

September 19, 2019

# The Role of Dignity in Service Delivery and Economic Success

2019 National TANF State Directors' Meeting: Helping Families to Overcome



Heather Hahn, PhD/MPP

*“Americans, it seems, have a uniquely low opinion of poor people: **We offer them neither our empathy nor our respect...** Othering the poor will only cease when we acknowledge the truth: They are us, and we all belong together.”*

– john a. powell and Arthur Brooks

# 3 Questions

1. What should you keep doing?
2. What can you change?
3. What do you still need to learn?



What would it take to dramatically increase  
**mobility from poverty?**

[www.MobilityPartnership.org](http://www.MobilityPartnership.org)

## American Dream

Work hard,  
get ahead

---

Children do  
better

## Today's Reality

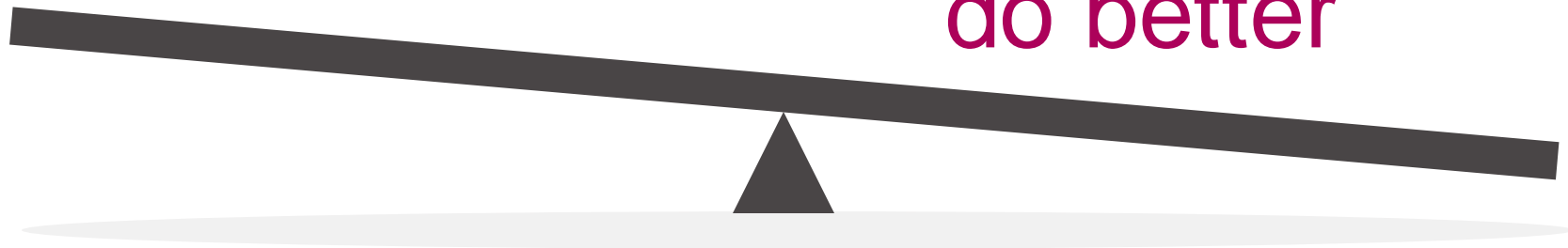
Place matters

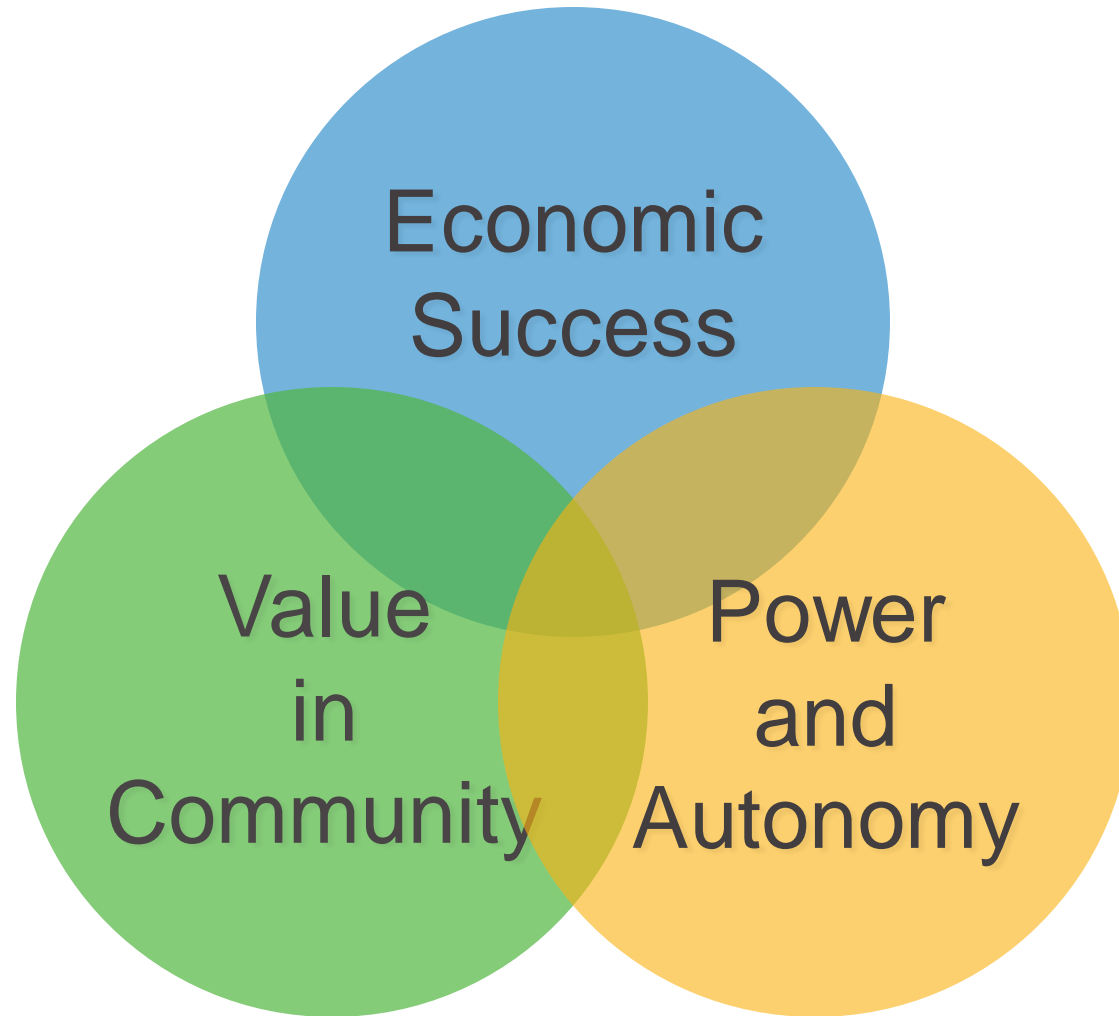
---

