



## **PENNSYLVANIA'S PROMISE FOR CHILDREN BECAUSE EVERY CHILD IS PENNSYLVANIA'S FUTURE**

### **About Pennsylvania's Promise for Children**

Quality early learning is crucial to our young children's intellectual, social and emotional development. The benefits that our children and families experience from quality early learning opportunities extend to all of our communities by making it possible for parents to work and build a stable family structure for their children by increasing our children's success in school and in life; in turn this creates a stronger workforce and tax base today and in the future. Programs that increase access to quality early learning, such as those administered by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and its partners, are a vital part of Pennsylvania's overall goal to make the Commonwealth an attractive place to live and work.

Pennsylvania's Promise for Children is a coordinated statewide campaign to raise awareness about the value of quality early learning for all of our young children and build responsibility among every Pennsylvanian for the early learning of the young children in their lives. Pennsylvania's Promise for Children is sponsored by the Pennsylvania

**Continued on page 2**

## **A Message from the Executive Director**

I hope this finds all of you happy and safe! Staying safe means many things; home safety, environmental safety, work safety, physical safety, and emotional safety. Learning to feel safe really starts in infancy. Our ongoing column in this newsletter, "Spotlight On Relationships", will explore this issue on a regular basis.

The Alliance is committed to continuous improvement in our goal of excellence. We are always seeking to improve the services we provide to children and families. Our staff are always learning more through furthering their education, attending training, seminars, and getting advanced certificates and degrees. The knowledge base about infant learning, brain development and infant mental health has exploded over the past several years. All of us are committed to keeping up with the latest knowledge. Elizabeth Fairweather, Service Coordinator, recently completed her Masters in Early Intervention with a specialization in Autism. Several of us were members of the first class of the Chatham University's Infant Mental Health certificate program last fall. Jil Hawk, Clinical Director, Erin Troup, Service Coordinator, and I completed the one year intensive graduate program in order to learn the latest thinking in this rapidly evolving field.

Since our last Newsletter, I'm happy to announce that several of our Service Coordinators delivered healthy babies. Among them include Christina Yost, Amanda Reagle, Rebecca Mibroda and Rebecca Dunmyre. Congratulations to each on their new little ones!

There are many opportunities for parents to participate in learning opportunities and social gatherings. The upcoming events are listed in this newsletter. Feel free to talk to your Service Coordinator or contact the numbers provided for the event for more information!

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## PENNSYLVANIA'S PROMISE FOR CHILDREN *(continued from Page 1)*

Build Initiative, Heinz Endowments, The Grable Foundation, William Penn Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

### **Pennsylvania is:**

- helping children reach their promise
- helping families reach their promise
- helping teachers reach their promise
- helping communities reach their promise

A child's brain develops so rapidly in their first years, it's almost impossible for us to imagine. By age five, about 90% of our brains are developed. Our children's brains are much more open to learning influences than when we are adults. But they are also more vulnerable and will be more greatly affected by negative experiences or a lack of quality early learning opportunities. Every day, every moment, becomes an opportunity for a child to learn, an opportunity to set a child on the path of future success in school and in life.



### **A child's early experiences (both positive and negative) can actually affect the structure of the brain!**

In addition to a child's health and nutrition, every experience--whether it is seeing one's first rainbow, riding a bicycle, reading a book, sharing a joke--"turns on" certain neural circuits and leaves others inactive. Those that are consistently turned on over time will be strengthened, while those that are rarely excited drop away.

Poor nutrition, abuse and neglect can have devastating effects on a child's brain development. According to Dr. Bruce Perry, a neurobiologist and authority on brain development and children in crisis, "The systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first

years of life..With severe emotional neglect in early childhood the impact can be devastating." (Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect in Pennsylvania: A Report on In-Home Parent Coaching Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania, 2006)

If you would like to learn more visit [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org) for Zero to Three's Brain Development page. There you'll find a wealth of information on how a child's brain develops (including an interactive "brain quiz") and why quality early learning opportunities are so important.

[www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com)



## PA RESOURCES FOR HELP IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

"The faltering national economy has created many challenges for our families," said Governor Rendell. "Citizens going through difficult periods often do not know where to look for help. The Here to Help web site puts many beneficial programs under one umbrella, making it easier for families to locate the resources that can get them through this tough time."

