

CHEERS for Parents

How to Use These Materials*

1) The CHEERS Parent Handout

This handout, created by Healthy Families Oregon, is intended to help newly enrolled families understand CHEERS and grow in their ability to form secure attachment relationships with their children. It can be used to prompt conversations with parents about the following:

- What secure attachment is, what it looks like, and why it is essential to healthy child development.
- CHEERS as a means for the home visitor and the parents to observe, discuss, and understand secure attachment and parent-child interaction throughout the family's time in the program.
- Culturally responsive discussions about what the parents experienced related to CHEERS when they were children, how they experience the CHEERS domains in their current family, and the meaning and value of the CHEERS domains for each family member.

2) CHEERS: Talking Points for Home Visitors

Home visitors can draw on the explanations provided in this document from PCANY to deepen a parent's understanding of each CHEERS domain beyond the short definitions offered in the CHEERS Parents Handout.

We recommend that home visitors introduce the *CHEERS Parents Handout* to parents and use *CHEERS: Talking Points for Home Visitors* to guide conversations within the first few home visits, and to continue to integrate CHEERS discussions into home visits thereafter.

3) CHEERS Parent Reflections Worksheet

A parent's experience and understanding of attachment is deeply personal and influenced by their own histories, family norms, and cultural practices. The *CHEERS Parent Reflections* worksheet, created by Healthy Families Oregon, provides a means for the family to reflect on their experience of the CHEERS domains, engage in discussions with their home visitor, and write down their responses to the various questions. Discussions can include what CHEERS "looked like" in their family growing up, what they would like to carry forward from that experience, and what they would like to do differently as they parent their own children.

4) CHEERS and Reflective Strategies

Every CHEERS observation and discussion with parents is an opportunity to promote CHEERS related strengths and address challenges using Reflective Strategies. The *CHEERS Guide for Home Visitors* offers guidance in this area (on the HFNY website under network resources, FSS section).

*This document is adapted from materials created by Healthy Families Oregon

CHEERS Parent Handout

The parent-child relationship forms the basis for all relationships in life. Securely attached children know they can depend on their caregivers. Why does this matter? Babies and children need to feel safe in order to learn. When babies/children feel secure they are more curious, tend to cry less, manage emotions better, get sick less often, have higher self-confidence and do better in school.

CHEERS offers a way to look at the many moments in a day that create the parent-child relationship.

Cues...

How babies communicate their needs



Holding...

Physical comfort



Expression...

Talking to and with my baby

Empathy...

Understanding what my baby is feeling



Rhythm/Reciprocity...

Ways we interact



Smiles...

Ways we show we enjoy each other

Secure Attachment with CHEERS

CHEERS looks different in each family. Cultural practices, traditions and values all influence parenting beliefs, practices and wishes for children. What does CHEERS look like in your family?

CHEERS: Talking Points for Home Visitors

Cues: how babies communicate their needs

Cues include behaviors like cooing, smiling, crying, reaching, arching the back, and turning away. When interacting with others, your child communicates a need for a break or a desire to continue an activity through their cues. Recognizing and responding to your child's cues lets them know that their needs will be met, builds their trust in you, and helps them learn how to manage their emotions over time.

Holding: physical comfort

Holding refers to both physically cradling or cuddling with your child and to “spatial closeness” – how near or far you are from your child as you relate with them in physical space. Holding a child helps them to feel comforted and nurtured. Sitting close to an older child as they begin to explore their world independently helps to build their confidence and keep them safe.

Expression: talking to and with my baby

Expression relates to all the ways that you and your child communicate with each other through vocal sounds, singing, and verbal self-expression, even if your child doesn't use words yet. When your child coos and you coo back, or you describe an object or activity to your child, you are stimulating their language development and brain development.

Empathy: understanding what my baby is feeling

Empathy refers to your ability to sense or know what your child is experiencing and feeling. For instance, when your child cries a certain way, you may know that they are hungry, frustrated, or tired. Your ability to understand your child's experience comforts them and builds their trust in you.

Rhythm/Reciprocity: ways we interact

Rhythm and reciprocity relates to the “give and take” in your interactions with your child. For example, at times you might start an activity with your child and at others your child might start one with you. When this “give and take” is going well, it's like the two of you are dancing together. Over time, this kind of interaction helps your child learn how to “connect” with others and enjoy healthy relationships.

Smiles: ways we show we enjoy each other

Smiles refers to the joy, happiness, and laughter you and your child experience as you relate to each other. By taking the time to play and laugh with your child, you become a source of pleasure for them, and create a positive bond between the two of you.

CUES...

How does my baby tell me what they are wanting or needing?

Is it easy or difficult to understand what my baby is trying to tell me?

How does my baby communicate needing a break or wanting more?

HOLDING...

How often do I sit next to or hold my baby?

How does my child respond when I hold, touch or sit with them?

In what ways do I comfort my child through touch?

What do I enjoy the most and the least about holding?



EXPRESSION...

How often do I talk, sing, or tell stories with my baby?

How does my baby respond when I talk with her/him?

When my baby talks or makes sounds, how do I respond?

How often do I describe what we are doing or what my baby sees?

EMPATHY...

How do I know what my child is feeling?

How do I show my baby I understand what they are feeling?

How do I feel when my baby is sad or upset?

How do I respond?



RHYTHM/RECIPROCITY...

What kind of play does my baby/child enjoy (slow, quiet play or faster, louder types of play)?

Does my child lead some activities and I lead others?

How easy is it to match my style of play to the way my baby likes to play?



SMILES...

How do we have fun together?

How does my child know I enjoy being with them?

How do I know my child enjoys being with me?

CHEERS Parent Reflections



What areas of CHEERS are the most important to you and your family?

What areas do you feel the strongest in?



What areas are more challenging?

CUES...

How does my baby tell me what they are needing? Is it easy or difficult to understand what my baby is trying to communicate? How does my baby communicate needing a break from interaction?

EMPATHY...

How do I know what my child is feeling? How do I show my baby I understand what they are feeling? How do I feel when my baby is sad or upset? How do I respond?

HOLDING...

What does physical touch look like in my family? How often do I sit next to or hold my baby? How does my child respond to holding and touch? What do I enjoy the most and the least?

RHYTHM/RECIPROCITY...

Does my child lead some activities and I lead others? What kind of play does my child enjoy (slow, quiet play or faster, louder types of play)? How easy is it to match my play style to the way my baby likes to play?

EXPRESSION...

How often do I talk, sing, or tell stories with my baby? How does my baby respond when I talk with them? When my baby talks or makes sounds, how do I respond? How often do I describe what we are doing or what my baby sees?

SMILES...

How do we have fun together? How does my child know I enjoy being with them? How does my child show me they enjoy being with me?
