



PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.

THE FIRST YEARS LAST FOREVER

I AM YOUR



C H I L D

The New Brain Research
and
Your Child's Healthy Development



THE I AM YOUR CHILD CAMPAIGN

I Am Your Child is a new national public awareness and engagement campaign to make early childhood development a top priority for our nation. Breakthrough brain research has revealed that the first three years of a child's life are more important for emotional and intellectual growth than we had ever thought.

I Am Your Child is an unprecedented coalition of entertainment leaders, children's organizations, elected officials, health professionals, foundations and corporations who have joined together to help unite the work being done across the country to promote family and community involvement in young children's healthy development. ***I Am Your Child*** founders include Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, and Ellen Gilbert of International Creative Management as well as a broad range of experts from the early childhood fields. Campaign outreach activities are being coordinated by the Families and Work Institute.

Please visit our web site -- www.iamyourchild.org for additional Campaign information.

The goals of the Campaign are:

- ✓ Raise public awareness and promote citizen engagement regarding the importance of the first three years of life
- ✓ Provide families with young children the information, resources and services they need
- ✓ Unite and expand the work being done on the national, state and local levels to improve services for young children and their families
- ✓ Increase the public will to make quality resources and services more widely available to families with young children

Upcoming Events

Campaign Launch

I Am Your Child will be officially launched in Washington, DC on April 16, 1997. Campaign Chair Rob Reiner will be joined by elected officials, corporate and foundation representatives and leaders in health, science and early childhood development to announce this unprecedented effort. Reiner and other Campaign leaders will then participate in the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development on April 17.

Hour-Long ABC Prime Time Special

Produced by Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, the special will air on ABC on April 28 (8pm ET) and will feature music, comedy and a documentary about a community that has mobilized on behalf of young children. The program will be hosted by Tom Hanks and features Billy Crystal, Michael J. Fox, Charlton Heston, Rosie O'Donnell, Roseanne, Shaquille O'Neal, Robin Williams, Oprah Winfrey, General Colin Powell and President and Mrs. Clinton.

Campaign Outreach Materials

Newsweek Special Edition – This special edition will be published to coincide with the airing of the prime-time special and will be a status report on young children and their families. The magazine, sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, will also include information about parenting and early childhood development.

A Parent Booklet – *The First Years Last Forever*, funded by AT&T. The booklet will include tips on how families can promote young children's healthy development. The booklet will be available - free of charge - by calling 1-888-447-3400.

PSAs – The Ad Council is distributing a series of print and electronic PSAs focusing on the importance of family involvement in early childhood development. Each PSA will contain the *I Am Your Child* toll-free number so families can call for free material on early childhood development.

Video for New Parents – Produced by Michele Singer Reiner, this video will help new parents understand the importance of the first three years of life in the healthy development of their children. This video, funded by Johnson & Johnson, will be sent to birthing hospitals, schools, libraries and child care centers throughout the country, and will be available for free to parents and other caregivers (only a \$5.00 fee for shipping and handling will be charged).

CD-ROM – Funded by IBM, the CD-ROM will address, among other things, questions that parents have about their children, beginning in the prenatal period and extending through the first three years of life. You can also learn more about *I Am Your Child* by visiting the Campaign's web site (www.iamyourchild.org).

National, State & Community Action

The Campaign has coalitions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that are forming partnerships to strengthen programs and policies around early childhood development. Outreach activities for the Campaign are being coordinated by the Families and Work Institute. The Campaign is working with over 100 national organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Welfare Association, the Coalition for America's Children, the National Association of Children's Hospitals, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Latino Children's Agenda and the National Urban League. These organizations are using newsletters, journals, and other communications vehicles to publicize the Campaign and inform members about early childhood development.

Public Policy

The Campaign is stimulating bipartisan dialogue about federal, state, and local policies concerning health care, parenting and early childhood development.

The National Governors' Association has formed a bipartisan task force of governors, led by Bob Miller (D-NV) and George Voinovich (R-OH) that will study federal and state policy options to strengthen programs and supports for families with young children.

The National Conference of State Legislatures is developing a leadership group of state legislators who will promote legislative action around the healthy development of young children. Campaign leaders will provide a briefing at the organization's national meeting in August 1997.

The Rand Corporation is conducting research on the long-term economic benefits of various early childhood development policies. A series of cost-benefit analyses on the impact of such programs on the prevention of child abuse, crime, welfare dependency and other outcomes will be released in Spring 1997.

CAMPAIGN FUNDERS

A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, Inc.
AT&T Foundation
The California Wellness Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
The Charles A. Dana Foundation, Inc.
The Commonwealth Fund

Freddie Mac Foundation
The Harris Foundation
IBM Corporation
John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Johnson & Johnson
Kaiser Permanente

The Reiner Foundation
Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
The Teresa & H. John Heinz III Foundation
The Travelers Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation



The First Years Last Forever
MATERIALS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Everyone who cares for young children – parents, family, friends, teachers and child care providers – have an enormous impact on how a child's brain develops. How caregivers interact with and care for young children influences each child's entire life. The *I Am Your Child* Campaign is making a number of materials available to those who care for young children to give them information about how they can help foster healthy brain development during the first three years of a child's life.