The Commonwealth launched a new online resource, Here to Help web site that will make it easier for citizens to find the resources they need through existing government programs to help make ends meet during the economic crisis. Visit their website at: [www.heretohelp.pa.gov](http://www.heretohelp.pa.gov) There, Pennsylvanians can find resources grouped by the following topics: employment, family services, housing, older Pennsylvanians, and economic development.

## DO YOU NEED HELP WITH FOOD?

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services has lots of information available on a variety of sources of help at their website:

[www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/basicneeds.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/basicneeds.aspx)

### Follow the links to food assistance:

- ● If you need food assistance, or you know someone who does, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank is there for you. For help in finding a food assistance agency near you, call the Food Bank at 412-460-FOOD, ext 456.

Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank  
412-460-FOOD (3663)  
One North Linden  
Duquesne, PA 15110  
[www.pittsburghfoodbank.org](http://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org)

- ● Angel Food Ministries is a non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to providing grocery relief and financial support to communities throughout the United States. Angel Food is available in a quantity that can fit into a medium-sized box at \$30 per unit. Each month's menu is different than the previous month and consists of both fresh and frozen items with an average retail value of approximately \$60. There are no qualifications, minimums, income restrictions, or applications.  
[www.angelfoodministries.com/](http://www.angelfoodministries.com/)



## DO YOU HAVE AN ACCESS CARD?

### Special Museum Price for those with Access Cards

The Carnegie Museums are offering a special price of one dollar per person (for up to 4 people) for each of their 4 museums: Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Museum of Art, The Carnegie Science Center, and The Andy Warhol Museum. Visit each museum as often as you like, all year long, at that rate.

Show your access card at the museum's admission office to take advantage of this offer. Call any of the museum numbers below for more information:

- Oakland Museums: 412.622.3131
- Carnegie Science Center: 412.237.3400
- The Warhol: 412.237.8300



## A Message from the Executive Director *(continued from Page 1)*

Alliance staff members also work extremely hard within the Allegheny County communities. Recently two staff members, Kelly O'Malley and Fran Bosser, received the 2008 ACHIEVA Award for Excellence in Volunteerism on behalf of people with disabilities. All of us at the Alliance congratulate Kelly and Fran on the prestigious award. Also noteworthy, Outreach Support Coordinator, Reverend Arlene Walker will be reading at the Biggest Bedtime Story Ever on May 16th at the Peterson Events Center. We look forward to this jazz themed day and greatly value Arlene's devotion to READ! 365, a campaign of Beginning with Books, to help children throughout our community grow into eager and enthusiastic readers.

We all hope that you remain safe and healthy!



Michele Myers-Cepicka  
Executive Director

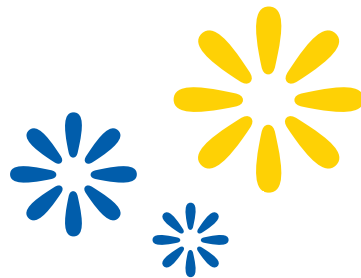


### READ A BOOK!

"One of the greatest gifts adults can give -- to their offspring and to their society -- is to read to children."  
-- Carl Sagan

Giving your child the love of reading starts early. Every book you read to your baby is investing in his/her future. Letting your child play with books, explore them, look at the pictures, point to them, show them to you, all are important learning steps in beginning to read. Not all of us can afford to buy books. Many of us may not know which books may be best for our children at certain ages. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has programs designed for children and adults of all ages.

At branches throughout the city, they operate programs specifically for infants and toddlers called Baby LapSit Programs for children from birth to 18 months and their parents or caregivers. For older toddlers (18 -36 months) Toddler Storytimes are provided. For parents who are not interested in a group, your local librarian can help you select age-appropriate books that will interest your children. Check with your local branch of the library for times and dates of programs for children. Use your local library!



## OCDEL PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

If you would like to share what you have learned through participating in early intervention and what you know and have experienced as a parent in helping to advise the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's OCDEL, parents are being sought to participate in a parent advisory council:

- Do you have a child under the age of 8?
- Are not a professional in the Early Care and Education field.
- We have a particular interest in recruiting families who are currently or who have in the past received TANF services.
- We are also interested in assuring that the council has representation of parents from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

If you or someone you know might be interested please call: Sarah Holland at 717-787-8691 or email at [saholland@state.pa.us](mailto:saholland@state.pa.us)

