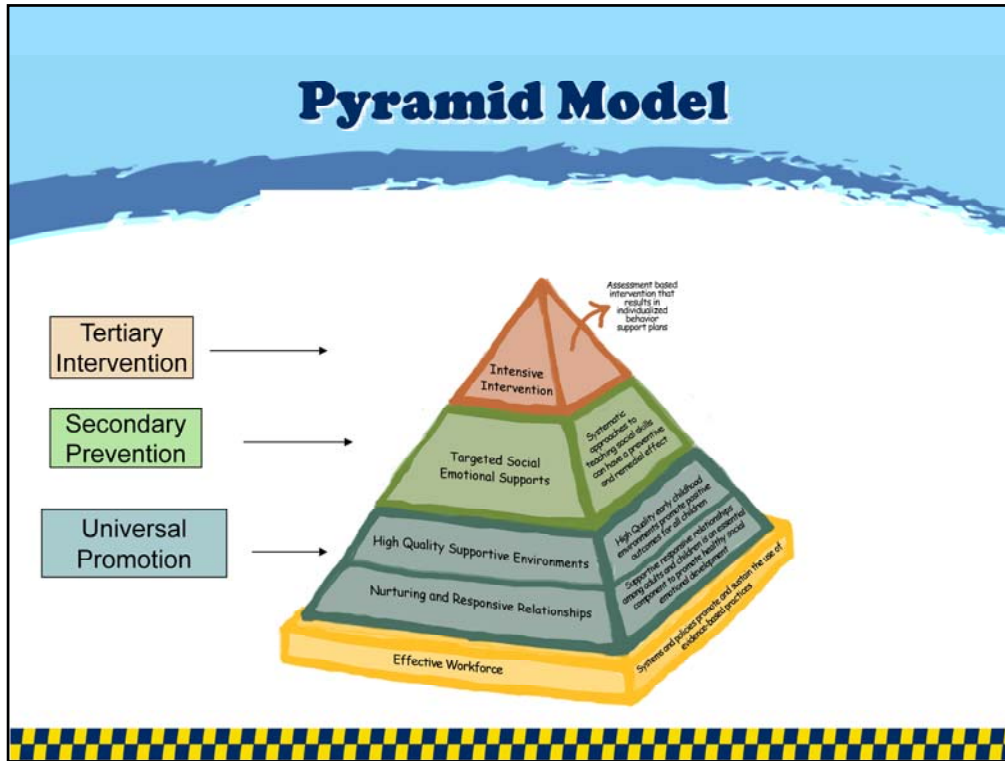


The Pyramid Model provides guidance for early childhood special education and early intervention personnel, early educators, families, and other professionals on the evidence-based practices for promoting young children’s healthy social and emotional development. This brief presentation provides an introduction to the Pyramid Model.



The inspiration for the Pyramid Model comes from the public health model of promotion, prevention, and intervention. Similar to the public health model, we describe the need for universal, secondary, and tertiary interventions. At the universal level we include the practices needed to ensure the promotion of the social development of all children. At the next level, the prevention level includes the provision of targeted supports to children at risk of challenging behavior. Finally, the tertiary level of the pyramid describes the need to provide individualized and intensive interventions to the very small number of children with persistent challenges.



The Pyramid Model includes evidence-based teaching practices and intervention approaches that promote children’s social development or are effective in addressing challenging behavior. You will notice that the model is supported at the foundation by an effective workforce. This an important focus of the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children or TACSEI. It is our goal to provide technical assistance and training to establish the systems and policies needed to adopt and sustain the implementation of the Pyramid Model with a particular focus on supporting the social development and relationships of young children with or at risk for delays or disabilities. The Pyramid Model that we are describing is the same model that is used by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) TACSEI works in partnership with CSEFEL to promote the adoption of this framework by all early education and care providers.

Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

- Foundation of the pyramid
- Essential to healthy social development
- Includes relationships with children, families and team members



In the Pyramid Model, we place the provision of nurturing and responsive relationships with children, families, and colleagues as the foundation for all other practices and the universal conditions that are necessary for social competence promotion and behavior guidance. The focus on relationships puts primary importance on the caregiver or teacher engaging in responsive and positive interactions with children and the development of partnerships with families. Moreover, it includes the critical importance of collaboration and teaming that is essential to the provision of high quality early childhood programs and early intervention services in natural environments.

In their early years, children exist within a web of relationships among parents, teachers, other caring adults in their lives and eventually, peers. This web supplies the context within which healthy social emotional growth and the capacity to form strong affirmative relationships with adults and peers develop. The relationships level of the pyramid includes practices such as: actively supporting children's engagement; embedding instruction within children's routine, planned, and play activities; responding to children's conversations; promoting the communicative attempts of children with language delays and disabilities; and providing encouragement to promote skill learning and development. When providing support to very young children and their families within early intervention programs, this level of the pyramid includes developing strong collaborative partnerships with families and other caregivers, providing support to caregivers in responding to the infant and toddler's needs, and guiding caregivers in establishing responsive and nurturing interactions that will promote the child's social development.

