

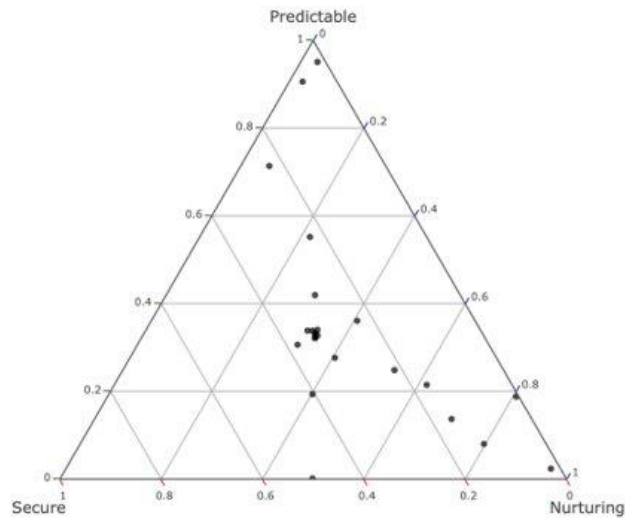
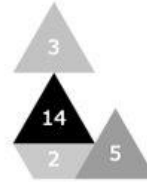
# Maternal Child Health Domain: Child Health – 30 Stories

## Homelife\_Pos

The family's homelife felt...

- Secure
- Predictable
- Nurturing

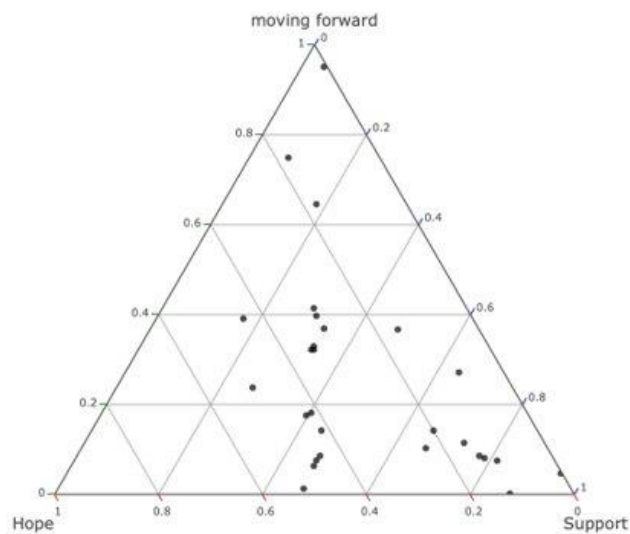
Triads



## Things got tough

In the experience you shared, when things got tough, what helped the family get through?

- Hope for the future
- Gritting my teeth and moving forward
- Support from others



### **hard but making it (2293)**

Most of the time we are just surviving. Its hard to make it with just one income in a family, especially if there are medical bills. Its crazy that healthy choices cost so much more than unhealthy choices but you try to give your kids healthy food and opportunities.

### **Teacher trauma (667)**

The classroom teacher continued to work while her daughter received cancer treatment in another state and her husband recovered from a debilitating car accident. The teacher also has 3 other school-aged children who needed their mother. She used all her leave time and was not getting paid if she needed to get to medical appointments.

### **Medical debt crippling good, hard working families (2592)**

I recall a time in my family in which we were just surviving. We had a daughter who was chronically ill and medical bills were piling up. We had insurance but with copays and coinsurance, we still owed thousands of dollars. We called the hospital to make payment arrangements but couldn't afford their arrangements. The bills went into collections and then to attorneys who made us go to court all the time. All this was happening at the same time our daughter was very sick and I was unable to work in order to be with her. In the end it turned out, the debt owed to the hospital after insurance would have been forgiven because of our family size and income if the hospital had let us know they had a debt forgiveness program. Something ALL nonprofits medical facilities are supposed to have because of their own tax forgiveness and federal and state laws. I mention this episode now because this same thing happens to people all the time. Medical debt is crippling very good, hard working people because the hospitals and attorneys work together to go after these families rather than helping them with available programs. This problem needs to be fixed legislatively in order to really make a difference.

