
SHARING THE BASICS™ IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

Healthcare providers are committed to overall child wellbeing, not just physical health. Consequently, standard medical visits also address other aspects of development. During the first three years of life, this includes attention to aspects of social-emotional and cognitive development that lay the foundation for lifelong learning and health. There is an emerging consensus among providers, researchers, and professional medical organizations that helping parents and caregivers to support their children’s learning and development is a key element of a comprehensive approach to providing healthcare for young children.^{i,ii}

The five Basics provide a simple but powerful framework for engaging parents and caregivers, not only in healthcare settings, but also in other organizations that are becoming part of the Basics movement.

The goal of the movement is “socioecological saturation,” which means making the Basics routine across the whole community. Healthcare organizations are anchor institutions for the movement because they touch almost every family and are trusted sources of caregiving information.

This document provides ideas for getting started with the Basics in healthcare settings along with core issues to consider. It will help you:

- **Recruit Across Roles and Settings** by finding ways to involve people who play multiple roles.
- **Utilize Physical Spaces** by putting up posters and other displays.
- **Engage Caregivers During Visits** by weaving the Basics into routine conversations.

“There’s no pediatrician in my clinic who thinks that child development and helping parents attend to the socioemotional development of their children isn’t one of the most important things we do.”

—Kathleen Conroy, Pediatrician and Associate Director of Primary Care, Boston Children’s Hospital

VIDEOS: Watch videos in the Basics Community Toolkit to hear directly from nurses, physicians, behavioral health specialists, home visitors, and administrators.



Why are Healthcare Professionals Using the Basics?



Everyone Can Be Involved



What Does It Look Like When Healthcare Professionals Use the Basics?

Recruit Across Roles and Settings

Think about the many departments and people who support and interact with caregivers and young children—from the time they enter the building through the end of a visit. Potential settings and roles for spreading the Basics include pediatrics, OB/GYN, neonatology, WIC, behavioral health, human resources, and others.

Utilize Physical Spaces

Turn multiple spaces into Basics promotional environments. Consider waiting rooms, exam rooms, or even hallways and bathrooms as spaces for disseminating the following resources:

- ✓ **Posters.** Hang Basics posters (see the Posters section of the [Basics Community Toolkit](#)).
- ✓ **Print materials.** Display and distribute print collateral on counters and tables in patient-facing areas (see the Handouts section of the Basics Community Toolkit for postcards, tips sheets, and other materials).
- ✓ **Videos.** Play Basics videos on a waiting room television or make them available on tablets. Use closed captioning if the sound on waiting room televisions needs to be low. If visitors have smartphones or tablets, provide them with the URL and suggest they watch Basics videos online.

There may be special roles for members of your community in helping these things to happen. For example, you might encourage your receptionist to mention the Basics to visitors or refer them to resources on display when they arrive and check-in for appointments.



Engage Caregivers During Visits

During medical appointments and other meetings, frame conversations with caregivers using the steps outlined below. Reinforce the ways caregivers are already supporting their children’s development.

1. Chat

Start the conversation with an open-ended question like, “Can you tell me about some of the things (child’s name) is doing that he/she wasn’t doing before?”

2. Affirm

Perhaps drawing upon their response, acknowledge what the caregiver is already doing to support their child’s development. Comment positively when you notice them doing one of the Basics and remind them why it matters.

3. Focus

Select a Basics-related emphasis for the visit, matched to the child’s age and stage. If this is the first visit, refer to the “Basics General Talking Points” on the following page. For more discussion topics, see the tip sheets in the Handouts section of the Basics Community Toolkit.

4. Model

If possible, show a Basics video (or a segment of one) to reinforce your focus for the visit. If there is no computer or tablet available, smartphones work well for online videos. The caregiver and child can watch the video together, since young children enjoy the scenes of other children and families. If using a video is inconvenient, you can model key behaviors instead.

5. Plan

Have the parent visualize their daily routine with their child, including activities like changing diapers, meals, or bathing. Help them identify specific times they could incorporate Basics practices. Suggest encouraging other adults in the child’s life to also do the Basics.

6. Share Resources

Offer a Basics take-home handout to reinforce your conversation and support their plan. The Handouts section of the Basics Community Toolkit has examples to download, reproduce, and distribute. Let them know where they can go online (website, social media) to find additional Basics videos and tips.

Basics General Talking Points

- **Science shows that a huge amount of brain growth—around 80%—happens by age three.** Beginning from birth, young brains develop like little muscles, getting bigger and stronger the more you and your family interact with your infant or toddler.
- This early development lays a **foundation for learning and wellbeing that lasts a lifetime.**
- That means we have a **big opportunity** to give all our kids a strong foundation for school and life right from the start.
- The Basics are **five simple and powerful ways to boost children’s brain development and learning** that are based on the latest science.
- Doing the Basics is free. It does not require any fancy toys or adding hours to your day. It’s all about the way you interact **during the time you already spend together.**
- When **everyone in a child’s life** uses the Basics from the very beginning, the child arrives at school ready to succeed and thrive.

ⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2014). Policy statement: Literacy promotion: An essential component of primary care pediatric practice. *Pediatrics*, 134(2). Available at www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2014-1384

ⁱⁱ Zuckerman, B. (2015). Two-generation pediatric care: A modest proposal. *Pediatrics*, 137(1). Available at

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2015/12/24/peds.2015-3447>