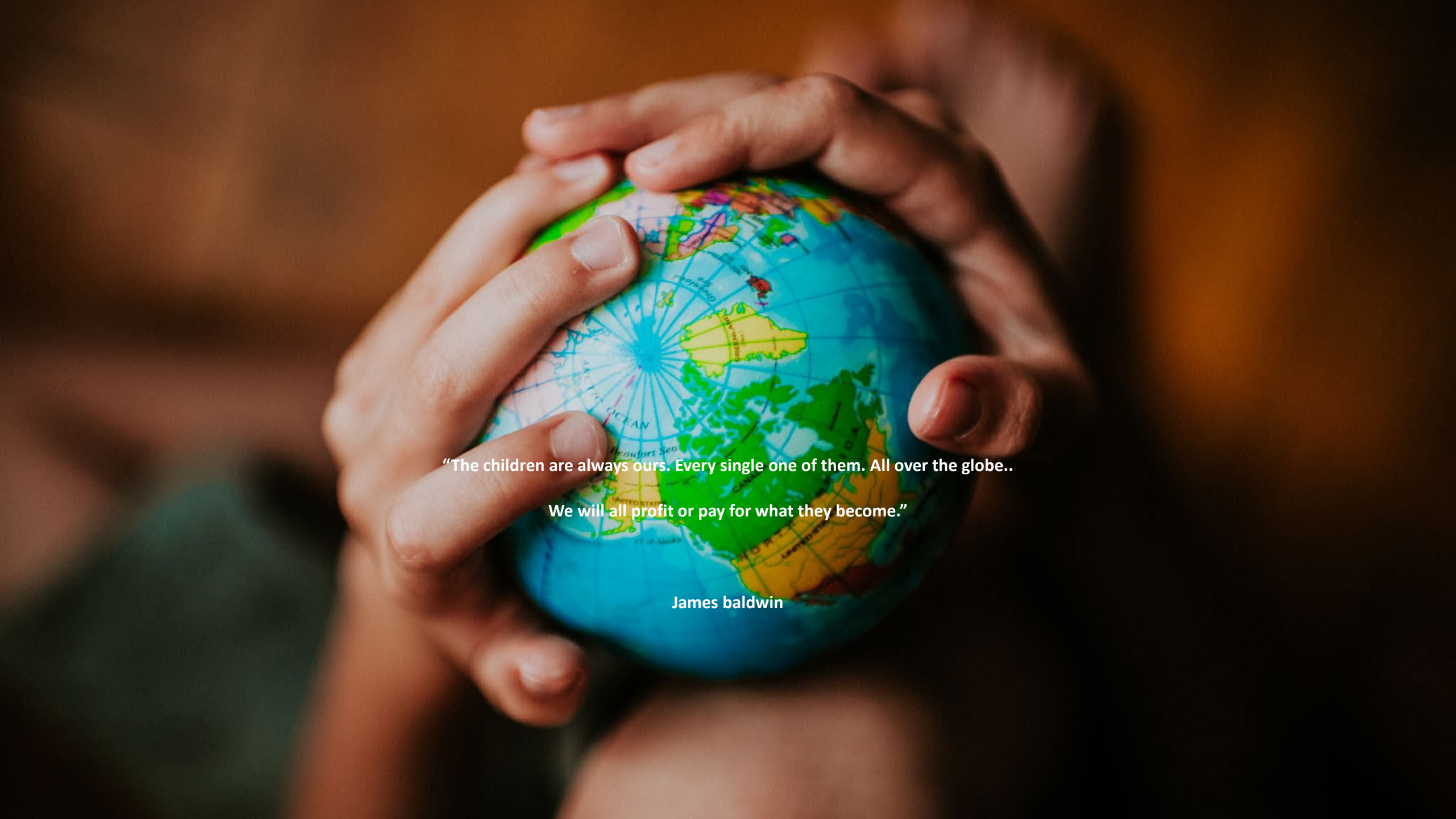
The Evolution of the Agency





Services Today

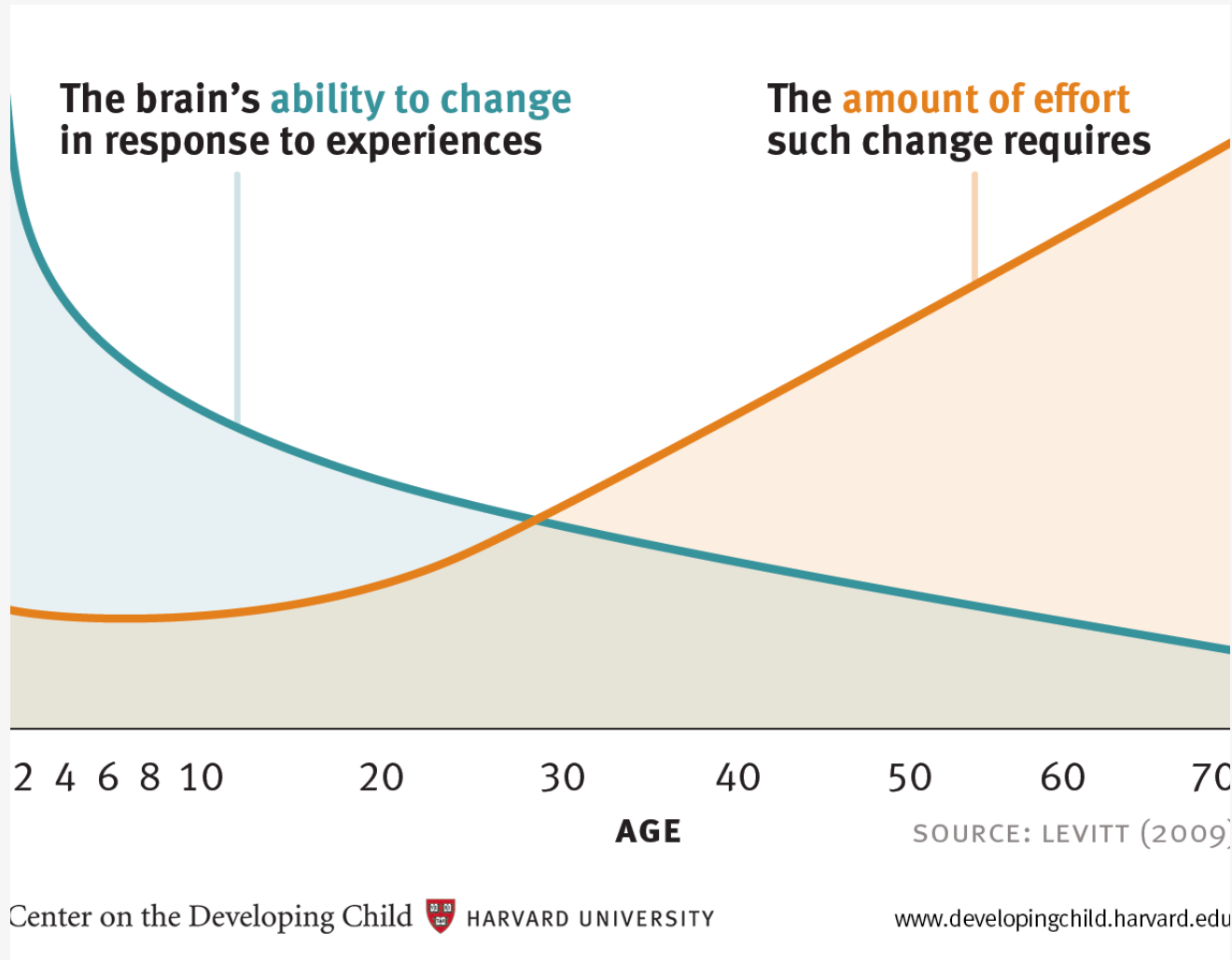
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- Special Needs Resourcing
 - Infant and Child Development
 - Mental Health
 - Autism Diagnostics
 - Caregiver Mediated Early Years

A close-up photograph of a pair of hands gently cradling a small, colorful globe of the Earth. The globe shows continents in green and yellow and oceans in blue. The hands are positioned with fingers spread, supporting the globe from below and sides. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown. Overlaid on the center of the image is a quote in white text.