### **Early Intervention Makes a Difference (1029)**

Our program is a preschool that serves children all day with a half day prek option and a half day daycare option. We take children at 2.5 year old for the full day daycare option. When we started our program in 2014, our first 2.5 year old child that we offered all day care to was a little lady who had three words in her vocabulary, was not toilet trained, did not play with others, and only ate the ketchup and ranch offered with carrots by dipping her fingers in and licking it off. In addition, during this time, her parents split up and her father ended up being incarcerated. The student grew by leaps and bounds that first year. By spring that year, her mother took her on a vacation to Branson. They went out to dinner and the child ordered chicken and broccoli, please. Her mom could not believe that she would eat that, but she did. This child came to us with an IFSP. As she transitioned into prek, she had an IEP for developmental delay and speech. She is now going to be a first grader. As a kindergarten student, she was at the top of her class in academics. She has many friends and has flourished. We are in awe of her many achievements and sometimes wonder...what would her current development be if we had not been here?

### **Anti-vaxx (1054)**

When I was pregnant my mother-in-law, who is antivaxx, refused to get the TDap vaccine. It was difficult because I told her she would not be allowed to see her if she did not get the vaccine. She still refused to get the vaccine.

### **Proactive immunizations during an outbreak (2555)**

When we had a measles outbreak, which was an unique experience for our area in how it affected our population and how different the transmission was I personally had to take a step back from the situation at one point as my child could have potentially been exposed. Prior to this I had felt like I wanted to get his 2nd immunization prior to turning 4, then repeating this dose as I knew the risk and complications of measles. It wound up being fine and he wasn't exposed but as a healthcare provider and mother its was very concerning at the time, especially knowing about SSPE. I myself had a 3rd dose during the outbreak as my titers were low, this was extremely important to me as I viewed it as a responsibility to my family and the public in my line of work to protect those around me.

### **Schedule (1096)**

There have been times at our clinic that certain parents only want their children to do a few vaccines at a time, because they knew someone else who did that and they think it will be less trauma for their child. Even though it takes a longer time to complete the series of vaccines, I tell them that as long as they are getting vaccinated, then I am okay with working with them to come up with a schedule that works for both them and us. This usually makes the parent feel like they are in charge of their child's health, while also helping to make sure they are completely vaccinated. I also remind them that their child won't remember having to get shots at a young age, rather than trying to catch them up when they are older.

### **Rotovirus (1099)**

My first child was 13 months old when I experienced what rotovirus really was. We spent 3 days really trying hard to manage his symptoms as that was all we could do. On the fourth day, he was taking an unusually long nap so I was thinking he was finally on the mend. when he finally woke up he just didn't seem right, too drowsy really out of it. we took him immediately to the ER where they tried to give him IV fluids He was so dehydrated, the nurse couldn't find a vein. it was such a traumatic experience for my son, his dad and I and the nurses. End the end, they were able to get the IV in and he spent the next day being re-hydrated and monitored and was fine. The unknown was what would have happened if I didn't take him to the ER when I did - would we have had the same outcome? I am now so grateful that there is an available vaccine so the risk of this happening again to another family is reduced.

### **Hearing Impairment from Meningitis & Advocating for Immunization as a Nurse (2158)**

I was a stay at home mom with 4 children. A friend of mine helped her husband run their business and needed someone to watch their 3 girls for the summer so I volunteered. I hadn't taken the time to really get to know their oldest daughter but through the summer I got to know her and her story. She developed meningitis as a toddler. Yes she was really ill. As a result she lost most of her hearing. She wore hearing aides. Sometimes she had a rough time speaking, and being understood. It was during this time that I realized how truly important immunizations are. I made sure during the years to keep my family up to date on immunizations. Since becoming a nurse I am a pretty big advocate about pushing immunizations and giving parents facts, literature and websites to help educate them on the importance. I know that wearing hearing aides isn't that big of a deal compared to needing a wheel chair because of the loss of limbs. I used examples of things that could happen to a child when not vaccinated. Death being the worst.

### **I didn't know. (2151)**

My daughter was fully immunized and always took it like a champion. One day I was making a copy of her shot records (side note: I had just graduated from Nursing school) And I noticed that the rotavirus vaccine had been left blank. So therefore at her next appointment I brought this up and the physician stated that it's not mandated for school so he doesn't typically require it, especially since we are such a low risk. Honestly, I was furious. Having been given the option I would have given her this vaccine, but at this appointment she was now too old to receive it. She is still happy and healthy, but this has come back to cause issues when we tried to get her into day care. They required a written letter from the physician. All in all this was a negative situation, most parents don't know what their kid needs and I feel like every time they should be educated fully and be given a choice.