- ***The First Years Last Forever***

A simple, easy to read booklet, *The First Years Last Forever* will provide tips on how families and caregivers can promote young children's healthy development. The booklet will be free and made available to caregivers who call the *I Am Your Child* toll-free number – 1-888-447-3400. The booklet, also available in Spanish, is being produced by The Ad Council and is being funded by AT&T.

- **New Parent Video**

Produced by Michele Singer Reiner, this video will help new parents understand the importance of the first three years of life in the healthy development of their children. This video, funded by Johnson & Johnson, will be sent to birthing hospitals, schools, libraries and child care centers throughout the country. Johnson & Johnson is also providing the video for free to individuals who request it by calling, 1-888-447-3400 (only a \$5.00 fee for shipping and handling will be charged).

- **CD-ROM**

The *I Am Your Child* CD-ROM will be an easy-to-use resource on early childhood development for new parents. The CD-ROM will address the burning questions that parents and parents-to-be have about their children. Funded by IBM, the CD-ROM will cover the prenatal period through the first three years of life. In the future, the CD-ROM will be accessible to families all across the world through the *I Am Your Child* website (www.iamyourchild.org).

- **Newsweek Special Edition**

Newsweek magazine will publish a special edition on early childhood development. This status report on young children and their families will also include practical information about parenting. This special edition is being funded by Johnson & Johnson and will hit the newsstands on April 24.

- **PSAs**

The Ad Council is producing and distributing a series of print and electronic PSAs focusing on the importance of family involvement in early childhood development. Each PSA will contain the *I Am Your Child* toll-free number, 1-888-447-3400, so families can call for free material on early childhood development.

- **Community Mobilization - Helping Children & Families**

This booklet identifies what individuals and organizations can do to create communities that support family's and young children's development.

- ***I Am Your Child* Web Site**

By accessing the web site (www.iamyourchild.org), people will be able to keep up to date on Campaign activities. Additionally, individuals can get information like "Brain Facts" -- facts on the importance of healthy brain development during the first three years of life.



The First Years Last Forever
Campaign Funders and Sponsors

A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, Inc.

AT&T Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation

Carnegie Corporation of New York

The Charles A. Dana Foundation, Inc.

The Commonwealth Fund

Freddie Mac Foundation

The Harris Foundation

IBM Corporation

John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Johnson & Johnson

Kaiser Permanente

The Reiner Foundation

Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Teresa & H. John Heinz III Foundation

The Travelers Foundation

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

March 17, 1997

TOM HANKS HOSTS TOP HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES AND PROMINENT AMERICANS IN ABC'S PRIMETIME SPECIAL, "I AM YOUR CHILD," WHICH FOCUSES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, MONDAY, APRIL 28

Two-time Academy Award-winner Tom Hanks will host an all-star lineup of top Hollywood celebrities and prominent Americans, including the President of the United States Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Billy Crystal, Michael J. Fox and Tracy Pollan, Rosie O'Donnell, General Colin Powell, Roseanne, Robin Williams and Oprah Winfrey, in a unique, one-hour primetime special, "I Am Your Child," which will focus on the critical importance of early childhood development and its impact on society. The special will air **MONDAY, APRIL 28** (8:00-9:00 p.m., ET), on the ABC Television Network.

Editors please note: "Spy Game" will not be seen on this date.

Acclaimed filmmaker Rob Reiner ("Ghosts of Mississippi," "The American President," "A Few Good Men," "When Harry Met Sally," "Stand By Me," "The Princess Bride"), who is the director and an executive producer and writer of the special, also will be featured on the program. Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks will reunite for another visit with the 2000-Year-Old-Man; Charlton Heston, Jon Lovitz, Martin Short and Alex Trebek also will be spotlighted in special appearances.

Grammy Award-winner Barry Manilow composed the show's theme song, "I Am Your Child," which will be sung by Bill Medley.

The special will combine music and comedy with the documentary-style story of Hampton, Virginia, a community which has successfully rejuvenated itself by investing in programs for young children and their families. The stories of three Hampton families whose lives have been changed by participating in these programs will be showcased.

The show also will highlight the substantial body of new brain research that reveals how the first three years of life are by far the most formative in a child's emotional, social, physical and intellectual development, as well as what communities are doing to empower and support parents and their youngsters during these critical years.

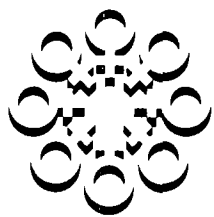
Rob Reiner, Michele Singer Reiner and Alan Zweibel are the executive producers of "I Am Your Child." Jeff Stott is the producer. Mr. Reiner serves as the director and co-writer with Zweibel. Chuck Bangert, Lou Gorfain and Hank O'Karma of New Screen Concepts, producers of ten seasons of America's premier parenting show, "What Every Baby Knows" with T. Berry Brazelton, are producers of the special's documentary segments. The special is a production of Castle Rock Entertainment. (CLOSED-CAPTIONED) (Broadcast in stereo where available)

A TV parental guideline will be assigned closer to airdate.