"The children are always ours. Every single one of them. All over the globe..

We will all profit or pay for what they become."

James baldwin



Investment in the future

- Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar of brain architecture.
- It is easier and less costly to form strong brain circuits during the early years than it is to intervene or “fix” them later.

Aging Begins in Childhood



- **Obesity roots are in childhood**
 - Obese children are 5x more likely to be obese in adulthood than those who were not obese
- **Addiction is a pediatric disease**
 - According to research, approximately 90% of adults with a substance use disorder started using during adolescence
- **Mental and emotional behavioral disorders start early**
 - Half of all lifetime cases start by age 14
- **Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs)** are associated with adult increased physical and mental health disorders, lower education and productivity.



Supportive Relationships

- The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, substance use, and depression.
- Research indicates that supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress response.

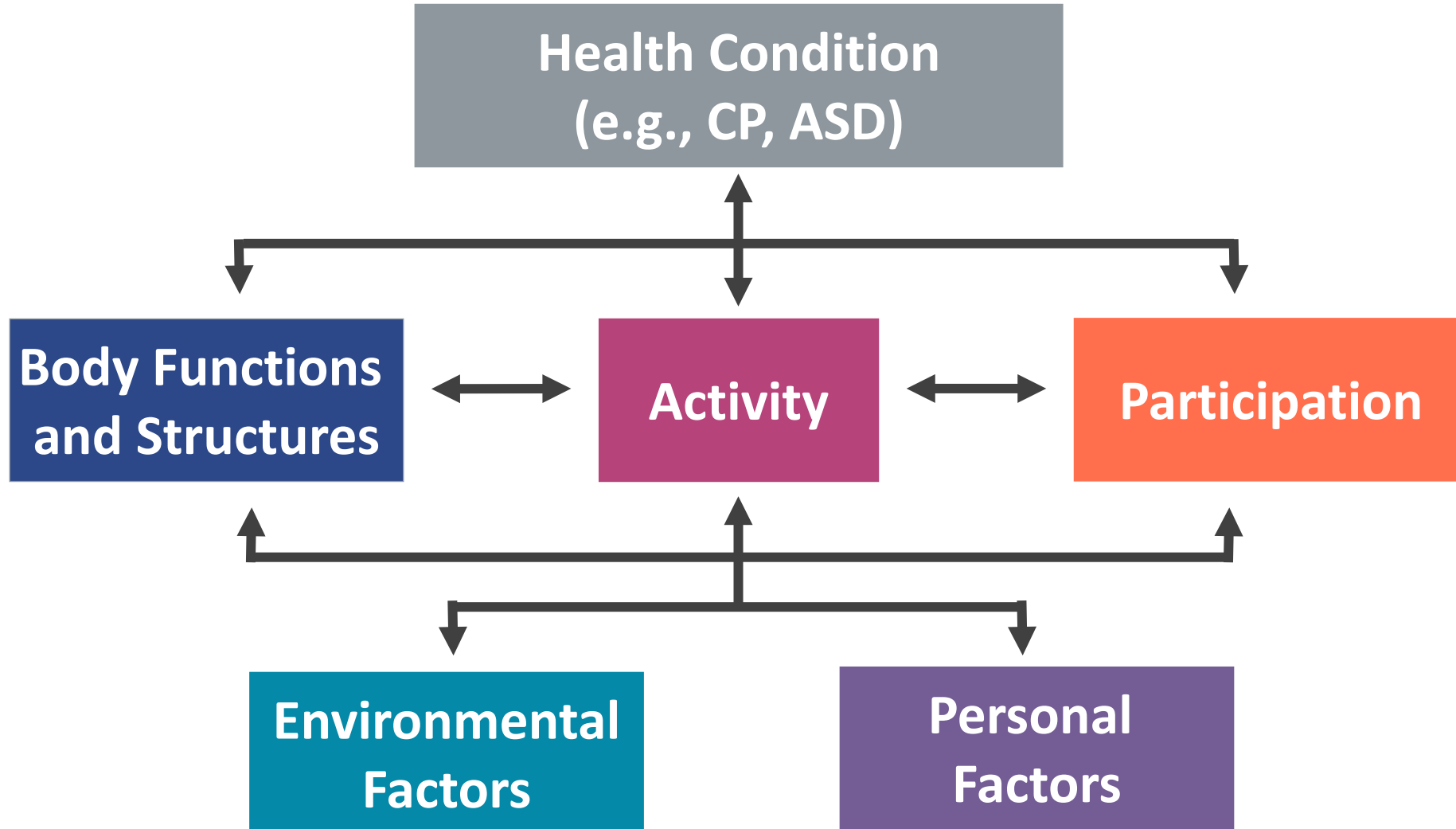
In our training and society in general...

