

# Parent Aware Tip Sheets

## Modeling Positive Social Behaviors

### Why is modeling positive social behaviors important?

A major task of child development is to increase the number of positive, acceptable social behaviors that children perform. This sets the stage for children to become adults who are able to control their behavior and behave appropriately.

Children learn by watching adults around them and trying to model their behavior. Having a role model who shows mutual respect and displays positive behavior makes it more likely that children will copy acceptable behavior. Smiling, laughing together, and showing enthusiasm throughout the day are signs that the caregiver is modeling appropriate behavior.

### How can you help children develop appropriate social behavior?

- **Show respect for children**, such as listening intently to them, using eye contact, and empathizing with children's feelings.
- **Maintain a calm environment by using pleasant tones of voice**, gentle touches, and kind words helps children to be relaxed and less likely to feel stressed.
- **Facilitate appropriate peer interactions**, such as placing infants where they can watch and respond to others, helping children to find duplicate toys, stopping negative or hurtful interactions among children, and initiating activities where children can interact in positive ways (such as teaching toddlers to roll a ball back and forth or doing an art project that preschoolers work together to complete) helps children to have positive experiences with their peers.

When children behave in more negative ways, such as hurting others, guidance is needed to direct them back to more positive behaviors. Caregivers can calmly explain why a certain behavior is not appropriate, and then direct the child to what is acceptable, such as, "When you hit him, it hurt him. See that he is crying? He is sad that you hurt him. Let's use gentle touches with our friends." This helps children learn that their actions affect others.

- **Point out instances of positive behavior**, such as children working together, using kind words or performing kind actions, promote this type of behavior and make it more likely that children will perform these actions again