

Ways you can be a Corporate Champion for Children

You may be thinking, "Fine, I see the importance of early childhood development ... but what can I actually *do*?"

Whatever your profession, your role, and your interests --- there are ways you can make a difference in assuring a bright future for our community's youngest children!

Below are some specific "early childhood action tips" to consider. Try some of these, or think of your own ideas! Encourage your colleagues and peers, family and friends to get involved too.

Volunteer with Durham County's many non-profit organizations which provide a wide variety of programs benefiting young children and their families. You are needed.

Support Durham's Partnership for Children...make a donation

Your tax-deductible contribution will help assure the success of this important work!

<http://dpfc.net/GetInvolved/Donations.aspx>

Early Childhood Action Tips

Read actions steps for many business sectors below. These tips were adapted from "The Seven Lessons of Early Childhood Public Engagement" prepared by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Families and Work Institute. These tips originally were part of a series of tools and materials published to support the "I Am Your Child" Early Childhood Public Engagement Campaign.

Architects, Developers and the Building Trades (Contractors, Carpenters, Electricians, Painters, Plumbers, etc.)

- Assess the condition of playgrounds and facilities currently used for early childhood programs according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Standards for Playground Safety.
- Volunteer to repair or renovate early childhood playgrounds and facilities.
- Design and build low-cost early care and education and family center facilities.
- Use non-toxic building materials.
- Encourage clients in public spaces to include rooms for parent classes and meetings, areas for mothers to nurse their infants and early care and education facilities in workplaces, parks, housing and commercial developments, and other public places.
- Include instruction about early childhood facility design and construction in architecture schools and building trades training and apprenticeship programs.
- Public articles in professional journals about the importance of the early years and how a wide range of individuals and groups in the building trades can make a difference.

Businesses and Other Employers

- Work with media to publicize local programs that offer parent education, family support, early care and education and health services.
- Inform employees about the importance of the first years of life and provide parenting information using a wide variety of communication vehicles, such as bulletin boards, in-house newsletters, electronic networks, or literature in paycheck envelopes.
- Provide employees with family insurance coverage that provides such health services as prenatal and maternity care, well child and mental health care and immunizations.
- Learn about best practices in the work / family arena.
- Conduct surveys or focus groups to learn about employee needs and create an internal task force to study needs.
- Underwrite some employee child care costs.
- Review policies and practices to consider how to become more supportive to families, and whenever possible, offer flexible work schedules and telecommuting options.
- Inform the public about the importance of the early years on company ads, promotions and products.
- Sponsor community parenting seminars or family support groups at the workplace.
- Invite local speakers to offer parenting seminars at work sites.
- Honor and reward employees who volunteer to provide or improve early childhood programs and services.
- Offer employees access to online parenting information and resources at work.
- Serve on community planning and improvement committees.
- Share expertise (such as accounting skills, management training, public relations, etc.) with early care and education programs and health and family support programs and volunteer to serve on their boards.
- Provide in-kind support, such as copying, faxing, mailing or printing to local early childhood health, education and care, and family support programs.
- Communicate concern about the importance of the early years to policymakers.

Civic, Community and Professional Organizations

- Educate members and the public about the importance of the first years of life.
- Collect and publish information about state and local early childhood needs and resources.
- Organize referral services and / or help lines for families with young children.
- Host or co-sponsor community forums on early childhood topics, such as early childhood brain development, parenting programs that work, improving the quality of child care, or expanding access to health care.
- Help local service providers design services that are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs and preferences of their communities. Help providers recognize and eliminate obstacles that may prevent segments of the community from using their services.
- Organize volunteers to build or refurbish neighborhood playgrounds or improve child care facilities.
- Organize volunteers to work in early childhood programs, mentor young children, or read stories to children in libraries, early education settings, and hospitals.
- Celebrate and honor state and community leaders and organizations that are making a difference for young children and their families.