- We were taught to believe...
 - **We need a medical** understanding of problems
 - **Treatment** should aim to 'fix' medical problems
 - **'Normal' function** is the treatment goal
 - Service providers are the **"experts"**
- We believed: **experts diagnose, treat, and fix!**

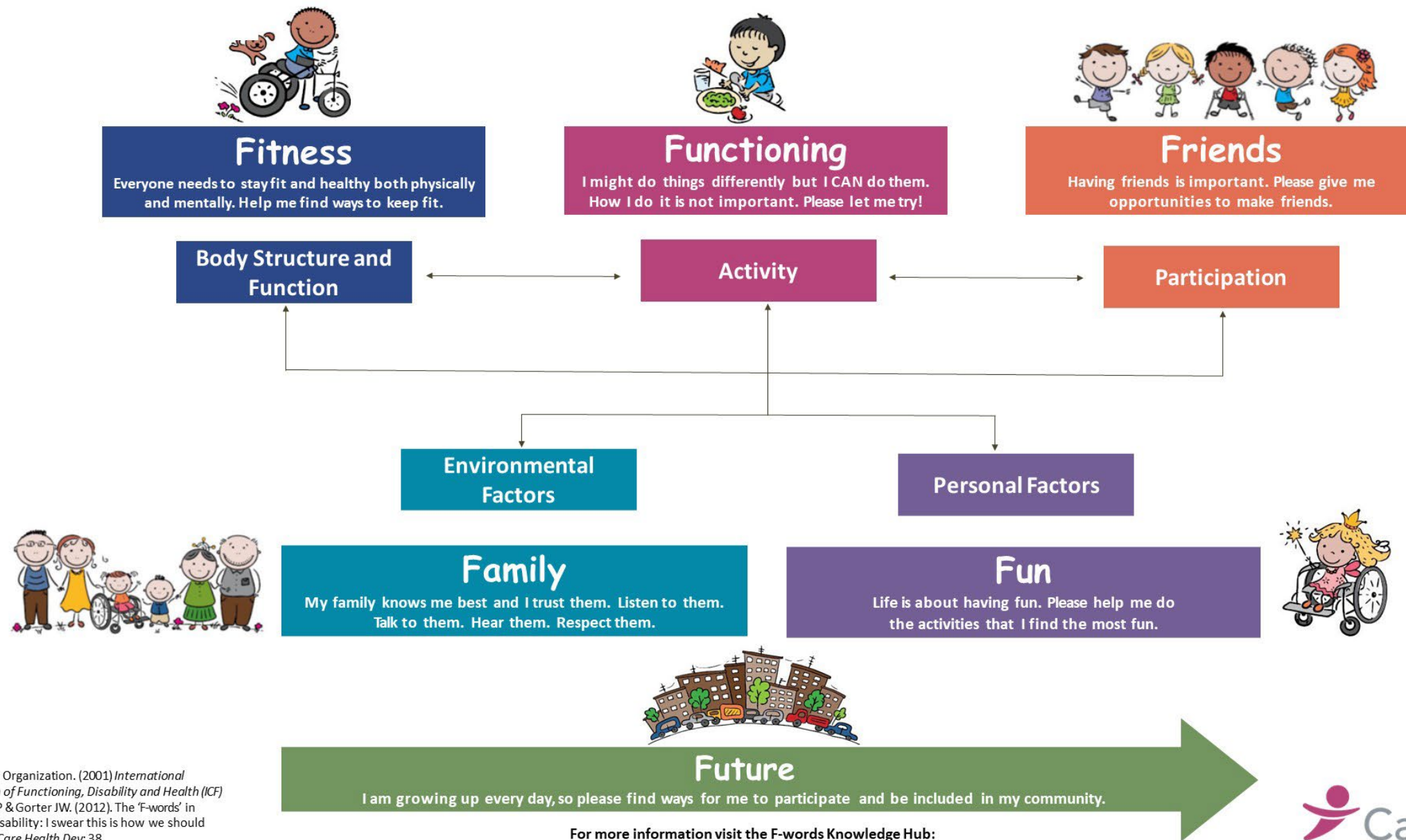


World Health
Organization

ICF Framework



The ICF Framework¹ and the 'F-Words'²



- 1) World Health Organization. (2001) *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*
- 2) Rosenbaum P & Gorter JW. (2012). The 'F-words' in childhood disability: I swear this is how we should think! *Child Care Health Dev*; 38.

For more information visit the F-words Knowledge Hub:
www.canchild.ca/f-words

IMPORTANT TO NOTE...

This approach **is NOT/does NOT**

- ... a new assessment measure
- ... diminish the roles of professionals
- ... diminish the roles of therapies/interventions

What it **DOES do...**

- ... increases the roles of children, families and their voices
- ... emphasizes family values and goals
- ... sees the child in the context of family & environment(s)
- ... changes the dynamic of families and professionals



WHY?

- Supports a **holistic, strengths-based, family-centred** approach to care.
- A **common language** for families and service providers.
- Insight into **real** life goals, challenges, and priorities.
- A framework for **inter-professional collaboration**.

Jaxon



All About Me – JumpStart Program Example

Hi
I'm Ava!



Things I LOVE!!!



I love music and dancing.
I enjoy using my imagination, telling stories, and including them in my pretend play.
