



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 Mealtime

IT'S TIME TO EAT:

Helping Families Use Mealtime to Build Relationships

What can you do when supporting families at mealtime?

Family Friendly Resources:

- Provide settings that support pleasant family meal time experiences i.e. table sizes appropriate for family dining, quiet music during meals, no TVs, ask families not to use phones during meals, etc..
- Provide families opportunities to learn (from staff or more experienced parents) about meal preparation. Learning to cook nutritious meals can be framed as a gift to their children's health.

Family Friendly Structure:

- Help parents create a meal time routine soon after they enter your facility (See accompanying parent tip sheet) Ask parents about their fondest memories about mealtimes. If at all possible, find one thing from that experience you can help them replicate. Examples: a family that used to say grace before eating or a family that used to talk about their day at mealtime. These things can be encouraged in your facility.
- Help parents identify, anticipate and plan solutions to their meal time stressors. For example Mom can have some conversation topics or silly word games in mind to keep everyone getting along while eating.
- Help parents include their children in meal planning and preparation.

Special Note: When parents and children plan and prepare meals together, eat together while enjoying each other's company, they strengthen their relationships. Your guidance can help families in this very important time!

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, Adagio Healthy Start House, The YWCA, Bridge to Independence, Sojourner House, The Center for Victims, 4 Kids Early Learning Center, and Family Foundations Early Head Start.

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