INTRODUCTION

The Raising of America, a documentary series by the producers of Unnatural Causes: Is Inequity Making us Sick?, reframes the way we look at early child health and development. The documentary explores how a strong start for all our children leads not only to better individual life courses (learning, earning, and physical and mental health), but also to a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous, and more equitable America.

In many ways, due to its mission and the flexibility afforded by its structure as a block grant, state and territorial Title V programs can serve as the backbone or hub of maternal and child health activity broadly and around specific life stages, including early childhood. There is clear evidence that investments in this period improve health, educational attainment and economic outcomes. A healthy and strong start for children and families can positively influence physical and mental health, education, social and family well-being. Unfortunately, many children are getting their start on unequal footing; inequitable beginnings are leading to inequitable outcomes throughout the course of life. States and Title V programs are well positioned to engage with stakeholders, including families, to work toward a healthy start for children. State Title V MCH programs administer numerous public efforts that are natural access points for building and strengthening integrated services for children and families. Additionally, Title V programs can share data from their needs assessments and performance measures on the pressing needs of MCH communities to show the importance of early childhood in their state and highlight potential opportunities for impact.

AMCHP, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Healthy Heartland, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and the California Newsreel National Public Engagement campaign seek to change the conversation about what we, as a society, can and should do to ensure every infant has an equal opportunity. This short guide was developed to provide state Title V MCH programs with information and resources to support use of the documentary series.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RAISING OF AMERICA

The Raising of America is a multimedia project that seeks to expand the conversation around early childhood. The project components include:

- **A Documentary Series** that explores how a strong start for all our children can lead to a healthier, safer, better educated and more prosperous and equitable America
- **A National Public Engagement Campaign** to reframe the debate about what we as a society can – and should – do to ensure a strong start for every infant
- **A Companion Website** with video clips, interactives, discussion guides, action guides, resources and more
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<th>DOCUMENTARY</th>
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<td><strong>OPENING EPISODE: The Raising of America</strong></td>
<td>This hour-long episode moves back and forth between the science of human development and the stories of families and communities struggling to provide the rich and responsive environments all children need to thrive – while too often hindered by social conditions and inequities which impede their every effort.</td>
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<td><strong>ARE WE CRAZY ABOUT OUR KIDS? The Cost/Benefit Equation</strong></td>
<td>Investing in high-quality early care and education pays for itself in many ways and many times over. This episode brings to life the classic economic studies that illustrate how we can either invest early for success or pay more for failure later.</td>
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<td><strong>DNA IS NOT DESTINY: How the Outside Gets Under the Skin</strong></td>
<td>New scientific discoveries reveal how the fetal environment and early childhood experience quite literally ‘wire’ the rapidly developing brain and other bio-regulatory systems, changing not our genes but the epigenetic ‘volume controls’ that turn genes on and off. These epigenetic changes can influence not only cognitive function but the self-regulation of emotions and behaviors, even the susceptibility to chronic diseases as we age.</td>
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<td><strong>ONCE UPON A TIME: When Childcare for All Wasn’t Just a Fairytale</strong></td>
<td>Just imagine how things might be different if, for the past four decades, all our children had access to high-quality early care and education. Back in 1971, Congress passed a bill providing high-quality, universal childcare, home visiting and other services from birth to age five. Pres. Nixon’s 11th hour veto marked the first time ‘family values’ was invoked to undermine pro-family and child initiatives. The veto marked a critical inflection point from our path toward a more inclusive nation to today’s ‘you’re-on-your-own’ society.</td>
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<td><strong>WOUNDED PLACES: Confronting Childhood PTSD in America’s Shell-Shocked Cities</strong></td>
<td>Too many of our children, especially children of color in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, are exposed to adversity, violence, neglect and other forms of trauma and show symptoms similar to PTSD – except there is no ‘post.’ This episode asks not “What’s wrong with you?” but rather, “What happened to you?” and how can we help our traumatized children and neighborhoods heal.</td>
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Adapted from the Raising of America website: [http://www.raisingofamerica.org](http://www.raisingofamerica.org).

**USING THE SERIES**
State Title V MCH programs are encouraged to utilize a collective impact framework and bring together community members, advocates, local agencies, educators, practitioners, researchers, parents, and others from the community to view and discuss The Raising of America documentary series. State Title V MCH programs can use this opportunity to promote dialogue and highlight local and state actions which can strengthen communities and improve the conditions faced by families with young children. Ways that Title V programs could use the documentary to advance work in their states include:

- **Raise Awareness**
  - Increase awareness of the historical context of early childhood care and effects on child and family health today
  - Host a screening and discussion of the film
  - Share with staff to help renew their commitment to the work they do

- **Educate**
  - Pair with state public health data on child and community well-being and return on investment
  - Use as part of training and development for state public health workforce

- **Engage and Empower**
  - Share with families to encourage them to use their voices to support and advocate for investments in early childhood
  - Work with advocates and community groups
Plan a Screening
You can plan a screening to bring together partners and stakeholders to start the conversation about the value of effective programs, policies and systems that impact early child health and development, and opportunities to align and further work. See Figure 1 for examples of the types of stakeholders you might engage.

