

How to Develop Supportive 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 supportive communities. A safe place for children to play is one feature of a supportive 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. Supportive communities can help build strong families.*

What You Might Be Seeing

Supportive communities that are nurturing to families will have the following:

- Parks and recreation facilities that are accessible, safe, and inviting places for families
- Resources to help families in need access food, jobs, 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 people's homes or a local park (consider inviting people who may not have children at home, such as 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 protective factors that support child and family well-being, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/promoting/protectfactors/>. This tip sheet was created with input from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.