

## A Scripted Guide to Making the Most of the Rocking Chair Project Home Visit

### Arrival

**Let the Mom know how happy you are to make the home visit and that you appreciate her sharing her home with you:** *Thanks so much for inviting me into your home. It's so nice to see where Isabelle is loved and cared for.*

**Make a comment about something nice the parent has done in her home for the baby:** *(Baby's name) room is so bright and cheerful. It's lovely.*

**Inquire about how the Mom is doing:** *How is it going for you? Remember, taking care of yourself is very important for taking care of your little one. He/she needs you to be healthy and strong.*

### Extending the Conversation

**Show empathy to Mom:** *It must be hard to get used to waking up in the middle of the night. Your baby is so lucky to have you taking such good care of her.*

*I know it can be so hard and frustrating to hear your baby cry. But that's her main way of communicating. Holding her in different ways and trying different things to comfort her—talking or singing to her—is the best you can do. Some days nothing works—babies just have to cry sometimes. But hang in there. Responding in a loving way now lets your baby know she can trust you to always be there. That means in the long run, she will cry less.*

**If the baby is awake, comment on your observations of the baby to help Mom tune in to her baby and to see him/her in positive light:** *Oh, look at that sweet face. He looks so peaceful. You are taking very good care of him.*

*I know it's hard to hear your baby cry, but thank goodness he has those strong lungs to let you know when he needs you.*

*He's turning his head and making sucking noises. That's often a sign of hunger. Do you think he's ready to eat?*

*She's arching her back and looking away. What do you think she would be saying if she could talk? [Note: This often means that a baby needs a break. Newborns tire really easily. Even feeding can exhaust them!]*

**Comment on things you see the mom do that show the positive impact she is having on her baby:** *You picked him up when he fussed and look how he melted into your arms and calmed. You are letting him know how important and loved he is. This helps him feel good about himself as he grows.*

*When you sing and talk to her, you are actually already building her language skills. Hearing your voice helps her eventually learn words. When you smiled back and talked to her after she cooed at you, you let her know she is a good communicator. This makes her feel loved and special. These moments are her first back-and-forth conversations.*

### Using the Rocking Chair

**If the baby is sleeping, invite Mom to help you put the rocking chair together:** *Comment on how helpful it is to have assistance.*

**Have Mom "test out" the chair with her baby. Point out the benefits of rocking together:** *Rocking your baby is a great way to soothe him. Don't worry about holding and cuddling him too much. You can't spoil a baby.*

*This rocking chair is a great place for you and your baby to relax together. Just looking into each other's eyes makes him feel safe and secure. Moments like that build a strong bond between you.*

*You can rest his head on your arm in this rocking chair. He'll love looking at your face while you talk to him. It doesn't matter what you say, he just loves the sound of your voice.*

**Point out when the baby responds with his eye contact or sounds.** *See how he looks at you and makes sounds. This is his way of responding to you. These are actually his first conversations with you, even before he can say any words. He's letting you know that he likes having you here with him.*

### Dealing with Difficult Issues

**Comment on any concerns you have in a non-judgmental way:**

*I can tell you have made such a special effort to make (baby's name) crib so warm and cozy. But, unfortunately, doctors have discovered that the bumpers in cribs can be dangerous for little ones. I understand that might be disappointing to hear, but I know you want your baby to be safe. That's why it's important to take the bumpers out of the crib for now. You can put them back in when your baby is a year old.*

**If you see a Mom getting frustrated and perhaps rough with her baby:**

*I know it can be very hard to have a fussy baby. Some babies have a harder time being soothed. It's not your fault, it's just the way they're wired. Remember, though, that even fussy babies get calmer as they grow. Just hang in there and try different ways to soothe her until you find what works. If nothing works, don't be afraid to ask for help. [Explore if there are family or friends who can step in when Mom needs a break. Also let Mom know she can always put baby down in a safe place for a few minutes if she needs a brief break. If you see signs of reflux or other medical issues, suggest that Mom schedule an appointment for the baby.]*

**If you see a Mom over-stimulating her baby and/or not reading the baby's cues:** *It is so great to see how much you enjoy interacting/talking/playing with your baby. It looks like—from the way he's turning away from us—that he's had so much fun that he's tired out and needs a little break. Babies tire so easily. Just making eye contact can be intense and exhausting for them!*

**If a Mom is not responding to her baby's needs:** *I see (baby's name) is fussing. If he could talk, what do you think he'd tell us he needs?*

### Saying Good-Bye

**End the home visit by making sure Mom feels good about her role as a Mom:**

*You are providing such a warm, loving home for your baby. This is the most important thing you can do to get her off to a good start.*

**Thank her for inviting you in to her home. Reassure her that no question is too small:**

*Thanks again for having me into your home. I loved being here and seeing where you and (baby's name) live together. Let me know if there are any questions you have before you come in for your next visit. There are no unnecessary questions. That's what I'm here for—to help you help [baby's name] grow up healthy.*