Getting Started with The Basics
A Guide for Organizational Leaders and Coordinators
None of us can do alone what all of us can do together!

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Now that you know about The Basics approach and are planning to get started, what are some possible next steps? What are the ways that you can play an important role?

The Basics community is a diverse network of organizations and individuals committed to a single goal: improving children’s life trajectories by making sure that all families have access to science-based strategies for making the most of the time they spend with their children from birth to age three. Whether you connect with families in a clinic, a child care center, their place of worship, or anywhere else, you have an important role to play.

The Basics Community Toolkit is an online repository of videos, activities, handouts, and other materials designed to support your organization’s routine interactions with families. It already provides materials in multiple languages, and additional languages will be added. The entire collection of resources will expand as The Basics community grows and learns together.

This guide will help get you started. It provides background on The Basics Principles, some common vocabulary and talking points, an overview of the materials and resources in the toolkit, as well as a template for planning and documenting your work. Local Basics leaders may offer additional support and resources, so be sure to seek out opportunities to join Basics-related activities in your community. Some of the materials in the toolkit, especially the six core videos, are probably available locally in your community with a logo that includes the name of your community. When that is the case, please try to use the local versions in order to support your local Basics campaign.

Your commitment, expertise, and relationships with parents and caregivers are what bring The Basics to life. Working together, we have a great chance of ensuring that all children get the best possible start.
WHY THE BASICS?

80% of brain growth in the first three years

From birth to age three, a child’s brain undergoes rapid development, producing more than 1 million neural connections per second.1 By age three, the brain has achieved 80% of its adult size.2

Skill gaps clear by age two

Nationally representative data show clear skill gaps by the second birthday. One recent study found that by the age of two, less advantaged children were six months behind more advantaged peers in language processing skills.3

Too many missed opportunities

Many parents and caregivers have never had opportunities to learn the science behind The Basics Principles and how important they are to their children’s brain development and wellbeing. A number of the greatest misunderstandings pertain to the first year of life, when doing The Basics Principles already makes a big difference.4

Lifelong consequences

Brain development during the first three years builds critical foundations for cognitive skills associated with academic learning, but that’s not all. It also supports development of social and emotional skills, all of which confer lifelong benefits.

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1 Center on the Developing Child. (2009). Five numbers to remember about early childhood development [Brief]. Available at www.developingchild.harvard.edu
WHAT ARE THE BASICS PRINCIPLES?

The Basics Principles are five clusters of parenting and caregiving behaviors, distilled from research by the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University in collaboration with a national expert advisory committee. They encompass most of what experts find is important for boosting cognitive and social-emotional development of children from birth to age three. The Basics Principles are free and don’t require fancy toys or extra hours in the day—they can be incorporated into families’ everyday routines.

Maximize Love, Manage Stress

Babies and toddlers thrive when their world feels loving, safe, and predictable. Respond with smiles, words, and touch to help them see, hear, and feel your love. You will help them develop a sense of security and self-control.

Talk, Sing, and Point

Babies learn language from the moment they are born. Be responsive to their sounds, and later, their words. Connect with eye contact and a loving tone of voice, while pointing to help them know what you are talking about.

Count, Group, and Compare

Every child’s brain is wired for math. Make talking about numbers, shapes, patterns, and comparisons a focus of your time together and watch your child learn to love math.

Explore Through Movement and Play

Babies are like scientists who love making discoveries. Watch to see what interests your child, then encourage their curiosity and help them learn when they play and explore.

Read and Discuss Stories

Reading turns kids into confident thinkers. Make books a regular part of your relationship from the very beginning. With infants, point at the pictures and speak with excitement. With toddlers, just make it fun.
WHAT IS SOCIOECOLOGICAL SATURATION?

People live in social ecologies made up of the people, settings, and norms that shape their everyday interactions, and consequently, their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The Basics movement aims to saturate the social ecology around each family and to engage the whole community, so that everyone knows The Basics Principles and every parent or caregiver receives encouragement and support for using them. Every type of setting and organization in the image below is a place for sharing The Basics Principles.
The Basics Learning Network brings together cities, towns, and counties in the U.S. and abroad where civic-sector leaders have adopted the five Basics Principles as a framework for infant and toddler caregiving. As the work develops across the Network, The Basics Community Toolkit and other collaborative resources and activities provide ongoing opportunities to accumulate and share emerging lessons to maximize the collective impact of our work.
The Basics Community Toolkit is a repository of tools and resources for sharing The Basics Principles. Inspire and support parents, caregivers, and other allies with six types of tools, each introduced below. Use and combine them in ways that fit your context and typical workflow, so that sharing The Basics Principles can become a routine component of your organization’s support for families. The collection is a living resource that will grow as The Basics Learning Network accumulates knowledge about the most effective strategies for disseminating The Basics Principles and supporting their widespread adoption.

