

Working together: Partnering with families in the care of small and sick newborns

Families and healthcare professionals working together in the care of preterm, small and sick babies holds many benefits, examples of which are outlined for the groups presented here. Select your subtheme to fit your campaign based on your target group below.



CHILDREN, THEIR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

- Babies have better healthy development outcomes and survival rates
 - Care is improved for small and sick babies with parental support and supervision
 - Bonding and stable attachment is promoted and supported
 - Improved success of exclusive breast milk feeding
- Parents are empowered as primary caregivers
 - Partnership improves self-efficacy, caregiving competence and confidence
 - Families gain health literacy and learn to read baby's cues, leading to improved care; they receive the knowledge they need to support short- and long-term caregiving needs
- Parents' emotional coping abilities are strengthened reducing the risk of negative health effects and feelings of shame and guilt
- Zero separation maintains infant-parent unity and protects the family bond

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

- Leads to improved outcomes and enhances staff satisfaction
- Improves post-discharge care and rates of return for follow-up or preventive care, and reduces the need for re-hospitalization
- Allows more efficient allocation of resources
- Reduces staff burden once parents have been empowered to care for their baby
- Providers see better health outcomes for babies when the parents' role and capacity is expanded
- Improved decision-making when informed parents are involved
- Improved health, attachment and bonding is seen using Kangaroo Mother Care, a recognized lifesaving intervention which includes parents in care
- Increases partnership and understanding between providers and families about the care being received
- Health care professionals benefit from parental insight regarding their baby
- Promotes a high quality of care for babies

THIRD PARTIES (POLICYMAKERS, NGOs, COMMUNITY)

- Leads to better health outcomes, which in turn lead to greater economic benefits, creating global impact for an entire generation of citizens and beyond
- Leads to savings in the public health budget related to reduced hospital stays
- Health staff and families experience greater satisfaction with their experience of care
- Family involvement in care has benefits for babies, families, health professionals, policy makers, and society at large

- **Small and sick babies** refers to babies born preterm – before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed – as well as babies born small for gestational age, or with health problems requiring inpatient care.
- An estimated 15 million babies are born preterm every year – more than 1 in 10 babies around the world (WHO).
- Rates of preterm birth are rising in the majority of countries with adequate data (WHO).
- Preterm birth complications are the leading cause of death for children under 5, causing an estimated 1 million deaths in 2015 globally (UNICEF).
- Family partnership in care includes approaches such as Family Centered Developmental Care and Family Integrated Care, among others.
- Evidence shows that **families and health care professionals working together in the care of small and sick babies leads to better health and developmental outcomes and experience of care.**

ACTION NEEDED TO PROMOTE FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN CARE

- Working with families as caregivers during inpatient care requires context-specific adaptation and inputs
- Ensure healthcare providers are trained to safely identify and manage care for preterm, small and sick newborns, as well as how to engage families in care
- Support health care professionals to fully realize the benefits of working with parents as partners in care, and ensure they acknowledge and strengthen parents' role
- Educate parents as primary caregivers for their baby, and involve them in informed decision-making about their baby's care
- Ensure health facilities have the equipment, supplies, and infrastructure they need so providers can safely care for early/small and sick newborns, and so that families can partner in that care at all hours
- Promote Kangaroo Mother Care in facilities as an evidence-based, low-cost intervention that includes parents in care
- Support fathers to be included in the family unit in facilities
- Ensure communication between health providers and families on preterm babies' special needs, and provide physical and emotional support to the family
- Champion policies and regulations that support family engagement in the health system, particularly inpatient care of newborns

More information on how you can get involved is available in the [2018 WPD Advocacy and Social Media Toolkit](#). A technical brief on *Family Participation in the Care of the Inpatient Newborn* will be launched on WPD [at this link](#).