

strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

social and emotional competence

fact sheet for early care & education program staff

COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

- Children with challenging behaviors are at greater risk for abuse. Identifying and working with children early to keep their development on track helps keep them safe.
- Programs' essential work of helping children develop socially and emotionally also has impact on the way parents and children interact. As children learn to verbalize their emotions rather than act them out, they are more able to tell parents how they feel, what they need, and how their parents' actions make them feel. Parents can then be more responsive to their children's needs and less likely to yell or hit.
- In particular, children who have experienced or witnessed violence need a safe environment, trained staff, and opportunities to develop normally.

HOW EARLY CARE & EDUCATION PROGRAMS BUILD IT

- Staff teach children social skills (such as sharing and being respectful of others) and emotional skills (such as expressing feelings).
- Staff are trained to notice possible signs of problems, and when they are concerned about a child, they respond quickly by asking another teacher or staff member to observe, talking with the parent, or bringing in a consultant.
- Programs offer art programs that allow children to express themselves in ways other than words, many of which include a take-home component that involves parents.



“help children communicate”



QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM STAFF

- How do you currently build social and emotional competence in your work with children and families?
- What new strategies might you try to build social and emotional competence?
- What organizational changes would support your capacity to build social and emotional competence in your work?

Strengthening Families Illinois, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. *Love is Not Enough to Keep Your Family Strong* Campaign. <http://www.keepyourfamilystrong.org>