

**NATIONAL  
HEALTH CARE**  
*for the*  
**HOMELESS  
COUNCIL**



# Happy, Healthy Children in Shelter and in Supportive Housing

*Session One:  
Children and Trauma*

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Director of Community Engagement

# Welcome!

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- *Introductions*
- *What is a Learning Session?*
- *What is our goal?*
- *POLL*

# Children Experiencing Homelessness and Trauma

- Defining Trauma (Child Traumatic Stress)
- Signs of stress disorder
- Trauma Informed Care AND Resiliency
- Trauma in the Shelter
- Trauma in PSH, RRH
- Supporting the Needs of the Child and Family
- Secondary Trauma

# What is child traumatic stress?

- *A traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to a child's life or bodily integrity. **Witnessing a traumatic event that threatens life or physical security of a loved one can also be traumatic.***
- ***Examples: abuse (personal or witnessed), neglect, domestic violence, loss of home/possessions/pets, accident or natural disaster, substance use disorder – anything that seems to threaten personal or family identity or security***
- Complications within family response to trauma
- Learned trauma

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>



# Contributing Factors

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- **Severity of the event.**
- **Proximity to the event.**
- **Caregivers' reactions.**
- **Prior history of trauma.**
- **Family and community factors.**

**Trauma is in the eye of the beholder**



# ACEs = Adverse Childhood Experiences

The 3 types of ACEs include

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Abuse toward Parent



Substance Abuse



Divorce

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

Traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and wellbeing



People with 6+ ACEs can die

**20 yrs**

earlier than those who have none



1/8 of the population have more than 4 ACEs



[www.70-30.org.uk](http://www.70-30.org.uk)  
[@7030Campaign](https://twitter.com/7030Campaign)

