

SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN

MAKING THE MOST OF FAIRS, FESTIVALS, AND PARADES

WEST VIRGINIA INFANT/TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION



Spring, summer, and fall in West Virginia often include lots of fairs, festivals, and parades. This is a great time for young children to explore different foods, music, animals, and fun new experiences. It can also mean that young children may experience unfamiliar sounds, smells, lights, and crowds. Preparing young children in advance, and a little pre-planning, will help to make the experience enjoyable for all! Fairs and festivals are a great way to explore the state, both in your own area and beyond.

WWW.NURTURINGWVBABIES.ORG



To access more resources of the West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association, please scan the QR code.

Start with a plan. Begin with making sure the festival, fair, or parade is the right fit for your family. Other considerations could be the time when you attend, how long you attend, and what activities your family would be interested in seeing. Visit the areas that your family is most interested in first, in case you need to leave early. Depending on the length of time you will be staying, you may want to bring:

- comfort item for naptime,
- snacks to stretch between meals,
- sunscreen for hot days,
- jackets for cooler evenings, or
- change of clothes for water rides.

Consider sensitivity to sounds, lights, and costumes. Some children LOVE loud noises, bright flashing lights, and characters in costumes. Others do not. If your child is sensitive to these things, you may consider:

- bringing ear plugs or head phones, or leaving the event earlier before all the loud noises begin.
- avoiding activities with bright lights, or attending in the daytime when the lights are not as bright.
- redirecting the child away from an area that has characters in costumes. Children should not be made to interact with characters in costume if feeling anxious or afraid.

Recognize your child's need to have some quiet time if feeling overwhelmed. Signs that your young child is feeling overwhelmed:

- irritable or crying,
- anxious,
- agitated, or
- clingy behavior.

Plan for breaks and look for quiet areas. Sometimes, fairs and festivals will offer a sensory room that offers young children a quiet place to rest and recharge.