### **Faced with Change (1170)**

A mother with 11 children was recently divorced and forced to return to work, which meant she could no longer home school. Our clinic had the task of immunizing all 11 children to be ready for public school, the children had never been vaccinated. It was a long process and we got to know the family well. All the children are up to date on vaccines and the mother is now an advocate for vaccines.

### **Bullied (1234)**

My child was struggling in school social and behaviorally. We were at a loss of what to do. This all began when she was 3 1/2 years old. She was always getting into trouble at daycare. We were not seeing the same behaviors at home as they described at daycare center. We turned to Russell Child Development Center and had someone go in and do an observation. From that we discovered even at that young age she was being bullied. We helped her through it the best we could. Daycare in Garden City was difficult to find (and this was 13 years ago). RCDC helped with some coping strategies and boundaries. Things got a little better. She started school and at school she did great. No problems in the classroom. It was again at daycare. We finally found a new daycare provider and away from a lot of the children she was having conflict with. She did fine for a year. 1st grade she started having problems again in a classroom with less structure. The teachers seemed to focus everything on her. We had a meeting and the teacher saw what was going on even to pointed out how the kids were treating her. Pushing her buttons, taking things from her, telling on her for any little thing she was doing. She was miserable. We looked to counseling. We also worked with the school district with a behavioral consultant who backed up that she was being bullied in the classroom. We were at a private school so the school district was limited with what they could do. That was the last year we were at the private school. She started public school where she thrived to this day. If it was not for the help of the local agencies and resources I do not know where she would be today. RCDC pointed us in the direction of help.

### **Hidden in small town (2745)**

Working at school, I have had contact with many families who were struggling. It is often the family that doesn't appear to be just getting by day to day that goes unnoticed. They are presumed to be just doing fine because they work hard and their children look happy. When a teacher develops trust with the student and family, you begin to hear what is really going on behind the white picket fence. I think that is why it is imperative that the information the free lunch program is confidential, and more than that top secret. Never presume to think that you know everything, because you don't. A student stopped at Casey's all the time, I thought why are they spending money there that they cannot afford. Well, I was wrong, they made condiment sandwiches. They were taking the ketchup, mustard and mayo packets for their sandwich, so they didn't have to eat just plain white bread. There are high school students who would stay at the school until I went home. They would just hang out in the classroom. For some it was better to be at school, it was quiet with no drama. We had heat or air conditioning and even electricity. After school

snacks are a big deal. Many student athletes would come in after practice to get something to eat. They hadn't had anything since lunch and it might be until school breakfast to get something good. Snacks are often provided after school, but what about after practice. Once again, they are the kids who seem to have it all together and don't really need assistance. Well that's not true. We work really hard to get students involved with band and choir. To compete at higher level audition and performance, it is required to wear black and white. Sounds so simple. I have been shopping for concert clothes, so the students don't stay home sick. Imagine not even trying because you don't have black dress shoes. Many families are working hard to make it all work. They are treading water but going down stream in a hurry. Our society often presumes that the troubled students and families live in the city. Well that's not true. Perhaps it is easier to hide for awhile in a small town. Kids eat at the neighbors and eat with their friends. The teacher miraculously was given these items and thought maybe you could use them. The local church adopts families for Christmas, but the rest of the year, good luck. I guess my point is that we think we know what being hungry and struggling looks like. But really it is families and people working really hard to keep it quiet. They are proud Kansas families with a tradition of doing it alone and not complaining. We have to open our doors wider and at unconventional times. Discover when they need help, not when it fit into the schedule. If the parents won't come, find a way to help the child. Build trust and be in it for the long haul. No one wants to fail and it takes times to see real change. Remember it isn't the child's fault, just be the person that helps

### **Rural Family (2113)**

I work with a family of a toddler who lives in a rural county. There are not many resources in the community but the family was able to access the Healthy Steps program. Pediatricians are not available in the community but health departments and family doctors are. The mother suffers from anxiety and bipolar disorder. The mom doesn't like being around many people in public. Healthy Steps home visits allow for her child to receive monitoring of his development, provide the family with information and be a support for them. DCF was involved with the family at one point and father is in prison.