## 4 or more ACEs

**3x** the levels of lung disease and adult smoking

**11x** the level of intravenous drug abuse

**14x** the number of suicide attempts

**4x** as likely to have begun intercourse by age 15

**4.5x** more likely to develop depression

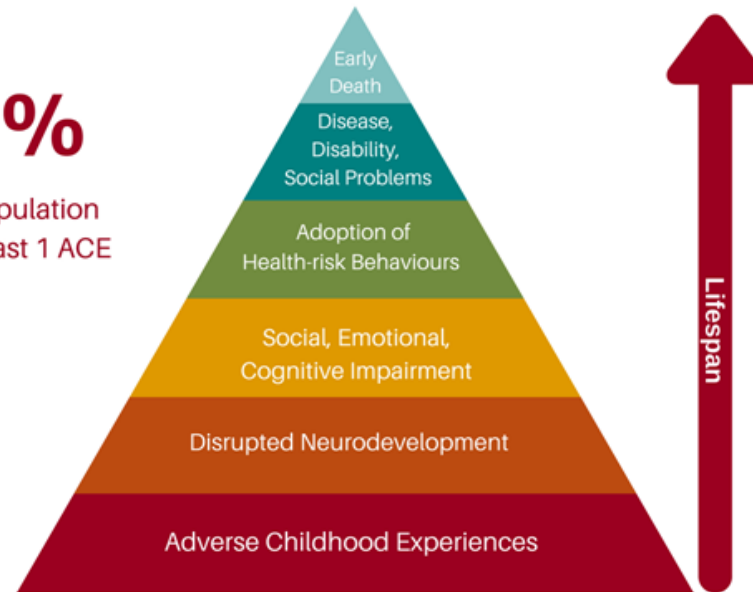
**2x** the level of liver disease

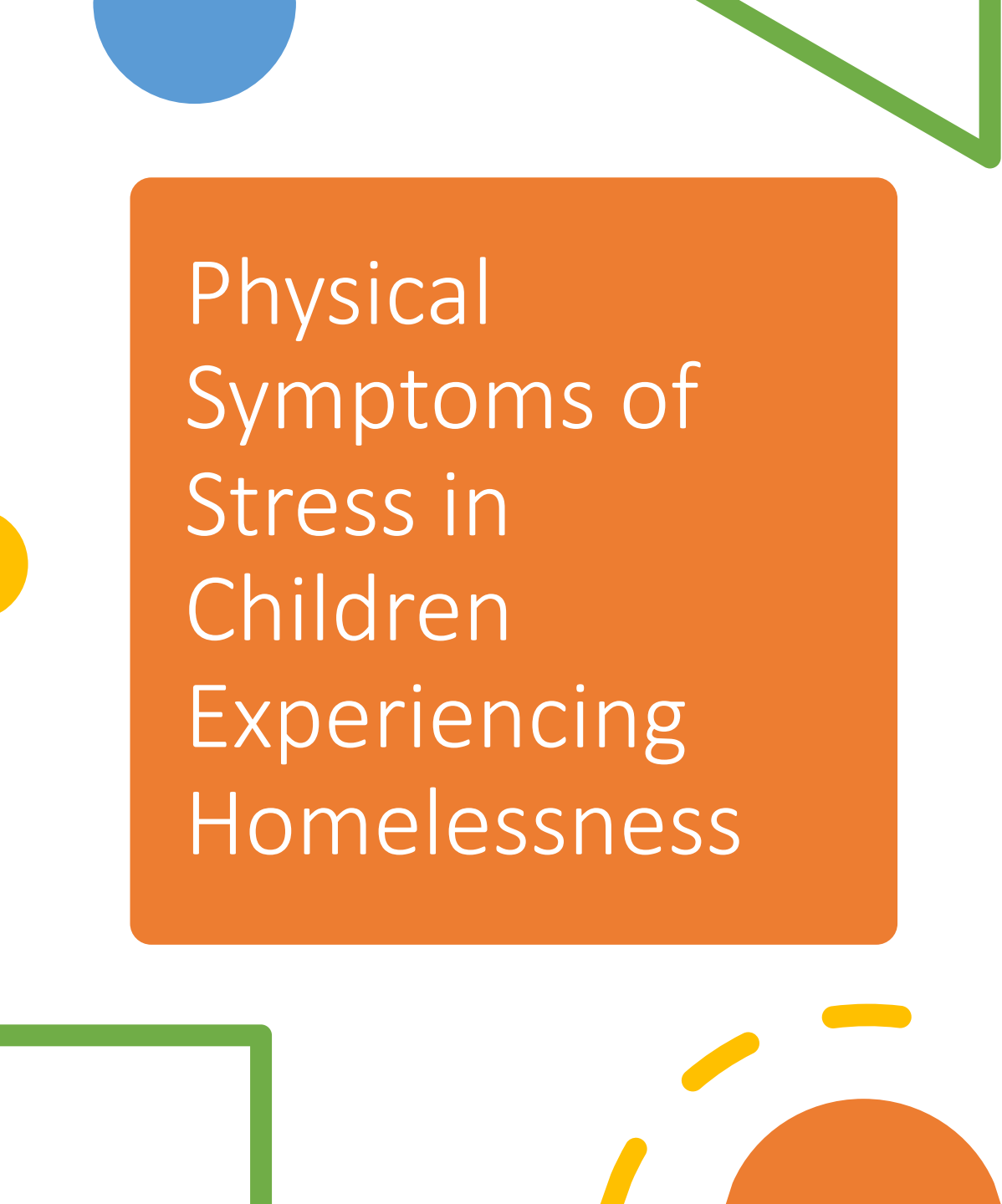
**“ Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today ”**

Dr. Robert Block, the former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics

