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## **Survey Reveals What Adults Know (& Don't Know) About Child Development**

### **Findings Indicate Adults Feel Less Prepared To Be Parents**

HOUSTON, Texas (March 28, 2005) – How much do Houston area adults know about parenting and child development? Not enough, according to a survey conducted by Early Connections, a project of Collaborative for Children. A survey of 553 adults in the Houston area and another study of 103 adults in the East End area of Houston were performed to determine what Houston parents think about how young children learn and develop and to seek their opinions about public policy affecting young children.

Results of the new survey were compared to an initial survey conducted by Early Connections in 2002 to see if the general public has improved its knowledge about child development or changed any opinions about child care. The initial 2002 results indicated that Houston parents needed and desired more information on parenting their young children.

The new survey results show that more adults are aware of the importance of talking and reading to babies and young children than they were in 2002, but there is still confusion about expectations of children at different ages and stages of development, about the most beneficial ways to learn language, and the ability of children to sense stress in their environment.

“This misinformation and lack of understanding by adults create unrealistic expectations about appropriate behaviors at various ages. This can lead to inappropriate discipline and inadequate nurturance and care for the child,” said John Sargent, M.D., Baylor College of Medicine and Early Connections Professional Advisory Committee member. “This study reinforces the need for adults to understand the critical importance of a child’s first six years and age appropriate behavior of children during their developmental stages.” Research has demonstrated that positive early experiences are essential to a child’s healthy growth and development.

Survey results were compared to the initial survey, and highlights of the new data include:

- 54% of respondents do not understand that children begin thinking good and bad things about themselves as early as two years of age. (Child experts say this lack of information may lead in some cases to low self-esteem and possibly depression.)
- 49% of adults think that children can learn as much language from television as from talking with another person. (Child experts say that positive, face-to-face interactions between adults and young children are one of the most effective ways to develop language.)
- The top issues facing parents of small children, as reported in the survey are: education, 29%; teaching right from wrong, morals, conduct and discipline, 20%; safety, 16%; and daycare, 13%.
- 49% of respondents believe that a 15 month-old should be expected to share toys. (Child experts say that children should not be expected to share until they are 3 ½ years old.)

The complete survey results are available online at [www.earlyconnect.org](http://www.earlyconnect.org)

Collaborative for Children works to improve the quality of early care and education through educational programs for parents and early education professionals, public awareness campaigns, and efforts to strengthen the overall early care and education system. “We are working in the community to educate parents about the critical importance of a child’s first six years. Our Early Connections project provides educational messages through the local media and through neighborhood-based dissemination points to provide helpful information to parents and other adults in the community about the simple, everyday interactions that are most important to stimulating healthy development,” states Carol Shattuck, President of Collaborative for Children.

Early Connections, a project of Collaborative for Children, encourages parents, caregivers and others in the community to call its **FREE** Early Connections InfoLine at 713-464-0800 (Or, toll free at 1-877-511-KIDS). The Early Connections InfoLine is a bilingual service for parents and caregivers of children ages zero to six, offering answers to questions, simple tips, and free information. Information is also available on the website at [www.earlyconnect.org](http://www.earlyconnect.org).

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