Hard work  
isn't enough

---

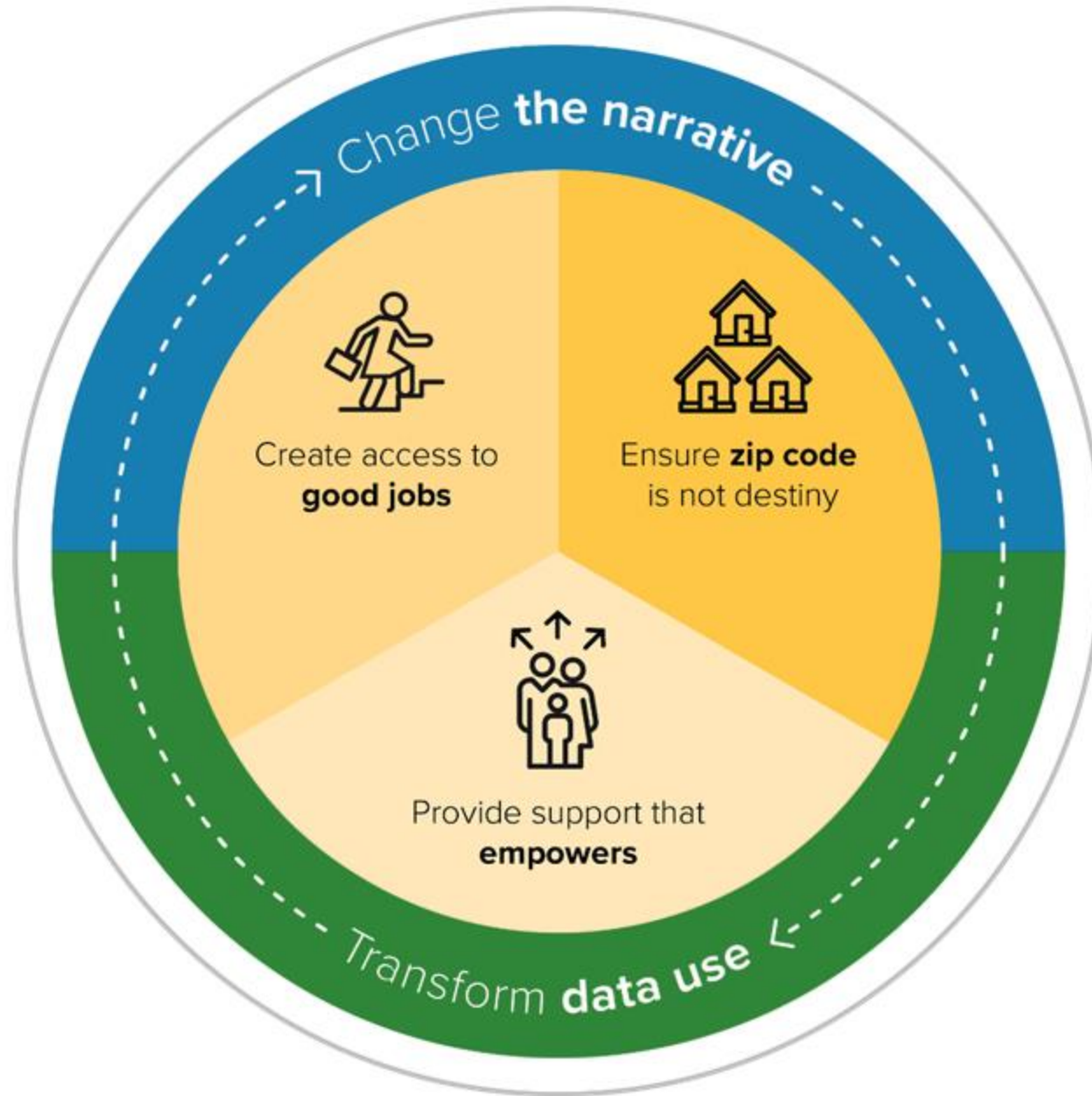
Children don't  
do better





## Strategies

- Change the narrative
- Create access to good jobs
- Ensure zip code is not destiny
- Provide support that empowers
- Transform data use





# Engaging and understanding families

*“If [caseworkers] don’t understand why we’re there and coming for assistance, they won’t understand what they need to do to get us out of the situation”*

