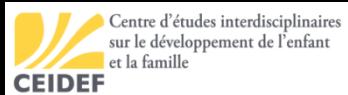


Improved response to the needs of children in situations of neglect?

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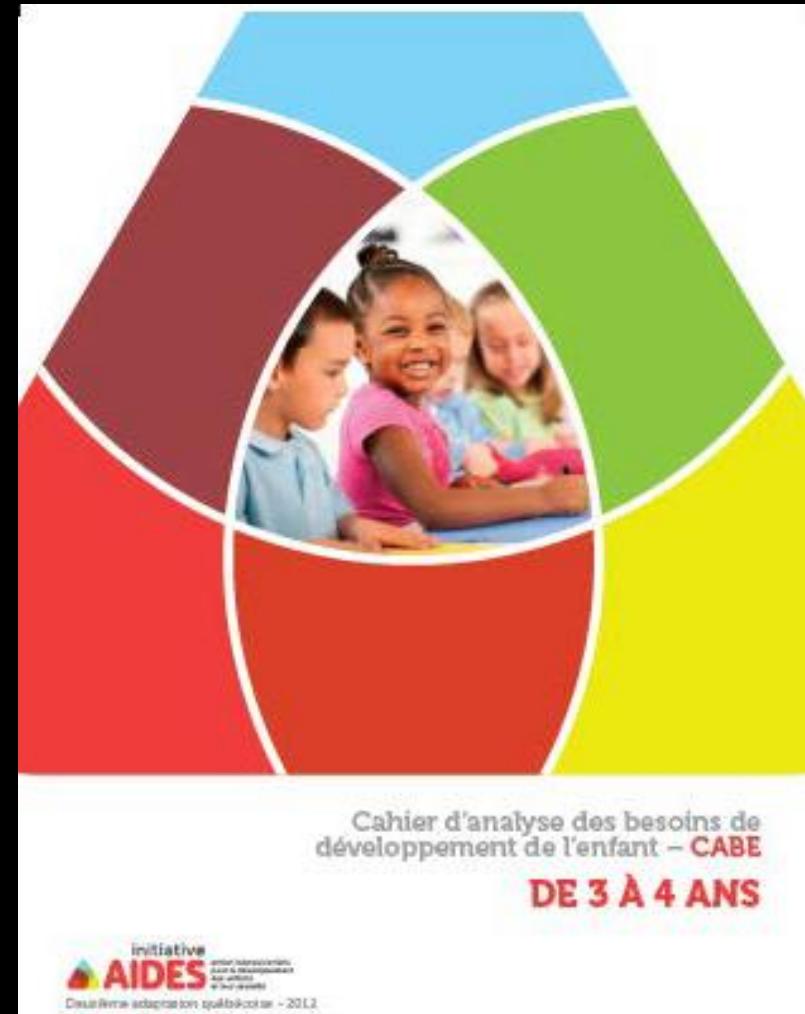
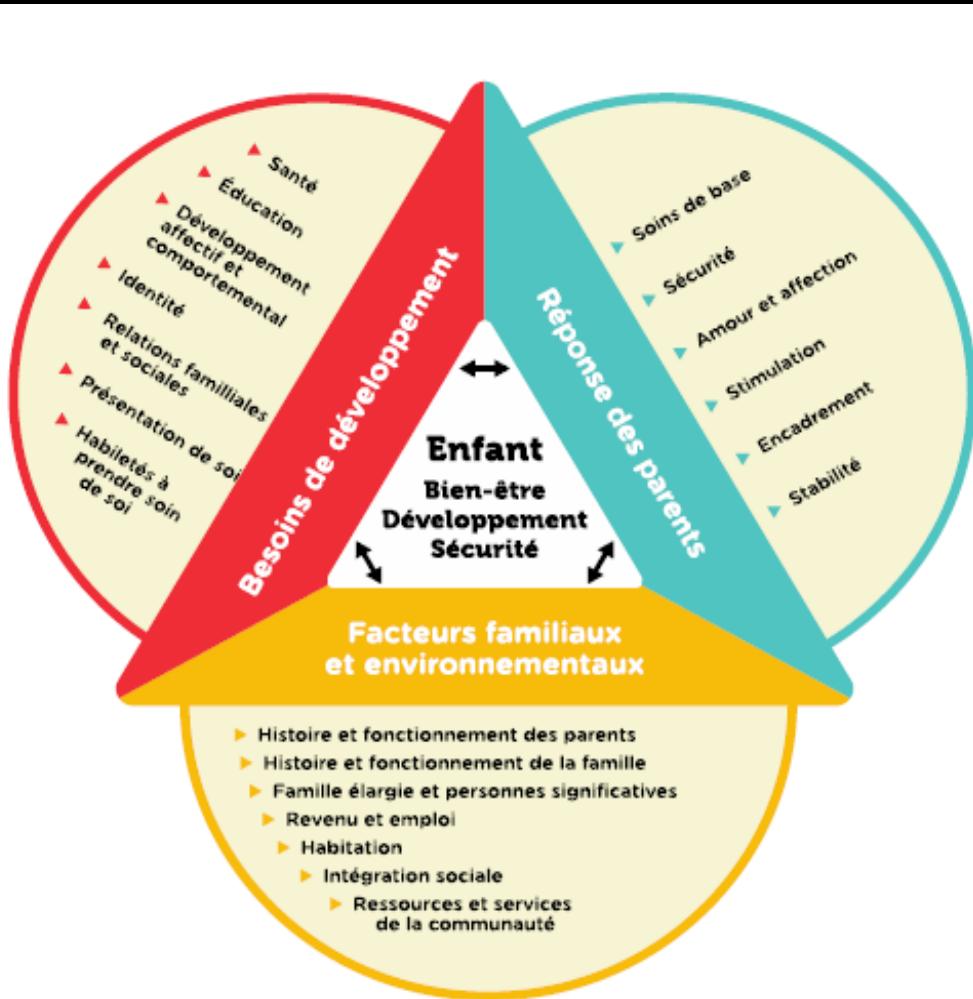