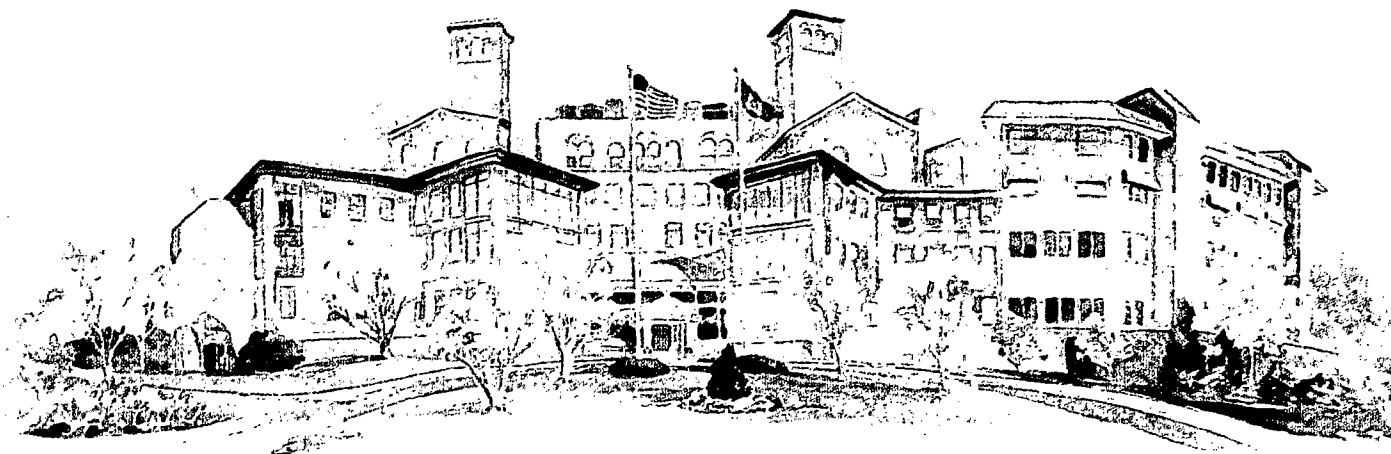
ABC CONTACTS:

Media Relations: Cathy Rehl (212) 456-6749
Photo (Color): Ida Astute (212) 456-6719
Photo (B&W): Jill Yager (212) 456-7031

-- -- ABC -- --



COLUMBIA HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN



For more than 128 years, Columbia Hospital for Women has been the leader in women's health in the Washington metropolitan area. Its history dates back to the Civil War, when medical care was desperately needed for women and infants in Washington, D.C.

In 1866, Congress established and chartered the Columbia Hospital for Women, and today, it remains the only women's hospital in the nation with this distinction. The hospital's history is rich with examples of compassionate care, medical innovation and pioneering new technologies that have benefitted women and infants throughout the United States. It remains today, as it was then, a hospital dedicated exclusively to the care of women and newborns.

Obstetrics

Since 1866, Columbia's physicians, nurse midwives and staff have brought more than a quarter of a million babies into the world. Today, Columbia is the District of Columbia's largest birthing

center. Facilities include 16 state-of-the-art birthing rooms which provide a homelike environment for labor, delivery and well-baby care to mothers and their infants.

Columbia's Alternative Birthing Center (ABC) is designed to facilitate a natural birth experience within a hospital setting for women with low-risk pregnancies. The ABC is the perfect choice for couples who are seeking a birth experience with minimal "high-tech" interventions.

Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery

Columbia's Neonatal Intensive Care Nursery (NICU) provides round-the clock specialized care for premature and critically ill infants. The highly skilled team of NICU professionals and the advanced technology available at Columbia qualify the hospital as a regional center for high-risk obstetrical care. Auditory screening, developmental follow-up and sleep apnea services help promote optimum growth and development for babies who need additional care.

Department of Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Columbia's Maternal-Fetal Medicine Program provides specialized care for women who are experiencing high risk pregnancies, such as pregnant women with hypertension or diabetes, or women who are having their first baby after the age of 40. Our skilled staff of perinatologists provide comprehensive care for women throughout pregnancy and delivery. Specialized services are offered at the hospital as well as in our satellite facility in Shady Grove, Maryland. Should hospitalization be necessary prior to delivery, Columbia's antepartum nursing unit provides round-the-clock specialized care to women experiencing pregnancy complications.

Kushner Institute of Reproductive Genetics

The Kushner Institute of Reproductive Genetics provides specialized diagnostic testing and counseling for couples at risk for genetic disorders.

Center for Fertility and Reproductive Endocrinology

Columbia's skilled staff of reproductive endocrinologists, nurses and technicians provides comprehensive care for infertile couples. For more than 20 years, the fertility center has assisted infertile men and women to achieve pregnancy through the use of state-of-the-art reproductive technologies, including in-vitro fertilization, donor insemination and donor egg programs.

Surgery

Columbia's medical staff offers expertise in gynecological, general, plastic and urological surgery. The surgical suite accommodates both short-stay and overnight patients, and operating rooms are open Monday through Saturday, for the convenience of our patients.

Betty Ford Comprehensive Breast Center

Since 1980, the Betty Ford Comprehensive Breast Center has been dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of breast disease. The Center offers a full range of breast health services, from information, counseling and screening, to diagnosis, treatment, follow-up counseling and coordination of necessary treatment. Mammography, breast ultrasound and mammo-test services are provided through the Center. A consumer library offers free literature on breast health and breast disease, and community education services are also available.

Continence Center

Columbia's Continence Center is the Washington area's first center for the evaluation and treatment of urinary incontinence, and the first such facility exclusively for women. State-of-the-art

medical and surgical remedies for incontinence are provided by our skilled urological staff. Specialized services are provided at the hospital and its satellite facility in Shady Grove, Maryland.

Osteoporosis Diagnostic Center

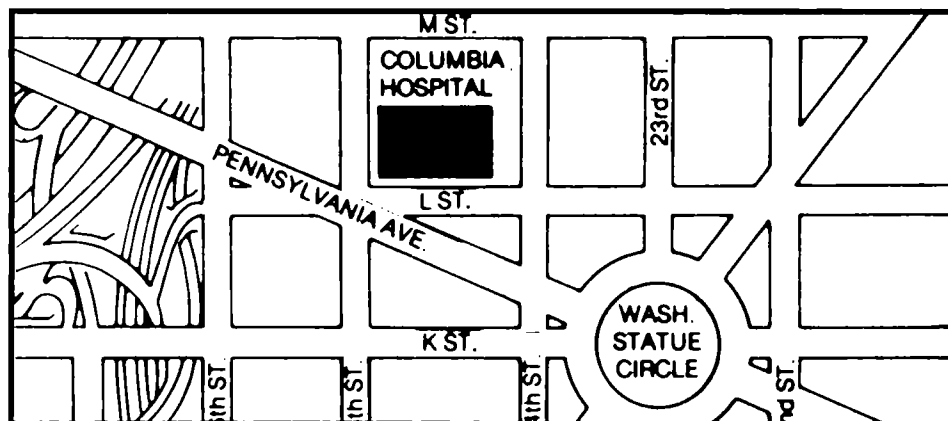
The Osteoporosis Diagnostic Center offers the latest technology to measure bone density in women who may be at risk for the development of osteoporosis.

Teen Health Center

Located at 801 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., the Teen Health Center meets the special health, education and counseling needs of young women between the ages of 13 and 19. Services include comprehensive pre-natal and postpartum care, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, nutrition counseling, social services, family planning services, and referral for specialized care.

National Women's Health Resource Center

Affiliated with Columbia Hospital, the National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) is a not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to improving the health of women throughout the nation. The NWHRC serves as the national clearinghouse for women's health information, providing women and professionals with the information they need to make informed health decisions. The NWHRC publishes the bi-monthly *National Women's Health Report* and provides information in response to inquiries via its health information and referral databases. The Center works with other organizations to develop and implement unique educational programs on key women's health issues.



INSURANCE PLANS

Columbia Hospital for Women accepts the following insurance plans:
(As of August 1994)

- Affordable
- America Health Plan Inc.
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- Capital Care (Capital Choice)
- Chartered Health
- CIGNA
- Community Care Network
- HealthPlus
- Healthkeepers
- Lincoln National Health PPO
- MD-IPA (Preferred, Optimum, Choice, Alliance)
- Mega Life
- Metropolitan Life Insurance
- Multiplan
- Mutual of Omaha
- National Capital PPO
- Private Healthcare System
- Principal Healthcare
- Prudential
- The Travelers
- USA Healthnet

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Columbia Hospital
Physician Referral
(202) 293-6540

Columbia Hospital
General Information
(202) 293-6500

Teen Health Center
(202) 546-TEEN

National Women's Health
Resource Center
(202) 293-6045

Women's Wellness and
Community Education
(202) 293-3239



HOLD FOR RELEASE

April 16, 1997 9:30am

CONTACT: Lorie Slass
Jodi Slusky
202-338-8700

**Breakthrough Brain Research Finds 1st Three Years of Life Critical to Children's Healthy Development
Findings Launch Unprecedented Early Childhood Development Campaign**

***Campaign Founder Rob Reiner Urges Nation to Focus on 1st Three Years of Life
to Help Next Generation of Children Reach Their Full Potential***

(Washington, DC) Prompted by breakthrough brain research that demonstrates the importance of the first three years of life in the healthy development of children, the *I Am Your Child* Campaign was kicked-off today in Washington, DC.

Campaign Chair and Founder Rob Reiner said, "A child born today will be three years old as we enter the new millennium. We now know that these first years last forever -- they directly impact the adult that the child will become. As a country we need to focus attention on these critical years so that our children truly reach their potential and to ensure that they grow to be healthy adults."

The *I Am Your Child* Campaign brings together entertainment leaders, corporations, foundations, elected officials, and health and early childhood experts to help unite and expand the work being done across the country to promote family and community involvement in young children's healthy development.

Reiner was joined by Governors Bob Miller (D-NV) and George Voinovich (R-OH); Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D., Senior Fellow CIVITAS Initiative at Baylor College of Medicine; David Hamburg, M.D., President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York; Dr. David Lawrence, Chairman and CEO of Kaiser Permanente; T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.; Barry S. Zuckerman, M.D., Professor and Chair of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine; and Megan Gunnar, Ph.D., Professor, Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota.

"We have found that experience is the chief architect of the brain," said Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D., Senior Fellow CIVITAS Initiative at Baylor College of Medicine, "Experiences that fill a baby's first days, months and years have a decisive impact on the structure of a child's brain and their future intellectual, social and emotional abilities."

According to recent research, the first three years of a child's life are more important for emotional and intellectual growth than had been previously thought. Findings show that the capacity of a child's brain grows more between birth and age three than at any other time, and brain patterns created during these early years affects every aspect of life, all the way through adulthood. *Rethinking the Brain*, a new report on this important research, will be released by the Families and Work Institute at the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development on April 17.

"When we play with our babies, we talk to them, read to them, we're not just showing love," added T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. "We're helping them develop brain patterns as well as creating a sense of self esteem, all of which will enable them to be enthusiastic about doing better in school and later on in their adult lives."

-- MORE --

In addition to providing families and caregivers with important resources in the area of early childhood development, *I Am Your Child* is working with policy makers and health and early childhood organizations to promote federal, state and local action on behalf of young children and families.

“The National Governors’ Association is promoting an action agenda for states around the importance of the first three years of a child’s life,” said Governor Bob Miller (D-NV), Chairman of the National Governors’ Association. “The National Governors’ Association has formed a special task force to explore these issues and share best practices between states.”

“We must also ensure that government policies - at all levels - support the healthy development of young children,” added Governor George Voinovich (R-OH), Vice-Chairman of the National Governors’ Association. “If we do our job right, the result will be children who are happier and healthier, ready for school, and better prepared to lead productive lives. That benefits *all* of us.”

Research has illustrated that if a child receives warm and responsive care by talking, reading and playing, it can help a child’s brain develop to its full potential. However, if a child is abused or neglected, problems may ensue that can persist a lifetime.

“The fact that the brain matures in the world, rather than the womb, means that young children are deeply affected by their early experiences,” said Barry Zuckerman, M.D., Professor and Chair of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine. “Their relationships with parents and other caregivers, the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings they experience, don’t just influence their moods, they actually affect the way a child’s brain develops.”

“Children who receive consistent, warm, and responsive care tend to produce less of the stress hormone cortisol when they become upset, and in turn, they turn off their stress reaction more quickly. In effect, children who get nurturing, attentive care are better equipped to respond to life’s challenges,” said Megan Gunnar, Ph.D., from the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota.

The Campaign will be producing a number of materials for parents and child care givers which will enable them to learn more about the healthy development of children in the early stages of life.

“We have a web site (www.iamyourchild.org) which contains information for caregivers,” said Reiner. “In addition, we are developing a wide range of products to help parents, including a series of print and electronic PSAs which focus on the importance of family involvement in early childhood development. The PSAs, developed as part of an Ad Council campaign, will include a special number where families can call for free material on early childhood development. The toll-free number is – 1-888-447-3400.”

Additional Campaign materials include:

- **Parent Booklet** -- *The First Years Last Forever*. Funded by AT&T, the booklet will include tips on how families and communities can promote young children’s healthy development. The booklet will be available – free of charge – by calling 1-888-447-3400.
- **Video for New Parents** – Produced by Michele Singer Reiner, this video will help new parents understand the importance of the first three years of life in the healthy development of their children. This video, funded by Johnson & Johnson, will be sent to birthing hospitals, schools, libraries and child care centers throughout the country, and will be available for free to parents and other caregivers (only a \$5.00 fee for shipping and handling will be charged).

- **CD-ROM** – Funded by IBM, the CD-ROM will address, among other things, questions that parents have about their children, beginning in the prenatal period and extending through the first three years of life.
- **Newsweek Special Edition** -- Funded by Johnson & Johnson, this special edition will be a status report on young children and their families, along with practical information about parenting and early childhood development. This will hit the newsstands April 24, 1997.
- **ABC Prime Time Special** -- Hosted by Tom Hanks, the special will air on April 28 at 8pm (ET) and will highlight the efforts of communities to mobilize on behalf of young children and their families. The special was produced by Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner and includes a wide array of entertainers and national leaders.
- **Community Mobilization - Helping Children & Families** -- This booklet identifies what individuals and organizations can do to create communities that support family's and young children's development.
- **I Am Your Child Web Site** -- By accessing the web site (www.iamyourchild.org), people will be able to keep up to date on Campaign activities. Additionally, individuals can get facts on the importance of healthy brain development during the first three years of life.

“Businesses have an important role to play in the healthy development of young children. We need to work with our employees and families in the communities we serve -- to ensure that they are able to give their children the nurturing and assistance they need to get the best start possible,” said Kaiser Permanente CEO, Dr. Dave Lawrence. “And those of us in the health care field have a unique responsibility to identify ways we can help support new and expectant families so they can take advantage of these critical early years – because the first years *do* last forever.”

The Campaign has coalitions in all 50 states that are forming partnerships to strengthen programs and policies around early childhood development. In addition, the Campaign is working with over 100 national organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Welfare Association, the Coalition for America's Children, the National Association of Children's Hospitals, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Latino Children's Agenda and the National Urban League. Campaign outreach activities are being coordinated by the Families and Work Institute.

“What is so unique about *I Am Your Child*, is the diverse group of leaders who have been brought together around this issue. This Campaign is mobilizing every sector of society,” said David Hamburg, M.D., President of Carnegie Corporation of New York. “Rarely has corporate America, the entertainment industry, the foundation community and the hundreds of state and local organizations working for children come together in this way.”

I Am Your Child is a national public awareness and engagement Campaign to make early childhood development a top priority for our nation. Campaign founders include Rob Reiner and Michele Singer Reiner, and Ellen Gilbert of International Creative Management as well as a broad range of experts from the early childhood fields. The Families and Work Institute is coordinating outreach activities for the effort. The Campaign is made possible through the generous support of over a dozen foundations and corporate sponsors, including the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, AT&T, Johnson & Johnson, IBM and Kaiser Permanente.



The First Years Last Forever

BRAIN FACTS

A Parent's Guide to Early Brain Development

Brain Facts is part of the *I Am Your Child* public engagement campaign. Like all of the Campaign's activities, its aim is to raise public awareness about the importance of the first three years of life. **Brain Facts** suggest how recent findings by scientists affect you and your children. It puts these findings into a broader context, and addresses some of the questions you may have about your child's early development.

Q: Why are we hearing so much about children's brains these days?

A: How we humans think and learn - and how we gain these capacities - has always fascinated people. But recently these questions have inspired even greater interest and attention. There is a good reason for new interest in the brain. Thanks to new technologies, including powerful brain scans, scientists are now able to form a much clearer picture of the brain's inner workings. These technologies have allowed new insights into early development.

But technological breakthroughs are only part of the story. New interest in the brain also reflects growing concern across the nation about young children's learning and overall well-being. In particular, parents are eager to understand the role they play and how they can enhance their children's brain development in the crucial early years.

Q: What have scientists discovered that we didn't know before?

A: Scientists have made many discoveries about how a child's earliest experiences affect the way the brain is organized. Some of the neuroscientists' findings simply confirm what many parents already suspected. For example, researchers now confirm that the way you interact with your child in the early years, and the experiences you provide or encourage, have a big impact on his emotional development, learning abilities and how he functions in later life. At the same time, scientists are now learning much more about the biological processes that underlie what we have known.

Scientists are finding that the kind of caregiving that parents provide for their children has an even greater effect on brain development than most people previously suspected. Of course, heredity plays a role. But, we now know that a complicated mix of heredity and experience shapes brain development. Because most of your child's brain development takes place after birth, you have many opportunities every day to contribute to his healthy development. Experience shapes the developing structure of the brain.

-- MORE --

Q: Exactly how do parents affect brain development?

A: The human body is entirely made up of cells, and the brain is no exception. Before birth, a baby's brain cells multiply at an astonishing rate. By the time your baby is born, she will have 100 billion brain cells. These cells are not yet connected in networks as they will be when her brain is mature.

The networks formed by brain cells are crucial. Among other things, they allow thinking and learning to take place. Given the importance of these networks, why do babies begin life without them? One answer is: an unfinished brain offers an important benefit to your baby. It lets him form networks of brain cells in direct response to the world - and from an infant's viewpoint, you are the world.

Babies experience the way you look into their eyes, and they see the expressions on your face; they hear you cooing, singing, talking and reading; they feel you holding or rocking them; they take in your familiar smells; they often experience the taste of your skin as well as their own. Touch is especially important: holding and stroking an infant stimulates the brain to release important hormones that allow him to grow. Your love for your child is, of course, the key to the powerful connection between the two of you. But it is the **expression** of your love that affects the way her brain forms connections.

Q: How do brains form connections?

A: Fortunately, brain cells are perfectly designed for making connections. Each cell sends signals out to other brain cells and receives input from other cells. The signals, in the form of electrical impulses, travel down the length of the nerve cell. With the help of special chemicals (such as serotonin), they travel from cell to cell, creating connections. Repeated activation of networks of neurons strengthens these connections.

These connections are miracles of the human body. But to understand their power, you have to multiply this miracle by trillions. A single cell can connect with as many as 15,000 other cells. The incredibly complex network of connections that results is often referred to as the brain's "wiring" or "circuitry". Experience shapes the way circuits are made in the brain.

