

# The Children's Program

## For Parent Educator:

The Children's Program component of parenting groups can sometimes pose a challenge. Recruiting staff and volunteers takes perseverance. We want the Children's Program to be fun, safe, and creative and often we must get creative to make this happen.

Our customers have shared ways to make the Children's Program a positive addition to their parenting groups. We hope you will find them helpful.

- **Give staff and/or volunteers in the Children's Program copies of handouts** from the parent booklets (those that seem relevant to working with the kids) so they can see what the parents are working on. The information in the handouts can help staff and volunteers interact with the children, and help model the principles the parents are learning.
- **Offer families a childcare stipend as an option** to bringing their children to group if parents are more comfortable using their care provider.
- **Spend the first half hour of group sharing a light meal with the children** before they are off to the Children's Program. This arrangement provides transitional time for children who have just been picked up from daycare and whose parents have been at work all day. (Some groups start 30 minutes earlier to do this.)

Sometimes the caring individuals who come to volunteer in our Children's Program have never been around young children before. Providing volunteers with simple, explicit suggestions about how to be with the children can help them be more successful. Here are a few of the suggestions and guidelines we provide at Birth To Three:

- **Get down low** so you are on the child's level, especially when children first arrive.
- **Smile often.**
- **Talk to the children.** Use your voice to soothe, engage, and interact; e.g., "Devon, I see you cooking in the kitchen! What fun!"
- **Create interest by doing an activity;** e.g., build a tower and wonder out loud if anyone wants to help you knock it down.
- **Avoid the word "NO"** (unless in an emergency). Tell children what *TO DO*; e.g., "let's keep the rice on the touch table," or "feet stay on the floor."