

A Goslings Family Hour Facilitators' Guide

By Dr. Brenda Hussey-Gardner
& Dr. Betsy Diamant-Cohen

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Acknowledgements

Mother Goose on the Loose Goslings is the successful result of multiple collaborations and partnerships. The program script was co-authored by **Brenda Hussey-Gardner, PhD, MPH** and **Betsy Diamant-Cohen, MLS, DCD**.

Dr. Diamant-Cohen brings more than 25 years of experience as a children’s librarian in public libraries and children’s museums. As the creator and Executive Director of the award-winning Mother Goose on the Loose early literacy program, she envisioned the Goslings adaptation and championed its development. Dr. Hussey-Gardner, a Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, contributed over 30 years of clinical and research expertise supporting medically fragile infants and their families.

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Under the direction of Dr. Hussey-Gardner, and with sustained support from the **PNC Foundation**[®], medical students and neonatology fellows from the University of Maryland School of Medicine have played a pivotal role in ongoing Goslings research. Their contributions include:

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- **Khateerja Aboolatiff, MD**, who helped create and study the Goslings Traffic Light Sign;³
- **Amy Campos, BS**, who is currently evaluating the Goslings Sibling Visitation Badge.

Above all, we express our deepest gratitude to the **families** who participated in Goslings and shared their experiences through evaluation activities. Their reflections have shaped and strengthened the program in profound ways.

To date, Goslings has expanded to NICUs across several states. Drs. Hussey-Gardner and Diamant-Cohen look forward to the continued growth and national reach of Goslings as a model for supporting early language, literacy, and parent-infant bonding in the NICU.

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About MGOL Goslings

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Goal

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Objectives

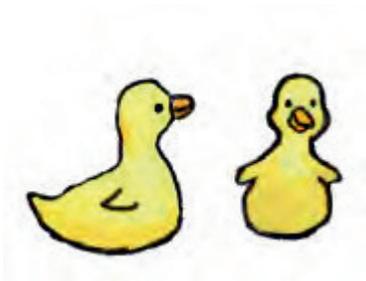
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Outcomes

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Goslings has the potential to positively impact the lives of premature and medically fragile babies, and their families nationwide. It is unique among known interventions in that it addresses NICU parents' desire to learn how to understand and interact with their medically fragile babies, and it also addresses a relatively recent resurgence of interest in language and auditory stimulation in the NICU, particularly in single family room (SFR) units. Goslings is on the cutting edge of early literacy; empowering parents, assisting medical staff, and helping babies.

There are two Goslings Programs: Goslings Family Hour (GFH) and Mini Goslings. This Facilitator's Guide focuses on GFH. Mini Goslings is a 15-minute video that summarizes key components of GFH: (1) understanding the medical readiness of their baby for interaction, (2) interpreting their baby's behavioral signals, and (3) talking, singing, and reading in the NICU. Families who are unable to attend GFH can watch Mini Goslings.



Goal

The goal of Goslings Family Hour is to facilitate the development of optimal language and literacy habits from the very beginning of life—even when that life begins too early or is medically complex. GFH equips parents with the knowledge and tools needed to:

1. Understand their baby’s medical readiness for interaction
2. Interpret their baby’s behavioral signals
3. Talk, sing, read (share books), and play with their baby—in the NICU and later at home

Objectives

1. Encourage parents to spend quality time interacting with their baby in medically and developmentally appropriate ways that promote early language and literacy while supporting parent-infant bonding.
2. Inform parents about the importance of early language and literacy from the very beginning of life.
3. Encourage parents to talk, sing, read, engage in fingerplays, and play with their baby according to the baby’s individual readiness.
4. Educate parents about the behavioral signals babies use to communicate readiness for interaction, self-coping, and the need for a change.
5. Empower parents to give their babies the best possible beginning by offering high-quality language, expressions of love, soothing lullabies, and gentle music.
6. Reduce feelings of isolation, anxiety, and stress by offering a joyful program that builds community among families with babies in the NICU.

7. Encourage parents to continue early language and literacy activities once their baby is home.

Outcomes

Results from two Goslings evaluations demonstrate that the program:

1. Provides parents with the guidance and materials needed to promote early language and literacy in the NICU.
2. Enhances parent confidence in interpreting their baby’s signals of readiness for interaction.
3. Increases parent engagement in early language and literacy activities—especially talking and singing in ways that are responsive to the baby’s medical status and behavioral signals.
4. Reduces instances of overstimulation among medically fragile babies.

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Strategies for NICUs & Community Agencies to Partner Together

NICUs vary widely in staffing, expertise, and available time. Some NICUs may have sufficient internal resources to deliver Goslings Family Hour (GFH) independently. Others may wish to partner with a community organization to implement the program.

Potential community partners include:

- Educators from a children’s museum
- Children’s librarians from a public library
- Librarians from a university health sciences library
- Early literacy professionals
- Early intervention specialists (e.g., early childhood special educators)

Whether the initial contact comes from a NICU or a community agency, communication should be clear, professional, and purposeful.

- **If a NICU is seeking a partner:** A designated staff member should phone or email the program director at the community agency, introduce themselves, briefly describe GFH, and

request a meeting to explore collaboration.

- **If a community organization is seeking a NICU partner:** A designated staff member should contact the NICU Medical Director and/or NICU Nurse Manager with a similar introduction and request.

If funding is already secured to support program implementation, this should be mentioned in the initial communication. If funding is not yet in place, it should be added to the agenda for the first meeting so the partners can explore possibilities together.

Some community agencies may be able to donate staff time in-kind if the NICU covers material costs, while others may require funding to support staff salaries. When additional funding is needed, the NICU and the community partner may:

- Seek philanthropic donations
- Jointly apply for grants from local foundations
- Consult hospital or agency development staff for assistance with fundraising or grant writing

If resources are tight, there are cost-saving options. NICUs and community partners can collaborate with local childcare centers, sororities, or service groups to hold a **rattle and book drive** or host a **craft night** where families can make their own monkey puppets (many free templates and tutorials exist online).

Establish a Goslings Team & Champion

To successfully implement Goslings Family Hour (GFH) in any NICU, it is essential to establish a Goslings Team and appoint a Goslings Champion. The Goslings Team should consist of **at least three professionals** who work collaboratively to integrate Goslings into the NICU culture. Core responsibilities of the team include:

- Educating NICU staff about GFH and its benefits
- Advertising the program to families
- Inviting families to participate
- Facilitating program implementation
- Documenting family attendance

The team may also identify or pursue **funding opportunities** to support program implementation and may participate in **program evaluation** activities. During the first year of planning and implementation, the Goslings Team should meet monthly to ensure a strong foundation and consistent progress.

One of the team's earliest tasks is to appoint a **Goslings Champion**. While the Goslings Team may include both NICU staff and community partners involved in delivering GFH, the Goslings Champion **must be a member of the NICU staff**. This individual assumes overall responsibility and accountability for program implementation within the NICU and serves as the primary point of contact for all Goslings-related activities.

Create a Sibling Policy

Each Goslings Team should develop a clear policy regarding sibling attendance at GFH. Older siblings—particularly those **10 years of age or older**—may benefit from participating in GFH activities and may be able to engage meaningfully in the session. Younger siblings, however, may not yet have the attention span needed for an hour-long program designed for adults.

When creating your sibling policy, be sure to consider:

- Your unit's **general sibling visitation policy**
- Any **flu-season or infection-prevention policies** that may further restrict sibling access

A well-defined sibling policy helps ensure the safety, comfort, and inclusion of all families attending GFH.

Establish the Schedule

When planning GFH, each NICU will need to determine how often sessions will be offered. The optimal frequency depends on staffing, funding, and trends in NICU census and patient acuity. Each session lasts **60 minutes**, and although parents only need to attend once, families may enjoy attending more than once. In most NICUs, offering GFH **one to two times per month** works well.

In addition to setting the frequency of sessions, the Goslings Team should identify the **best day of the week and time** of day for their unit. This will vary by NICU, but many parents return to work

and save parental leave until their baby is discharged, making late-afternoon or early-evening sessions the most accessible.

Whenever possible, hold sessions on a **consistent schedule**. Predictability makes it easier for families and staff to remember and communicate upcoming sessions. For example, saying that GFH is offered “the first and third Thursday of each month at 4 p.m.” is more memorable than a rotating schedule such as “Tuesday the 8th at 4 p.m. and Sunday the 20th at 7 p.m.” A clear, consistent schedule supports family participation, improves communication across the clinical team, and helps establish GFH as a valued and expected part of NICU culture.

If funding is tight, additional ideas to reduce costs include holding a raffle and book drive with a local childcare center or sorority and hosting a craft night for families to make monkey puppets; there are a variety of directions for making monkey puppets online.

Goslings Facilitators

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Qualifications

GFH can be facilitated by a wide range of neonatal, pediatric, and early childhood professionals.

Potential hospital-based facilitators include:

- Child life specialists
- Developmental specialists
- Physicians
- Nurses
- Psychologists
- Social workers
- Speech-language pathologists
- Other pediatric rehabilitation specialists

Community-based professionals who may partner with NICU staff to deliver GFH include:

- Children’s librarians
- Children’s museum education specialists
- Early literacy professionals
- Early childhood teachers
- Early childhood special educators
- Early interventionists

A **bachelor’s degree** in a related field and at least **one year of experience** working with parents and infants under one year of age is required to become



Parents enjoy chanting to their “babies” during a Goslings session.

a GFH facilitator. An exception may be made for professionals who hold an **associate degree in a related field** and have one year of relevant experience **if they have completed in-person GFH facilitator training**.

Regardless of a facilitator’s professional background or institutional affiliation, GFH facilitators must embody qualities that help families feel welcomed, supported, and at ease. Effective facilitators are:

- Warm and naturally friendly
- Comfortable smiling, laughing, and using a sense of humor
- Skilled at engaging parents as equal partners

- Flexible and accommodating
- Confident reading and singing in front of others

Importantly, facilitators **do not need to have a strong singing voice**. The emphasis in GFH is on fostering meaningful, responsive parent-infant interactions—not vocal performance.

Required Readings

Prior to administering GFH, all facilitators are required to read **two key articles** in addition to this Facilitator’s Guide.

The first article, **Mother Goose in the NICU: Support for the Neediest**

Infants and Their Families¹

explains the rationale behind the development of Goslings and provides background on how the program was created.