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The problem

- Child neglect: complex challenges in order to ensure an adequate response to children's needs
 - Most goals in action plans relate to parents' (and specifically mothers') problems and deficits
 - Few goals directly focus on child development and well-being
- Because the response to children's needs in neglect situations involves several actors, one of the main challenge relates to the building of a shared understanding of their developmental needs among them

Ecosystemic Assessment Framework and Tools



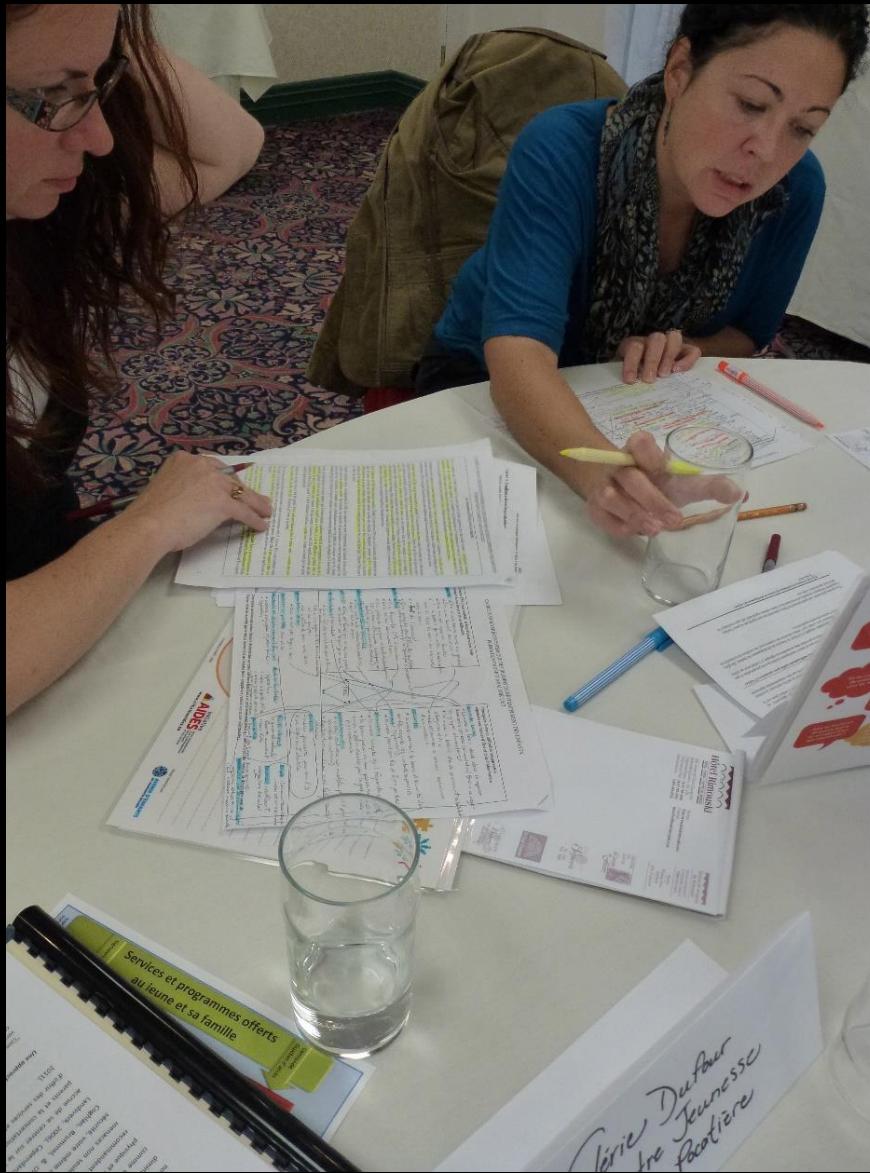
One-day « forums » with services providers involved with children and families in local communities



