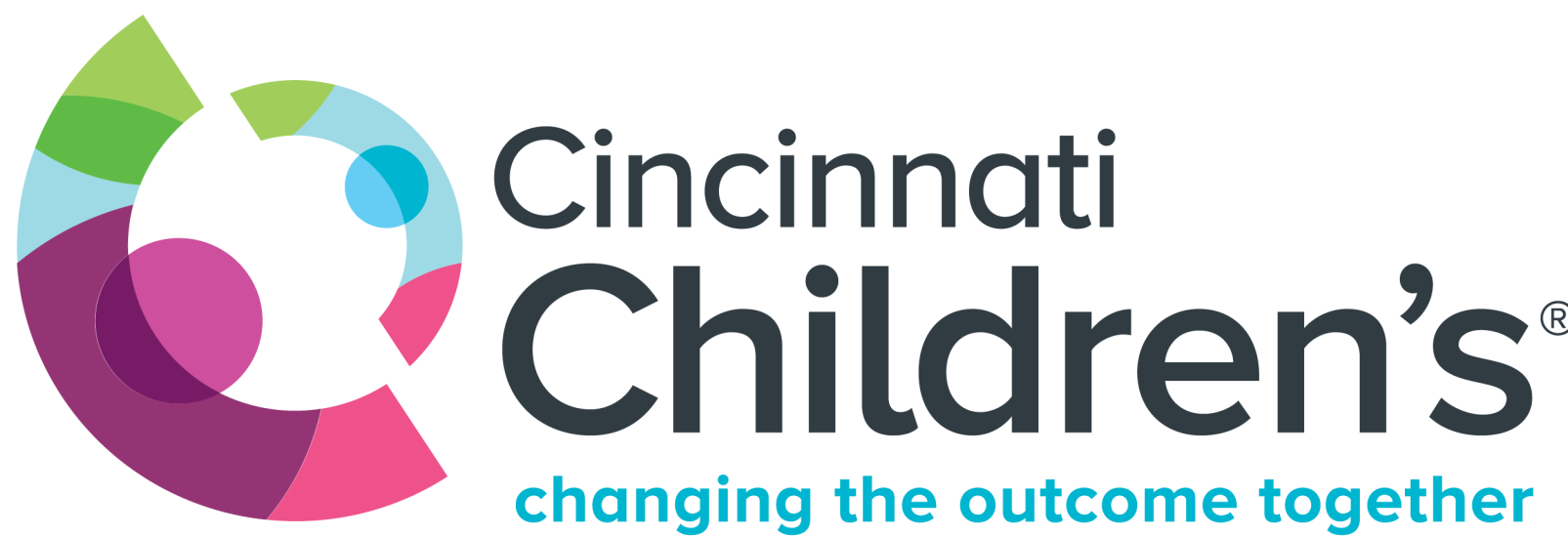


Using group model building to create a systems map for child and youth well-being in a structurally disadvantaged neighborhood in Cincinnati, OH

Carley Riley, MD, MPP, MHS; Annika Aebker, MPH; Kristen Gasperetti, MPA; Jamaica Gilliam; Allison Lonstein, MD; Raven Lyons; Rohit Ramaswamy; Takaia Rouse; Anthony Scott; Constance Stewart, MBA; Calvin Williams; Rachel Zuellig, MD; Brita Roy, MD, MPH, MHS



Background and Objectives

The well-being of children and youth is influenced by a myriad of factors and the interactions among them over time.

To inform efforts to improve the collective well-being of children and youth, we used the participatory method of group model building to elucidate and visualize the complex, dynamic system of factors that influences child and youth well-being in our city.

Methods

We convened 12 adults with varied viewpoints, roles, and lived experiences with children and youth to create a causal loop diagram of the system that produces child and youth well-being (see Photo). Through a series of facilitated activities, participants:

- Identified the factors that foster and/or undermine the well-being of children and youth;
- Mapped relationships among these factors and;
- Identified potential leverage points for actionable focus to improve child and youth well-being.

This process occurred at a workshop over a two-day period in July 2023.

Results

The group identified 43 factors from which they generated a causal loop diagram that demonstrates complex dynamics in the education system, environmental conditions, family factors, health and social care policy, interpersonal skills, physical and mental health, self-awareness, and social connectedness (see Figure).

The group identified the following factors as the most influential and actionable: Community safety, healthy household environment, self-care, supportive family dynamics and parenting skills, understanding youth perspectives, quality child educational system, positive sense of self, current social services policies, physical and mental health, and child exposure and influences.

Of these key leverage points, supportive family dynamics and parenting skills, quality child educational system, and physical and mental health were voted upon as the top three leverage points for actionable change.

