

## Primary Caregivers

*“In group child care settings, establish a primary caregiver to create a trusting relationship from which the child can explore.” ~ Idaho Early Learning eGuidelines*

### **Why I need a primary caregiver:**

- I will have consistent adults in my life. This helps me develop trusting relationships.
- I will develop a strong attachment to my caregiver. This makes it easier for me to have healthy relationships and learn new skills.
- I feel safe exploring new places and things when my caregiver is close by.
- My caregiver has many opportunities to learn the ways I ask for attention, help, or comfort using my cries, sounds, and movements. I get what I need from a trusted adult.
- I will learn to tell the difference between caregivers and strangers.
- I can “check-in” with my primary caregiver for help or reassurance when playing alone or with peers.
- I may be more likely to try new things.
- I begin to expect familiar places, people, or routines with cues from my primary caregiver.
- I may show stronger social and emotional skills when I have consistent adults in my life.



*“Setting up a system of primary caregiving establishes an environment in which meaningful and lasting relationships can develop between caregivers and children as well as between caregivers and families.” ~ Zero to Three*

*To learn more about social and emotional development in infants and toddlers, see “My Social and Emotional Health.”*

### **My caregivers support me by:**

- setting up a system of “primary caregiving” for me in my child care.
- providing a consistent routine where my primary caregiver can change my diapers, give me my bottle, help me when I’m sad, or help me go to sleep.
- keeping me with a caregiver I know. Keep caregiver transitions at a minimum.
- using consistent responses when caring for me.
- providing opportunities for me to watch and interact with other children and caregivers.



#### **Thoughts on Primary Caregiving from an Early Childhood Professional**

*“The primary caregiving system for me ensures that each individual child has ‘an extension of their home’ into our facility. As much as possible, the primary caregiver advocates the parents’ wishes for their child’s individual needs, becomes an ‘expert’ about the child and does the majority of the nurturing during the prime times: feeding, changing, and putting to sleep, building that bond and developing that trusting relationship with the child and ultimately with the parents as well.”*

*~ Chris Meyers-Zacharias, Early Childhood Advocate/Lead Teacher, Boise, Idaho  
(Chris has been providing primary care with infants and toddlers since 1979)*

*To learn more about primary caregiving, view the Resources and References found at the end of these materials.*