**67%**

of the population have at least 1 ACE

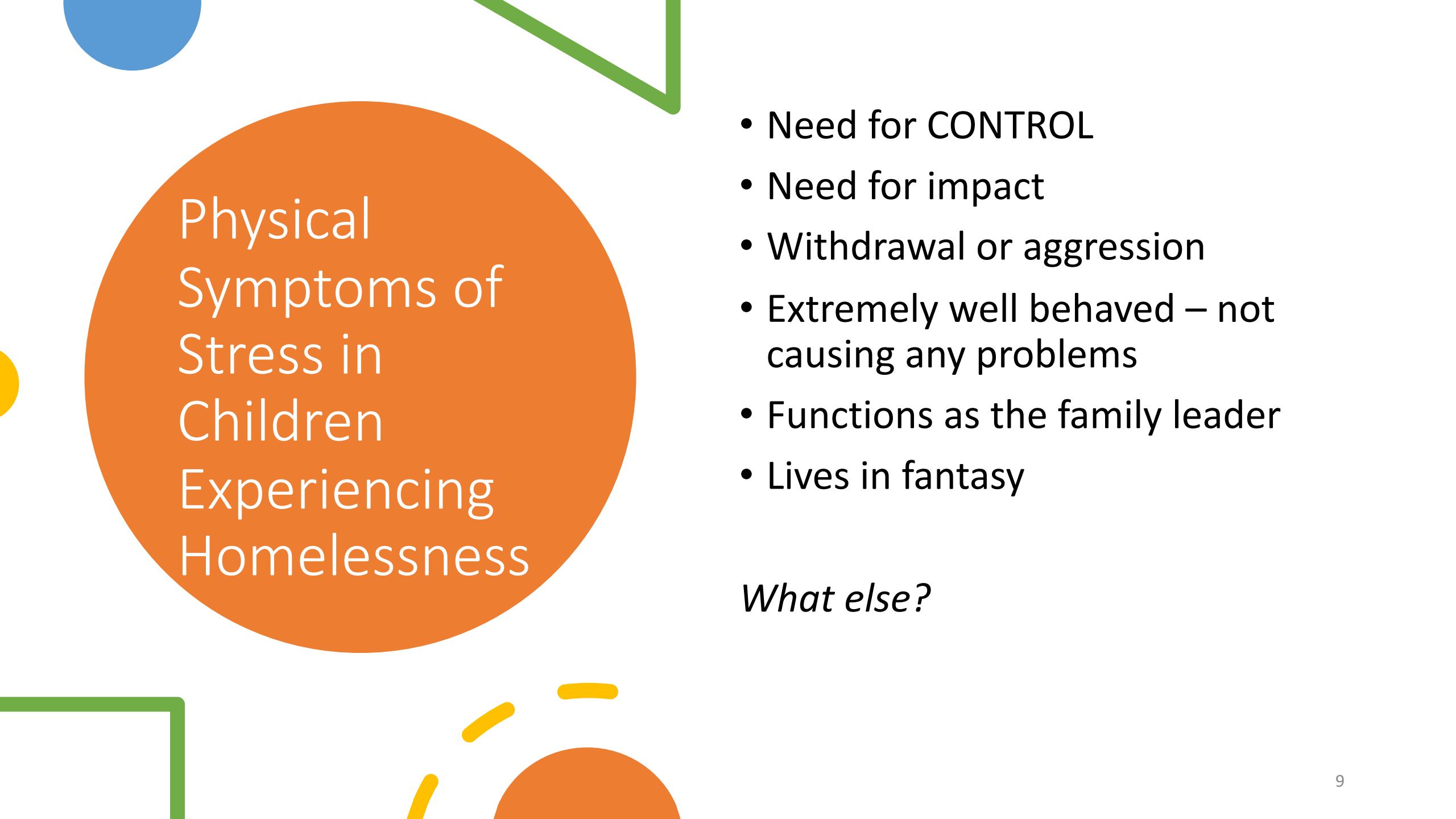




## Physical Symptoms of Stress in Children Experiencing Homelessness

- Inability to regulate mood or emotional responses (self regulation)
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Attachment issues
- Regression in skills, development
- Nightmares, intrusive thoughts
- Changes or unhealthy patterns in eating, sleeping, bathroom habits, hygiene
- Risky behavior
- Lethargy, exhaustion





## Physical Symptoms of Stress in Children Experiencing Homelessness

- Need for CONTROL
- Need for impact
- Withdrawal or aggression
- Extremely well behaved – not causing any problems
- Functions as the family leader
- Lives in fantasy

*What else?*

# Serious Warning Signs

- Suicidal ideation
- Homicidal ideation
- Running away
- Dangerous, risky behavior
- Extreme changes in sleeping or eating
- Play or art with dark, sexual, or abusive themes
- Signs of physical or sexual abuse
- Signs of neglect
- Signs of illness that may be hidden





# Trauma Informed Care and Building Resiliency

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- Bad behavior vs. trauma response
- Self expression
- Choices – personal power and control
- Safety Planning as a means of power and control
- What are we reading/watching/playing/drawing?
- Unsupervised playtime – the collective impact of trauma/crisis



# Trauma in the Shelter: Reducing Re-traumatization

- ***Lack of context – where do you think you are? Who do you think you are? Who do you think we are?***
- Adults/Small Children/School Age Children/Teens in crisis
- Substance Use
- Frequent 911 Calls
- Severe Mental Illness
- Lack of privacy
- Loss of personal possessions/pets/family support
- So many parental figures



# Trauma in Supportive Housing: Reducing re-traumatization

- Loss of possessions/pets/family support
- New school, new providers
- Lots of support or no support – weakness/strength of *housing first*
- Community impact