### **Not Dying of Tetanus (1349)**

Although my family hasn't always stayed super up-to-date on vaccines (I don't think I got the HPV vaccine until I was 17 or so), I always understood what an amazing tool they are for society. How cool is it that we have the collective power to completely eradicate diseases that used to kill so many people? I especially appreciated vaccines when I cut my foot open to the bone on a rusty door and had to get stitches. While it wasn't a fun experience and it took a long time to heal, at least I didn't have to worry about dying of tetanus!

### **Surviving as a family (1419)**

Our family has had times when we were not able to financially make it and have had to utilize state subsidies to be able to get by. When we were younger parents, having small children, trying to hold down jobs, provide for our children, pay rent/utilities and day care was something that seemed only those with high paying jobs could do. We received medical, food, daycare from the state, and without the help of government assistance, we would not be where we are today, making more than we ever had, buying a house of our own, not on ANY government subsidies. It was nice to have the help, and encourage those who may feel ashamed to ask for it, do go ahead and get the help that they need, as it is not something that you use forever, it is assistance. Help to get you by.

### **Community Supports it's own (1463)**

Families needing early intervention services in Haskell County (Sublette and Satanta) are thriving because County Commissioners understand the importance to supporting their own community. They allocate funds so services can be provided free of charge. Another great program in the area is Learn & Play Parent/Child Playgroups. It's a time parents come together and help their children get school ready.

### **Early Childhood Mental Health (1528)**

When my son was born 20 years ago, I had planned to stay home with him for a year and then go back to work. I felt fortunate that I could make this decision and we were prepared to make sacrifices so I could stay home. During that year, he was a difficult child, especially compared to his older sisters. We lived in a very small town (1000 people) with only a few child care options, only one of which I thought provided good care. However, as the end of that year, I knew that he wasn't going to be able to handle typical group care. He often needed me to help him calm or remove him from an over-stimulating environment. I decided that if I couldn't find the best child care situation for him, I would try to create one. I kept enrollment extremely low (2-4 others at the most) and was fortunate to be able to enroll children who were naturally



calm, which helped control his behaviors. I also stumbled upon parenting classes and we attended all of them and read Love and Logic and Conscious Discipline books. When I finally had to go back to work, he was 3.5 years old. He struggled in his FCC program, broke some toys, had frequent meltdowns. His behavior was fine in preschool, but by the time he was in Kindergarten and 1st grade, his teachers wanted us to put him on medication for ADD. No one suggested behavior therapy although his first grade teacher attempted some classroom modifications, which worked fairly well. I have a degree in psychology so I had already been doing everything I could to modify his behavior instead of medicating him. There were no supports to help us except occasional parenting classes. I am not anti-medication, but it shouldn't be the first and only option. We didn't start medication until he was 15 and his ADD was really affecting his academics and confidence. He was an honor roll student, a class leader, an athlete and an Eagle Scout. I am grateful for my psychology background and all that I had learned through classes and reading. We were able to survive and he was able to thrive. However, many parents aren't able to access or implement the behavior modifications. Early childhood mental health and behavior modification services are necessary. All children deserve the opportunity to thrive no matter what their genetic or environmental challenges.

#### **Preventible disease results prior to vaccine availability. (1660)**

A family member had permanent hearing loss after having mumps at age 4 years. Because the otic nerve was damaged, no treatment via hearing aids or cochlear implant was an option. Another family member had polio at 21 years of age which resulted in permanent severe weakness of legs for walking. A friend's premature child developed asthma after having had whooping cough.

#### **Early childhood resources (2600)**

My toddler son was having reoccurring ear infections that lasted about a year. During that time my Parents As Teachers Parent Educator identified a language delay with him and referred us for speech a evaluation and hearing evaluation. Getting connected to these services in my community served as early intervention for my child. After a year of speech and language therapy, my son was now ready for preschool and went in to thrive in kindergarten. I'm grateful to live in a community with early childhood resources.

### **Advocating for my child. (1722)**

Our family was in the midst of transitioning our child to a Preschool program in our town. If we did not have the support from our Tiny-K program at RCDC preparing me during home visits and knowing what the process would be like, I don't know if I would have been prepared to advocate for my child at the IEP meeting like I was able to. In this meeting, the preschool program was only wanting to offer my child one day a week due to her having significant issues with tantrums and difficulties with transitions and changes. I stood my ground and requested her to be in the program three days a week which they understood my point and she began the program within a week following that meeting.

