

# Social Connections

## The Value of Social Connections

**Facilitate friendships and mutual support – Help parents connect with each other and develop social networks.**

Social connections help families stay strong, get through the hard times and enjoy family life. Families can have many different types of social connections that provide different types of support. No matter the type of connection – it should be positive – someone that is there for you, treats you well and helps you be the best person you can be!

## Everyday Actions that Help Build Social Connections

- 1 Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections
- 2 Create an inclusive environment
- 3 Facilitate mutual support around parenting and other issues
- 4 Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities

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## Concrete Examples of Everyday Actions

Value, build and use social connections

Create an inclusive environment

Facilitate mutual support

Promote community engagement

Social Connections

Social Connections

### 1 How do your friends know that you appreciate them?

- I offer help before my friends have to ask.
- By listening to a friend who just needs an ear.
- I like to pay attention to the things my friends like, and pick them up from time to time when I see them on sale or special – just to let them know they are heard and cared for.
- Many of my friends are more like family than family, so I value all our relationships very much.
- I specifically turned down an invite to an event with my friend so that I could watch the kids and she and her husband could go. I had a great time hanging with the kiddos and they had a refreshing date night!
- Taking the time to tell or show someone how much they mean to me.
- Celebrating their successes – and inviting them to celebrate any success I may have.

### 2 What do you look for when thinking about joining a group?

- I feel welcome and I see a friendly face.
- It is clear what is required of me.
- I am interested in a topic, and it is helpful to my family.
- I'm more likely to participate in a group when:
  - It's safe to share my thoughts and I will not be judged.
  - I am asked for my opinion and it's valued.
  - There are family activities.
  - It is flexible and supportive of me and other parents.
  - It's fun.

### 3 What is the most critical thing you need as a parent when unexpected things happen?

- Having someone available who I can ask for what I need with no judgement and where they are truly willing to help.
- This need has changed as my children have grown. Now that they are teenagers I would say positive affirmations from others and someone to talk to.
- Having the opportunity to take a break.
- Help with meals, babysitting or housework – whatever I need – to lift me up and help make my burden feel lighter.
- Resources to turn to such as school, church, books, support groups, WIC.

### 4 What are some positive ways your community is supportive?

- The librarians we have gotten to know since the boys were small have been great people to talk to for advice and other affirmations.
- My community is one I have built with other parents who have special needs children. We check in with each other, support and pray for each other.
- "Bring your family to the zoo day" was great. They had free health screenings for the whole family that day, plus it was fun.
- It was a "bring your parent to school" day. It was good to spend time with my child and learn what he does throughout the day.
- Free event for the kiddos put on by a local church. Everyone was pleasant and happy to see us. It was close to our home and the kids had a great time.
- I know how I'm connected, but I'm constantly looking for ways to connect friends
- Parent-led groups – places for parents to meet and talk. Older parents offer wisdom.



Social Connections

**need2know**

Resource from the ANPPC

For more parent-to-parent tools visit  
[ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/  
anppc/#resources](http://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/anppc/#resources)

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# Social Connections within the Framework

**Social Connections** is one of the five protective factors. Each of the protective factors is essential but most important is what they do together to build strength and stability in families.

Social Connections might come in the form of seeking community support and finding a resource (Concrete Support). It could show up when a teacher or counselor partners with the parent to support a child's social and emotional development (Social and Emotional Competence of Children). It may even be supporting a child's behavior or milestones with consistent and positive peer, community and family supports (Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development).

The Protective Factors work together to help make your family strong!

## Parents Help Define Social Connections

Many parent groups have defined the protective factors in ways that are relatable for their community and their lives. These ideas help us appreciate and honor family strengths in diverse geographical and cultural settings from across the country. Here are some ways parents have defined this protective factor – **Social Connections** – in ways that are meaningful for them.

## Defining the Five Protective Factors

Families are supported to build:

### Parental Resilience

The ability to recover from difficult life experiences, and often to be strengthened by and even transformed by those experiences.

### Social Connections

The ability and opportunity to develop positive relationships that lessen stress and isolation and help to build a supportive network.

### Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The ability to exercise effective parenting strategies to guide and know what to expect as children develop in multiple domains (physical, cognitive, language and social and emotional).

### Concrete Support in Times of Need

Access to supports and services that reduce stress and help to make families stronger.

### Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

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### Colorado Department of Human Services – Children's Trust Fund

*Nurture caring friendships. Having a network of friends and family helps us feel secure, confident and empowered.*

### Michigan Great Start Collaborative (Charlevoix, Emmet and Northern Antrim Counties)

*Make a friend. Connecting with friends builds a support system and makes your family strong.*

### New Hampshire Children's Trust

*I have friendships with people who support me and my parenting.*

### Prevent Child Abuse Arizona – Strengthening Families Arizona

*All parents need support. Building relationships is an important way to get the connection and support we all need.*

### Alaska Child Welfare Academy

*Get and give support.*

### Hawaii Child and Family Services – The Parent Line

*I am connected. I know what to do and how to deal with stressful situations.*

### Community Café Collaborative

*I have people who know me – friends – and at least one person who supports my parenting.*

### Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board – Five For Families (fiveforfamilies.org)

*Connecting with Others – Building a network of people who care about you and your family.*

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