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## Information to Share with Families

Many families will view you, their child's teacher or home visitor, as an expert! Sometimes families will ask for your help with problems they are having, especially around sleep. **Here is some information families might find helpful.**

- Acknowledge how hard it is to have a child who isn't sleeping at night. When a baby doesn't sleep the parents don't sleep and everyone is exhausted. Remember, none of us are at our best when we feel sleep deprived!

- When parents ask about night time waking, or getting their baby to sleep through the night, there is no one strategy that will work for all families. Help parents think through what they will do when the baby wakes up so that they have a plan. The plan might include quietly going into the baby's room, waiting a few minutes before going in, or safely co-sleeping. Help parents understand it is important to be consistent in responding to a waking baby. When parents do the same thing every night the baby will know what to expect.

- Ask about the family's bedtime routine. A lot of infants and toddlers sleep better when they eat dinner and go to bed at the same time every night. A bedtime routine might include some activities like bath time, brushing teeth, stories, or a short cuddle and off to sleep. Over time a consistent routine will be a cue that it is time to calm down and be ready for sleep.

- If the baby is teething or nearing a milestone, like walking, they might wake up more at night. Brazelton (1992) points out that during times of exciting growth babies may have more trouble sleeping (382).

- Just like adults, babies and toddlers can react to stress by losing sleep. Think about the child's experiences while you are with her – have there been any changes in caregivers, peers, or classrooms? Ask the family if there is anything going on in their lives that might be stressful. If so, find out if there are ways that you can support the family and the child.

- Some parents have found that “white noise,” that is, the sound of the vacuum cleaner, a fan, or running water helps their baby sleep. If that works try recording the sound to play back during sleep times. A fan can also provide some white noise to drown outside sounds and lull a baby to sleep. The white noise can be comforting because it is similar to the sounds babies experienced in the womb.

- Researchers have found that when a baby has trouble sleeping the mother is more likely to have depression (Hiscock & Wake 2001, 1317). If a family member seems to be having a very difficult time work with your mental health consultant.

Parent resources about sleep are available at ZERO TO THREE.