The second article, **A Comprehensive Evaluation of Goslings-II: A Sustainable Early Language and Literacy Program for NICU Parents³** offers a thorough review of the relevant literature and presents the most recent published evaluation of GFH.

Additional recommended readings—including the original Goslings evaluation and other related publications—are available on the Goslings website:
<https://mgol.net/mgol-goslings-publications/>

Recommended Training

On-site training for GFH facilitators is available and recommended, but not required. This interactive, hands-on workshop helps facilitators build confidence and ensures consistency in delivering GFH.

*For more information about upcoming training opportunities, visit the Goslings website:
<https://mgol.net/mgol-goslings-training-info/>*

Practice

It is essential for facilitators to **practice implementing GFH** with one another in order to gain confidence and receive constructive feedback. If your NICU has only one GFH facilitator, that individual should rehearse the session **multiple times** in front of one or two colleagues.

When practicing, facilitators should follow the **GFH script** closely and use the **panels and manipulatives** exactly as they will be used during an actual session. The script does not need to be memorized; in fact, facilitators are encouraged to speak naturally and in their own words. However, the **details are extremely important**, and core content must be delivered accurately.

Facilitators may use the panel visuals as prompts to guide the flow of the session, but they should aim to incorporate as much of the scripted language as possible. Because NICU babies are medically fragile, it is critical that parents receive **accurate, developmentally appropriate information**. Repeating key points throughout the session helps reinforce learning and supports parents in remembering what they have heard.

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Educate Staff

Early in the planning process, it is critical to inform physician and nursing leadership about GFH and to obtain their support. The Goslings Champion should schedule a meeting with the **NICU Medical Director and NICU Nurse Manager** to introduce GFH, answer questions, and request approval to bring the program to the unit. At the end of this meeting, the Champion should request time to present at a staff **clinical meeting**.

During the meeting, the Goslings Champion can:

- Provide an overview of GFH
- Introduce the unit's Goslings Team
- Share the proposed implementation plan
- Request feedback and support
- Describe how Mini Goslings will be used, if applicable

If desired, the Champion can also email clinical staff a copy of the Cao et al.³ evaluation article for additional background information.

In addition to informing neonatologists, all other NICU clinical staff must learn about the program. This includes—though is not limited to—**nurse practitioners, physician assistants, bedside**

nurses, social workers, and pediatric rehabilitation therapists. An informational email is the quickest way to reach the broader clinical team. A sample email is provided in **Appendix A** and may be adapted to fit your unit’s specific needs.

However, email alone is often insufficient. To ensure full staff awareness and buy-in, consider using additional communication strategies such as:

- Creating a **bulletin board** in the staff lounge
- Posting **flyers** in staff restrooms or locker rooms
- Sharing GFH updates during team **huddles**
- Providing a brief **in-service** session

These steps help ensure that staff understand the purpose and value of GFH and feel confident encouraging families to participate.

Gather Supplies

Several supplies are recommended for the successful implementation of GFH. These items—used for assembling the Goslings Kits, presenting the session, and storing or transporting materials—are listed in **Appendix B**. Although the materials included in this appendix were reviewed and approved for use in a Level IV SFR NICU, each institution has its own process for vetting materials. The Goslings Champion should consult with the NICU Medical Director or NICU Nurse Manager to determine the appropriate approval procedure at your facility.

Because the health and well-being of NICU babies are of utmost importance, it is essential to follow your unit’s policies

and procedures for **cleaning and disinfecting** all supplies. We recommend wiping down all materials with Lysol or Cavicide wipes—or any disinfectant approved by your NICU.

Additionally, facilitators should be mindful of latex allergies. All items purchased for GFH should be **latex-free**.



Figure 1. An example of a plastic bin being used as an isolette.



Figure 2. The dolls can rest on tabletops throughout the workshop to help save funds.

Many of the GFH materials are **optional**, depending on your setting, the supplies you already have, and your budget. For example, the deluxe version of GFH uses plastic storage containers as isolettes attached to stools using Velcro (see *Figure 1*). However:

- If your room has tables, you may place the isolettes on the tables instead of purchasing stools.
- If you eliminate the stools, you also eliminate the need for Velcro.
- To reduce costs further, you may choose not to use isolettes at all and simply rest the dolls on tabletops (see *Figure 2*). While this setup is less realistic, it reduces expenses, speeds up setup time, and requires less storage space.

The list of materials related to **storage and transport** is also optional. These items have been helpful for sites where supplies are stored in another room—or even another location—and must be moved for each session. If you have adequate storage space in the GFH room, you may need only a few basic storage bins. However, if you will be presenting GFH in multiple locations, travel-friendly storage and transport options may be more cost-effective than purchasing duplicate sets of materials.

To help create a welcoming environment, consider offering **water** to program participants. Since breastfeeding mothers should be encouraged to stay hydrated, you

may provide bottled water or a pitcher with cups. If your budget allows, a small basket of **healthy snacks**—such as fruit, granola bars, or pretzels—is always appreciated.

Prepare Panels

In addition to purchasing supplies, you will need to print and laminate the 11" × 17" Goslings panels available on the Goslings website: <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>. During Goslings Family Hour (GFH), the full-size panels are displayed on a magnet board as visual supports for families and prompts for the facilitator. Attach the Goslings logo to the top of the magnet board with tape or Velcro so it remains visible throughout the session (see *Figure 3*).

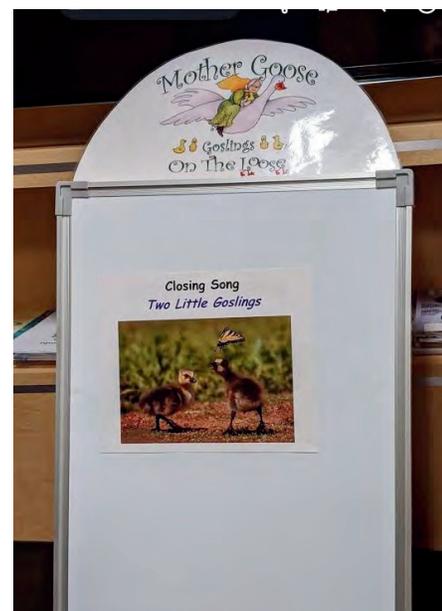


Figure 3. Goslings logo attached to the top of the magnetic board.

Purpose and Design

Panels provide:

- **Family-facing visuals** that illustrate and reinforce key messages.
- **Facilitator prompts** to guide the sequence of activities.

Each panel includes text and at least one illustration.

- **Purple text** indicates the **title** of the song or chant.
- **Black text** provides **facilitator prompts** to support the narrative.

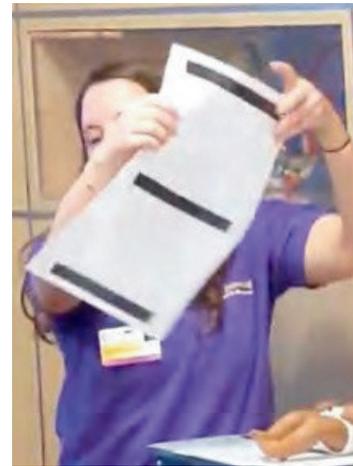


Figure 4. Magnets placed on the back of panels, for display on the magnetic board.

Printing & Laminating

- **Photocopy each panel** in color (do not print double-sided).
- To keep pages in order, **handwrite the panel number on the back** of each page **before laminating**.
- **Laminate** all panels to increase durability and support easy sanitizing.
- Affix **magnetic strips** to the back of each laminated panel so they can be placed on and removed from the magnet board with ease (see **Figure 4**).
-

Session Setup & Flow

- Before the session, **stack all panels face-up in numerical order**, with Panel 1 on top.
- **Store the stack behind the magnet board**, within easy reach but out of participants' view.

- After using a panel, **place it in the plastic storage bin** under the table to free workspace and simplify clean-up.
- **Immediately place the next panel** on the board so the magnet board is never empty for more than a few seconds.

Family Guide

In addition to the panels, **laminates the Family Guide** (available at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>). Laminating the guide:

- Adds stability when showing pages to parents during the session.
- Improves wipe-down and sanitizing.
- Extends the life of materials across multiple GFH sessions.

Inform Parents

Parent Flyer

In addition to notifying staff about GFH, it is important to proactively share information with parents. A GFH flyer is an effective way to do this. The flyer should briefly explain what the session entails, highlight its benefits, and provide the **date, time, and location** of the next session.

Flyers may be:

- Posted in the **family lounge**
- Displayed in **hallways** or near unit entrances
- Delivered at the **bedside**
- **Emailed** directly to families

A sample flyer is available at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>.

While flyers raise awareness, a **personal, face-to-face invitation** is the most effective way to engage parents and encourage attendance. Although all families can benefit from GFH, certain parents may benefit even more—such as those who tend to over- or under-stimulate their babies, or those who feel unsure or hesitant about how to interact with their medically fragile infant.

Weekly **interdisciplinary rounds** or another routine clinical team meeting are excellent times for the Goslings Champion to:

- Remind team members about upcoming sessions, and identify
- families who may especially benefit from receiving a personal invitation

In addition to targeted invitations, a Goslings Team member should **walk the unit** the day before—and again a few hours before—the session to invite any families who are present. Bedside nurses and social workers are also ideal partners for informing and encouraging families to participate.

Sign-Up Sheet

It is helpful to have a system for registering families who plan to attend GFH. A sample **Program Sign-Up Sheet** is available at

<https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>. The sign-up sheet may be:

- Posted in a prominent location (e.g., **main nursing station, front desk**)
- Used by the Goslings Team when walking the unit and inviting families in person

Because the NICU environment is unpredictable, flexibility is essential. Some families who sign up may not be able to attend, while others who did not sign up may arrive spontaneously. The sign-up sheet is therefore best viewed as a **planning tool**, not a strict attendance list.

Sign-In Sheet

Because actual attendance may differ from sign-ups, it is important to have families sign in upon arrival. The sign-in sheet should collect:

- Names of all family members attending
- Their relationship to the baby (e.g., mother, father, grandparent)
- The baby’s name, as the family would like it to appear on the **Certificate of Attendance**

A sample sign-in sheet is available at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>.

