

## **CARING CONNECTIONS**

### **Language Guide for Caring Connections**

### **Home Visitors and Families**

During the first twelve months of life, infants quickly turn into toddlers who are simply smaller, walking and talking people. At times it is hard for parents and caregivers to understand exactly what it is that small people are trying to tell them. The way that adults talk to and interact with young children as they develop their language skills is very important to a child's healthy language development.

The following is information that you may find useful in answering some of your questions regarding language development in toddlers. Please remember this is only an outline of information and does not apply to all situations. If you have a specific concerns or questions about your toddler's language development, you should discuss it with your child's physician or ask your Caring Connections home visitor to assist you in finding a local resource near you to answer your specific questions.

Development of Early Communication Skills for:

#### **12 – 14 Months:**

- 1) Appears to understand and gain some new words each week;
- 2) Seems to understand the psychological feeling and shades of meaning of most speakers;
- 3) Will sustain interest for two or more minutes in looking at pictures if they are named;
- 4) Uses five or more words with some consistency;
- 5) Attempts to obtain desired objects by using voice in conjunction with pointing and gesturing;
- 6) Some words now occur in jargon utterances.

#### **14-16 Months:**

- 1) Demonstrates understanding by carrying out verbal requests to select and bring some familiar object from another room;
- 2) Recognizes and identifies many objects or pictures of objects when they are named;
- 3) Clearly recognizes names of various parts of the body (nose, eyes, toes, fingers, etc);
- 4) Consistently uses seven or more words;
- 5) Most frequently used consonants are "T," "D," "W," "N," and "H";
- 6) Most communication is now accomplished by using some words along with gestures.

#### **16-18 Months:**

- 1) Can comprehend simple questions and carry out two consecutive directions. (i.e. "Go get the ball and throw it to me.");
- 2) Remembers and associates new words by categories (such as foods, clothing, animals, etc.);
- 3) From a single request, identifies two or more familiar objects from a group of four or more familiar objects;
- 4) Begins using words rather than gestures to express wants and needs;
- 5) Begins repeating words overheard in conversation;
- 6) Evidences a continual but gradual increase in speaking vocabulary.

## **Ways to Help with Language Stimulation for Toddlers:**

**PARALLEL TALK:** Child Centered – Describe what the child is doing, seeing or hearing as he/she does it. “You are rolling the ball!” Repetition might be boring to us, but not to the child – vary your tone of voice as you repeat words and phrases to the child.

**DESCRIPTION** – Object Centered – Describe what something is – “It is a BIG dog!” Follow the child’s lead when making comments.

**SELF-TALK** – Centered on Adult – Talk about what you are doing while the child is watching. Describe what you are doing as you do it, “I am wiping off the table.” This is particularly helpful for children ages 12 – 24 months.

**EXPANSION** – Repetition and More – Add more information to a word a child uses. Revise and complete the child’s speech without correcting it. If the child says “Plane,” the parent says “Yes, that is a plane!” This shows you are listening to your child. Make sure you are expanding and not asking questions.

**EXPANSION PLUS** – Stretch out “baby sentences” by adding one or more short sentences to it. If a child says “Yellow puzzle,” the parent can add “You’ve got a yellow puzzle,” to expand the sentence, and “It’s a big puzzle!” to expand even further.

### **Other tips:**

- 1) Take advantage of any play time and help the child learn that everything has a name, and quality – size, shape, color and function.
- 2) **Expect errors** – All children and adults too, make some errors in articulation – how they make speech sounds. In fact, children normally take seven to eight years to learn to all of our English sounds correctly!
- 3) **Honesty pays** – Be honest when you do not understand what your child says. Admit that you do not understand. Ask the child to tell you again or ask them to show you what they are talking about. Don’t pretend that you understand by saying “That’s nice” or “Yes, that’s right.” You won’t be fooling anyone! Your child will probably think that you are just not interested and stop talking to you.
- 4) **Be a good listener** – Listen to what your child is trying to tell you, not how it is said. Ignore your child’s errors. Correcting errors, instead of responding to the message can undermine your child’s confidence as a speaker. To improve, your child must keep talking! If you constantly correct pronunciation errors, your child may begin to speak less and less. As a general rule, never force your child to repeat a remark you have understood. You want talking to be a good experience for your child!
- 5) **Model good speech** – When your child makes errors, repeat the child’s message correctly. But don’t ask the child to repeat after you. Children learn by listening. They need to listen to good speech. When you model correct speech for your child to hear and imitate, speak clearly and slowly. This helps your child in two ways. First, your child knows that you understood and your child feels successful because, “You got the message.” Second, your correct speech helps your child learn to speak more clearly.

Parents are a child’s first and most important teacher. Parents set an example for their child on how to listen and talk with others and can make a big difference on in how well a child develops his/her communication skills. As you watch your child learn and grow, you will feel proud of your child’s success in talking and communicating with you and others around you!