



Milwaukee County  
**Birth to 3**   
Program

## What is Social-Emotional Development in Children?

Social-emotional development is the evolution of a child's ability to react to and interact with their social environment. A child's social-emotional development from birth to age three is incredibly important as it directly impacts their long-term brain structure and resulting behavioral patterns through adulthood.

Below are the different components that contribute to a child's social and emotional development:

- **Social interaction:** The connections children form with others, including caregivers, family and peers. A young child's social skills show in their ability to take turns, play with others and follow simple instructions.
- **Emotional awareness:** A child's ability to recognize and understand their own feelings as well as those of others. For example, a young child might show concern for a crying friend.
- **Self-regulation:** How well a child manages their feelings and behaviors. Being able to calm down when experiencing big emotions (anxiety, anger, excitement, etc.) and focusing on a difficult task are examples of self-regulation.

The Birth to 3 Program strives to help children grow and learn to their fullest potential. If you're concerned about your child's social-emotional development, Milwaukee County's Birth to 3 Program can help.