Involve Cuddlers

Some NICUs have trained volunteers, often called **Cuddlers**, who provide comfort to babies by holding and soothing them. These volunteers may be invited to attend a Goslings Family Hour (GFH) session so they can learn how to foster early language and literacy development during their interactions with the babies they cuddle.

To reinforce that **parents are the most important people in a baby’s life**, certain song lyrics and rhymes have been modified specifically for Cuddlers. For example, instead of singing, “*Since I love you very much, I’ll make a heart,*” Cuddlers sing, “*Since your Mommy loves you lots, she sends a heart.*”

A **Goslings Song and Rhyme Sheet for Cuddlers** is also available at: <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>.

Each NICU will need to decide whether Cuddlers should receive a GFH kit. This decision may depend on unit policy, supply availability, and the role Cuddlers play in supporting families.

To clearly communicate that parents are of utmost importance in a baby’s life, some of the words to the Goslings songs and rhymes have been modified for Cuddlers. For instance, instead of singing “*Since I love you very much, I’ll make a heart,*” Cuddlers sing “*Since your Mommy loves you lots, she sends a heart.*”

Set-Up the Room

Before each GFH session, the facilitator will need to prepare the room to create a welcoming, organized, and functional learning environment. The following steps outline the recommended setup:

- 1 Prepare the facilitator's table.**
Place a table at the front of the room and set a chair beside it, facing the participants.
- 2 Set up the magnet board.**
Position the magnet board on a table (see [Figure 5](#)). Ensure the Goslings logo is attached at the top of the magnet board using tape or Velcro so it remains visible throughout the session.



Figure 5. Magnet board with logo..



Figure 6. Dolls.

- 3 Display the practice dolls.**
Arrange the dolls on a table or counter where families can see them as they enter and choose one to use for the session (see [Figure 6](#)).
- 4 Organize GFH materials.**
Place the laminated GFH session panels and the laminated Family Guide next to the magnet board. Position a plastic container on the floor, underneath the table, for storing used panels during the session.
- 5 Set up participant seating.**
Arrange chairs in a circle facing the magnet board so all participants have a clear view.
- 6 Prepare participant stations.**
Place a GFH kit on or near each seat. If your NICU is using the optional isolette/stool setup, place an isolette and kit—or just a kit—at each chair.

Make sure the facilitator also chooses a doll and prepares their own station (see **Figure 7**).



Figure 7. Setting up your workspace.

7 Prepare sign-in materials. Set the sign-in sheet and pens on a table or counter near the room entrance. If you are administering evaluation forms, place them beside the sign-in sheet.

8 Arrange drinks and snacks (optional) If you plan to offer water or snacks, place them in a basket or on a tray to make them easy to distribute during the program (see **Figures 8 and 9**).



Figure 8. Healthy drinks.



Figure 9. Healthy snacks.

9 Set up stools and isolettes (optional deluxe model) If using stools, place one in front of each chair with two Velcro strips across the top. Attach the matching Velcro strips to the bottom of each plastic isolette and secure it to the stool (see **Figure 10**).



Figure 10. Preparing isolettes with Velcro.

GFH Script

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Introduction to the Script

Early Language and Literacy Key Points

The GFH script includes familiar movement and singing activities—such as “**Old MacDonald Had a Farm**” and “**Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star**”—adapted for safe, developmentally appropriate use with preterm and medically fragile babies. The script was purposefully designed to highlight the following **early language and literacy principles**:

- **Hearing words** helps babies develop sound patterns and activates their pre-programmed capacity for language.⁵⁻⁸
- **Greater exposure to words** builds vocabulary,⁹⁻¹² which, in turn, supports **reading readiness**.¹³⁻¹⁵
- Babies who are **exposed to books and read-alouds** demonstrate stronger academic outcomes.¹⁶⁻¹⁷
- According to **Every Child Ready to Read®** (ECRR), five core practices best prepare children to read: **talk, sing, read** (share books), **write** (develop fine-motor/pre-writing skills), and **play**.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
- Engaging babies in early literacy through **rhymes**,²⁰⁻²¹ **songs**,²²⁻²⁴ **chants**,²⁵ **books**,²⁶⁻²⁷ and **movement**²⁸ is both appropriate and beneficial.
- **Direct parent talk and singing** are more effective for vocabulary building than background language from phone conversations, television, or videos.²⁹⁻³¹
- There are **multiple ways to share books** with babies: reading aloud, talking about pictures, singing about the images, pointing to pictures, or simply allowing the baby to look at a single page.³²⁻³⁴

Talking, reading, and singing to your baby helps to build your baby's brain.

To learn more about ECRR's five practices, visit:

<https://www.npr.org/2014/12/30/373783189/talk-sing-read-write-play-how-libraries-reach-kids-before-they-can-read>.



- **Nursery rhymes and songs** lay an essential foundation for later reading.³⁵⁻³⁷
 - **Reading aloud and singing** promote healthy brain development and can improve overall infant well-being.³⁸⁻⁴²
 - **Appropriate sensory exposure in the NICU** is associated with better language and motor outcomes.⁴³⁻⁴⁴
 - **Lullabies** help soothe and regulate infants.⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷
 - **Parents are a baby's first teacher** and play a pivotal role in development.⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹
 - **Positive parent-infant experiences**, beginning at birth, enhance bonding and are essential for building early literacy skills.⁵⁰⁻⁴⁵
- A warm, genuine smile
 - A confident, relaxed manner
 - A cheerful and inviting tone of voice
 - Clear voice projection so families across the room can hear you
 - Sincere, encouraging words such as *"I'm delighted to see you here today"* to communicate authentic enthusiasm

Practice this introduction until it feels natural and comfortable—this opening sets the tone for the entire program.

As a GFH facilitator, your goals are to:

- **Provide a safe, supportive, non-judgmental space** where families can come together. GFH helps reduce the isolation many NICU parents feel by offering time to meet one another, and share experiences.
- **Inform families about resources** that support their baby's early brain development and early literacy skills (e.g., the Family Guide, Goslings Team members available to answer questions).
- **Add joy** to a family's day by modeling fun, developmentally appropriate language- and literacy-building activities they can use while visiting their baby.

Delivering the Script

The following script outlines the full GFH session, which lasts about **60 minutes**. Although facilitators do not need to memorize the script, it is essential to present the information **accurately**. The script's details are crafted to ensure that parents receive clear, developmentally appropriate guidance.

Before delivering GFH, practice the **Welcoming Comments**, making sure your greeting includes:

A quick guide to reading the script:

• • • • •

The text in black is for the facilitator to read or say aloud.

The text in purple italics gives explanations or instructions for the presenter.

The text in red italics are extra notes for the facilitator to use at his or her discretion.

The text in green boxes shows which display piece to use on the magnet board.

All of the illustrations can be photocopied and used to make magnet board pieces.

WELCOMING COMMENTS

Welcome everyone and introduce yourself.

Hello, everyone. Welcome to Mother Goose on the Loose: Goslings Family Hour. Thank you for joining us. My name is _____ and I am delighted to see you here today.

Invite each person to choose a doll.

Since your babies can't leave the NICU just yet, we have dolls for you to use during the session. If you haven't already chosen a doll, please take a moment to pick one and place it in the isolette beside you (or on the table in front of you). The kits near your seat are our **practice kits**. After the program, each family will receive a **new Goslings Kit**—clean, complete, and yours to keep—so you can use the items safely at your baby's bedside and later at home.

Talk about the kits.

Give cell phone instructions.

Before we begin, please silence your cell phones. If you're expecting an important call, feel free to keep your phone on vibrate, but we ask that you step outside the room to take the call. If you need to leave at any point, that is perfectly fine; however, kits are only given to families who attend the full program so that everyone receives the information needed to use the materials safely.

Go around the circle giving each person the opportunity to introduce him or herself.

Let's take a moment to get to know one another. We'll go around the circle, and when it's your turn, please share your name and whatever you feel comfortable telling us about your baby. You might share whether you have a boy or girl, how old your baby is today, or how early your baby arrived—whatever feels right to you. *[After each parent speaks, welcome them by name.]*

Also introduce any non-family members who are in attendance

As we get started, you'll hear me repeat certain information more than once. This is intentional—NICU life is overwhelming, and repeating key messages makes them easier to remember.

I'm truly glad you're here today. Let's begin.



Q&A

Ask the following questions:

- Who is able to hold their baby?
- Are your babies in a closed or open isolette?
- Are there any siblings? What ages are they?

Then invite parents to introduce themselves and answer any, or all, or none of the questions. After each person says their name, respond with “Welcome” or “Welcome, so-and-so.” Make sure everyone gets a personal greeting from you. If you smile while you are talking, your voice will sound joyful.



On the Board: PANEL 1

Put panel 1, “Welcome” on the magnet board (see **Figure 11**).



Figure 11. Picture from Panel 1.

OPENING RITUAL

Our program is called **Goslings Family Hour**. The purpose of this session is to support your baby’s development by creating a gentle, language-rich environment that matches your baby’s medical and developmental readiness. Even though it may feel a little unusual at first to be singing and doing hand motions with a doll, I promise it gets easier—and it becomes fun. Today you’ll learn simple songs, rhymes, and comforting routines you can use with your baby in safe, developmentally appropriate ways.

Sometimes it’s hard to know exactly what to do when you’re at your baby’s bedside. These activities can give you confidence and offer meaningful ways to connect with your baby—both here in the NICU and later at home. Many parents find that using songs and rhymes helps pass the time, strengthens bonding, and supports their baby’s early brain development.

To begin, here is a rhyme about **two little goslings**. I’ll say each part twice. The first time, just listen. The second time, you’re welcome to join in with the words and hand motions. You can sing or hum—whatever feels most comfortable.

Song #1: Two Little Goslings

Sing “Two Little Goslings” to the tune of “Hush Little Baby.”

*Two little goslings safe in their nest.
 Link fingers together to make a nest.
 One was awake and the other at rest.
 Slowly and gently lift one hand, lower the other
 One fell asleep, and the other did too,
 with palm facing up.
 And they slept, and they slept
 Hands together.
 the whole night through.
 Head leans on hands.*

Sleep is incredibly important for your baby. When babies sleep, their bodies focus on healing and growing. This song is a gentle reminder that even if you’ve just arrived to visit, it’s good to let your baby sleep.

Show the Family Guide and point out the QR code on the back.

We also included the words to this and all other Goslings songs in the **Family Guide** inside your kit. On the back of the guide, there is a **QR code** you can scan to hear recordings of every song. We’ll use that later.