Casual Loop Diagram (April 2024 Version)

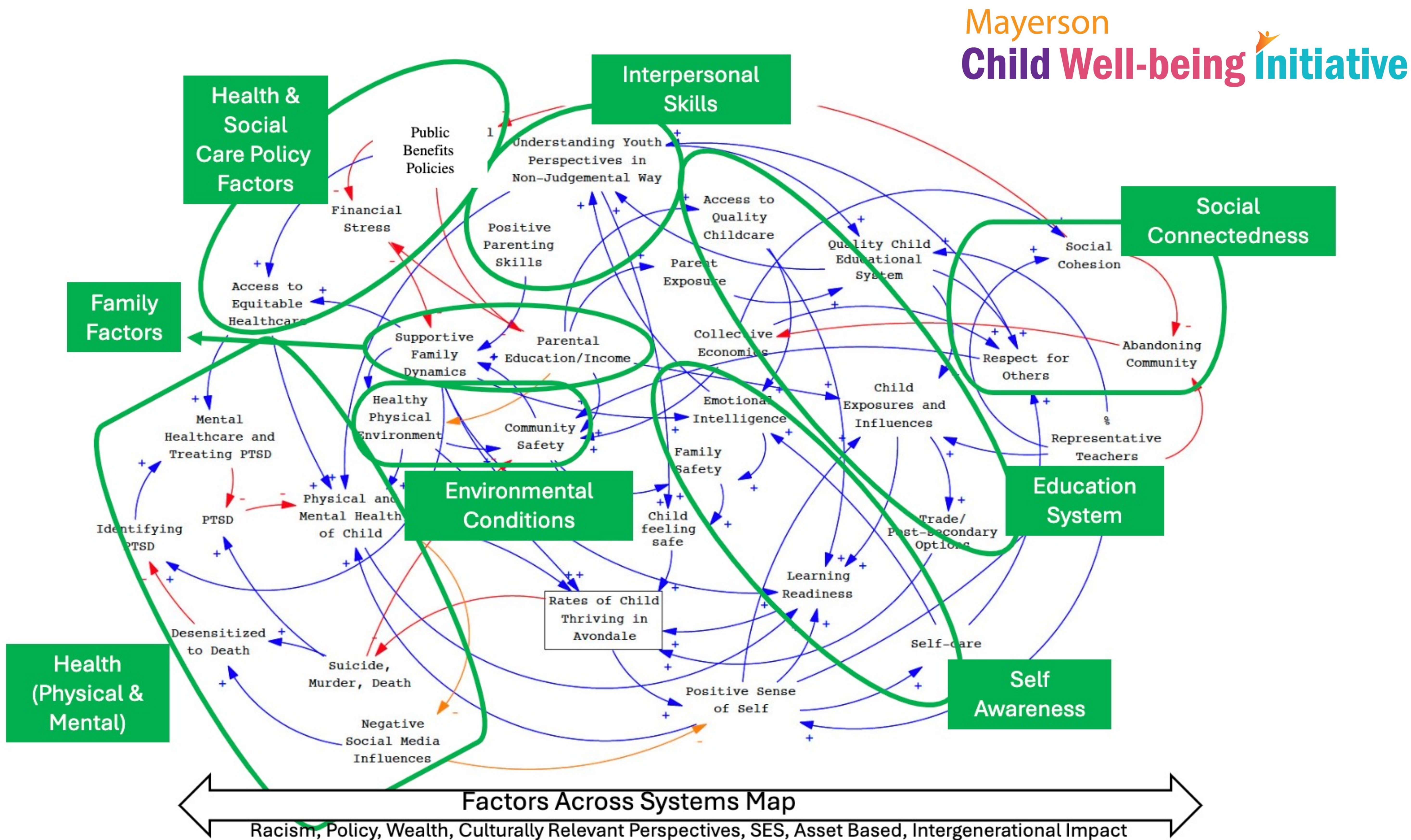


Figure. Causal loop diagram co-created by 12 adult Cincinnati community members with varied lived expertise on child and youth well-being, July 2023

Discussion

Community-based group model building allowed a diverse set of perspectives to:

- Engage in systems thinking,
- Generate a shared understanding of the system of factors that influence child and youth well-being, and
- Identify leverage points for action to improve collective well-being.

The resultant map provides a foundation for the generation of systemic action to improve the well-being of children and youth.

Next Steps

A half-day session was held in September 2023, in which a majority of the 12 original group participants reconvened to discuss the outputs and next steps of the group model building process.

- The group established subcommittees related to the leverage points of health (physical and mental) and supportive family dynamics, with the goal of designing and testing interventions supporting these factors in their community.
- Our group will also hold a group model building process with community youth this summer.



Photo: Adult Group Model Building Team and Facilitators, July 2023