### More Information about the Parent Advisory Council:

- The purpose is to provide input and make recommendations in order to strengthen OCDEL's work and develop improved communication strategies with families across the Commonwealth regarding the importance of quality early care and education.
- The Council is comprised of parents who have at least one child under the age of 8, who are not professionals in the Early Care and Education field and have an interest in sharing their expertise and experiences.
- The Council includes parents of children who participate in a variety of settings and programs including children in Early Intervention, Head Start, Keystone Stars participating child care centers, Pre K Counts and child care subsidy. The Council also includes parents whose young children are not enrolled in early care and education programs outside of their home.
- The Council continues to grow and evolve and is interested in adding additional voices to the table. The Council strives to be representative of our diverse Commonwealth. We are particularly interested in recruiting families of younger children, families who are now or who have in the past received support from TANF and parents of children receiving child care subsidy through CCIS. We are in need for more members from the Southeast, Northwest and Northeast areas of our state.
- Council members are not expected to have prior experience participating on advisory councils or committees in the past. The most important expertise that parents on the council bring to the table is their personal joys and challenges that they experience in raising their children.

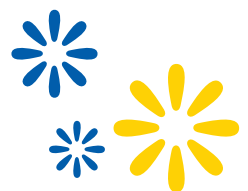
- Council members have an interest in learning more about OCDEL's programs and providing input and feedback to OCDEL as we move forward in further developing programs and policies and work to expand our outreach to families.
- The Council meets twice yearly in Harrisburg, with phone conference calls in the summer and winter months and frequent updates and requests for input via email, mail and/or phone calls (whatever works best for the parents) throughout the year.
- Parents are reimbursed for their expenses for participating on the Council and support is provided to council members as they learn and develop in their leadership role.



### OUT OF A JOB? LOOKING FOR HEALTH CARE BENEFITS AND OPTIONS?

PA's Insurance Department can help you find coverage and answer questions you may have. Contact PA Consumer Services: (412) 565-5020 or TTY/TDD: (412) 565-2376

[www.insurance.state.pa.us](http://www.insurance.state.pa.us)  
[www.heretohelp.pa.gov](http://www.heretohelp.pa.gov)



# FAMILY EVENTS

## EI FAMILIES

Family Education and Empowerment Workshop on the Basics of Early Intervention

Do you have a child, age birth through 5 years old, who receives Early Intervention services in Allegheny County?

Would you like to:

- learn more about the supports and services available to your child and family?
- meet other families who share your experience?
- be a better advocate for your child?
- educate and mentor other families in the early intervention system?

EI Families is a workshop by families for families. The intent of the workshop is to empower families, whose children, age birth through five years old, receive Early Intervention services in Allegheny County. All of our workshop leaders are family members raising a child with developmental delays. They carry with them many years of experience in acquiring services and resources for their child. They have an understanding of how systems work, and will share their knowledge with other families.

### Training topics include:

- PARENTING A CHILD WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS
- CREATING A PLAN FOR YOUR CHILD AND FAMILY
- THE LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND OF EARLY INTERVENTION, THE PARENT MOVEMENT AND ADVOCACY
- PROMISING PRACTICES: INCLUSION, FAMILY CENTERED PRINCIPLES, PARENT/ PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
- FINDING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### EI FAMILIES TRAINING DATES:

Saturday Training (includes ALL above training topics)

**Saturday, March 28**

Time: 8:30 – 3:00

Place: Zion Lutheran Church  
4301 Brownsville Road (Corner of Route 51 & Brownsville Rd)  
Pittsburgh, PA 15236 (Brentwood/Whitehall Boroughs)

Free On-Site Parking – 412-881-5512

Child Care is provided on a limited basis. Infants are welcome to attend with their families. Call 1 week in advance to arrange for child care (412-885-6000 x3136). Continental breakfast and lunch provided.

–OR–

### THURSDAYS EVENING SERIES

**THURSDAYS April 16, April 23, and April 30**

Time: 6:30 – 9:00pm

Place: Zion Lutheran Church  
4301 Brownsville Road (Corner of Route 51 & Brownsville Rd)  
Pittsburgh, PA 15236 (Brentwood/Whitehall Boroughs)  
Free On-Site Parking – 412-881-5512

Child Care is provided on a limited basis. Infants are welcome to attend with their families. Call 1 week in advance to arrange for child care (412-885-6000 x3136). Light dinner provided.

