



# Building the Social-Competencies Assets

Young people—no matter what their age—need to develop social competencies. Here are ideas on how to build the five Social-Competencies assets for children and youth at different ages:

## **Ages Birth to 1**

- Give babies new toys and safe objects to touch and explore. Infants learn a lot about how to deal with people by first interacting with objects.
- Encourage children to experiment with sounds. It will help them develop language later on.

## **Ages 1 to 2**

- Give children at least two equally appealing choices whenever possible.
- Encourage children to express their feelings, but give them guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate ways to act on their feelings.

## **Ages 3 to 5**

- Continue to cheer on children's new skills, such as drawing, walking backward, and learning how to cut with scissors.
- Encourage families to start having periodic family meetings in which children have input in decision making.
- Let children make simple choices on their own, such as whether to play with blocks or to color.

## **Ages 6 to 11**

- Encourage children to use words—rather than just actions—to communicate.
- Encourage children to develop more skills in areas that interest them.
- Find ways for children to spend time with people who look, act, think, and talk in different ways.

## **Ages 12 to 15**

- Help young people use healthy coping skills when difficult situations arise.
- Be gentle and supportive in how you respond to young people's fluctuating emotions.
- Help young teenagers find ways to deal with conflict without fighting.

## **Ages 16 to 18**

- Slowly begin to allow teenagers more freedom to make their own decisions.
- Ask teenagers about their dreams for the future and help them plan how to achieve them.
- Encourage teenagers to practice healthy responses to situations where they might feel pressured or uncomfortable, such as being offered drugs by a friend or being challenged to fight.