– Parent receiving TANF

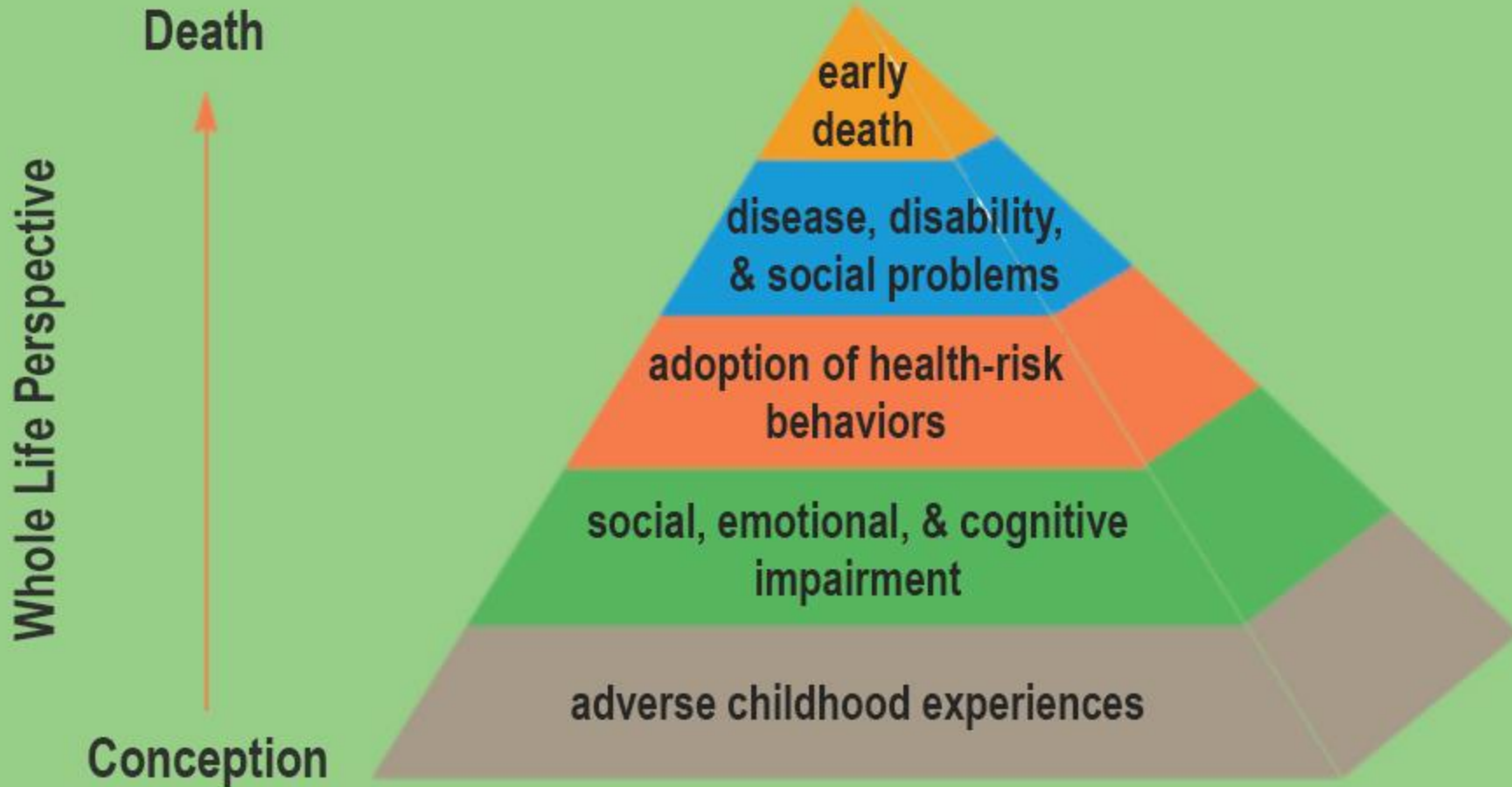
# Toxic Stress

The stress of living in poverty affects:

- Sense of self (identity, self-efficacy, motivation)
- Executive function (ability to focus on tasks and goals)
- Self-regulation (persistence to achieve tasks or goals)

Toxic stress affects the whole family

# Childhood Trauma has Long-Term Effects



Randa, R.F. & Felitti, V.J. *The Averse Child Experiences Study*. Retrieved from <http://acestudy.org>

# Sometimes it is just about respect

*“They don’t treat us like humans. We have feelings and they are hurting us badly.”*

– Parent receiving TANF

# Discussion



What are you already doing to understand the families you serve?

# Strategies for Providing Supports that Empower

# Brain Sciences and Human Service Delivery

- Trauma-informed human service delivery
- Coach-navigator interventions
- EMPATH program model
- Motivational interviewing
- Behaviorally-informed process redesign

# Conditions for Success

- Holistic approach
- Trained facilitators
- One-on-one respectful relationship
- Driven by the participant
- Designed to support changes in cognitive and behavioral patterns



# Physical Environment

# Entrance to state TANF office

How do you feel?



Waiting area in state TANF office

How do you feel?



# Waiting area in Tribal TANF office

How do you feel?



Bring it Home

# 3 Questions

1. What should you keep doing?
2. What can you change?
3. What do you still need to learn?

**You will make a difference in a family's life.**

**Make it a positive difference!**

**THANK YOU!**

**Heather Hahn  
hhahn@urban.org**