Three-day training for child welfare workers by local coaches



Ongoing supervision by coaches



Purpose and Method

- To examine the attainment of intervention goals among families with whom the framework and tools has been tested on a 18-24 month period
- A cross-case study of 24 children (aged 0-12) and their families receiving prevention or protection services for child neglect in 6 communities (urban and rural) in the Province of Quebec, Canada
- *Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)*: 2 to 3 major goals centred on child development and well-being and to assess the attainment of these goals 12 to 18 months after the planned actions have been implemented
- interviews and questionnaires with 24 parents (4 fathers) and 24 workers

Results

- For 70% of the children, all or most of the major goals have been attained within a 18-24 month period. For the rest of the cases, goals have not been attained (or only partially attained) during this period
- Almost all (96%) parents have strongly appreciated the approach and tools and have said that it supported their participation to the assessment process and the elaboration of action plans
- Most workers have reported that the approach and tools have enhanced:
 - their understanding of children's needs
 - their relations with parents
 - the coordination of action with other professionals working with the families that they followed

Results

- A wide variety of developmental needs have been identified during the assessment, but workers and parents still have focused mainly on goals related to behavioural/emotional needs of children
- But participation to the assessment of needs and to the planning of actions of professionals from other sectors of services has been observed in less than half of the cases
- Low convergence between prioritized goals identified in GAS and those appearing in the Institutional Action Plans (still more centred on parents' personal situations and less centred on children's needs)

Conclusion

- Is the response to the needs of children in situations of neglect improved by the implementation of an ecosystemic approach to assessment?
- « Yes... but » : beyond the efforts made in this initiative, the situations of neglect still contain obstacles to the sharing of responsibilities between families and workers from multiple sectors of services :
 - One of these obstacles rests on the lack of a common language about children's needs among professionals
 - Another obstacle concerns a dominant organizational culture that is centred on alleviating parents' deficits rather than on improving the response to children's needs

Conclusion

- Impacts of the study:
 - Several revisions of the content of training and supervision activities are suggested by the results
 - Further development of strategies and tools for effective reaching out of professionals involved with situations of child neglect that work outside of the social welfare sector
 - The establishment of a task force that aims to revise the institutional protocols used by professionals in social welfare so that they formally reflect a focus on the response to children's needs

Limits of the study

- The study was realized during a period of profound organizational change in the public apparatus of health and social services in the Province of Quebec
- There was no comparison group
- There was no objective/independent measures of child development and well-being

Thank you

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