

Preface

In this volume, we adopt a systems-contextual view of supporting families of young children. Raising happy, healthy, competent, and confident young people requires environments at many levels that support positive development. This means parents and caregivers who understand how to help children grow and thrive, accessible and effective supports for parents and caregivers in need, early care and education settings that are loving and interesting, healthcare providers that take a keen interest in promoting overall child well-being, neighborhoods that are safe, nurturing, and supportive, and public policies that enable and support caregivers to focus on the best for their children. Together, we will explore these many facets to promote and strengthen outcomes for families of young children.

Chapters in this volume are organized to reflect multiple levels of the social ecology for children. We begin with the most proximal environments, including parents and early care and education providers. We then move to more distal but nonetheless critical environments, including primary healthcare settings and neighborhoods. We then turn to the fabric within which all environments are embedded—the policy environment. Lastly, we respond with a summary and call to action, helping us to pave the way for building and promoting strong supports for families of young children well into the future.

Throughout this volume, we will stand on the shoulders of giants, remembering that we can imagine and hope while simultaneously acting in a way to change the world for families of young children for the better. Use this volume well.

Columbia, USA
Washington, USA

Cheri J. Shapiro
Charlyn Harper Browne

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Shapiro, C.J.; Harper Browne, C. (Eds.)

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