We Are One:

Strengthening Infants & Toddler Families As We Work Together

<u>Knowing and Respecting Families</u>

- **Defining Families:**
    - Families can be a group of people related to one another or not. They can be multigenerational to include parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and great grandparents, etc. They may even be of different races or ethnicities. Families share values, goals, bonds, and beliefs that define them as a family unit. These relationships can be complex with many facets of the family that need support.

    - Families, however they are defined, should be respected and supported in ways that are non-judgmental. As child care professionals, we need to offer support as we navigate through professional partnerships and relationships with families.

- **As child care professionals, we need to follow guidelines that help us to understand our role and relationship with families**
    - A helpful document is the **Competencies of Child Care Professionals** available on the Virginia Infant Toddler Specialist Network. www.va-itsnetwork.org
        - Consider the following areas when working with families:
            - Knowing and respecting families
            - Communication
            - Collaborative Community Partnerships
            - Nurturing Families as Advocates

- **It is extremely important to provide ways our early childhood classrooms allow families to feel welcome.**
    - Examples of welcoming families and children in the classroom are:
        - Offering an organized classroom with labeled cubbies along with the child's name and, if possible, a photo of the child.
        - Displaying decorations that are appropriate for the age of the child. For example, in an infant or toddler classroom, posting pictures of the child's family and pictures of items that may be familiar to them such as animals or pets. Photos of a ball and a truck are more appropriate than alphabet and numbers posters.
        - Providing a parent bulletin board or a welcome area that will display information that is important for parents.
        - Knowing each child's parents by name rather than just saying, "Hi mom!"