

Extended Family Concept

- Parents are growing and developing human beings with special needs of their own, which are as real as the needs of their children.
- Parents are individuals first and parents second. Giving birth does not automatically make a person emotionally ready to be a parent, nor does birth automatically produce a parent who is responsible, mature and knowledgeable.
- The younger the parent, the greater the need to supplement parenting of the child if harm is to be avoided and maximum growth and development are to be realized for both parents and children.
- Pregnancy and the first five years of life are critical in all areas of growth and development of the child.
- The needs of the parent may conflict with the needs of the child. When such conflicts occur and cannot be positively resolved, pressures build, and damage to both child and parent is predictable.
- Those who help the parents with the education of their child are *supplementing* the education the child gets from his/her own parents, not *substituting* for the parent. The child gets the help he/she needs while the parent is enhancing parenting skills.
- Parenting skills may be taught; responsibility is developed, and *development is a process that can not be hurried.*
- Skills and responsibilities are best gained when parenting does not overwhelm the parent. The parent needs a change to observe role models demonstrating appropriate techniques and attitudes of parenting and child-rearing over a long period of time. Role models are especially helpful when the parent observes models of different ages.

- The same level of parenting can not be expected from all people. Some parents were abused themselves as children, while others are from intact families where both parents are present, and still more have parents with poor attachment histories. While there are many variables that affect parenting levels, one is relatively constant: age. The younger the parent, the less there will be the capacity for abstract, logical, non-egocentric thinking.

Supportive Intervention

- A sharing of ideas regarding child-rearing techniques and educational plans between parents and staff, according to the parents' individual needs, interests and abilities.
- A staff that cares about the child and the parent in a way similar to that of extended family members
- The message that: "It's okay to get help for the demanding job of parenting. The important thing is to make sure you – and, if necessary at times, another caregiver – are meeting your child's needs."
- A willingness to accept that both love and responsibility for a child can be shared by many interested people. The focal people are the parents, but others may play a central role from time to time.
- A chance for the parents to learn skills and develop parental responsibility without concern that others are taking over.

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