Five Protective Factors that
Strengthen Families and Protect Children

1 - Social emotional competence of children
Children who attend high quality early childhood education get support for healthy social emotional
development in many ways. They learn how to identify their feelings, empathize with the feelings of
others, share emotions appropriately, and problem solve with peers and adults. The children bring
these skills home and affect the ways they interact with their families and how others interact with
them.

2 - Knowledge of child development and parenting
Parents with knowledge about parenting and their own child’s development have more appropriate
expectations and use more developmentally appropriate guidance techniques. Early care and
education professionals have a wealth of knowledge about child development that they can share
with parents, whether through an informal conversation, in a class, or by sharing brochures and
other written information with parents. Parents learn best when they are talking about their own
child right now.

3 - Concrete support in times of need
When families are in crisis, the children are more protected if the family gets access to the
resources they need relatively quickly. Early care and education professionals may not personally
provide those resources, but they can provide appropriate referrals and follow-up to families who
need immediate support.

4 - Social connections
Whenever a family is isolated from family or community, the children are more at risk. Many
parents naturally develop friendships with other parents they meet in the child care program, but
others may need help establishing those social connections. Building trusting relationships with all
families and helping isolated families connect with other parents strengthens parenting skills and
protects the children.

5 - Parent Resilience
Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficulties. There are two parts to resilience. The first
is to be able to recognize and acknowledge difficulties and the feelings that go along with
challenging events and situations. The second part of resilience is the ability to have hope, to
problem solve and to take action in the midst of difficult events and feelings.

For more information and resources, contact:

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