Sing a second time and invite everyone to join in.

Now let’s sing “Two Little Goslings” together. If you’d like, try adding the hand movements to help you remember them for later.

Singing to your baby is important. Gentle rhymes and steady rhythms can be very comforting, and hearing your voice—whether spoken or sung—helps support your baby’s early brain development. No matter what your voice sounds like, **to your baby, it is the most beautiful and familiar sound in the world.**

Having a baby in the NICU can feel overwhelming and a little scary. This is not what any parent imagines when welcoming a new baby into their family. **Goslings offers a chance for all of us to come together, to learn, to share, and to support one another.**

It is truly impressive that each of you is here today, taking time to learn ways to nurture your baby’s brain development during this difficult period. At the end of the program, we will have time for questions and for families to talk with one another and with the Goslings Team.

Understanding Baby Signals
supports bonding and early learning

• **Happy and Ready**



On the Board: PANEL 2

Take off panel 1 and place it in the container under the table. Put panel 2, “Understanding Baby Signals” on the magnet board (see **Figure 12**).

Figure 12. Picture from Panel 2.

MEDICAL NOTE



Before trying any of these activities with your baby, take a moment to think about how your baby is doing medically today. Life in the NICU can feel like a roller coaster—there are good days and harder days, with many ups and downs.

On good days, sharing songs, rhymes, gentle touch, or other activities may be a wonderful way to provide appropriate stimulation.

On harder days, your baby may need less stimulation. On those days, it may be best to simply sing softly, hum, or speak quietly to your baby. Even your calm voice alone can be soothing and supportive.

If you are ever unsure whether your baby is ready for more interaction, ask your nurse. Your baby’s nurse can help you understand what kind of day your baby is having and what level of stimulation is safest and most appropriate.

BUILDING PARENT KNOWLEDGE

Understanding Baby Signals

Pass out the Family Guide. Have families open to the Baby Signals page. Read the pages aloud and physically show or describe the signals.

Babies use their **bodies, faces, and behaviors to communicate** how they are feeling and what they need. Learning to recognize these behavioral signals will help you decide when to begin an activity, when to pause, and when to give your baby a break. In Goslings, we group signals into three categories:

1. “Happy and Ready” Signals

These signals show that your baby is calm, comfortable, and **ready for interaction**. (see **Figure 13**). Examples include:



Figure 13. Family Guide

- Eyes open and looking at you or at an object
- A relaxed face, with soft muscles
- Relaxed arms and legs
- Attempting to smile or make small sounds

When you see these signals, your baby may be ready for gentle singing, talking, or other developmentally appropriate activities.

2. “Helping Myself” Signals

Sometimes babies use subtle behaviors to help themselves stay calm and organized. These may include:

- Holding onto your finger
- Bringing hands together
- Sucking on fingers or hands
- Brief periods of light sleep

These signals indicate that your baby is **working to stay settled**. You may continue interacting gently, but watch closely for any signs that your baby is becoming overwhelmed.

3. “Not Happy — Need a Change” Signals

These signals show that your baby needs less stimulation or a break.

Examples include:

- Saluting (arm is raised forward with hand extended)
- Finger splay (spreading fingers wide)
- Frowning, grimacing, or grunting
- Yawning, sneezing, or hiccupping
- Arching the back or pushing away
- Looking away or closing the eyes
- Crying

When you see one or more of these signals, **pause and reduce stimulation**. You might simply place your hands gently around your baby to help them feel secure, or let your baby rest quietly.

Using Signals to Guide Interaction

As you spend more time with your baby, you will learn to read these cues quickly and respond in ways that support your baby’s comfort and development. Always follow your baby’s lead. If your baby shows “happy and ready” signals, you can continue or gently increase interaction. If your baby shows “helping myself” or “not happy” signals, slow down or stop.

Understanding and responding to your baby’s signals is one of the most important ways to support bonding, and early learning—especially in the NICU.



On the Board: PANEL 3

Place panel 2 under the table. Put panel 3, “Expectations” on the magnet board (see *Figure 14*).

EXPECTATIONS

**Every baby is different.
Remember, your baby
loves your voice.**

Figure 14. Picture from panel 2 Expectations

SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Every baby in the NICU is different. Each baby has their own needs, abilities, and level of medical support. As you learn new songs and activities today, it’s important to remember that **every baby can participate in their own way**.

You and your baby are still getting to know each other. Your baby may be able to open their eyes briefly, hold your finger, or relax when hearing your voice. Even if your baby cannot do much right now, they can still **hear you, feel your presence, and be comforted by your gentle voice**.

Talking, singing, and simple activities help your baby’s brain grow. And when you go home together, these same activities can become part of your everyday routine.

Most of all, remember:

Your baby loves your voice just the way it is. You don’t have to sing perfectly—your voice is what your baby knows and loves.

Now let’s learn a song that can help you gently connect with your baby.

Song #2: Since I Love You Very Much

You may know the traditional song **“If You’re Happy and You Know It.”** In the NICU, clapping can be too loud and overstimulating for babies, so we’re going to adapt it in a gentler way.

I Love You

Figure 15. Picture for verse from Panel 3, “I love you.”

For the first verse, we’ll simply **whisper, “I love you”** (see *Figure 15*). You do not need to lean close to your baby’s ear—your baby will hear you even if you whisper softly from a short distance. Your quiet voice is calming and familiar, and whispering is a perfect way to share love without adding extra noise.

Sing “Since I Love You Very Much” to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It.”



Figure 16. Picture for verse from Panel 3, “I’ll hold your hand.”

Since I love you, I will whisper “I love you.”
 Since I love you, I will whisper “I love you.”
 Since I love you, love you, love you, and I’m always thinking of you.
 Since I love you, I will whisper “I love you.”

The next verse is **“Hold a hand”** (see **Figure 16**). Gently hold your baby’s hand in yours while you sing. Let’s try it!

Since I love you very much, I’ll, hold your hand.
Since I love you very much, I’ll hold your hand.
Since I love you, love you, love you, and I’m always thinking of you.
Since I love you very much, I’ll hold your hand.



On the Board: PANEL 4

Add panel 4 (see **Figures 17-19**), to the magnet board while leaving panel 3 on if there is space. If there isn’t space, remove panel 3.

Demonstrate the NICU hug with your doll and encourage the parents to do the same.

The next verse is a chance to give a gentle **NICU hug** (see **Figure 17**). To do this, place one hand on top of your baby’s head and your other hand on your baby’s bottom or feet. Keep your hands **very still**. It’s as if you are making a soft little nest with your hands, and your baby is cuddled safely inside.

Now let’s try singing **“give a hug”** while giving our dolls a NICU hug at the same time.



Figure 17. Verse “I’ll give a hug.”

Since I love you very much, I’ll give a hug.
Since I love you very much, I’ll give a hug.
Since I love you, love you, love you, and I’m always thinking of you.
Since I love you very much, I’ll give a hug.

Next, we’re going to sing “Since I love you very much, I’ll make a heart” (see **Figure 18**). You can **make a heart** by putting your thumbs and index fingers together, like this. (*Show example.*)



Figure 18. Verse “I’ll make a heart.”

Since I love you very much, I’ll make a heart.
Since I love you very much, I’ll make a heart.
Since I love you, love you, love you, and I’m always thinking of you.
Since I love you very much, I’ll make a heart.



Figure 19. Verse “I’ll blow a kiss.”

For the next verse, we’ll **blow a kiss** (see **Figure 19**). Remember to make it a gentle kiss and not to blow too hard. Flatten your hand, kiss the middle of your palm, and gently blow the kiss in your baby’s direction, like this. (*Show example.*)

Since I love you very much, I’ll blow a kiss.
Since I love you very much, I’ll blow a kiss.
Since I love you, love you, love you, and I’m always thinking of you.
Since I love you very much, I’ll blow a kiss.



On the Board: PANEL 5

Take off panels 3 and 4 and put them under the table. Put panel 5, “Traffic Light” on the magnet board (see **Figure 20**).

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT

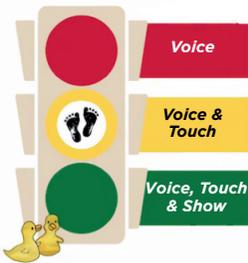


Figure 20. Picture from Panel 5.

Even on a good day, it is important to watch your baby’s signals and use those signals to decide whether to sing more or fewer verses of this song. You will always want to adjust which verses you do based on how medically stable your baby is.

Babies move through different stages of readiness—just like the colors of a traffic light.

We all know what a traffic light means:

- Red means stop,
- Yellow means go slowly and be careful,
- Green means go but pay attention.

In Goslings, we use a **traffic light system** to help you understand your **baby’s medical status** and choose activities that match how your baby is doing that day.



Red Means Voice Only

A **Red Light** day means your baby needs very little stimulation. Your baby may be sick, working hard to breathe, or resting after a procedure.

On Red Light days:

- It is safest to use your **voice only**
- You can **talk, sing softly, or hum**

Your calm, gentle voice is exactly what your baby needs. During a red-light day, the first verse, “I will whisper ‘I love you’” would be all that you should sing with your baby.



Yellow Means Voice & Gentle Touch

A **Yellow Light** day means your baby can handle a little stimulation, but only in small, gentle amounts.

On Yellow Light days:

- Keep using your voice
- Add **gentle, still touch** (no stroking or patting)
- You may try a **NICU hug**

Think of Yellow Light days as “go slow” days. Your baby can connect with you, but needs you to keep things calm.

On a yellow light day, you might sing the first verse as well as the second and third, “hold your hand” and “give a hug.”



A **Green Light** day means your baby is medically stable enough to enjoy a wider range of activities.

On Green Light days, you can:

- Talk or sing
- Use a NICU hug or gentle, still touch
- **Show** simple items such as books, puppets, or shaker eggs.

Help parents understand that they should wait until the baby's adjusted age is 36 weeks PCA.

If your baby was born prematurely, their eyes may still be developing. Please wait to introduce extra visual stimulation—like books or puppets—until 1 month before your original due date.

Green Light days are when babies have the most energy for safe, developmentally appropriate activities.

On a green light day, you can sing all of the verses, but monitor the signals your baby is giving you. Stop or modify what you are doing if you get a “not happy” signal.

You can show your baby how you make a heart with your hands, or how you blow a kiss, but even these movements need to be done slowly and gently.

How to Know What Color Your Baby Is On

If your NICU has an actual traffic light sign to indicate the baby's readiness, point this out.

You do not need to decide this alone. If you're unsure, **ask your baby's nurse**, who can help you understand what kind of day your baby is having. The Traffic Light System helps you choose activities that feel good, safe, and comforting for your baby—every single day, no matter how things are going in the NICU.



If you are a member of the NICU clinical staff, this is a good place to briefly explain the different medical stages babies may be experiencing and how these stages connect to the Traffic Light System. If you are not clinical staff, there will likely be a nurse or other clinical team member attending the session who can provide this explanation for you.

One of you may choose to say something like:

“Babies on ventilators need very gentle stimulation because they are working hard to breathe. These babies often have Red Light days. On those days, you might only want to talk, read, or sing softly.”

“Babies who are stable on a ventilator or who are on a nasal cannula may be ready for a little more stimulation. These babies often have Yellow Light days. On Yellow Light days, you might talk, read or sing softly while giving a NICU hug or doing skin-to-skin care.”

“Babies who are breathing on their own and starting to take feeds by mouth may be ready for you to show them an item from the kit. These babies often have Green Light days. On those days, if they are old enough, you can use the Goslings items with your baby.”

This simple explanation helps families understand how their baby's medical needs guide the kinds of activities that are most comfortable and safe.



On the Board: PANEL 6

Take off panel 5 and place it under the table. Put panel 6, “Chanting” on the magnet board (see **Figure 21**).



Figure 21. Picture from Panel 6.

CHANTING

Now we’re going to learn a **chant**. Chanting is another gentle way to connect with your baby. It can be used when you want simple, soothing phrases without a melody. The steady beat of a chant can be very calming for babies, and the simple rhythm makes it easier for them to focus on your voice. Chanting also gives your baby another way to hear language in a gentle, predictable pattern.

Many people chant when they meditate, and chanting has been shown to help stabilize heart rate, lower blood pressure, improve circulation, and reduce stress.⁵²⁻⁵⁴

Chanting can be used on **any kind of day**:

- On a Red Light day, you can chant softly to your baby without adding any touch or movement.
- On a Yellow Light day, you can chant during skin-to-skin care or while giving a NICU hug.
- On a Green Light day, you may chant while gently holding your baby and showing the monkey puppet from the kit.

In this chant, we’ll practice **saying the words slowly** and keeping a steady beat. You can repeat a chant as many times as you want. You can insert the names of family members or keep it simple, such as saying, “Mommy loves you.” You can list as many people as you like.

Chant #1: Mommy Loves You

*Mommy loves you. Daddy loves you. Auntie loves you.
Grandma loves you. Grandpa loves you. Brother loves you.*

Chant: “Mommy loves you.”

Chanting is very relaxing. Chanting helps calm you as well as your baby. You can also create your own chants. For example, when babies are first learning to breast- or bottle-feed, parents sometimes like to chant:

Chant #2: You Can Do It

“You can do it, you can do it, you can do it! I can do it!”

Let’s give our babies a gentle NICU hug now and chant together. Feel free to repeat the chant we just practiced or make up your own.



Figure 22. Picture from Panel 7.

Pull each item out of your kit one by one and name it. Show the monkey puppet last, and continue with the script. Use this time to inform families how to clean kit items following their unit’s policies and procedures.



On the Board: PANEL 7

Take off panel 6 and place it under the table. Put panel 7, “Kits” on the magnet board (see **Figure 22**).

KITS

Your kit has lots of great things in it: **two books**, a **shaker egg**, a **monkey puppet**, and the **Family Guide** with all the songs we are using today. Even though the kit includes several items, in the NICU we always use only one item at a time. Too many things at once can be overwhelming for a medically fragile baby.

Please take the monkey puppet out of your kit and place it on one of your fingers. Tiny babies can see, but their vision develops gradually over the first several months of life.

Here is how vision typically develops:

- **At first**, babies can **look at** an object, but they cannot use their eyes to follow it.
- **Next**, babies begin to do a little **side-to-side tracking with just their eyes**, without moving their head.
- Around **one month** old, most babies can follow an object **horizontally** using both their **eyes and head**.
- Around **two months** old, most babies begin to follow up-and-down movement (**vertical tracking**).
- Around **three months** old, many babies can follow an object in a big **circle**, moving their eyes and head around the whole motion.

Babies see best when objects are held about **10 inches away**—that’s roughly the distance from your baby’s face to your chin when you’re holding them.

If your baby was born early, remember to think about your baby’s **adjusted age** when it comes to vision skills. Adjusted age simply means the age your baby would be if they had been born on their due date.



Figure 23, Picture from Panel 8.



On the Board: PANEL 8

Take off panel 7 and place it in the bin under the table. Put panel 8, “Meet the Monkeys” (see **Figure 23**), on the magnet board.

USING FINGER PUPPETS

Song #3: One Little Monkey Jumping on the Bed

Recite the rhyme softly and slowly, looking at the monkey without showing the monkey to the doll. Remember to use soft voice inflection; this is especially important since participants may be used to reciting this rhyme in a lively fashion.

Intentionally put the monkey down and pat him.

After the song, Show some of the Baby Signals and ask the participants to identify them. Translate that into how to use the puppet.

Show example of putting one monkey puppet on an index finger, positioning your hand about 10” inches from baby.

Remember: A **Red Light day** means your baby is medically ready for **voice only**. If your baby is having a Red Light day, it is best to **recite the rhyme quietly** without using the puppet. You may look at the puppet yourself—without showing it to your baby—if it helps you stay engaged in the rhyme.

*One little monkey jumping on the bed.
He fell off and bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor, and the doctor said,
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!*

A **Yellow Light** day means your baby is medically ready for **voice and gentle touch**. On a Yellow Light day, you can recite the rhyme while giving your baby a **NICU hug** or during **skin-to-skin** care.

A **Green Light** day means your baby is medically ready for voice, touch, and show. On these days, many babies enjoy hearing the rhyme while **looking at the puppet**. Start by saying the words while holding the puppet still. Watch your baby’s signals carefully. If looking at the puppet seems like too much, simply put the puppet away and continue reciting the rhyme softly. If your baby gives you “**happy and ready**” signals, you can add **gentle, slow movement**. Move your hand slowly enough for your baby to follow along. Babies see best when an object is about 10 inches from their face, so hold the puppet around that distance.

Now let’s recite the rhyme together as a fingerplay, using the finger puppet to act it out.

Goslings Script

Recite: One Little Monkey using the monkey finger puppet.

One little monkey jumping on the bed.
Hold up finger with monkey puppet.
He fell off
Lean finger slowly to one side.
and bumped his head.
Lightly tap head.
Mama called the doctor and the doctor said,
Lean finger to the other side.
No more monkey's jumping on the bed
Move finger forward.

Now that we've talked about three different ways to share this rhyme, take a moment to think about your baby and decide which version would work best today.

On a Red or Yellow Light day, you can simply recite the rhyme softly, without adding any extra stimulation.

If it's a Green Light day, you can add a little playful conversation after the rhyme. For example, the monkey puppet might say, "That was so much fun! Did you like reciting that rhyme?" And you might answer, "I did!" Then the monkey might add, "It was so much fun performing for the baby. Can I give the baby a kiss?"

On a **Green Light day**, you can give a **very gentle puppet kiss** in a safe place. Slowly use the monkey puppet to give a soft kiss on your baby's **leg or arm**—choosing an area of bare skin so your baby can feel the softness without disturbing any medical equipment. Avoid kissing the face, as the puppet coming toward your baby's face may feel overwhelming or scary.

Chant #3: Monkey See, Monkey Do

Here is another chant you can recite with the monkey puppet. It has a steady, gentle beat—almost like a quiet heartbeat.

Sing: Monkeys away, monkeys away, put your monkeys away today.

*Monkey see, monkey do.
Monkey says, "I love you!"*

Let's put the monkey puppet back in the kits and try a different chant.

Babies' brains are wired for learning. **They learn by hearing you** talk and sing to them. Sounds from a television or from overheard cellphone conversations do not stimulate a baby's brain in the same way. Every time you talk or sing to your baby—even for a few seconds—you are helping your baby's brain grow!



On the Board: PANEL 9

Take off panel 8 and put it in the bin under the table. Put panel 9, “Body Rhymes” (see **Figure 24**), on the magnet board.

BODY RHYMES

Song #4: Open Them, Shut Them



Figure 24. Picture from Panel 9.

The next song may be familiar to you—many parents sing it to their children. In the original version, the song tells children not to put their fingers in their mouths. However, developmental specialists actually **encourage** babies to suck on their hands and fingers. This is one of the ways babies calm and comfort themselves.

Sucking on fingers also helps babies strengthen the muscles they need later for **eating and talking**. Because we want babies to explore their hands and practice sucking, we will change the words of this song just a little.

Demonstrate singing and doing the movements: Open Them, Shut Them

Open them, shut them.

Put both hands in front. Open them and then make a fist.

Open them, shut them.

Open hands and then make a fist.

Give a gentle tap, tap, tap.

Clap hands together softly.

Open them, shut them.

Open hands and then make a fist.

Open them, shut them.

Open hands and then make a fist.

Put them in your lap, lap, lap.

Fold hands in lap.

Goslings Script

Sing with everyone using the movements.

Creep them, crawl them,
 Slowly walk fingers up your body.
Creep them, crawl them, Right up to your chin, chin, chin.
 Rest fingers on chin.
Open up your little mouth....
 Open mouth.
And then invite them in!
 Gently tap your fingers on your chin.

If your baby is having a **Red Light** day, it may be best to sing this song **softly**, without any hand movements or touching. On a **Yellow Light** day, you can sing while doing **skin-to-skin** care or while gently **cradling your baby**. On a **Green Light** day, you can sing using all of the **hand movements**. When adding movements, always keep your baby safe. Hold your baby securely, or sing while your baby rests in the crib.

Pause and give participants a chance to answer.

Imagine you are about to sing this song, but you notice your baby showing one of the **“not happy”** signals. What might those be?

Yes! Your baby might show signals such as:

- Saluting or spreading fingers apart
- Frowning, grimacing, or grunting
- Yawning, sneezing, or hiccupping
- Arching the back or pushing away
- Looking away or closing the eyes
- Crying

When you see these signals, the first thing to do is **PAUSE and give your baby a break**.

Pause for answers. If your baby is in the isolette, what can you do?

You can gently tuck your baby’s arms and legs close to their body to help them feel secure.

Pause for answers. If you are holding your baby, what can you do?

You can hold your baby quietly and firmly, helping them feel safe. You might also place your baby gently on your lap and sit together quietly. While you are waiting, watch your baby for signs that they are ready to interact again.

Pause for answers.

What are some of the “**happy and ready**” signals?

That’s right! If your baby opens their eyes, tries to smile, looks at you, or has a relaxed face, arms, and legs, these are all signs that your baby is happy and ready for interaction again. When your baby is ready, **start slowly** and use only **one type of stimulation at a time**. You might begin by humming softly.



On the Board: PANEL 10

Take off panel 9 and put it under the table. Put panel 10, “More Chanting” on the magnet board (see *Figures 25-28*).

MORE CHANTING

Chant #4: Rum Pum Pum



Figure 25. Verse “This is my voice” verse.

On **Red Light** days, when it is best to have no touching, you may simply want to **recite** this phrase (see *Figure 25*).

*Rum pum pum, this is my voice.
Rum pum pum, this is my voice.
My name is Mommy.
Your name is Baby.
I love you.*



Figure 26. Verse “Here is a hug” verse.

On **Yellow Light** days, you may want to give your baby a **NICU hug** (see *Figure 26*) while he rests in the isolette, reciting this rhyme:

*Rum pum pum, here is a hug.
Rum pum pum, here is a hug.
My name is Mommy.
Your name is Baby.
I love you.*

On Yellow Light days, during skin-to-skin care, you may want to **hold your baby** on your chest so your heartbeat can be heard (see *Figure 27*). Without any extra movement, you can recite:



Figure 27. Verse “Here is my heart” verse.

*Rum pum pum, here is my heart.
Rum pum pum, here is my heart.
My name is Mommy.
Your name is Baby.
I love you.*



Figure 28. Verse “Here is my thumb” verse.

On **Green Light** days, you may want to chant the “heart” verse while showing baby a heart with your hands (see **Figure 28**):

Watch your baby’s signals. If **showing** causes a “not happy” signal, stop and simply sing the verse.



Figure 29. Picture from Panel 11.



On the Board: **PANEL 11**

Take off panel 10 and place it in under the table. Put panel 11, “Sharing Books” on the magnet board (see **Figure 29**).

SHARING BOOKS

Book #1: Look Look!

This book, **Look! Look!** by Peter Linenthal, has **bold, high-contrast black-and-white art**—exactly the kind of images very young babies enjoy looking at. When **read aloud softly**, the rhyming words are soothing, and the simple rhythm can even help babies relax or fall asleep. On Red, Yellow, and Green Light days, you can read this book aloud very slowly in a gentle, rhythmic way.

Even if you don’t read the printed words, you can still talk with your baby about the pictures. At this age, simply **talking about what you see**—on the cover or inside the book—is just as

You can use any high-contrast board book with black and white art. You can keep this panel or edit it to include a picture of the book being used. If using the standard panel with a different book, tell parents to take out their black and white board book instead of referring to the book by name.

Hold up a copy of the cardboard book and read a few pages

Show one more example, and remind parents to stay on each page for at least 30 seconds to give their babies time to take in all the contrasting colors and details on the pages.

meaningful as reading the story. Naming colors, shapes, and simple objects introduces your baby to books and shows them that reading is fun.

On **Green Light** days, you may want to **show** the pictures to your baby while you talk about them. Because the pictures are bold and high-contrast, stay on each page for at least **30 seconds**. Babies need that time to visually process everything. A helpful way to make sure you stay long enough is to **talk about three different things** on each page before turning it. For example: “This is a sun. The sun shines down on flowers to help them grow. Daddy likes seeing the sun after a rainy day.”

Let’s all take our books out of the kits.

I’ll read a few pages aloud from my book. If you’d like to read along with me, that’s great. If you’d prefer to quietly look at the pictures and turn pages as I read, that’s fine too.

Put the books away now, and take out your shaker egg.



On the Board: PANEL 12

Take off panel 11 and place it under the table. Put panel 12, “Playing Musical Instruments” on the magnet board (see **Figure 30**).



Figure 30. Picture from Panel 12.

Let everyone have a chance to play with the egg.

Pause for answers.

Demonstrate.

PLAYING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Shaker Egg

Each kit has a shaker egg inside. Please take yours out. You’ll notice that you can shake the egg **two ways**: loudly and softly. The loud shake is too noisy for NICU babies, so we always **use the soft, gentle version**.

Can you think of a safe way to use this shaker with your baby?

The best way to use the shaker egg in the NICU is to hold it between your thumb and index finger and **twist it gently** with your fingers only, not with your wrist. Another option is to hold it between your thumb and other fingers and **tap it lightly** with your pointer finger.

When shaken softly, shaker eggs can make songs more fun on a Green Light day. They help you keep the beat and may remind you of simple songs you can sing to your baby.

If obtaining shaker eggs is challenging, you can use any primary colored rattles. You can keep this panel or edit it to include a picture of the rattle being used. If using the standard panel with a rattle tell parents to take out their sound maker, instead of referring to it as a shaker egg or rattle. Modify the script accordingly.

Song #5: Are You Listening

(to the tune of “Are You Sleeping, Brother John”)

Even though these shaker eggs make a very soft sound, remember that we **never wake a sleeping baby**, because sleep is how babies grow and get strong. For this reason, shaker eggs should only be used on a **Green Light** day, when your baby is **awake**.

*Are you listening?
Are you listening?
To the sounds?
To the sounds?
Sounds are all around us.
Sounds are all around us.
I love you.
I love you.*

Now let’s **personalize** the song. Instead of singing “to the sounds,” you can say “Baby Boy,” “Baby Girl,” or use your baby’s name. Let’s try it together.

Practice singing the song together.

*Are you listening?
Are you listening?
Baby boy?
Baby boy?
Sounds are all around us.
Sounds are all around us.
I love you.
I love you.*

Let’s give the shaker eggs a little break. Don’t put them back in your kit—we’ll use them again soon.



Figure 31. Picture from Panel 13.



On the Board: PANEL 13

Take off panel 12 and place it under the table. Put panel 13, “More Body Rhymes” on the magnet board (see *Figure 31*).

MORE BODY RHYMES

Here’s a twist on a song you may already know:

Song #6: Twinkle, Twinkle

*Sing: Twinkle,
Twinkle Little Star*

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, what a wonderful baby you are.
A little face, a tiny nose.
Tiny fingers, tiny toes.
Twinkle, twinkle little star, what a wonderful baby you are.*

Talking and singing to your baby **helps build their vocabulary**. Even at this early age, babies are already learning the words they hear. Having a strong vocabulary helps children learn to read. Studies tell us that children who enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies tend to do **better in school**.⁴⁶ So, by singing to your baby, you are actually helping to build your baby’s brain!

Let’s use the shaker egg again. Instruments like the shaker egg should be used only on Green Light days. Even then, they should be used **only if your baby is in the crib or an infant seat**, or if you are **holding your baby safely and securely**.

Please take your baby (doll) into your arms. Hold your baby in the crook of one arm, like this, and gently use the shaker egg with your other hand as we sing the song again.

Sing the song while demonstrating how to hold the doll in one arm and the shaker egg in the other hand.

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, what a wonderful baby you are.
A little face, a tiny nose.
Tiny fingers, tiny toes.
Twinkle, twinkle little star, what a wonderful baby you are.*

Pause and give participants a chance to answer.

When using this rhyme on a Green Light day, it’s still important to watch your baby’s signals. What signals do babies show when they are **not happy or need a change**?

That’s right—they may:

- Salute or spread their fingers apart
- Frown, grimace, or grunt
- Yawn, sneeze, or hiccup
- Arch their back or neck, or push away
- Look away or cry

Pause and give participants a chance to answer after each question.

How could you **modify this rhyme** depending on the kind of day your baby is having?

- **Red Light** day? Sing the song softly as a lullaby, with no extra movement or stimulation.
- **Yellow Light** day? Sing softly during a NICU hug or skin-to-skin care. Depending on your baby’s signals, you can also gently touch the body parts in the song.
- **Green Light** day? Gently twist or tap the shaker egg to add gentle music. Remember to watch your baby’s signals.



Figure 32.
Picture from
Panel 14.



On the Board: PANEL 14

Take off panel 13 and place it under the table. Put panel 14, “Lullaby” on the magnet board (see **Figure 32**).

LULLABY

As you already know, the shaker egg makes a soft, soothing sound when you slowly turn it from top to bottom. Please remember not to shake it near your baby’s ears—at this young age, even quiet sounds can be too loud when they are close by. But when used gently and held farther away, the soft sound created by slowly rotating the **egg** can be a **beautiful addition** to a lullaby on a **Green Light** day, when your baby is ready for that kind of stimulation.

Any song can become a lullaby when you sing it **slowly and softly**. The “Alphabet Song” has the same melody as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”

- On **Red or Yellow** Light days, you would **only sing** the lullaby—no shaker egg.
- On a **Green** Light day, you may **use** the shaker **egg gently**, along with your voice, as long as your baby is awake and giving “happy and ready” signals.

Let’s sing the “Alphabet Song” slowly and softly now, using the shaker egg along with our voices.

Demonstrate.

Song #7: The Alphabet Song

Sing the “Alphabet Song” slowly and softly while using the shaker egg.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z. Now we’ve sung our ABC’s. I love you, and you love me.

Sing “Shakers Away.” Put shaker eggs back in kit.

It looks like baby is tired now, so let’s put our eggs away and simply sit quietly with our baby.

Lullabies are wonderful for babies at every stage. Because it is so important not to overstimulate our little ones, a slow, **soft, gentle lullaby** can be the perfect way to soothe and comfort your baby.⁵⁵

Even though all the songs in this program are sung in English, you can sing to your baby in **any language**. In fact, it is best for your baby if you sing in the language that feels most natural and comfortable for you. If your grandmother used to sing you a lullaby in Spanish and you remember it with love, share that same song with your baby. Familiar melodies and family traditions make lullabies especially meaningful.



Figure 33.
Picture of Hello Farm! from Panel 15.

You can use any animal book. You can keep this panel or edit it to include a picture of the book being used. If using the standard panel with a different book, tell parents to take out the animal book instead of referring to the book by name. If you are not using an indestructible book, modify the script accordingly.



On the Board: PANEL 15

Take off panel 14 and place it under the table. Put panel 15, “Animals” on the magnet board (see Figures 33-34).

ANIMALS

Book #2: Hello Farm!

Take the book Hello Farm! out of your kit (see Figure 33). The beautiful illustrations in this book were created by Maddie Frost. The book is made of a special, durable material that is almost **indestructible**. You can crinkle it (demonstrate), fold it (demonstrate), get it wet, or drop it, and it won’t get damaged. It is even washable! If you drop the book on the floor, be sure to clean it with an antibacterial wipe or with soap and water. This prevents germs from the floor from being transferred to your hands and then to your baby. The same rule applies to any item from the kit—if it falls, pause and clean it before using it again.

Goslings Script

Go through the book, one animal at a time, making the animal sounds.

While you can read *Hello Farm!* aloud, there are also many other meaningful ways to share this book with your baby. One option is to fold the pages back so only one illustration is visible at a time (**demonstrate**). Let's go through the book together and make the **animal sounds**.

Another way to use the book is with a **picture walk**. To do this, simply look at the pictures and talk about them. For example, you might point to the cow and say: "Here is a cow. What does the cow say? The cow says, 'Moo.'" It may feel unusual to "read" to such a young baby in this way, but this is exactly how early book sharing begins. Just show the pictures and talk about what you see. Even pointing to something on the cover and talking for a second or two helps your baby's brain grow.

You might also look at a picture and make up your **own story**. For example: "One day, a cat visited the farm. He saw cows eating lunch. He also saw a rooster standing on a fence. The rooster was singing a funny song."

Model reading the book to your doll, while the parents read to their dolls.

Now let's take a moment to share this book with our "babies" in any way you choose—reading, talking, pointing, or making up a story.

Once you've shared this book with your baby, it becomes comforting because it is **familiar**. Familiar books are easier for babies to learn from because you are building on what your baby already knows.

On a **Red** Light day, the pictures in the book can give you ideas for a quiet song or lullaby to hum. Your **voice alone** is enough stimulation, so there is **no need to show** the pictures to your baby on Red Light days.

Pause and give participants a chance to answer.

You can also use *Hello Farm!* as a reminder to sing a simple animal song to your baby. What animal song do you know?

Many people know the song "**Old MacDonald**." Instead of singing it in the usual lively way, we will sing it slowly and softly, almost like a lullaby. This **gentle version** is more appropriate for tiny babies in the NICU.

Because the picture on the cover shows a cow, let's begin with a cow.



Figure 34. Picture of Old MacDonald from Panel 15.

Sing: Old MacDonald (slowly), modeling how to turn it into a gentle lullaby.

Song #8: Old MacDonald

(see **Figure 34**)

Old MacDonald had a farm.

Ee-ai-ee-ai-oh.

And on that farm, he had a cow.

Ee-ai-ee-ai-oh.

With a “Moo, moo” here and a “moo, moo” there.

Here a “moo,” there a “moo,” everywhere a “moo, moo.”

Old MacDonald had a farm.

Ee-ai-ee-ai-oh.

Watch your baby’s signals. If your baby is showing **“happy and ready”** signals, you can **sing another verse**. If your baby is showing **“helping myself”** signals, you might switch to humming a verse or simply **sit quietly** together. If your baby shows “not happy” signals, pause and give your baby a break. During the break, you can quietly look through the book yourself and think about which animals you’ll include in the song once your baby is ready again.

On a **Yellow** Light day, during skin-to-skin care, you can **hum or sing** the song very softly. If you want to change things up, you can make up a simple story about one of the animals in the book. Talk to your baby about the animal without showing the book. Continue watching and responding to your baby’s cues.

Let’s put our babies (dolls) on our chests now and try singing the verse about the cat, very softly.

Model holding the doll at your chest while singing softly; as the parents do the same.

Old MacDonald had a farm.

Ee-ai-ee-ai-oh.

And on that farm, he had a cat.

Ee-ai-ee-ai-oh.

With a “Meow, meow” here and a “meow, meow” there.

Here a “meow,” there a “meow,” everywhere a “meow, meow.”

Old MacDonald had a farm.

Ee-ai-ee-ai-oh.

Stop singing as soon as your baby shows any **“not happy”** signals. But if your baby is giving happy and ready signals, then you can continue singing. There’s no need to sing about every animal in the book—just choose a few and keep it simple. On a **Green** Light day, you may **look at the animal pictures** with

Demonstrate.

your baby, holding the book so your baby can see the illustrations too. Remember to keep the book about 10 inches from your baby’s face, since that is the distance where babies see best. As long as your baby is awake and showing positive signals, you can show the pictures while you sing the song softly.



On the Board: PANEL 16

Take off panel 15 and put it under the table. Put panel 16, “Bedtime Routines” on the magnet board

(see **Figure 35**).

BEDTIME ROUTINES
Bedtime routines are calming and help your baby get ready for sleep.



Figure 35. Picture from Panel 16.

BEDTIME ROUTINES

Book #2 (again): Hello Farm!

Let’s spend a few moments talking about **bedtime routines**. All babies—even babies in the NICU—can benefit from having a simple routine before sleep. A bedtime routine means doing the same **calming activities** each night before putting your baby to bed.

Bedtime routines often include feeding your baby, reading a short story, and singing a lullaby. Some families also include a bath once their baby is home. If you are here in the evening, talk with your baby’s nurse about creating a small bedtime routine using some of the items from your Goslings Kit. Just remember that bedtime is a **quiet time**, so choose only calm, soothing activities.

Any of the activities, rhymes, or songs we practiced today can be part of your bedtime routine. They help slow down the evening, soften transitions, and gently calm your baby. Let’s use **Hello Farm!** as an example of a simple bedtime story. There is no need to read every page—short and sweet is perfect. Just follow along with me.

Here is a bedtime book about farm animals:

- The rooster says, “It’s time to go to sleep.”
Cock-a-doodle-doo.
- The horse says, “It’s time to go to sleep.” Neigh, neigh.
- The cow says, “It’s time to go to sleep.” Moo, moo.
- And Mommy or Daddy says to the baby, “It’s time to go to sleep. Good night.”

Demonstrate showing the book to the doll, one page at a time, holding it 10” away from the doll.

Read the book aloud softly, but with expression.



Figure 36.
Picture from
Panel 17.



On the Board: PANEL 17

Take off panel 16 and put it in the plastic bin under the table. Put panel 17 “Family Guide” on the magnet board (see *Figure 36*).

GOSLINGS FAMILY GUIDE

Let’s take a look at your **Family Guide**. The Family Guide includes helpful information about the **Traffic Light system** so you can decide what activities are safe based on your baby’s medical status. It also explains your **baby’s signals**, which will help you know when your baby is ready for interaction, when they are helping themselves, and when they need a break.

In addition, the Family Guide includes **all the songs, rhymes, and chants** we used today. This way, you can continue practicing them with your baby whenever the time feels right.

To help you remember all the tunes, there is a **QR code** on the back of the guide. When you scan the code with your phone, it will take you to **recordings** of every song we sang today—and even a few extra ones. Let’s take a few minutes now for everyone to scan the QR code.



TIP

If you have parents who don’t have a scanner on their phones, have a couple of recommendations handy for iPhones, Androids, and other devices. Give time for parents to scan the barcode. They can also access the songs online at: <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/songs/>



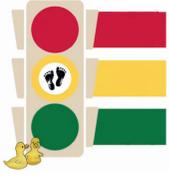
Figure 37. Picture
from Panel 18.



On the Board: PANEL 18

Take off panel 17 and put it under the table. Put panel 18, “Questions” on the magnet board (see *Figure 37*).

QUESTIONS



Pause and wait for questions. Spend five minutes responding to questions.

Can anyone tell me what we should do on a **red** light day? **Yellow** day? **Green** day?

Does anyone have any **questions** about anything we discussed today?

We are now nearing the **end of our program**. GFH was created especially for parents with babies in the NICU, and we truly hope that you found it helpful. Your thoughts matter to us, and we would love to hear what stood out to you.

Would anyone like to **share something important you learned** today, or **one thing you're looking forward to trying** with your baby?



TIP

It may take a while for someone to answer. It is fine to pause for a while and wait until people collect their thoughts. When someone answers, don't give a judgmental comment; rather, repeat back what they said, using fewer words (e.g., "Oh, you liked hearing about the traffic light.").



On the Board: **PANEL 19**

Take off panel 18 and put it under the table. Put panel 19, "Special Messages" on the magnet board (see **Figure 38**).



Figure 38. Picture from Panel 19.

SPECIAL MESSAGES

Depending on your profession, you may want to share a brief message with families. For example, if you are the **patient educator** for the NICU, this might be a good time to mention other family resources or classes available. If you are an **early interventionist**, you may want to briefly describe your program and the services you offer. This is an appropriate moment to share these messages—but **remember to keep them very brief**.

Whether or not you are a **librarian**, the public library as a free resource should be mentioned.



Public Library Note: *Libraries are no longer places where children are shushed and expected to sit still and be quiet. Children’s spaces in public libraries often include play areas and the librarians love seeing children playing with their parents and other children.*

TIP

Anyone can get a library card which allows you to borrow books and sometimes toys, games, movies, and music!



The job of public librarians is to help people find what they are looking for, so you can always feel comfortable asking questions.

Keep your comments brief.
It is important to complete the full GFH within 60 minutes so that families can return to their babies.

Once you are home, public libraries can be great places for you and your baby. You can borrow books, and music for free online, but visiting the local library can be helpful and fun.

Most libraries offer free programs for parents and babies that are similar to Goslings with songs, rhymes, and books. It is a great place to meet other parents and babies, while learning new rhymes to help grow your baby’s brain.

If you are not sure if your baby is healthy enough to go to the library, ask your pediatrician.

You are always welcome to offer to stay after the session to answer questions or talk with families one-on-one.

CLOSING RITUAL

Closing Song



Figure 39. Picture from Panel 20.



On the Board: PANEL 20

Take off panel 19 and put it under the table. Put panel 20, “Closing Ritual” on the magnet board (*see Figure 39*).

