



# Alignment Rockford

## Invitation to Participate™

Healthy Starts: Playgroups

Respond by: January 31, 2018

**Playgroup Pilot Implementation Dates:**  
**3/1/18 - 5/25/18 and/or 9/1/18 - 5/25/19**

### **Project overview:**

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***For all families with children ages 0-5 to have the resources they need to ensure their children excel in school.***

**Description:** Research conducted by the American Educational Research Association (Donald Hernandez) indicates that 3rd grade reading level predicts high school graduation; that a child's 3rd grade reading level is predicted by their vocabulary by age 3; and that a child's vocabulary by age 3 is predicted by early learning experiences well before their first word is spoken. Additionally, a recent study, typically referred to as the 30 Million Word Gap by Betty Hart and Todd Risley, brought to light the impact of parent/caregivers' role in vocabulary development of children under the age of 3. The study showed that, by age 4, children from lower-income families hear a staggering 30 million fewer words than children from higher-income families. This word gap puts children from lower-income families at a significant disadvantage when they enter kindergarten. It is critical that parents/caregivers talk, sing, and read aloud to children every day starting at birth to develop language skills. Language provides a strong foundation for reading success.

Based on this research Alignment Rockford's Healthy Starts team recognizes that increased parent-child engagement can significantly close the achievement gap for children in the Rockford community and is therefore seeking family/early childhood enrichment services providers to sign up to provide one or more hour-long parent/child playgroups at the pilot location of Rockford Housing Authority's The Grove at Keith Creek for families with children ages birth to 5 to increase parent-child interactions and enhance healthy relationships. Playgroups will offer families an introduction to early childhood resources in a familiar setting and provide opportunities to develop comfortable, trusting relationships with providers.

The focus of the parent/child playgroups will be to increase/develop high quality interactions between parent/caregivers and their children through active play. Additional benefits will include increased awareness of community services that support families and a decrease in isolation for families with young children.

#### **Activities:**

Parent-child interaction activities will include role-modeling of high quality interaction skills and the promotion of active play, arts/music, pre-literacy, pre-math/science, gross/fine motor, and social/emotional skills.

#### **Examples may include (but are not limited to):**

- Literacy activities (book share)
- Exercise
- Dental hygiene
- Infant massage
- Nutrition/cooking/health and wellness
- Self and child soothing
- Music and games

## **Services needed from the community:**

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Agencies chosen to participate in the playgroups will agree to the expectations outlined below:

### **Expectations include the following:**

- Sign up to facilitate playgroup for one or more of the (bi)weekly sessions offered during the pilot timeframe (March-May, 2018; September, 2018 - May, 2019)
- Provide appropriate notification of inability to provide services (at least 2 weeks in advance)
- Participate in pre/post-session survey(s)
- Report any issues/concerns to Alignment Rockford immediately
- Attend orientation (date to be determined)
- Follow expectations/guidelines for participation as outlined at orientation and in accordance with Rockford Housing Authority, Gorman and Company

### **What to expect from Alignment Rockford/Rockford Public Schools:**

- Selected agencies will be notified upon acceptance from the team....
- An orientation will take place prior to the start of the pilot to provide playgroup structure/framework/curriculum guidance, answer questions, ensure identified providers understand expectations, etc.
- Oversight support on location at each playgroup
- Regular check-ins about how the pilot is going, troubleshooting, and tweaks as necessary