



WHEN FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ARE HOMELESS

Relationships Between Parents and Children are Key

IDEAS FOR HOMELESS PROGRAM STAFF WHO ARE:
Supporting Families with Building Relationships at Bedtime

IT'S TIME FOR BED:

Helping Families Use Bedtime to Build Relationships

What can you do when supporting families at bedtime?

Family Friendly Resources:

- Include children's stories and children's music in your welcome packets
- Have rocking chairs available for families to use with young children – Help families remember to be mindful about safety issues like the tiny fingers of crawling infants
- Provide night lights for parents
- Help parents create a bed time routine soon after they enter your facility (See accompanying parent tip sheet)
- Ask parents about stressors that make bedtime challenging for them
- Help parent think about balancing the needs of multiple children at bed time

Family Friendly Structure:

- Schedule meetings, appointments with staff, and other programming at times other than during the bedtime hours
- Make house rules or recommendations that support a bed time routine (Examples would be children's music is played in the commons area after a certain hour, families are encouraged to move to their own rooms or areas after a certain hour)
- Create your own facility's routine that would encourage families to move into their bedtime routine. (An example might be that all families are invited to the commons room at 7:30 to hear a story read by the evening staff person. Children could then give a hug to or get a kiss from a stuffed animal like a teddy bear in pajamas. If you have a limited number of books and can't put one in every families welcome bag you could let children pick a book from a lending library before they say goodnight to the stuffed animal.)
- If you don't have a play area where families can get some exercise, consider having a time in the early evening when families can gather in the common area to exercise. Having children's exercise CDs or DVDs on hand will help
- Post nursery rhymes in common areas or give families copies of nursery rhymes

Special note: Help parents remember that using bedtime as a punishment can make children dread bedtime. Dreading bedtime can lead to challenging behavior at bedtime.

This Tip Sheet was developed by a Homeless Provider Work Group and was reviewed by parents experiencing homelessness. The Work Group included the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, Healthy Start House, The YWCA, Bridge to Independence, Sojourner House, Center for Victims, Heritage For Kids and Family Foundations Early Head Start

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