**Videos**

Communicate and model effective practices with short, powerful videos.

**Six Core Videos.** Use these foundational videos to show families who are applying the five Basics Principles in their everyday lives. These include an overview video and one for each of the five principles. Deploy them across a variety of settings. Most communities in The Basics Learning Network have these same videos with a logo that reflects participation in the network (e.g., Yonkers Basics or Chattanooga Basics). If this is true for your community, please try to use the local versions to help support your local campaign.

**Poems.** Use these animated videos to communicate key Basics messages. For example, propose to parents that “The Basics Caregiver’s Promise” is a pledge they should live by. Likewise, “The Basics Community Contract” defines the type of commitment to seek from the whole community.

**Voices of the Community.** Hear community leaders, practitioners, and parents and caregivers share their thoughts and experiences with The Basics Principles. Depending on the particular video, use them with colleagues in professional roles or with parents and caregivers.

**Implementation Guides**

Get ideas from several types of resources with guidance on sharing The Basics Principles. Find simple discussion protocols, hands-on activities to actively engage caregivers and children, and tips for integrating the principles into ongoing services for families. Discover how these resources can help during doctor’s visits, in parent workshops, playgroups, and other settings.

**Handouts**

Distribute handouts to raise awareness about The Basics Principles and offer concrete caregiving tips. Look for opportunities to share them whenever and wherever you can. Handouts can be used to spark discussion during trainings or
meetings. Send them home with participants to reinforce concepts covered and serve as reminders.

Posters
Spread awareness by hanging colorful, engaging posters in prominent locations, such as entrances and waiting areas.

Presentations
Share The Basics vision, approach, and methods with these PowerPoint presentations. Use them to introduce The Basics Principles to your organization or community and keep them involved as active allies.

Research and Evaluation
Learn about the research, including the science behind the five Basics Principles.
STEPS FOR ADOPTING THE BASICS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Make sharing and reinforcing The Basics Principles core to your organization’s routines and institutional identity. If possible, collaborate with your local Basics leadership organization to plan and document your progress. Consider using the Implementation Documentation Template on pages 11 and 12 of this guide (a Microsoft Word version that you can edit is also available online in the toolkit). In the toolkit, you will also find The Basics Organization-Level Rubric for Assessing Implementation Maturity, a multi-faceted tool that can be used as a guide during the planning stage as well as self-assessment once your organization is further along.

STEP 1: Recruit a Point Person and Initial Champion(s)

Identify the point person responsible for managing implementation and communicating with external Basics partners. Then recruit others whose positions or interests make them likely to be enthusiastic champions to help spearhead the effort.

STEP 2: Review the Toolkit and Brainstorm Uses

Begin exploring The Basics Community Toolkit, including videos, implementation guides, handouts, and other print collateral. Brainstorm ways that these free tools and resources might support or enhance the ways your organization interacts with parents, caregivers, and other stakeholders for the benefit of infants and toddlers.

STEP 3: Engage Others in Your Organization

Engage additional people in your organization. This requires introducing them to The Basics Principles and inspiring their interest. A great way to introduce The Basics Principles is by showing a PowerPoint presentation from the toolkit and playing one or more Basics videos at a regular staff or department meeting. Later, you may choose to provide additional guidance or training on ways that frontline staff at your organization can make sharing The Basics Principles routine.

STEP 4: Develop and Document Your Implementation Plan

Goal. Develop a Basics goal statement for your organization. For example, “Among the parents we serve who have infants or toddlers, at least 80% will know and use The Basics Principles.”

Strategies. Decide which methods of sharing The Basics Principles will help you meet each goal. Consider the following key strategies:

✓ Display posters and materials.
✓ Show videos in waiting rooms and during presentations.
✓ Share The Basics Principles in one-on-one conversations (e.g., medical visits, case meetings).
✓ Share The Basics Principles in group sessions (e.g., workshops, playgroups, community events).
✓ Promote your work on social media or other communications channels.

Other questions to consider:

- How do you plan to initiate sharing The Basics in your organization?
- How do you plan to prepare and support your staff to share The Basics Principles?
- What (if any) forms of additional training might be beneficial?
- How will you reinforce parents’ and caregivers’ initial exposure to The Basics Principles?
- How can you support and perhaps even integrate efforts with other Basics champions in your community?

**Logistics.** For each way that you expect to share The Basics Principles, identify action steps and decide who will carry them out, what training or support they will need, when they will take each step, and with what resources.

**Documentation and Monitoring.** Consider how you will document the level of implementation activity and progress toward your goals. What forms of data will you collect to track progress? What forms of relevant data do you already collect?