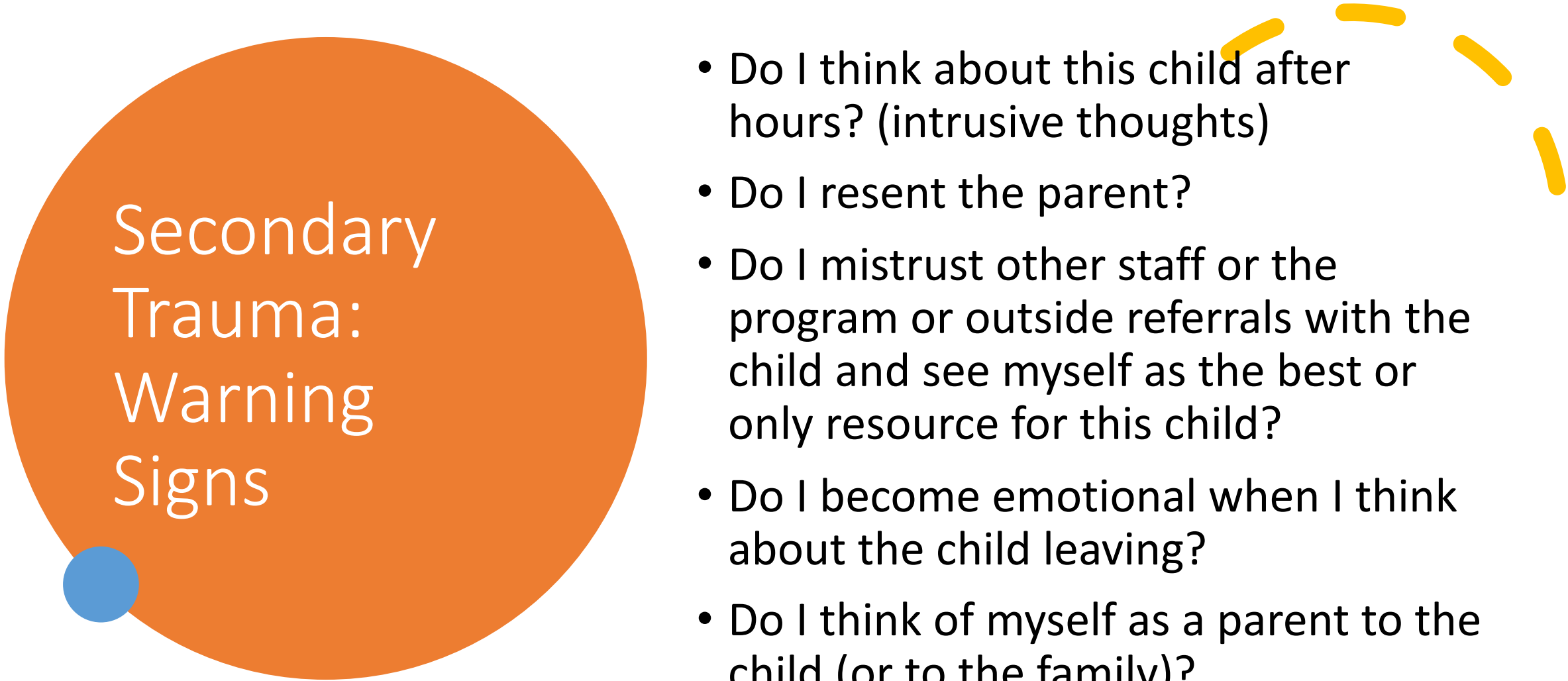




# Supporting the Child *and the Family*

- Balancing the needs of all
- Replacing the parent
- *You are temporary*
- Strengths Based Approach
- Safety Planning

***What else can we do to support the family as a whole – or what are things that we do that undermine the family?***



## Secondary Trauma: Warning Signs

- Do I think about this child after hours? (intrusive thoughts)
- Do I resent the parent?
- Do I mistrust other staff or the program or outside referrals with the child and see myself as the best or only resource for this child?
- Do I become emotional when I think about the child leaving?
- Do I think of myself as a parent to the child (or to the family)?





# What are my warning signs?

- Changes in eating/sleeping/feelings about coming to or leaving work
- Emotional stability
- Withdrawal or inability to feel
- What kinds of situations are particularly difficult for me?
- My personal support system
- ***My coping strategies***

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**Questions?**

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