

# The PUF program: Addressing infants' mental health vulnerabilities in the community health care.

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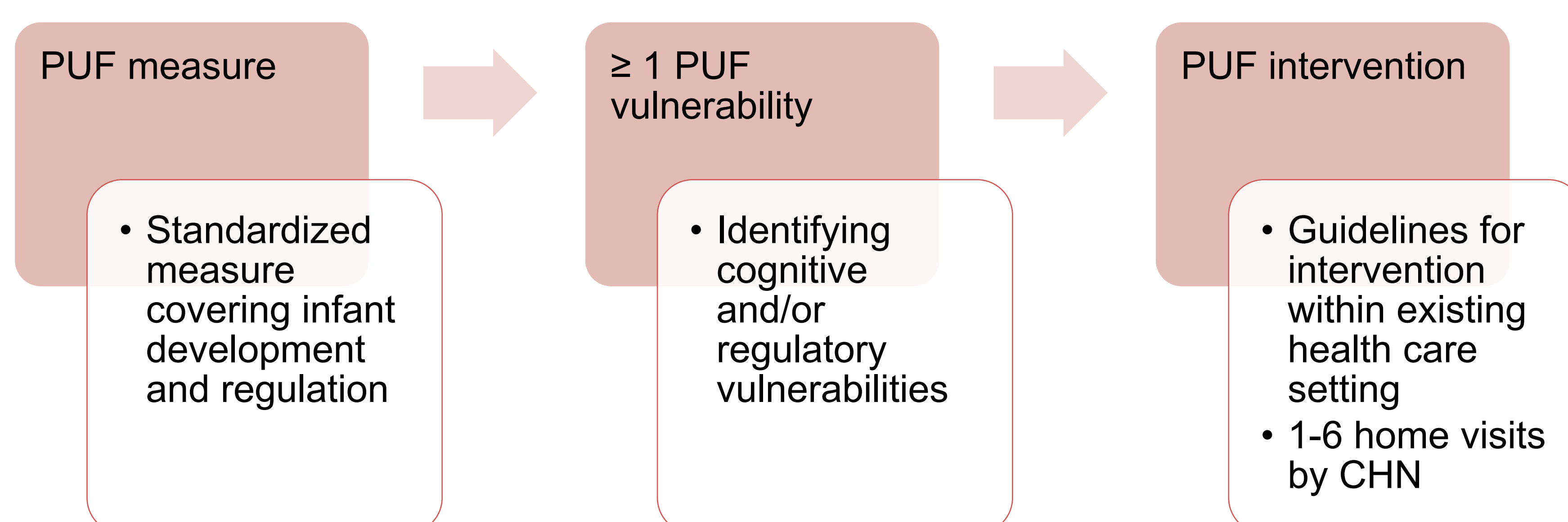
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Population-based strategies targeting infants' mental health are fundamental in the prevention of childhood psychopathology.

The PUF program was developed for use in the community health care to address problems of development (cognitive, language and motor activity) and regulation (eating, sleep, emotions and behavior).

The PUF program includes a three months training course and a manualized program to guide community health nurses in the assessment of 9 -10 months old infants in dialogue with the parents and a corresponding intervention within the municipality settings. So far, the PUF-program has been implemented in 37 Danish municipalities, overall showing good feasibility and acceptability among parents and community health nurses.

## The PUF program



### Manualized program of CHNs' training, assessment, and intervention

Overview of the elements in the PUF program – a service-setting based program of early identification and guidelines for actions addressing mental health vulnerabilities in infants aged 9-10 months delivered by CHN

#### Background

Population-based strategies addressing infants' mental health are fundamental to prevent the development of childhood psychopathology; and validated and feasible measures covering the range of mental health vulnerabilities in municipality settings are urgently needed.

#### Aims

To describe the development, validation and implementation of a pragmatic service-setting based program of early identification and guidelines for actions addressing mental health vulnerabilities in infants aged 9-10 months delivered by community health nurses (CHN)

#### Method

The PUF-program was developed in close collaboration with CHNs from twenty Danish municipalities (1,2). It builds on research evidence on developmental psychopathology, the potentials of early intervention in the settings of the CHNs (3); and the new measure to the standardized assessment of mental health at ages 9-10 months, the PUF (In Danish Psykisk Udvikling og Funktion) (4-6).

The PUF-program includes a manualized program for the CHNs' training, child assessment, and intervention within the existing municipality settings, building on the parent-nurse relationship.



Colourbox

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#### Results

The PUF-program was primarily implemented in 16 municipalities in 2018-2020. The fidelity of the program differed across municipalities and supplementary booster sessions were added to optimize the adherence to the guidelines of the program.

Preliminary analyses show that 11% of children from the general population were identified with complex problems (≥3 problems) of development and regulation.

Face validity of the program was reported high by CHNs, and CHNs experienced that parents appreciated the standardized approach and the associated communication about the child's development and needs.

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