

# Talking Points

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*The following talking points can be used flexibly – as a source of themes for longer written pieces, as short responses in media interviews or public appearances, or as set-ups to “pre-frame” a conversation on specific policy or program proposals. Each talking point pulls from rigorously tested messages that have been shown to shift thinking away from common but unproductive ways of thinking about human services, and to build the public’s support for more effective approaches to supporting healthy human development. They need not be used word-for-word. All of these can and should be embellished in multiple ways, drawing attention to details of programs and policies that flow naturally from these priming statements. However, when adapting, communicators should take care to maintain the core of the Value, Metaphor, or Example, and carefully avoid language that might call up unproductive or “swampy” associations with the topic.*

- **Lead with the *Human Potential Value* to help people recognize that everyone needs support and that human service benefit us all.**

*“When we support well-being, we make sure that everyone can reach their potential and fully contribute to our communities. In turn, maximizing potential helps our communities to thrive and remain vibrant.”*

- **Use the *Construction Explanatory Metaphor* to explain well-being how it is shaped.**

*“Well-being is built. Just as building a strong house requires a variety of materials, building well-being requires community resources, social relationships, and opportunities to thrive. To build well-being in our community depends on many people working together, just as building a house does.*

*“Like a new house, well-being needs a sturdy foundation at the start to prevent later problems and keep it standing through all kinds of weather. And some maintenance or even additional construction may be needed from time to time to make sure that everyone in the community keeps doing well socially, mentally, financially, physically, and spiritually.”*

*“How do we build well-being to make sure that everyone can reach their potential and fully contribute to our community? Just as one would turn to knowledgeable contractors, carpenters, and other specialists to build a house, our community relies on organizations whose purpose is to help build well-being. These are called “human services” organizations. They are set up not only to make repairs when well-being starts to break down, but also to build a strong foundation in the first place, and maintain this strength over time.”*

- **Extend the *Construction* Explanatory Metaphor to explain how Human Services Help Protect Well-Being from Disruption.**

*“When the building materials for well-being are not available, people and communities may have difficulty weathering life’s storms. Just as poor construction can make a house unstable, the well-being of people who have not received enough support in life can be threatened when they do not have the social relationships, community resources, and opportunities to thrive that they need. And when people’s well-being is unstable, a bad break in life—such as graduating from school during a recession or having to care for an aging parent with mental health issues—can, like bad weather, be catastrophic. While people with lots of support can weather the storm, people without enough support may struggle to do so.”*

- **Use *Life Cycle Examples* to give people a concrete understanding the full scope of human services.**

*“Human services build well-being throughout people’s lives. In childhood, human services support people by doing things like researching how early experiences affect child development, pushing for high-quality education for all children, and offering help to teens with drug or alcohol problems. In adulthood, human services support people by doing things like studying what affects people’s mental health, working to make housing safe and affordable, or providing literacy programs for adults who cannot read. Human services support older adults by doing things like exploring how social isolation affects people’s well-being, involving older people in tutoring programs so they can remain engaged in their communities, and providing meals to older people who can’t leave their homes. By supporting people throughout their lives, human services construct and maintain well-being.”*