

We Are Connected

GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS

All parents need emotional support. Social connections (supportive friends, family, neighbors, and community groups) help parents care for their children and themselves.

Social connections support children in multiple ways. A parent's positive relationships give children access to other caring adults, model important relational skills, and increase the likelihood that children will benefit from involvement in positive activities.

Building positive relationships may require extra effort for some families—including those who are new to a community, recently divorced, or first-time parents. Additionally, some parents may need to develop self-confidence and social skills before they can expand their social networks.

Key Points to Cover With Families

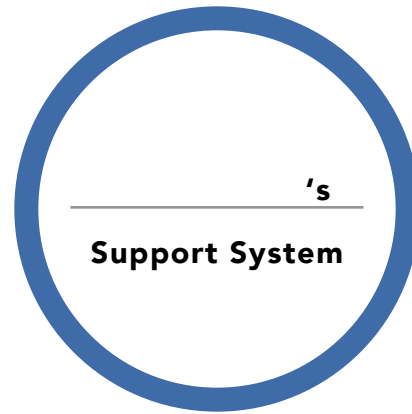
<p>All parents need support sometimes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain that this conversation guide is a tool to help the parent “map” their sources of social support. ▪ Emphasize that there is no wrong way to complete this worksheet. ▪ Have the caregiver put their name or family name in the center circle.
<p>Support can come from family, friends, neighbors, or other helpful people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask: <i>Who are the people in your circle of support?</i> ▪ If needed, prompt for names of friends, family, neighbors, and helping professionals. ▪ Add their names in circles or other shapes around the center circle of the ecomap.
<p>Social support can be found by belonging to groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask: <i>What groups or organizations are part of your family's life?</i> (e.g., faith communities, schools, workplaces, community centers) ▪ Add them in the circles where they belong.
<p>Not all connections are equally supportive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask: <i>How well do each of these connections support you as a parent?</i> ▪ Invite the caregiver to show differences with different colors, solid vs. dotted lines, or arrows indicating which direction(s) support flows. ▪ Ask: <i>Looking at this map, what do you notice about the connections in your life?</i> ▪ It may be important to take some time to help caregivers process their feelings about the current amount of social support in their life.
<p>Making new connections can be challenging, but it is possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask: <i>Would you like to have more support? How do you go about making new connections? What are the challenges?</i> ▪ Ask: <i>What is one thing you can commit to doing this week to strengthen your social connections?</i>

More resources on building [social connections](#) can be found on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website.

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CONVERSATION GUIDE

All families need support. Connecting with others helps to build a strong support system.



One thing I will do this week to strengthen my connection to others is:
