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Thank you for helping to promote literacy and bonding among the youngest members of your community!

Literacy achievement has been closely linked to language exposure in infants and toddlers¹. Research has shown that when health care professionals discuss literacy development with parents, and provide them with tools such as age appropriate books it can have a positive effect on family attitudes towards reading, reading frequency and pre-school language scores^{2,3}. Literacy is linked to higher levels of employment and income, and reduced health risk behaviours such as smoking, physical inactivity and poor nutrition¹.

The Babies, Books and Bonding program does not have a detailed or specific procedure for distributing books at child health clinic and immunization visits. We do ask that the nurses do the following when distributing books to children and their families at the time of their pre/post-natal, 6 month, 12 month, 18 month and 4 year well-child clinic visits:

- Provide one book from the appropriate age category to each child and their parents or caregivers at the time of the appointment
- Provide one copy of the educational pamphlet/bookmark to the child and their parents or caregivers that corresponds to the child's age/immunizations
- At the 4 year appointment we ask that staff also distribute one activity book and one set of crayons to the child/family
- Provide education to the parents or caregivers about the importance of reading with their children and some tips for doing so. Staff are welcome to draw from the information included on the back of the books or from the information on the pamphlets or other knowledge sources for this education. In the event that the parents or caregivers are not able to read, we ask that staff also communicate that sitting with a child and telling them stories or telling made up stories based on the pictures in the book will help develop literacy skills in the children just the same as reading with them.
- Ask the parents or caregivers the questions on the attached "Babies Books and Bonding Revised Tracking Sheet" that correspond with the child health clinic/immunization visit they are completing with the child. There are 3 to 5 simple questions for each age group that we used to evaluate the program and its impact.

We ask that staff store the "Babies Books and Bonding Tracking Sheet" on the child's chart/file between appointments at which books are distributed. This way we are able to collect multiple data points for each child and are able to keep the data de-identified. Once the child's 18 month visit has



passed and the entire tracking sheet has been completed, we ask that staff fax the completed form to the Population Health Unit so we can include the data in our analysis and evaluation of the program.

The “BBB Order Form” is the simplest way for those working in each community to get more books. We ask that staff complete and send in this form when their supply of books is running low but BEFORE they run out of books completely. It often takes a couple of weeks to assemble an order and get it from my office here in La Ronge to the community that needs it. By ordering more books when a clinic is down to a few weeks of supply we can try to make sure that every child gets all of the books they are entitled to.

If you have any questions about the Babies, Books and Bonding program or about the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership (NHCP), please do not hesitate to contact the NHCP Coordinators at nhcp@pophealthnorthsask.ca or 306-425-8512 or 306-953-5000.

Thanks again for helping to support the development, learning and health of northern Saskatchewan children!

Rochelle Browett and Kevin Mageto
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