

How to Develop Strong Communities



What's Happening

Communities have a great influence in families' lives. Just as plants are more likely to thrive in a garden with good soil and plenty of sunlight and water, families are more likely to thrive in nurturing communities. A safe place for children to play is one feature of a nurturing community. Other features include the availability of food, shelter, and medical care for families, as well as a culture that encourages neighbors to get to know and help one another. Nurturing communities can help build strong families. They are critical in helping build protective factors.*

What You Might Be Seeing

Strong, nurturing communities that are supportive of families will have:

- Parks and recreation facilities that are accessible, safe, and inviting places for families
- Resources to help families in need access food, shelter, medical care, and other resources
- Early education programs that are easily accessible and welcoming
- Safe, affordable housing available to all families
- Clean air and water

What You Can Do

Baby steps

- Meet and greet your neighbors
- Go to a parents meeting at your child's school
- Participate in an activity at your local library or community center

Small Steps

- Set up a playgroup in your community at homes or a local park (consider inviting people who may not have children at home, like local seniors)
- Organize a community babysitting co-op
- Volunteer at your child's school through the school's administration or the parents' organization
- Encourage local service providers to produce a directory of available services in the community

Big Steps

- Organize a community event (a block party, father/daughter dance, parent support group)
- Run for an office in the parent organization at your child's school
- Attend local government meetings (city council or school board meetings) and let them know how important resources are in your community. Let them know how parks, strong schools, and accessible services help to strengthen your family and other families
- Join or create a group in which parents and children meet regularly to play or serve together, such as scouting, a flag football league, or service club

Remember:

Everyone can take steps to make communities more supportive of families!

* To learn more about the protective factors, visit:
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/can/factors/protective.cfm>

This tip sheet was created with input from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting> you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.