I love caring for others.
My interests include playdoh, magnet tiles, the kitchen centre, and painting at the easel.
I enjoy joining and helping others with special roles and tasks.



How to best support ME:

I do best with routine and consistency; I like knowing what is happening.
If I am overwhelmed, give me some time to ground myself; I might need to be guided through breathing.
Some days I may be quiet and over stimulated; allow me to process in my own time.
I am sensitive, can worry about my friends and their big feelings in the classroom; I will need my caregivers to support me in ceasing my adult role, providing me reassurance, and helping me understand if my peers are not interested.



Struggles I encounter:

I tend to mask my anxiety by going into “mom” mode; I need encouragement to focus on myself and being a kid.
Sometimes I tend to overthink and worry about situations and what is happening; I’m learning through my caregivers that what is happening is safe.
I am toilet learned but need reminders and encouragement as new toilets and bathrooms make me uncomfortable; I need someone to show me it is safe.

JumpStart Program - Finish Line



FUNCTION

I like to help out my caregiver with special jobs and tasks; help me build my sense of belonging in the classroom.

To gain my focus; get down to my level, use a gentle physical prompt (shoulder tap, hand holding hers, eye contact), pause and wait for my response to what you said.



FAMILY

It is important for my caregivers to have positive relationships with my classroom teachers.