### Thursday, April 16

Time: 6:30-9:00pm

#### Training topics include:

- PARENTING A CHILD WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS
- CREATING A PLAN FOR YOUR CHILD AND FAMILY

### Thursday, April 23

Time: 6:30-9:00pm

#### Training topics include:

- THE LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND OF EARLY INTERVENTION, THE PARENT MOVEMENT AND ADVOCACY

### Thursday, April 30

Time: 6:30-9:00pm

#### Training topics include:

- PROMISING PRACTICES: INCLUSION, FAMILY CENTERED PRINCIPLES, PARENT/ PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
- FINDING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

To RSVP, obtain a training brochure or for additional information, please call Stephanie Scanlon at (412) 325-4278 or Julie Hladio at (412) 885-6000 ext. 3136.

**Please RSVP 1 week prior to all trainings.**

Sponsored by:  
Local Interagency Coordinating Council  
Allegheny County Department of Human Services  
The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers  
Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Allegheny Intermediate Unit Project DART  
Special thanks to ACHIEVA, Easter Seals & Allegheny County Health Department



## MORE UPCOMING FAMILY EVENTS

**PEAL CENTER**  
Third Annual Inclusive Education Conference  
"Celebrating Common Bonds: Enriching Our Inclusive Community"  
**March 17-18, 2009**

**PRE-CONFERENCE DAY**  
**March 16, 2009**  
FourPoints by Sheraton Pittsburgh North,  
Cranberry Township, PA

Parent scholarships are available.  
Register at [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org)

**ABOARD SPRING CONFERENCE**  
**March 21, 2009**  
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Integrative Biomedical Treatment Options for Children and Adults with ASD  
Featuring: "Healing the New Childhood Epidemics: Autism, ADHD, Asthma and Allergies"  
Kenneth Bock, MD, Defeat Autism Now Practitioner, and Author & "Chemical and Heavy Metal Toxicity: Implications for Evaluation and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders"  
Scott Faber, MD, FAAP  
Holiday Inn Pittsburgh Airport  
Register at [www.aboard.org](http://www.aboard.org)

### UNDERSTANDING SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDERS **Friday, April 3, 2009**

The Hope Learning Center is proud to present Carol Kranowitz, author of *The Out of Sync Child*, in an all day conference. Ms Kranowitz has written many articles on sensory processing, child development, and preschool curricula for magazines such as *Parenting*, *Sesame Street Magazine*, *Child Care Information Exchange*, and *Family Circle*. Please call 724.933.HOPE for additional information and to register.

**PAEYC – PITTSBURGH ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG CHILD**  
**Sunday, April 5**  
See [www.afit.org](http://www.afit.org) for more information

**WALK FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY PRESENTED BY HIGHMARK BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD**  
Raising more than \$50,000 to benefit individuals and families.  
**May 2009**  
Heinz Field

**BIGGEST BEDTIME STORY EVENT**  
**Saturday, May 16, 2009**  
Peterson Events Center  
See [www.read365.org](http://www.read365.org)

**2009 - 16TH ANNUAL FAMILY SUPPORT CONFERENCE**  
**Unlocking Resources: Parent Leadership is the Key**  
**Tuesday, May 19, 2009**  
Westin Convention Center Pittsburgh Hotel  
Pittsburgh, PA

#### **2009 Family Support Conference Objectives**

- Promote parents as vital partners in the success of all programs.
- Identify best practices and strategies for building parent leaders and advocates.
- Enhance relationships among families, schools, services and communities to foster success for all children.
- Promote effective policies and programs through parent leadership and advocacy.
- Identify ways to be agents of change.

**Conference Attendees represent a broad spectrum of our community including parents, family center staff, early care and education practitioners, policy makers, human service providers, school district staff, clergy, community leaders, etc.**

**Register [www.education.pitt.edu/ocd](http://www.education.pitt.edu/ocd)**



# PRODUCT SAFETY: RECALLS

By US CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

For most up-to-date information: see website at [www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html)