High Quality Environments

- Inclusive early care and education environments
- Supportive home environments



The second category of universal promotion practice is the provision of supportive environments. Within home and community settings, this level of the pyramid refers to the provision of predictable and supportive environments and family interactions that will promote the child's social and emotional development. Universal practices for children with or at risk for delays or disabilities includes receiving instruction and support within inclusive environments that offer the rich social context that is essential to the development of social skills and peer relationships.

The universal level of the pyramid refers to the design of classrooms and programs that meet the standards of high quality early education and the recommended practices of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children. This includes the implementation of a curriculum that fosters all areas of child development; the use of developmentally and culturally appropriate and effective teaching approaches; the design of safe physical environments that promote active learning and appropriate behavior; providing positive and explicit guidance to children on rules and expectations; supporting, guiding, and teaching social skills; and the design of schedules and activities that maximize child engagement and learning.

Supportive Home Environments

- Supporting families and other caregivers to promote development within natural routines
- Providing families and other caregivers with information, support, and new skills



At this level of the pyramid, families who receive early intervention services might be provided with information and support on establishing predictable routines; implementing specialized health care and treatment procedures; teaching social, emotional, and other skills within play and routine activities; promoting language and communication development; and how to foster the development of play and social interaction skills. All of these parenting issues have a relationship to supporting the social and communication development of children and minimizing the likelihood that a child will develop challenging behavior.

Targeted Social Emotional Supports

- Explicit instruction and support
- Self-regulation, expressing and understanding emotions, developing social relationships



The secondary or prevention level of the Pyramid includes the provision of explicit instruction in social skills and emotional regulation. In early childhood programs, all young children will require adult guidance and instruction to learn how to express their emotions appropriately, play cooperatively with peers, and use social problem solving strategies. However, for some children it will be necessary to provide systematic and focused instruction to teach children discrete social emotional skills. Children might need more focused instruction on skills such as: identifying and expressing emotions; self-regulation; social problem solving; initiating and maintaining interactions; cooperative responding; strategies for handling disappointment and anger; and friendship skills.

Families in early intervention programs might need guidance and coaching from their early intervention provider for how to promote their child's development of targeted social and emotional skills. Families of infants and young toddlers might need guidance and support for helping the very young child regulate emotions or stress and understand the emotions of others.

Individualized Intensive Interventions

- Family-centered, comprehensive interventions
- Assessment-based
- Skill-building



When children have persistent challenging behavior that is not responsive to interventions at the previous levels, comprehensive interventions are developed to resolve problem behavior and support the development of new skills. At this level of the Pyramid Model, Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is used to develop and implement a plan of intensive, individualized intervention. PBS provides an approach to addressing problem behavior that is individually designed, can be applied within all natural environments by the child's everyday caregivers, and is focused on supporting the child in developing new skills.

Positive Behavior Support

- Convene a team
- Conduct functional assessment
- Identify hypotheses
- Develop behavior support plan for all relevant environments



The image shows a woman with dark hair, wearing a red turtleneck, smiling and hugging a young child with light hair, also wearing a red turtleneck, who is laughing joyfully. They are positioned on the right side of the slide, below the list of steps.

The process begins with convening the team that will develop and implement the child's support plan. At the center of the team is the family and child's teacher or other primary caregivers. The next step is to conduct a functional assessment to gain a better understanding of the factors that are related to the child's engagement in challenging behavior. Functional assessment ends with the development of hypotheses about the functions of the child's challenging behavior. These hypotheses are used for the development of a behavior support plan. The behavior support plan includes prevention strategies to address the triggers of challenging behavior; replacement skills that are alternatives to the challenging behavior; and strategies that ensure challenging behavior is not reinforced or maintained. The behavior support plan is designed to address home, community, and classroom routines where challenging behavior is occurring. In this process, the team also considers supports to the family and strategies to address broader ecological factors that affect the family and their support of the child.

The Pyramid Model

 Framework for the interventions and supports needed to support all children

 Visit the web site
www.challengingbehavior.org



The Pyramid Model offers professionals and programs with a framework for the support and intervention needs of all young children, children who may be at risk of developing social emotional delays, and those with persistent behavioral challenges. On this web site you will find policy guidance, materials, presentations, family information, and other resources to assist in the adoption and sustainable implementation of this approach. We hope that you will consider becoming a frequent visitor to the TACSEI web site as we continue to develop and disseminate information and new materials and post opportunities for training and technical assistance.