

Celebrating All Children

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This month, communities all around the country are celebrating the Month of the Young Child, promoting the well being of children and families. April is also Child Abuse Prevention Month, encouraging parents and caregivers to get support when their stress or life circumstance interferes with the compassionate and appropriate treatment of children.

Research and experience show us that the early years shape children's learning and development, influencing their health and happiness throughout life. There are community agencies and professionals trained to support parents when things get difficult. You're not alone in your desire to do the best you can to love and care for the children in your life.

There are many things adults can do to ensure that all children are raised in healthy environments at home, school, and in the community.

At home:

- Spend time playing, reading, singing, and talking with children. These are fun ways to prepare a child for successful school experiences.
- Provide nutritious food, and decrease sweets and junk food. Have fun teaching children to shop and cook.
- Provide regular checkups with a doctor and dentist.
- Pass on your values, your religion, or your spiritual practice. You are your child's first teacher.
- Learn to discipline 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 for your children's schoolwork and homework. All 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 neighborhood.
- Make use of your public library. Get a library card and borrow books that you and your children will enjoy reading.
- Learn about local politics. If you can, vote for people who support the interests of children. Politicians often *talk* about helping families, but they may not vote for policies that put resources in needed places.
- Become an advocate for children so that some day all children will have healthy environments where they can play and learn.

When we take care of ourselves, it's easier to provide the love children need, and when we provide children with positive feedback, they thrive!

For information about events and services in your community go to visit First 5 California, on http://www.cfc.ca.gov/county/county_map.asp, to find out about the First Five Commission in your county.