From birth, the brain is rapidly creating these connections. By the time she is three, your baby's brain has formed about 1000 trillion connections-about twice as many as adults have. A baby's brain is super-dense, and will stay that way throughout the first decade of life. Beginning at about eleven, a child's brain gets rid of extra connections, gradually making order out of a thick tangle of "wires". The circuitry it ends up with is more powerful and efficient.

Q: How does the brain "know" which connections to keep?

A: This is where early experience comes into play. When a connection is used repeatedly in the early years, it becomes permanent. In contrast, a connection that is not used at all, or often enough, is unlikely to survive. For example, a child who is rarely spoken to or read to in the early years may have difficulty mastering language skills later on. By the same token, a child who is rarely played with may have difficulty with social adjustment as she grows.

-- MORE --

Q: Does it matter when connections are formed?

A: No complex construction process can happen all at once. Different parts of the job get top priority at different times. It's the same for brain development. During certain days early in pregnancy, the cells that will make up the cortex - the part of the brain that allows thinking - must travel to exactly the right place at the right time. This is a "prime time" for brain development. Of course, it is *always* risky for an expectant mother to take drugs or come into contact with radiation. But during this prime time, it is especially dangerous. If cells get sidetracked in their journey up the cortex wall, the baby's brain development may be jeopardized.

There are other prime times both before and after birth. Some of them are relatively short. For example, if the brain is not exposed to visual experiences in the first years of life, a child will not be able to see. Other prime times last a decade or more. For example, for the first dozen years of life, children can learn languages very easily, as opposed to later in life. Whenever these prime times are discussed, it is essential to keep in mind that it is never too late to help a child learn and develop- although it can be more costly and time consuming than in the early years of life.

Q: What does this mean about my relationship with my child?

A: Scientists have found that your relationship with your child affects his brain in many ways. By providing warm, responsive care, you strengthen the biological systems that help him handle his emotions. Research also shows that a strong, secure connection with your child helps him withstand the ordinary stresses of daily life - not just today, but in the future as well. A strong bond doesn't just reassure him, it actually affects the biological systems that adapt to stress. Scientists have shown that in stressful situations, children who have experienced a secure attachment to a parent are more adaptive and produce less cortisol, a stress hormone which affects metabolism, the immune system and the brain. Excessively high levels of cortisol alter the brain by making it vulnerable to processes that destroy brain cells, and just as importantly, by reducing the number of connections in certain parts of the brain.

Q: How can I ensure my child's healthy development when I'm at work?

A: Brain development is non-stop. It continues around the clock - not only during the hours that you spend with your children, but also during the times when you are away. That's one reason why high quality child care is so important - whether the caregiver is a relative, neighbor or child care provider. The person responsible for taking care of your child while you're at work is helping to shape the experiences which allow the brain to develop. From the child's perspective, every important caregiver is a potential source of love and learning, comfort and stimulation. Children need experiences with important caregivers who are sensitive to their emotional and physical needs. By providing consistent and responsive caregiving, you can ensure that your child will have the best opportunity for healthy emotional and social development.

Every important caregiver has the potential to help shape a young child's future.



The First Years Last Forever

TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

New brain research tells us that the first three years of life are a *critical* period in a child's development. Early experiences help determine the child's brain structure – shaping the way he or she learns, thinks and behaves for the rest of his or her life. The *I Am Your Child* Campaign has developed ten basic guidelines to help parents and caregivers raise healthier, happier children who can reach their full potential. The first years of life *do* last forever.

1. Be warm, loving and responsive.

We now know that children's early attachments actually affect the way their brains work and grow. When children receive warm, responsive care, they are more likely to feel safe and secure with the adults who take care of them. Researchers call these strong relationships "secure attachments", and they are the basis of the child's future relationships.

2. Respond to the child's cues and clues.

The cues and clues that infants send are the sounds they make, the ways they move, and the facial expressions they use. Children become securely attached when parents and other caregivers try to read these signals and respond with sensitivity. There are simple steps parents can take to build trust in their young children: the child smiles and someone smiles back; they are upset and someone comforts them; they are hungry and someone feeds them. Parents who respond to their children's needs for attention, as well as quiet times, help their children form secure attachments.

3. Talk, sing, and read to your child.

Telling stories about daily events, reading children's books aloud, singing songs about the people and places your child knows, describing what is happening during daily routines – all of these interactions give your child a solid basis for later learning.

4. Establish routines and rituals.

Daily routines and rituals associated with pleasurable feelings are reassuring for children. Teach your child to know it's nap time by performing a routine that the child can learn to recognize. For example, sing a song and close the curtains everyday when its time for a nap. Or, before bed, read a story to your child. These routines help children learn what to expect from their environment, and how to understand the world around them a little more easily. Repeated positive experiences, which form strong connections between neurons in the brain, provide children with a sense of security. Children who have safe and predictable interactions with others have also been found to do better in school later on.

5. Encourage safe exploration and play.

As infants grow, they begin to explore the world beyond their caregivers. Parents should encourage this exploration and be receptive when the child needs to return to them for questions and security. While many of us think of learning as simply acquiring facts, children actually learn through playing.

