

What is the *Healthy Families Advantage*?



3 key principles make Healthy Families America® stand out from the crowd:



Relationship and Attachment: Recognizing that our developing relationship with a family is the conduit to service delivery.



Trauma-Informed Practice: Knowing how trauma impacts the way that adults perceive and see the world is a core element of our philosophy.



Reflective Capacity: Supporting staff to reflect upon how their feelings and experiences might impact their work.

Many families enrolled in HFA have experienced unresolved early childhood trauma including Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, which we know thanks to HFA's initial psycho-social history; an integral part of the trauma informed approach. Early childhood trauma shapes a world view that is very different from those lucky enough to be born into nurturing families and relationships.

When infants are born, they are 100% dependent upon their parents to meet their needs. When needs are met consistently, it ultimately leads to the development of self-regulation and impulse control. But when an infant is hungry, cries, and no one comes to help, that infant learns early in life that he must manage his own needs and that he cannot count on others. If an infant's first relationship with his caregiver is unpredictable, scary or hurtful, he may come to believe that people in general are unpredictable, scary or hurtful.

Future relationships are based upon the first relationship that a child experiences; the relationship with a parent. As children grow into adults, these lessons can combine to make it more difficult to trust other adults, including home visitors.

Researchers estimate that between 60-80% of the HFA population have experienced unresolved early childhood trauma. **HFA staff implement a different approach** – one that starts with attunement and connection rather than task.

A parent cannot access critical thinking skills when feeling fear, anger or sadness. It is only when these emotions are regulated that the parent can hear and understand information that is shared.

This is why **the HFA approach puts relationships first** - we believe the best support person is one you trust. HFA staff go the extra mile to build this trusting relationship with parents so we can better support them in building a nurturing and trusting relationship with their child, often one they did not experience themselves. The parents and children HFA serves benefit most from reflective staff who build on parental competencies rather than lecturing. This builds strengths not just now but also for future generations.

That's powerful. **That's the Healthy Families Advantage.**