**STEP 5: Print or Order Basics Materials**

Identify which Basics materials you will need and the quantities. Download and print them from the toolkit or contact your local Basics leaders about acquiring locally-branded materials.

**STEP 6: IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN!**

**STEP 7: Reflect and Update Your Plan**

Find a time to meet as a team, hear from colleagues about their experiences sharing The Basics Principles, and review data on implementation activities and progress. Identify things that are working well and others that could be improved. Revise your implementation plan accordingly.

**STEP 8: Tell Us How You’re Doing**

A number of communities are beginning to share and practice The Basics Principles. We would love to know what you’ve tried, how it worked, and the successes and challenges you experienced. Please share with us at info@thebasics.org.
**IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENTATION TEMPLATE**

### STEP 1: Recruit a Point Person and Initial Champion(s)

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### STEP 2: Review the Toolkit and Brainstorm Uses

- Videos
- Implementation Guides
- Handouts
- Presentations
- Posters
- Research and Evaluation


### STEP 3: Engage Others in Your Organization

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who else needs to be engaged?</th>
<th>How? (E.g., Watch Basics videos, discuss PowerPoint presentation)</th>
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### STEP 4: Develop and Document Your Implementation Plan

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<th>By whom?</th>
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<th>Basics Materials and Other Resources Needed</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>▪ Display posters and materials</td>
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<td>▪ Show videos</td>
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Questions to Consider (and jot down brief responses to)

✓ How do you plan to initiate sharing The Basics Principles in your organization?
✓ How do you plan to prepare and support your staff to share The Basics Principles?
✓ What (if any) forms of additional training might be beneficial?
✓ How will you reinforce parents’ and caregivers’ initial exposure?
✓ How can you support and perhaps even integrate efforts with other Basics champions in your community?
✓ What forms of data will you collect to track progress? What relevant forms do you already collect?

### STEP 5: Print or Order Basics Materials

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<th>Basics Materials Needed</th>
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*Download and print from The Basics Community Toolkit website or contact your local Basics leaders about ordering materials.*

### STEP 6: IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN!

### STEP 7: Reflect and Update Your Plan

- Find a time to meet as a team.
- Share what people in the organization have experienced implementing The Basics.
- Review data on implementation activities and progress.
- Identify things that are working well and things that you could improve.
- Update your implementation plan in response to this discussion.

### STEP 8: Tell Us How You’re Doing

- Please share your progress and feedback at info@thebasics.org!

**Notes**
THE BASICS COMMUNITY CONTRACT
BY RONALD FERGUSON

We should sign a Basics Contract
Wherein when it comes to babies
We would share an obligation
With no “ifs” or “butts” or “maybes.”

Maximize Love, Manage Stress
We could guarantee that parents
Would be rescued from their stress
By supportive friends and neighbors
Helping put their cares to rest.

This includes the types of friendship where
When weary from no sleep
Every parent finds a trusted soul
Their precious child to keep.

Talk, Sing, and Point
We would help each parent come to know
The benefits of talking
And the ways that pointing helps the child
Decipher all their squawking.

Count, Group, and Compare
We would post on walls and billboards
Things that little kids could count
Near some sculptures made for grouping
To compare and climb and mount.

Explore through Movement and Play
We would donate games and puzzles
And some toys to use outside
We’d make sure that every toddler
Has a tricycle to ride.

Read and Discuss Stories
And each child would be enthralled
By all the wonders found through reading
For we’d offer to each family
Any books they might be needing.

Hereby Resolved
If we all embrace this vision
(That means friends and neighbors too)
Parents then will find the bandwidth
To do what they need to do.

Yes they’ll need to do The Basics
And by doing your small part
You will help more parents seed their kids
To learn and grow up smart.

If we all resolve to do these things
We’ve learned will be required
Then each child our efforts benefit
Will be a life inspired.
THE BASICS CAREGIVER’S PROMISE

BY RONALD FERGUSON

With my heart I will love you
And shield you from stress.
With my mouth I will speak what I feel.
With soft words and sweet songs every time I behold you
I’ll show you that my love is real.

With my fingers I’ll point at the objects I name
And I’ll count them in groups to compare.
With my feet I will take you outdoors to explore
While we play and enjoy the fresh air.

With my eyes I will read as I show you the world
Through bright pictures and stories in books.
These are ways to make sure that your brain is prepared
For successes wherever you look.

This my promise I make from the day of your birth
That these Basics I’ll faithfully do.
For my job is to help you grow happy and smart
Starting now when your life is brand new.

You will learn that your life is an artwork.
And that you are the artist in charge.
But before you decide what to do with your life
Listen now
To the beat
Of my heart