

# Supporting Families In Your Community

Social relationships influence every area of our daily life, from our personal health, to the safety of our neighborhood, to the development of our children. Getting to know your neighbors makes your community safer and provides individuals and families with the support they need.

Here are some simple ways to build a strong environment that will allow children to grow into healthy, productive citizens who will in turn give back to their communities:

- **Know your neighbors and keep your neighborhood safe.** Introduce yourself and your family to your neighbors. Know their names and the names of their children. Families feel safer and less stressed when they know support is nearby. Offer to be that support for your neighbor. Offer to pick up your neighbor's mail when they are out of town and let them know you can keep an eye on their home. When street lights burn out, report the outage to the city to avoid dark places in your neighborhood.



- **Mentor a new parent in your neighborhood and be a good role model.** Sometimes families go from receiving a lot of support when the baby first arrives to little or no support a few months later, which can leave a new parent feeling overwhelmed. Check in often with a new parent. Sometimes just holding or changing a baby will allow the new mom or dad to shower or to fold laundry. Parents are always looking for new parenting techniques and you can help provide them by setting a good example.
- **Congratulate parents on doing a good job.** Let parents know their child is a reflection of good parenting.

Praising parents can raise their self-esteem and make them feel good about their parenting skills.



- **Celebrate children.** Smile at children and praise them for doing something well. It helps children and parents feel good about themselves and will also reinforce positive behavior.
- **Be active in your community.** Developing playgroups for new families at community centers, libraries, or schools ultimately contributes to the well-being of children.
- **Distribute parenting materials in your community.**
- **Remember, anything you do** to support children and parents in your community helps strengthen families and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

## Offering Support In Public Places

Parenting can be most stressful when running errands with a small child or a few children in tow. Sometimes parents don't choose the best parenting techniques when their child is difficult to handle in public. Any assistance you can offer a parent will give them a few seconds to take a deep breath and deal with the situation calmly.

Here are some simple ways to offer your support in public places:

- **Praise the parent or child at the first opportunity.** Think of something positive to say and say it! It helps to hear that others are supportive of you.
- **Identify with the parent.** You can let them know you've been there by saying, "My kids used to do the same thing when they were that age. Is there anything I can do to help?"
- **Offer assistance and empathize with the child.** "You seem to really have your hands full. Can I help you?" Or, "You don't feel like sitting in that stroller anymore, do you? Well just a little longer and Mommy/Daddy will be all done and you can get out."