FITNESS

I am aware of my environment and move about the classroom with ease.



Children
First

JumpStart Finish Line

Name: _____

Ava



FUN

I like to play with playdoh, magnet tiles, the kitchen centre and painting at the easel.

I like to include my peers and adults into play; I may need help understanding if my peers are not interested.



FRIENDS

Utilizing my interests will help me join in and expand more on activities and play.

I prefer adult connection over same-aged children; reduce the pressure of adult roles providing me choices in play with my peers.



FUTURE

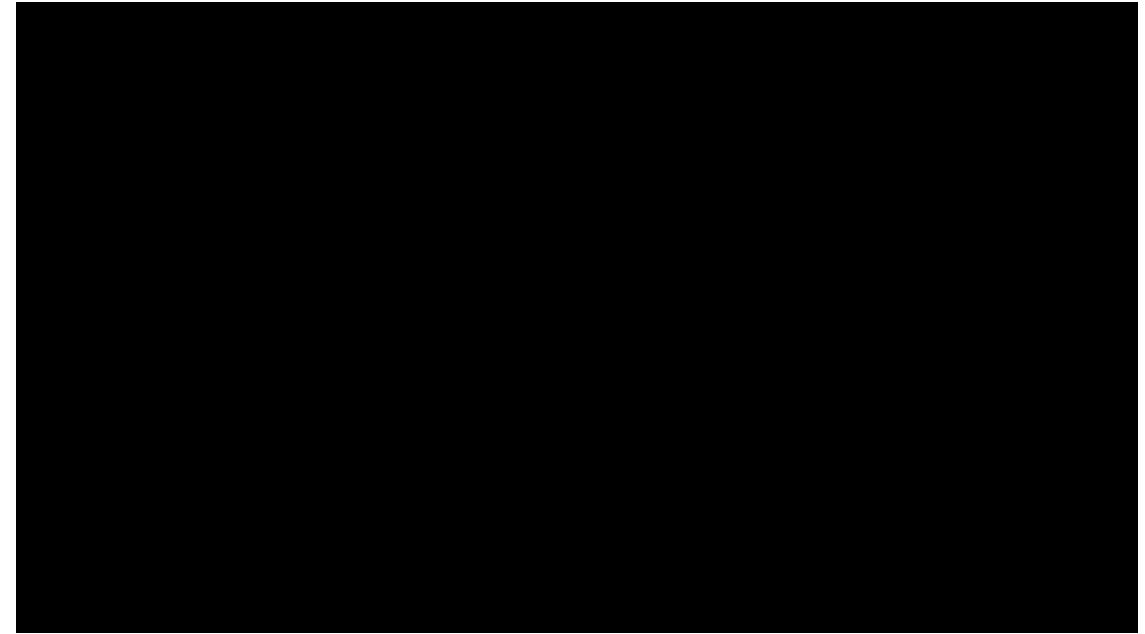
I am sensitive and can worry about my friends big feelings in the classroom; I will need my caregivers to support me in ceasing my adult role and providing me reassurance.



Growth and Opportunities Plan (GO Plan!)

Family Engagement Committee

- Family Led Design:
 - A single document that follows child
 - Strengths Perspective
 - Name of Document
 - Information Sections
 - Language and content
 - Sequencing of document sections
 - Special Considerations





**Families
have told
us this
too...**

- “I can use the F-words to celebrate my child’s uniqueness.”
 - “The F-words.... simplify the life of my child in a positive and productive way.”
 - “The F-words can be used in every aspect of planning for your child.”
- 

Jaxon Today



THE F-WORDS FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

F-words Training Program

Login/Sign up

Français



Clinician's quote

Good reminder to incorporate the 'F-words' into my own practice with families to ensure life domains are all considered. Loved hearing the parent perspective.



Parent's quote

"The information presented was amazing. Not only will it help me with my work but in my life and with my daughter. I am looking forward to trying these ideas at home."

<https://canchild-fwords.ca/>