## TOY HAZARD RECALL LIST (AS OF THIS PUBLICATION):

- ImagiPLAY Bead Maze Toys: Due to Laceration Hazard
- Target Dive Sticks: Due to Impalement Hazard
- Swim 'N Score Dive Sticks by Modell's: Due to Risk of Impalement Injury to Children
- JA-RU Toy Trains: Due to Choking Hazard
- OKK Trading's Toy TVs: Due to Violation of Lead Paint Standard
- Toy Xylophones by King Import Warehouse: Due to Violation of Lead Paint Standard
- Wooden Toys by Earth Friendly: Due To Choking Hazards
- Halloween Figurines by Coyne's & Company: for Lead Hazard
- Rage Wireless Guitars used with Popular Video Gaming System: Due to Chemical Burn Risk
- Toy Boats sold at Dollar General 3/2008 through 7/2008 (\$3): Due to Burn Hazard
- Hasbro Inc. Nerf Blasters: Child's Skin Can Get Caught in Plunger of the Toy
- Toy Boats by Buzz's Boatyard: Due to Violation of Lead Paint Standard
- Toy Police Cars by TCB Imports: Due to Violation of Lead Paint Standard
- Wood Abacus by LTD Commodities LLC: Due to Choking Hazard
- Remote-Controlled Helicopter Toys Protocol: Due to Fire and Burn Hazards
- Wooden Infant Toys by Habermaass Corp.: Due to Choking Hazard
- Batteries by Hobbico Inc. used in Radio-Controlled Helicopters: Due to Fire Hazard
- Fisher-Price Learning Pots and Pans™ Toys: Due to Choking Hazard



- Wooden Toys by Earthentree: Due To Choking and Strangulation Hazards
- Children's Stuffed Toys by Daiso: Due to Choking Hazard

## RECALLED DELTA CRIBS - Models Affected by Recall:

- Delta cribs manufactured in Taiwan or Indonesia, with the "Crib Trigger Lock with Safety Peg" drop side hardware design, numbers: 4320, 4340, 4500, 4520, 4530, 4532, 4540, 4542, 4550, 4551, 4580, 4600, 4620, 4624 (production dates 01/06 thru 11/07), 4640, 4660, 4720, 4735, 4742, 4750 (production dates 01/95 thru 12/00), 4760 4770, 4780, 4790, 4820, 4840, 4850, 4860, 4880, 4890, 4892, 4900, 4910, 4920, 4925-2, 4925-6, 4930, 4940, 4943, 4944, 4947, 4948, 4949, 4950, 4958, 4963, 4968, 4969, 4980.
- Delta drop side cribs manufactured in China through 2005, with the "Crib Trigger Lock with Spring Peg" drop side hardware design, numbers: 4340, 4343, 4520, 4600, 4620, 4624, 4625, 4629, 4660, 4665, 4720, 4750, 4751, 4850, 4855, 4857, 4880, 4920, 4925-2, 4925-2B, 4925-6, 4980, and 8605.

## PARENTS: DO YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY?

Three studies are currently underway at the University of Pittsburgh involving infants and young children. A brief overview of each study is provided below. Any interested person should contact the phone number provided. The Alliance is providing this information as a service to you and is not endorsing nor requiring participation in any of the studies.

### HOW EARLY INTERVENTION HELPS FAMILIES

(Directed by Ann Coffaro)

Mothers of children entering and exiting early intervention (EI) are welcome to participate in this study about how mothers feel about their experiences with EI. Upon entry and exit, Service Coordinators will hand out a survey packet. Mothers will complete a series of questionnaires and return the information in a stamped, addressed envelope included with the surveys. All families that are entering or exiting EI are welcome. For more information call Ann Coffaro at 412-498-4059.

The Pittsburgh Early Autism Study is conducting the next two following studies. The goal of the group is to study infants who have an older sibling with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to look for infant behaviors that may predict a later ASD diagnosis. Participants will be compensated for studies for which they are eligible and participate.

### HOW BABIES DEVELOP INTELLECTUALLY

(Directed by Dr. Mark Strauss)

Infants visit the Infant & Toddler Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh at 6, 11, 16, 24, 36, and 48 months of age. Visits last about an hour. Babies watch pictures and movies, such as Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood, while we record how the babies look at them. Infants who do not have a sibling with autism are also welcome in this study.

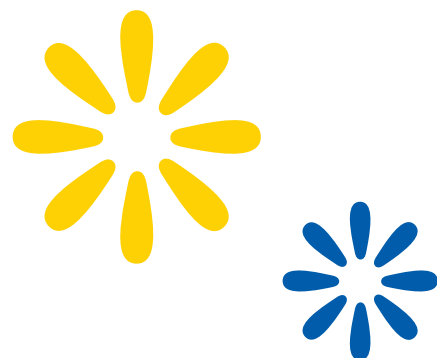
For more information on How Babies Develop Intellectually, contact 1-800-647-3436 or email [autismrecruiter@upmc.edu](mailto:autismrecruiter@upmc.edu).

