

The Big Picture

Telling a Complete Story

“Policy narratives define a problem, explain how it comes about, and show what needs to be done to improve the situation; in other words, they contain explicit and implicit ideas about what is ‘wrong,’ and how to put it ‘right.’”

– Harry Jones, 2009, “Policy-making as discourse.”

To help the public think about a social problem as a policy issue, not just a personal trouble, and to consider appropriate ways to address it, framers need to provide answers to these questions:

- Why does this matter to society?
- How does this issue work?
- What’s getting in the way—what’s the problem?
- What can we do to improve the situation?

These narrative outlines illustrate different ways to answer these questions with tested frame elements to make a powerful, accessible case on topics related to the system-of-care approach.

Early Learning & Development

Why does this matter?

Human Potential: We need the talents of all available to our community.

How does this work?

Brain Architecture: A sturdy or weak structure is built in the earliest stages of life, through experiences and interaction, with long-term effects.

What’s the problem?

Fairness Across Places: Right now, the experiences and resources that build sturdy brain architecture are plentiful in some communities, but lacking in others.

What can we do?

Solid Tracks: Coordinate and extend the different “tracks” of services and resources available across the city, making delivery more efficient, more effective, and less expensive.

Early Childhood Adversity

Why does this matter?

Human Potential: We need the talents of all available to our community.

How does this work?

Tolerable Stress: Adversity can be buffered by stable, caring relationships who help children cope.

What's the problem?

Toxic Stress: Unbuffered severe stress sends the body's systems haywire.

What can we do?

Civic Responsibility: It's our duty to reduce, prevent, and buffer toxic stressors.

Children's Rights

Why does this matter?

Civic Responsibility: We have a shared duty to our city's children.

How does this work?

Skills Ropes: How a specific right is woven into development.

What's the problem?

Fairness Across Places: Not everyone has access to this strand.

What can we do?

Civic Responsibility: Our city must do right by all of our kids.

Improving the Foster System

Why does this matter?

Civic Responsibility: We have a shared duty to our city's children.

How does this work?

Serve & Return: Stable, responsive relationships build brains.

What's the problem?

Breakdown of Serve & Return: Can derail development.

What can we do?

Solid Tracks: Coordinate, extend, and improve services so that children in the foster system have more stable relationships.

Integrating Behavioral & Physical Health

Why does this matter?

Civic Potential: The possibility of being a great city is just ahead.

How does this work?

Levelness: Good mental health is like a good, level table: it supports children's physical and academic development and whatever else is "on" the child in life.

What's the problem?

Patchy or Tangled Tracks: The current system is like a set of railway tracks that don't connect in the right places. Mental health and physical health are treated separately.

What can we do?

Build Solid Tracks: Coordinate between health and mental health providers, improve communication, and integrate the services.

Early Intervention for Mental Health

Why does this matter?

Civic Potential: The possibility of being a great city is just ahead.

How does this work?

Levelness: Good mental health is like a good, level table: it supports children's physical and academic development and whatever else is "on" the child in life.

What's the problem?

Levelness: If a table is a little wobbly, ignoring the problem doesn't make it go away. While many children's mental health issues could be resolved if handled early—like a slight wobble in a table—too often, the issues aren't addressed in a timely manner and become more serious.

What can we do?

Solid Tracks: Coordinate between health and mental health providers, increase early mental health screenings.