

# Five Protective Factors that Strengthen Families and Protect Children



## 1 - Social emotional competence of children

Children who attend high quality early childhood education get support for healthy social emotional development in many ways. They learn how to identify their feelings, empathize with the feelings of others, share emotions appropriately, and problem solve with peers and adults. The children bring these skills home and affect the ways they interact with their families and how others interact with them.

## 2 - Knowledge of child development and parenting

Parents with knowledge about parenting and their own child's development have more appropriate expectations and use more developmentally appropriate guidance techniques. Early care and education professionals have a wealth of knowledge about child development that they can share with parents, whether through an informal conversation, in a class, or by sharing brochures and other written information with parents. Parents learn best when they are talking about their own child right now.

## 3 - Concrete support in times of need

When families are in crisis, the children are more protected if the family gets access to the resources they need relatively quickly. Early care and education professionals may not personally provide those resources, but they can provide appropriate referrals and follow-up to families who need immediate support.

## 4 - Social connections

Whenever a family is isolated from family or community, the children are more at risk. Many parents naturally develop friendships with other parents they meet in the child care program, but others may need help establishing those social connections. Building trusting relationships with all families and helping isolated families connect with other parents strengthens parenting skills and protects the children.

## 5 - Parent Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficulties. There are two parts to resilience. The first is to be able to recognize and acknowledge difficulties and the feelings that go along with challenging events and situations. The second part of resilience is the ability to have hope, to problem solve and to take action in the midst of difficult events and feelings.

For more information and resources, see:

Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund: <http://wctf.state.wi.us>

Center for the Study of Social Policy: [http://www.cssp.org/doris\\_duke](http://www.cssp.org/doris_duke)

**strengthening families**  
THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION