



## **Getting Started with Books, Ball, and Blocks**

### **First Steps and Things to Consider:**

- Volunteer recruitment (should arrive 30min-1 hr before start of the event)
- Location, date, time
- Population focus
  - Will the event be open to the public, or will the host only be marketing the event to families in the organization or program?
  - Will the event be held for a specific age group or families with children ages birth to five?
  - Will the host expect a large number of Hispanic families?
- Marketing options (word of mouth, flyers, radio announcements, family magazine)
- Equipment needed
  - 3 to 5 tables for sign-in, scoring, and activity stations
  - Additional tables may be needed depending on the number of community resources invited to participate in the event
- Safety plan in case of emergencies as well as a First Aid Kit available for the event

### **Logistics**

#### **Volunteers:**

One of the most important aspects of planning a Books, Balls, and Blocks (BBB) event is to ensure there will be enough volunteers to maintain safety for everyone. There must be at *least* 18 volunteers for a full BBB (note that a large event will need more). This places one volunteer at each activity booth, one at sign-in, and one for ASQ-3. The 18 does not include BBB staff needed to manage the entire event and coordinate with community representatives. Whomever, volunteer or staff person, scores the ASQ-3 should be adequately trained on how to score the form, how to communicate the results, and how to answer possible questions parents may have.

Volunteers need to be fully aware of the intent of the BBB and their individual responsibilities as well as their overall obligation to supervision and child safety (see volunteer information sheet). Volunteers who are not accustomed to

working with young children may require extra time in their orientation to explain the importance of their undivided attention to the children and activities.

Volunteers who bring their own children need to make sure they also have someone else to watch the child. A volunteer cannot be fully engaged if s/he is also trying to parent.

We will provide red flags to communicate that s/he needs assistance. We tell our volunteers to wave their flags if they need help with a child, need a bathroom break, or need a BBB leader for any other reason. This way the volunteer does not leave his or her station unattended. As a leader, you must be vigilant of the signals sent by your volunteers. The flags should be distributed and explained during volunteer training.

### **Space:**

Another important aspect of a successful BBB is an understanding of the space the event will be held in. The ideal location to be able to set up all 16 stations is indoors and about 6,000 square feet with bathrooms and possibly a side room for extra materials and personal items to be stored (imagine a high school gymnasium).

A BBB can be held in a smaller space (like a classroom). If this is the case, then you need to reduce the number of activities and materials. It is possible to do a BBB with just a few activities; however, this will need to be for just a few children at a time. If you have significantly more children than your activities can handle, safety becomes a concern. Two to three children at a given time is appropriate for most activities.

A BBB can be held outdoors, but this is not ideal. It becomes very difficult to track children and parents as there are unlimited entrances and exits. If you are looking to host an event outdoors, try to see if there is an adjacent building you can guide people into for the BBB portion. Alternatively you may choose to have just a few activities with multiple volunteers or, instead of a BBB, simply use the space and time as a venue for parents to come through and pick up an ASQ-3 and make a community connection. You can ask parents to return the ASQ-3 to you via mail/fax/email or establish a system where you can call and complete it together over the phone after the event. Remember that in all situations, safety and security is of the utmost importance.

## **Public Relations and Marketing**

Books, Balls, and Blocks is a community outreach component of the Help Me Grow Alabama model. To conduct a BBB in a community, you will need at least one sponsoring organization willing to coordinate any advertising, marketing, volunteers, and community connections. This can be as small as telling relevant parents and passing out a few flyers to advertising via media and billboards to the mass public. Each community will differ, but there does need to be an agency and point-person responsible for coordination. We ask as you develop your materials that you please include, "Alabama Partnership for Children, Help Me Grow" and/or the Help Me Grow Alabama logo which can be obtained from the Alabama Partnership for Children. Additional logos to be considered include organizations leading the event, any key funders, and partners you want visibly affiliated.

### **Important Messages:**

- Books, Balls, and Blocks is a free event held for children and their families. The purpose of the event is to screen children for developmental delays in the first 5 years of life.
- The event is fun, educational, and exciting! While children engage in games and activities at different stations, parents learn how these interactions help stimulate their child's development.
- While the children are playing, parents can complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3). The ASQ-3 is reliable, valid, and easy to use. The ASQ-3 is the recommended tool to screen young children for developmental delays.
- On site, there will be professionals to score the ASQ-3. At the events or shortly afterwards, parents will receive follow-up from a professional to learn if his or her child's development 1) appears on schedule, 2) needs to be monitored and supported with learning activities, or 3) requires further assessment with a professional.
- Parents will be given resources concerning their child's development and fun activities that they can do with their child! Free community resources will also be available at the event.

Our hope is for Book, Balls, and Blocks to be a free, fun, and exciting event, while supporting the healthy development of children in our community.