Moving to Action
AMCHP developed the following templates that Title V programs can use with the documentary and Raising of America resources:

1. Facilitated agenda example for a screening event
2. Screening feedback handout (short)
3. Discussion handout (moving to action/moving forward)
4. Discussion guide for team breakouts
5. Commitment to Action to document next steps from your stakeholders

These resources and more information on AMCHP activities are available at:

FEDERAL RESOURCES TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE BEGINNINGS FOR ALL CHILDREN
At-risk MCH populations who are living in poverty, in environments with poor neighborhood conditions and poorly funded school systems are often the same populations served by Title V programs. Fortunately, there are several policies and programs designed to provide an equitable beginning to promote a healthy and strong start for all children. This guide highlights a few of these but it is not an exhaustive list. As you collaborate with other stakeholders in your communities, consider how these federally sponsored programs, operating within your state, can collectively support equitable beginnings for all children.

Affordable Care Act
The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides additional opportunities to strengthen coverage and adequacy of coverage for children. Qualified health plans on the marketplace are required to cover 10 essential health benefits (EHBs) that include habilitative and rehabilitative services, select preventive services for children at zero cost sharing and pediatric services (including oral and vision health), among others.

A few opportunities to advance children’s health under the health reform law:

- Health plans are required to cover all Bright Futures preventive services without cost sharing, which include developmental screening, injury and violence prevention counseling, and promotion of healthy weight (including BMI screening)
- The Medicaid eligibility for children is raised to a minimum of 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL)
- The law extends presumptive eligibility beyond children and pregnant women and expands the role of hospitals in determining eligibility presumptively
- There are opportunities to advance medical and health homes at the state and local levels, such as through the Medicaid medical home option for states and community-based health teams
- Qualified health plans under the ACA are required to provide coverage for breastfeeding support, supplies, and counseling at zero copayment
- Qualified health plans in the marketplace are required to provide pediatric coverage to enrollees until at least the end of the month in which the enrollee turns 19
- The ACA provides a uniform definition of habilitative services for plans on the marketplace
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS): ECCS is a federal grant program with a systems integration approach that brings together several stakeholders who influence early childhood, including families, teachers, caregivers, and primary care providers. Current grantees focus on one of three strategies: 1) Mitigate toxic stress and trauma in infancy and early childhood; 2) Coordinate the expansion of developmental screening activities in early care and education settings; and 3) Improve state infant and toddler child care quality improvement efforts. This program also can serve to bolster the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program within a state. http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/earlychildhood/comprehensivesystems/grantees/index.html

Head Start Programs: Two significant investments, Head Start and Early Head Start, are programs that promote school readiness for children in at-risk families in low-resource communities. Both programs provide comprehensive services to promote the healthy development of children from birth through age five by providing and connecting families and children to important resources in the community including for nutrition, health, and social needs. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohs

Healthy Start: Healthy Start works to reduce the rate of infant mortality and improve perinatal outcomes through grants to communities with high infant mortality rates. These projects provide direct outreach and client recruitment, health education, case management, depression screening and referral, and services between pregnancies. The program aims to improve birth outcomes and thereby reduce the likelihood of adverse childhood health outcomes. http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/healthystart/

Home Visiting: The most recent significant investment in early childhood is the MIECHV program. This program supports pregnant women and at-risk families with children, providing access to resources and develop skills to raise children that are healthy (physically, socially, and emotionally) and ready to learn. States and jurisdictions use evidence-based models to support the goals of home visiting. Federal funding for the MIECHV program was recently extended for two years. http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/ 

Medicaid & the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP): Medicaid and CHIP are safety-net health insurance programs to provide children with health care coverage. An important part of a healthy start for children is access to affordable health care where they can receive routine check-ups, preventive services and care. Federal funding for the CHIP program also was recently extended for two years. http://www.medicaid.gov/chip/chip-program-information.html

Nutrition Programs: The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides funds to states for supplemental nutrition, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income women pregnant women and children through age five. For families with children beyond age five, there is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

While no state program is singly responsible for child health, as neutral conveners, state Title V MCH programs can bring together partners to reach consensus on addressing challenges faced by families and children in the early years of life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
The Raising of America has several resources to help you use the documentary to further early childhood work in your state, including Episode Discussion guides and a Take Action Toolkit. Find out more at: http://www.raisingofamerica.org.

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Guidance for Title V MCH Programs Use of The Raising of America Documentary Series