CLOSING RITUAL

Let's close today with the same song we started with, **Two Little Goslings**:

Sing "Two Little Goslings" to the tune of "Hush Little Baby."

Two little goslings safe in their nest.

Link fingers together to make a nest.

One was awake and the other at rest.

Slowly and gently lift one hand, lower the other

One fell asleep, and the other did too,

with palm facing up.

And they slept, and they slept

Hands together.

the whole night through.

Head leans on hands.

If you are not doing a program evaluation, skip to the next paragraph.

Before you leave, please take 5 minutes to evaluate our program. When you are done completing the **brief questionnaire**, hand it in, and we will give you a new kit to use with your baby. Your new kit is clean and ready to use. Please do not take the kits you have used; these are only for Goslings sessions.

We invite you to stay and spend some time with one another. When you are ready to go back to your baby, remember to take your **Goslings kit** and **certificate** with you. Try out all the items and see if you can remember what we did with them here today.

Thank you for coming!

After the Goslings Session

Provide a Certificate of Participation

In this Section

Provide Certificate of Participation

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Document Attendance in the Electronic Medical Record

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For clinical staff to encourage and support the use of Goslings activities at the bedside, it is important to have a reliable way to communicate family attendance. One effective strategy is to provide a GFH **Certificate of Participation** with the baby's name prominently displayed. This certificate can be proudly placed near the baby's bedside, signaling to nurses, therapists, and other team members that the family has participated in Goslings. It also becomes a meaningful keepsake that many families cherish.

A sample Certificate of Participation is located at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>.

Whenever possible, it is ideal to have a second Goslings Team member present during each session. This person can prepare the certificates while the session is being facilitated, ensuring that families receive them promptly at the end of the program.

Document Attendance in the Electronic Medical Record (EMR)

Documenting family attendance in the infant's EMR is another effective strategy for **communicating participation** to the broader clinical team. The documentation template in **Appendix C** can be adapted for your unit. This promotes consistent messaging, supports bedside follow-through, and reinforces the developmental goals of the program.

Share Attendance Information at Weekly Rounds

Another way to keep clinical staff informed about family participation in GFH is for the **Goslings Champion** to provide a **brief update** during weekly interdisciplinary or clinical rounds. As each baby is discussed, the Champion can share whether the family attended GFH, noting who participated (e.g., mother, father, grandmother) and any relevant observations (e.g., “Mom realized she had been overstimulating her baby because she didn’t understand the signals she was seeing.”). Sharing this information helps the entire clinical team reinforce Goslings concepts at the bedside and support families in using developmentally appropriate interactions with their babies.

Program Evaluation

Conducting a simple evaluation of Goslings in your unit can support the Goslings Team in several important ways. First, evaluation results can help the team **identify areas for improvement**. In addition, evaluation findings can be used to seek or **maintain administrative support** for the program. Finally, evaluation data can **strengthen funding requests** and provide meaningful information for reporting back to funders. Funders appreciate having documentation about the number of families served, and many require evaluation results as part of their reporting process. Sample **brief pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires** are

located at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>. These questionnaires can be completed quickly and easily by families immediately before and after GFH.

Goslings Teams may use these questionnaires or design their own. Before using any evaluation measures, teams must remember to **obtain any required institutional approvals** if you plan to present or publish your evaluation results. In some institutions, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be necessary. If IRB review is required, it is important to begin this process early, as it can take considerable time to complete.

Staying Up to Date

Goslings Facilitators and Goslings Teams can stay up to date on new research, publications, resources, and program news by visiting the Goslings webpage: <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings>. To help keep track of all the GFH programs being offered nationwide, we ask that your Goslings Champion register your NICU as an official Goslings provider. Registering your program allows us to stay in touch, share updates, and invite you to participate in future studies related to Goslings. Your Goslings Champion can register the program here: <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/register-your-program/>

References & Appendices

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Draft Email: Introducing Goslings in Our NICU

Subject: Coming Soon to Our NICU: Goslings Family Hour & Mini Goslings!

Dear NICU Team,

We are excited to announce that Goslings Family Hour and Mini Goslings will soon be offered in our NICU!

Goslings is a nationally recognized early language and literacy program designed specifically for families with medically fragile and preterm infants. It teaches parents how to support their baby's brain development through gentle talking, singing, reading, and play, all while staying attuned to each baby's medical readiness and behavioral signals. The program is warm, practical, evidence-informed, and loved by families.

What's Coming?

Mini Goslings (Video)

A **15-minute introduction** to the core concepts parents need to know. Families will learn:

- How to read their baby's **behavioral signals**
- How to use the **Traffic Light system** to guide interactions
- Simple songs and bonding activities they can safely use at the bedside

This video is ideal for families who cannot attend the group session or want a refresher. It is available in English and Spanish.

Goslings Family Hour (GFH)

A **60-minute, interactive session** for families. Parents will:

- Learn how to understand their baby's medical readiness
- Practice reading and responding to signals
- Try gentle songs, rhymes, chants, and activities
- Receive a free Goslings Kit with books, a puppet, shaker egg, and the Family Guide
- Build confidence, reduce stress, and connect with other NICU families

GFH will be offered regularly (schedule coming soon!).

How This Helps Our Families—and Our Unit

Goslings

- Promotes family bonding and confidence during a stressful time
- Supports early brain development through safe, developmentally appropriate interaction
- Encourages families to partner with the clinical team
- Reduces overstimulation by teaching families to follow their baby’s cues
- Helps families carry these skills home after discharge

Your encouragement makes a tremendous difference in helping families attend.

How You Can Help

- Tell families about Mini Goslings and upcoming Goslings Family Hour sessions
- Encourage participation when you see a parent who might especially benefit
- Refer families who appear unsure, hesitant, or overwhelmed
- Celebrate their participation—look for the Certificate of Attendance at the bedside
- Ask parents about the activities they learned and reinforce safe, signal-based interactions

Thank you for everything you do to support our families. Goslings is designed to complement the excellent care you already provide and to give families more tools to bond with and support their babies.

More information—including session dates and materials—will be shared soon. If you have questions or would like to get involved, please reach out.

Warmly,
[Name]
Goslings Champion / Program Lead
[NICU Name]

Supply List

Items Recommended for the Goslings Kit



Hello Farm!
by Karen Pixton
Available at
Amazon.com



Look, Look!
by Peter Linenthal
Available at
Amazon.com



Mini monkey puppet
Available at
folkmanis.com

Folkmanis usually gives discounts to non-profits that buy in bulk. If the puppet exceeds your budget, consider hosting a craft-hour with parents to make a sock monkey puppet.



Nino percussion egg shaker
Available at
Amazon.com



Goslings Family Guide
Available (free) in PDF
at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>



Canvas or nylon bag to hold the materials
Available at
bit.ly/2MMmtQk

You can put your logo on it. If you already have your own hospital bag, it is absolutely fine to use it.

Items Needed to Present the Goslings Session



Constructive Playthings 10 Inch Huggable Multi-Cultural Baby Dolls, Set of 4

One per parent participant and one for the facilitator.
Available from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



24"x36" Magnetic board,

to display Goslings visual panels.
Available from [Lakeshorelearning.com](https://www.lakeshorelearning.com) at bit.ly/37vGYsQ



Cavicide wipes

Wipes are used to disinfect used kit materials and surfaces: available at bit.ly/37yVC2D. If your NICU requires disinfecting with a different product, follow your NICU protocol.

Goslings panels

to use with the magnet board.
Available (free) at <https://mgol.net/home/mother-goose-on-the-loose-goslings/mgol-goslings-materials/>

Optional Items Recommended for the Goslings Kit

Feel free to provide take-home materials from your local library (e.g., hours, phone number, address; early literacy brochure; list of recommended books for babies; website resource list) and/or early intervention program.

Optional Items Recommended for the Goslings Session



for the facilitator: available at bit.ly/isolette-box

- **Sterilite, 15 Qt./14 L Latch Boxes**

Comes in case of 12, to serve as the isolettes, one per participant and one



in the program room: available at <https://thd.co/2XCtSbp>

- **Lifetime 48 in. White Plastic Adjustable Height Folding High Top Table** for Goslings' facilitator use if there is not a table

- **Assorted plastic stack stools**

from Lowes (comes in stacks of 6) to serve as "isolette" stands: available at low.es/4dIOZ8q

If you opt for the stools, **VELCRO Brand Industrial Strength Tape**, 4' x 2" to keep the isolettes attached to the stools (pack of 6): available at bit.ly/Isolette_Fastener

- **Body Choice Deluxe Carrying Case** to carry the table, magnetic board and stand:



available at bit.ly/2U9grh0

Optional Items for Storage and Transport

- **Sterilite Latch and Carry Storage Bin** (18 gallon) to store supplies: available at bit.ly/LatchAndCarry



Depending on the number of program participants, you may need 2 boxes for storing dolls and other items. Smooth surfaces allow for easy cleaning and wiping down, latches are great in case the bin tumbles or gets knocked over, and handles make attaching bins together using bungee cords easier.



- **Magna Cart MC2 Steel Folding Hand Truck** for transporting storage bins and stools: available at bit.ly/4seixJW

- **48" Super Duty Bungee Cords** (4-pack) for securing bins (and possibly stools) onto Magna Cart; bungee cords increase durability when traveling and versatility when securing the bins: available at thd.co/2WStkgW.

- **Blue Plastic Button & String Closure Envelopes** (12" x 18") to store panels, instead of using an additional bulky bin: available at bit.ly/3dzMm1y.

Sample EMR Verbiage

The [mother/father] of [baby's name] attended Goslings Family Hour on [date]. Goslings Family Hour is an early language and literacy program offered [weekly/bi-monthly]. Participating families receive a new Goslings Kit of toys and books to use with their baby, along with a copy of the Goslings Family Guide.

During the session, families were taught the Traffic Light concept, which helps determine how much stimulation a baby can safely handle based on their medical condition.

- Red Light: voice only
- Yellow Light: voice + gentle touch (e.g., NICU hug, skin-to-skin care)
- Green Light: voice + touch + show (e.g., book, rattle, puppet)

Families were encouraged to ask their baby's nurse what kind of day their baby is having to guide their interactions. Families were also taught to continuously observe and respond to their baby's behavioral signals when talking, reading, singing, holding, or playing.

All participating families received a Certificate of Participation.