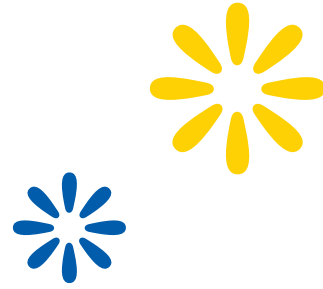
### HOW BABIES COMMUNICATE

(Directed by Dr. Jana M. Iverson)

Infants are seen in your own home at a time convenient for you. Trained staff visit your home for about an hour and observe infants during everyday play activities and playtime with you monthly while babies are 5-14 months old, then again at 18, 24, and 36 months.

For more information on How Babies Communicate, contact 1-800-647-3436 or email [autismrecruiter@upmc.edu](mailto:autismrecruiter@upmc.edu).





## HOW TO HANDLE THE TERRIBLE TWO'S?

"A two-year old is kind of like having a blender, but you don't have a top for it."

-- Jerry Seinfeld

Being two is frustrating. You simply don't have all the words you need to communicate the feelings you have so you get MAD when you don't get what you want when you want it, when people don't know what you mean, when people don't know what you think, when people don't know you are tired, when people just don't get it!!!! So you scream in frustration, you throw yourself on the floor, you WILL NOT calm down!

This is the year that being a parent is HARD. Your sweet little baby who would obey the word, "No", sometimes now totally ignores the word as if he never heard it before. Every limit is tested.

Two year olds are still learning to develop self-control. They don't understand the consequences of their actions. As a parent, you have to ask yourself, "What's hardest for you to handle?" Try to look for the triggers that come before that behavior starts. Try to prevent the behavior before it gets out of hand. Distract your child or redirect his attention to something else. If he throws a tantrum because he doesn't want to eat his cereal, give him a choice between two cereals. If she has a huge tantrum every time you leave Grandma's house, try letting her know what's going to happen ahead of time. "Finish playing, we are going to leave in 5 minutes."

While the temper tantrums are a normal part of development, this is also a delightful time in a child's life. A sense of humor develops further between ages 2 and 3. Children love to play tricks and learn to "be funny". They are growing more independent but during this year you will see signs of more dependency at the

same time. Typically, children who were not very fearful begin to show fear of separation. Also, around 2 \_\_ they become very negative. Throughout the year emotions seem very strong.

### ALL OF THIS IS NORMAL DEVELOPMENT!

During the year between ages 2 and 3, children love to move. They have an unbelievable amount of energy. They are beginning to enjoy pretend play. As parents you can help to stimulate that imaginative play. If your son or daughter says, "Daddy, me, fireman", you can pretend to help with a hose or make the sound of a fire truck. Two year olds also love to play in sand, in water or with play dough.

These are just a few ideas of what you can do with your child. The therapists who are working with your child can help you by giving you some specific advice on how to help your child through the two year old year. Your service coordinator also has lots of parenting ideas that may be of help. All members of your team are available to help you understand what is typical development and they will be available to provide any special assistance needed by your child or family.



## SPOTLIGHT ON RELATIONSHIPS: ATTACHMENT

Every parent tries to do their best for their children. Babies come into this world with their own personalities. Then their experiences and relationships add to the mix to make them what they become. In infancy, babies learn about relationships from their caregivers. If their Mom comes when they cry and soothes them, changes them, feeds them, they learn to trust that she will be there for them. It is the beginning of trust and love. This is called attachment. But what if she comes only some of the time or is not attentive? Or what if a different person comes each time? This can cause problems in developing the trust in relationships. Over time, this can have life long consequences if not addressed.

Earlier in this newsletter you read about 90% of a child's brain being developed before age 5. In simplistic terms, if the brain connections aren't used, they don't and won't develop. Early problems in developing relationships can have life long consequences.

So who is most at risk? There are some groups of children who may have experienced this type of deprivation. Groups at risk include: children removed from their caregivers multiple times, children who were abused or neglected, children who lived in institutional settings who had multiple caregivers, and children whose parents were unable to provide consistent care due to family problems. Other groups at risk include mothers and infants who have a difficult time reading each other's cues and meeting each other's needs.

Does every child at risk develop life long problems? No. Many children are very resilient. They have an inner strength that overcomes their early experience or had someone who loved them early on that provided enough of a foundation for the relationship building experience.

What should you do if you think your child is having attachment issues? Talk to your service coordinator and therapist about your specific concerns. The Alliance can help!





2801 Custer Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15227  
Phone: 412.885.6000  
Fax: 412.885.1688  
www.afit.org



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