Colleges and Universities

- Create campus parenting and child care programs for students and staff, and ensure that their facilities are safe and inviting for young children and their parents and caregivers.
- Establish curricula that encourage family-centered and collaborative practice among educators, health and family education and support professionals.
- Gather faculty and students across various disciplines and departments to share resources and research, and develop interdisciplinary programs and courses related to early childhood and encourage faculty to make early childhood a focus of their research.
- Take active part in efforts - local, regional, and national - to raise the qualifications of individuals providing services for young children and their families.
- Provide courses and education programs for child care providers and other early childhood service providers at convenient times and places.
- Help evaluate the quality of local and regional early childhood services.
- Learn how other colleges and universities are supporting the healthy development of young children and replicate promising practices.
- Encourage and support students, faculty and staff to perform volunteer service in early childhood health, education and care, and family support /parent education programs.

Government (at all levels)

- Increase investments in young children and their families, trying new investments to research on effective policies and practices.
- Create incentives for other organizations, in the public and private sectors, to expand and improve services to families with young children.
- Require ongoing collaboration and coordination among agencies that administer early childhood programs and services.
- Collect and share data about the needs of young children and their families.
- Document and share information on the cost and effectiveness of programs serving young children and their families. Benchmark the results of those efforts.
- Convene groups of citizens to address early childhood issues.
- Convene a group of business leaders to investigate how to finance early childhood programs and services.
- Institute appropriate quality-control mechanisms to assure the safety and healthy development of young children in early childhood programs, and provide technical assistance to those who need to improve quality.
- Provide low- or no-interest loans to early childhood programs that have plans to improve quality or undertake facility construction and renovation.
- Establish tax advantages for family-friendly businesses.
- Support research that holds promise for improving results for young children and their families.

Hospitals and Health Care Professionals

- Educate families, patients and staff about the importance of the first years of life, early brain development, and the importance of every child having a primary health care provider or “medical home.”
- Work with community-based organizations, the media and early childhood professional organizations to promote and provide immunizations and health exams for young children.
- Provide expectant and new parents with information about maternal health, including mental health.
- Provide facilities and materials for prenatal and parenting classes, early care and education programs, and other services that support healthy early childhood development.
- Collaborate with other community partners to expand and improve locally available health, parenting and family support and early care and education programs.

- Inform policymakers and the importance of the first years of life, and support laws and policies that increase and improve health, parenting, family support and early care and education programs.
- Volunteer as telephone or on-site consultants to early childhood programs on health and safety issues.
- Use professional journals, conferences and meetings to inform peers about key issues in early child development, including new research on brain development.

Law Enforcement

- Inform other community members of the law enforcement community, and the public at large, about the importance of the first years of life and the wisdom of prevention.
- Develop and vision of law enforcement that regards family support and parent education, voluntary home visits, and other services to families with young children as crime prevention strategies; share this vision with the public.
- Promote public policies and legislation designed to assist families with young children and prevent child abuse.
- Collaborate with other community partners (such as schools, health care providers, early care and education programs, and family support/parent education programs) to expand and improve services to families with young children.
- Include information about relevant issues in early child development, as well as child abuse prevention and intervention, in training programs for law enforcement professionals. Train police officers to work collaboratively with social workers, health care providers, and other professionals who interact with young children and their families.

Media

- Create and broadcast programming that informs the public about the importance of the early years.
- Create an early childhood "beat."
- Report on state or local efforts to expand and improve programs and services that assist families with young children.
- Organize and/or participate in state or local early childhood community efforts to improve the lives of young children and their families.
- Document positive aspects of the lives of families with young children.
- Publicize local resources available to families with young children.
- Report on state and community early childhood champions-individuals, organizations and businesses that are improving programs and services for young children and their families.

Service Providers in a Wide Range of Fields (Health Care, Family Support/Parent Education, Early Care and Education, Child Welfare, etc.)

- Educate families, staff and the public about the importance of the first years of life. Make a concerted effort to reach those who are not fluent in English or are isolated from the community by geographic, cultural, social, or economic factors.
- Involve a wide range of families and community members in designing and evaluating programs and services.
- Collaborate with other service providers and community partners on an ongoing basis to expand, coordinate, and improve early childhood programs and services. Share newsletters, sponsor shared staff training or develop new projects together.
- Make facilities safe and inviting for young children and their parents and caregivers.
- Enhance the quality of the early childhood services through staff development, national accreditation, and ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts.
- Participate in community efforts to define and improve the quality of services for young children and their families.
- Establish or contribute to “one-stop” resource centers to link families with appropriate services.
- Make collaborative efforts to help parents identify and seek early assistance for young children with disabilities.