

Let's Celebrate Young Children

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April is National month of the young child, and communities all across the United States will have fun festivals and informative programs to promote the well being of children and their families.

Research and experience show us that the early years shape children's learning and development, influencing their health and happiness throughout life. There are many things adults can do to ensure that all children are raised in healthy environments at home, at school, and in the community.

At home:

- Spend time playing, reading, singing, and talking with children.
- Childproof your home. Be sure that all medications and dangerous items are out of children's reach.
- Provide nutritious food, and decrease sweets and junk food. Teach your children to shop and cook with you.
- Provide regular checkups with a doctor and dentist.
- Pass on your values, your religion, or your spiritual practice, providing good examples for your child to follow.
- Learn to discipline your children with respect for individual styles and needs. Reduce yelling, and increase setting limits and providing routines.

At school:

- Develop a good relationship with childcare providers and teachers. Talk with them about your children's strengths and challenges.
- Find opportunities to be involved in the classroom, and support the work of the teachers.
- Have realistic expectations about your children's schoolwork and homework. Children have different styles of learning and creative talents. Get help for children who show signs of stress or special needs.

In the community:

- Spend time in nature and explore the riches of your community.
- Get to know your neighbors for support and fun.
- Make use of your public library. Get a library card and borrow books that you and your children can enjoy reading every day.
- Learn about local politics, and if you can, vote for people who support the interests of children and families.
- Become an advocate for children so that someday all children will have healthy environments where they can play and learn.

Listen to children when they're unhappy, look at them when they speak, and show your love through your smile, your touch, and the many ways you provide for their well being. When we provide children with positive regard, they thrive.

For information about events and services in your community go to First 5 California online at <http://www.cafc.ca.gov/> to find your local First 5 Commission.