### **A happy heart (1749)**

A mother is struggling to take care of her son and help him to grow and develop. She has limited supports and resources, and 2 other young children in the home. RCDC services have been able to help this mother learn better strategies to feed her son, calm him when he tantrums, and direct him in his play. Mom reports that her heart is happier because of the help and support she has received.

### **needs for the working class (1750)**

I am a single parent. I work full time and most of my time being a parent I have had to work more than one job because there is no assistance for the working class family. Some times I have to choose between my child's medications and bills to maintain the house. This is because he has disorders that require a lot of medical needs. and because I am just over the poverty line I am out of luck.

### **Mayan Language Barrier (1801)**

As a home visitor I work with several families whose first language is Mayan, second language is Spanish and speak no English. When these families do not know Spanish very well, it becomes very difficult to help them understand how to access resources, healthcare, and how to navigate the school system and expectations for their children. Many children in these families will learn and Spanish but not much Mayan, especially as they get on in school. One family that was in the home visiting program I work with was having difficulty taking advantage of resources available to their children due to this very language barrier. I worked with a Spanish-English translator but the mother who only went to school for a few years never learned very much Spanish. Her two year old was falling behind in language development and fine motor development. There were programs free of charge available to him but it was very hard to explain the rationale to the mother of why she needed to pursue these resources. At the time there was not an interpreter available who spoke her

rare dialect of Mayan. In the end the mother dropped the home visiting program with me and her child did not get the help he was due. .

### **Just because one has it, doesn't mean all have it. (1805)**

I received a referral to see a child whose parents were concerned she would be autistic. Two older brothers are on the autism spectrum. Evaluated and she is not autistic, but is having some challenges with speech. Therapy will begin and Mom is feeling very relieved.

### **Surviving- even when knowing the importance of early childhood development and supports (954)**

There hasn't been any point in time since becoming a parent that I felt as though we were thriving. Between issues with childcare- both trying to access (waitlisted for 18 months by one provider) and having licensed, quality providers, breastfeeding, working full time with no close family support and spouse health issues, parenting feels challenging, overwhelming, and with a lack of support and resources for middle income families. We probably are better informed than many others about the value of early childhood development including social-emotional development, breastfeeding benefits, early childhood education and importance of well child checks and supports, but access isn't always readily available to make this work and work well. Having universal homevisiting, and quality childcare access would benefit every parent so that they are better able to cope with the many challenges that face raising children today in Kansas. If we didn't have the income and access to medical care through both my husband and my jobs, we would have been overwhelmed and unable to cope with the medical bills and lack of income while my husband was recovering from multiple injuries and major surgery.

### **Early ed (795)**

Our community has an early education program called Toddlers turning 3. It is a free preschool program, but youth have to qualify due to an IEP. When my daughter turned 2, she was invited to be a peer in this program. This program was amazing, the educators were highly qualified- and even as a peer, my daughter was given the same program opportunities that every one else had. The program worked on speech, motor skills, social skills and more. The program really set my daughter up for a more successful start to kindergarten.

### **Staying above water (615)**

I was a single mom trying to provide for my children. I was only working part time and felt like we were just surviving. But was grateful we had a roof over our heads and food in our bellies. I was on WIC, Food Stamps and my children were on State Insurance. I was barely living pay check to pay check. I am happy we are no longer living that way and I work my hardest every day to make sure we never go back there.

### **My Struggle but I Survived It (2546)**

This story and experience is about a time when I was at my lowest point in life with the help of a few people and resources I survived it. I moved to Crawford County about a year ago with 2 young children and 5 months pregnant with a 3rd child. I had no one to help, no job, and nothing for my family as far as our needs. I was sleeping on the floor, eating on the floor and barely able to make it but then I met a lady from an agency that came in lifted me up gave me resources and help me become better in my situation. Thanks Healthy Families!

### **Family Trauma (158)**

I feel as though my family personally has barely been thriving ever since 2017. We have struggled in every area imaginable. I gave birth to a baby girl in July of 2018 and since then, everything has just been super extra difficult and we have been dealing with struggle after struggle. I do not have a strong familial support system, so we have relied heavily on the advice, resources, information and just plain old help that our Parents As Teachers Advocate has provided to us. I do not know how we could navigate all of this without her!!! Our 4 year old son has ASD and our daughter also has severe delays, so it has been hard to navigate the system with all of the overwhelming information out there and lack of services for the children.