

## What can you do locally?

There are many ways your faith community can get involved in making early childhood development a priority. Here are just a few ways to begin, based on the integrated approach of our program partnership, [Moments That Matter](#)<sup>®</sup>.

### Responsive Care & Early Learning

- Invite teachers, early childhood educators and Headstart professionals to offer group and individual training with parishioners and neighbors on a weekend or weeknight. Provide childcare for older siblings, and cook them all dinner.
- Offer a “Parents Night Out” for your parents. Collaborate with other faith communities or a local community center to provide similar evenings or events for the neighborhood.
- Offer childcare during a recovery support group. Includes materials for fortifying a caregiver’s relationship to infants.
- Join with other faith groups and non-profits to offer free workshops (with childcare and food) on early childhood development training for caregivers in your community.

### Nutrition and Health

- Recruit and train volunteers to learn about the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. These volunteers can then help your local food program leaders and clients better understand and enroll in the [underutilized WIC program](#) created for early childhood nutrition.
- Invite a pediatric nurse to train food program volunteers and clients on the proper distribution of donated infant formula.
- Host a weekend breakfast or other meal specifically targeting families with young children, especially those who count on schools during the week for their primary nutrition.
- Partner with a social worker to find a way to provide space and childcare for families who need appointment options that accommodate work, school, and transportation schedules.

### Physical Development

- Recruit volunteers or a local scout troop to adopt a safe play area, indoors or out (or both!) for infants and toddlers. Include safety information about the use of bucket swings for the very young. Make it open and available to the neighborhood.
- When conducting diaper drives, also ask for clean play mats and floor rugs for infants to explore.
- Make sure your toy drives specify building and exploration toys and activities for those aged 0-3.

### Social and Emotional Development

- Host play groups for the neighborhood, including adults to help oversee play, crafting and snacks for attendees. Recruit and train reading “tutors” to read with children at these events.
- Partner with Retirement Communities and other retired persons.

## Communication Development:

- Provide beautifully printed materials, flashcards and books designed for infants aged 0-3 in your common areas, waiting rooms and nurseries.
- Partner with your local library to offer space for family reading nights, book drives and sales and children's author events.
- Have a "Free Little Library" on your campus and specifically ask for board and vinyl books for children aged 0-3.

Encourage participation in these events with the families in your faith community. These priorities matter for children and their caregivers from all walks of life. Take care not to take for granted the wellness of families in our faith communities. Parenting and growing up have challenges for everyone, and we can all learn from each other. Every child matters. Children are excellent role models and peers for one another, and their wellness and good health can raise the wellness of other children. They exhibit care and compassion for each other. They are authentic, mindful and value the freedom.



*School children gather during a morning break in Ghana.*