

# Understanding Children's Needs

Head Start Innovation and Improvement Grant  
Funded by  
The Office of Head Start  
Administration for Children Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# Introductions

Please say your name, your agency, and your role in the agency.

Then, tell the group one of the best things an adult ever did for you as a child.

# The Basic or “Irreducible” Needs of Children

- The Need for Ongoing Nurturing Relationships
- The Need for Physical Protection, Safety, and Regulation
- The Need for Experiences Tailored to Individual Differences
- The Need for Developmentally Appropriate Experiences
- The Need for Limit Setting, Structure and Expectations
- The need for Stable, Supportive Communities and Cultural Continuity
- The Need to Protect the Future

# Strengthening Families

## how early childhood programs help prevent child abuse and neglect

Excellent early care and education programs use common program strategies to build the protective factors known to reduce child abuse and neglect.

### QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

#### Program strategies that:

- Facilitate friendships and mutual support
- Strengthen parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Facilitate children's social and emotional development
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect
- Value and support parents

#### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Parental resilience

Social connections

Knowledge of parenting and child development

Concrete support in times of need

Social and emotional competence of children



# Activity

- Look at the strategies.
- Think of specific activities your program does in each of these areas.
- If you can't come up with any, circle that strategy.
- Think of a possible way to implement all circled strategies.

# Strengthening Families: Strategies

- Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support
- Strengthen Parenting
- Respond to Family Crises
- Link Families to Services and Opportunities
- Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Development
- Observe and Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect
- Value and Support Parents

# The Need for Experiences Tailored to Individual Differences

Every child has a unique temperament.

Tailoring early experiences to nurture a child's individual nature prevents learning and behavioral problems and enables a child to develop his or her full potential.

# Activity

- Think of two children you work with.
- On Handout 4, describe the characteristics of these two children. Answer the questions as they relate to each child.
- Turn to the person sitting next to you and share with them one way you do, or might start, individualizing for this child.

# Developmentally Appropriate Experiences

Developmentally appropriate experiences for children are simply experiences that are geared for their level of development.

In order to provide these types of experiences, care providers, teachers, and parents must have a basis in knowing how children grow and develop.

# Activity

- Take a moment to read and reflect on the principles on Handout 5.
- Turn to someone sitting next to you to form a pair.
- Each of you are to pick a different principle and think of an instance when the principle was “lived out” in your Head Start classroom.

# The Need for Limit Setting, Structure and Expectations

Children need structure and discipline. They need discipline that leads to internal limit-setting, channeling of aggression and peaceful problem-solving.

To reach this goal, they need adults who empathize as well as set limits. They need expectations rather than labels and adults who believe in their potential but understand their weaknesses.