

# SEPARATION AND DIVORCE



**Early childhood educators have the unique joy—and stress—of caring for young children and their families. At no time is stress more evident than during a divorce. While it is not our role to counsel, advise, or evaluate the parents' situation, extra understanding on our part, as well as increased communication with parent and child, are essential.**

**For many mothers, divorce means reentry into the workplace. For fathers, it brings their first exposure to the early childhood classroom environment. They find themselves lost in a world known only by their ex-wives. It is important for teachers and directors to be open and willing to help both mother and father by emphasizing the positive things you hear and observe about their child. This may keep the focus on the positive.**

**See the sample article on the next page. You can send it home to parents to learn strategies to help children through separation and divorce.**

**Dear Parents,**

**Children are greatly affected by their parents' decisions and actions. This is true in everyday life and especially so in a situation as life-altering as divorce. Here are a few suggestions for helping a child through the trauma of separation or divorce:**

- **Speak to them about the separation or divorce as honestly as possible.**
- **Assure them that the divorce is a result of parental problems and they did nothing to cause the separation.**
- **Answer their questions to help satisfy curiosity and ease confusion and frustration.**
- **Listen attentively as kids share their feelings and concerns about the situation.**
- **Encourage expression of feelings in a variety of ways – through writing, talking, dancing, or drawing.**
- **Read stories together about divorce and divorced families. Ask a children's librarian to recommend books that are appropriate for your child's age and situation.**
- **Try to maintain family routines and continuity as much as possible, making sure that the child sees both parents on a frequent and regular basis.**

