

When a Parent Becomes Unemployed...



When a parent loses their job, it causes a great deal of stress. Not only are the adults in the family worried and concerned, but the children are affected as well. Job loss creates anxiety and economic hardship for families.

Here are some of the issues unemployment can bring:

- increased stress in the family
- negative change in economic status (worse with single parents)
- lower self-esteem (children may feel they are not as good as others)
- poverty status
- delay in social skills
- resignation (frustration over the situation can cause a hopeless feeling and bring about an attitude of "why bother?!")

Watch for the following warning signs:

- child lacks basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter)
- child is tired, listless
- child feels insecure, fearful, possessive
- child is withdrawn/depressed

How to help the child and the family during this time:

- address hunger first (giving extras)
- provide a special place for child's possessions
- provide a safe, stable, predictable environment
- understand the child's possessiveness
- offer support and encouragement to the family
- provide information on community support
- respect parents and offer empathy

Tips for parents:

- Be truthful and realistic. Do not tell a child nothing is wrong. Children will sense it anyway. Children need to be able to trust the adults in their life.
- Discuss feelings. Parents should say if they feel angry or upset.
- Using words like "fired" or "laid off" should be avoided. Children need to be told what is happening in words they can understand clearly.
- Parents should not burden children with things that may not happen like the possibility of selling the house.
- Children will worry about their parents and how they are doing, so it is essential that parents take care of themselves.
- Big transitions such as potty-training should be avoided at times of high stress.
- Parents should use this event as a way of helping children become stronger (more resilient).
- Routines and schedules should be kept consistent. It is reassuring!

Promoting Healthy Social Behaviors in Child Care Centers