6. Make television watching selective.

Television by itself can't teach an infant language, and it can't teach a child how to communicate. Be selective and involved in your children's television habits. Don't use TV as a baby-sitter. Whenever possible, sit and watch programs together with your child and talk about what you're viewing.

7. Use discipline as an opportunity to teach.

As children explore their ever-expanding world, they need limits and consistent, loving adult supervision. Studies reveal that the way in which adults provide discipline is crucial to their children's later development. Many approaches to setting limits can work, as long as they are intended to help and teach children rather than to punish them. Never hit or shake a child. Brain research has shown that these forms of "discipline" can have long-term negative effects. The only things a child learns from physical discipline are fear, humiliation and rage.

8. Recognize that each child is unique.

Children grow at different rates. Their ideas and feelings about themselves reflect, in large measure, parents' and caregivers' attitude towards them. When children receive concrete praise, they begin to see the connections between their actions and your response. Parents and caregivers who are sensitive to their particular child's cues and clues will have children with positive self-esteem.

9. Choose quality child care and stay involved.

To make a good child care choice, visit and observe how providers respond and interact with the babies and children in their care. Seek a provider who responds warmly and responsively to your baby's needs. Select someone who cares about children, is eager to learn about their development, and will give children individual attention and engage them in creative play and exploration. Find a setting that is clean and safe, and carefully check the provider's references.

10. Take care of yourself.

Parents and caregivers need care, too. When you are exhausted, preoccupied, irritable, or depressed, you will probably have a harder time meeting the needs of young children. When you feel overwhelmed, take care of yourself. Reach out and get some help. Families, friends, neighbors, pediatricians, child care providers and others – all can assist you in fostering your child's healthy development.



The First Years Last Forever
News Conference Participants

Rob Reiner is Chair and Founder of the *I Am Your Child* Campaign. He and his wife, Michele Singer Reiner, have also founded the Reiner Foundation, a non-profit foundation established to spotlight various community activities. An Emmy Award-winner for his role as Michael Stivic in the landmark television series, *All in the Family*, he has also directed *This is Spinal Tap*, *Stand By Me*, *The Princess Bride*, *When Harry Met Sally*, *Misery*, *A Few Good Men*, *The American President* and *Ghosts of Mississippi*.

T. Berry Brazelton, MD is Clinical Professor of Pediatrics Emeritus at Harvard Medical School and Professor of Psychiatry and Human Development at Brown University. He has written over 200 scientific papers and 26 books on newborns, intervention to at-risk infants, pediatrics and child development. He is the author of the Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale (NBAS), known as "the Brazelton", an evaluation tool used worldwide to assess the physical, neurological, and emotional well-being of infants.

Megan R. Gunnar, Ph.D. is a Distinguished McKnight University Professor at the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Dr. Gunnar has been studying early childhood issues for 18 years and holds a doctorate in developmental psychology. She has published many articles on early childhood development with much of her work focusing on behavior of young infants and their attachments with their child care givers.

David A. Hamburg, MD is the current president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, former Chairman of the Board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, former President of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences and a former professor of health policy at Harvard University and human biology at Stanford University. He serves on the President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology and is a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

David M. Lawrence, MD serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals. Kaiser Permanente which has approximately eight million members nationwide, delivered approximately 100,000 babies in 1995 alone. They have been involved in children's health for many years, most recently spearheading a highly successful campaign for children's health and safety.

Governor Bob Miller (D- Nevada) currently serves as Chairman of the National Governors' Association. Governor Miller is a former Justice of the Peace, Chairman of the National District Attorney's Association and the Western Governor's Association. Governor Miller was Nevada's Lt. Governor from 1987-88 and assumed the Governors office in 1989, fulfilling the term left by Governor Richard Bryan who was elected to the senate in 1988. He was elected to a four-year term in 1990 and reelected in 1994.

Bruce D. Perry, MD, Ph.D. is a Senior Fellow for the CIVITAS Initiative at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, and serves as Chief of Psychiatry at Texas Children's Hospital. Dr. Perry also serves as Vice-Chairman for research in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor. Dr. Perry has researched many facets of brain development including the affects of drug exposure and traumatic life events on the brain and examined long-term cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social and physiological effects of neglect and trauma in children, adolescents and adults.

Governor George V. Voinovich (R- Ohio) currently serves as Vice-chairman of the National Governors' Association and will serve as Chairman beginning in 1998. The Governor is a former Ohio state legislator, assistant Attorney General, and County Commissioner. Governor Voinovich was elected Governor in 1990 and again in 1994, after serving ten years as the mayor of Cleveland.

Barry Zuckerman, MD is Chief of Pediatrics and Medical Director at Boston Medical Center as well as Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health and Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs at Boston University School of Medicine. He has developed and implemented several programs focusing on early childhood including Reach Out and Read, Pediatric Pathways to Success, the Family Advocacy Program, the Women and Infants program and the Boston Infant Training Center.