A Novel Approach to the Implementation and Evaluation of Communities Adopting Systems Change Strategies within the Communities that Care Model.

Learning Objectives
In this session participants will:
1. Understand how the implementation of the Communities that Care model in Colorado comprehensively promotes the inclusion of environmental/systems change strategies.
2. Be able to describe the additional supports and tools developed by Colorado evaluators to guide implementation and evaluation.
3. Engage in an in-depth discussion examining common barriers and facilitators encountered when implementing system change efforts.

Statement of Purpose
With 47 communities across the state of Colorado implementing the Communities that Care (CTC) framework, evaluators needed an innovative and sustainable way to conduct process evaluations of primary prevention efforts. CTC is an evidence-based community prevention operating system through which coalitions select primary prevention strategies that address youth substance abuse and violence. Within this framework, grantees choose from 32 potential strategies that address their community’s specific needs. This presentation describes how we developed an innovative and complementary framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating all approved strategies.

Methods
While the CTC framework is tried and tested with the application of evidence-based programs implemented at the individual and interpersonal levels of the social ecology, a comprehensive process that supported community/environmental level strategies did not exist at the start of this project. By utilizing current best-practice guidance on the implementation of systems change strategies, evaluators were able to enhance the existing CTC framework to include common core competencies and capacity areas identified as critical for the implementation and evaluation of said strategies. This session will describe the process by which coalitions identify risk and protective factors most prevalent in their community, map existing strengths and resources using the core competencies framework, select community/environmental level strategies to address their needs, then plan, implement and evaluate their efforts.

Results
Colorado communities are just beginning to implement and evaluate selected systems change strategies, so conclusive process data is yet to come. Presenters will share preliminary findings and some of the tools used as part of the CTC process, with special emphasis on additional supports and innovations that address a systems change approach. As formal process data are forthcoming, the authors would like to lead an in-depth discussion of the presented framework and draw upon the collective expertise of participants to identify facilitators and barriers in their own work related to primary prevention efforts undertaken in the environmental/community ecology.
Conclusions
There is paucity of evidence to help guide large-scale implementation of community level primary prevention strategies, and even less research on how to evaluate them. This presentation proposes a comprehensive framework that supports state and local efforts for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of systems change strategies that address substance abuse and youth violence.

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More than just words: Parent-child engagement to promote protective factors that are associated with root causes of violence

Learning Objectives
In this session, participants will:
1. Recognize the connection between violence prevention and early childhood development.
2. Initiate steps within their organization to connect families with programs that support early childhood development as a violence prevention approach.

Statement of Purpose
Multiple forms of violence share root causes, such as poverty, connectedness, and educational attainment. Children living in poverty face disadvantages compared to more affluent peers. Research has shown that young children living in poverty are exposed to fewer words, are at higher risk for developmental delays, and face greater challenges when starting school. In addition, they are at increased risk for child maltreatment and exposure to adversities due to potential stressors, such as lack of resources, depression, or violence in the home or community. Exposure to cumulative risk factors alters brain development during this critical time. One of the most important early developmental skills, which could improve long-term outcomes is to maximize language development through parent-child engagement.

Methods
Parents of young children were recruited to participate in a 14-week parent-focused, group-based early language development program (upWORDS) implemented in multiple community settings. upWORDS is implemented by speech-language pathologists and trained health educators. The program utilizes early language curriculum and digital language processors (DLP) that record and provide feedback on child-directed speech and conversational turns between adults and young children. Through the program, parents learn about the importance of talking to their child, turn-taking, and reading together in order to support optimal brain development. Additional resources are provided to participants, such as age-appropriate books, food bank vouchers, and information on mental health. Data was collected through DLPs, pre-post questionnaires, and qualitative interviews.

Results
To date, upWORDS has expanded to 10 community sites and has reached over 500 families from over 125 different zip codes. Statistically significant increases in child-directed speech, conversational turns, child expressive-receptive language development, and parental self-efficacy have been observed in graduates of the program. Parents stated that through the program they received skills which formed sustained habits of engaging in their child’s development.

Conclusions
Early childhood is an important time for promoting population health, safety, and equity. Through community partnerships across sectors, the upWORDS program has supported families during an important developmental time. Enhancing protective factors, such as strengthening parent-child engagement and promoting future educational attainment, are critical for prevention of multiple forms of violence and promotion of child health and well-being.
Dr. Cary Cain is an Assistant Professor at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas with the Department of Pediatrics in the Section of Public Health and Child Abuse Pediatrics. She is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Future of Nursing Scholar. She graduated in May 2019 with her PhD in Nursing from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Cizik School of Nursing. She has experience working as a registered nurse delivering community health programs both locally and internationally to pediatric populations. She has been working in the injury and violence prevention field for 7 years and her research interests are the prevention of early adversity and promotion of healthy development and resilience. She has spent the past couple of years partnering with the upWORDS program staff to research the program feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.