

II. CURRICULUM & SERVICE PROVISION

PROGRAM STANDARD II.A. THE CURRICULUM REFLECTS THE CENTRALITY OF ADULT/CHILD INTERACTIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS.

The curriculum provides a framework to ensure positive interactions between and among children, staff, and parents. It is recognized that positive adult/child interactions serve as the basis for young children's learning. Through staff modeling and support, as well as through engagement of parent/child dyads in developmentally appropriate activities, parent/child relationships will be enriched. As a result, the children's growth and development and the family's knowledge and understanding will be enhanced.

Quality Indicator II.A.1. Positive parent/child interactions are encouraged and promoted in all aspects of the program.

Laying the Foundation

Recent advances in brain-imaging techniques have proven what early childhood educators and researchers have believed for many years: the infant's environment has a dramatic affect on brain development and provides the foundation for all subsequent development. In fact, research now confirms that consistent, predictable, warm and loving relationships between parents and young children, as well as exposure to many and varied experiences from the time of birth do make a difference in children's development for a lifetime.

In the first years of a baby's life, the brain is busy building its wiring system. Babies are born with all the brain cells they are going to have for the rest of their lives. At birth, a baby's brain contains 100 billion neurons and a trillion glial cells. The task after birth is to make connections between the cells. Activity in the brain creates tiny electrical connections called synapses. Repetitive stimulation strengthens these connections and makes them permanent, whereas cells that do not get stimulated and do not form connections eventually die out. This process is referred to as pruning. Thus an infant's experience actually "wires" or grows the brain. This intense

period of brain growth and network building happens only once in a lifetime. Parents have a brief but golden opportunity to help their babies' brains grow and develop. Following are some facts that researchers have discovered:

- Babies are born biologically and neurologically primed to learn. Infants and toddlers have more neurotransmitters and place more energy demands on their brains than do adults.
- The foundational networking of the brain's synapses is nearly complete after the rapid brain development of the first three years. However, it is important to note that **brain growth continues throughout life**.
- Visual stimulation can produce developmental advantages including enhanced curiosity, attentiveness, and concentration.
- The more stimulating experiences that parents can give their babies the more circuitry is built for enhanced learning in the future. However, it is important to recognize that these experiences must be individually tailored to each child's interest level and abilities to cope with the experiences. Finding this balance is a delicate process.
- The amount of connections in the brain can increase or decrease by 25% depending on the environment and stimulation.
- What a child's brain experiences the child's brain will become.
- Infants and toddlers in stressful environments lay down abnormal connections in their brains that may interfere with learning and forming relationships.

Credit is given here for the preceding information to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, Jack Shonkoff and Deborah Phillips eds., 2000 in the book, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* and to Rima Shore, 1997 in *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development*.

Getting Started

Incorporate "Ten Things Every Child Needs" into playgroup agendas and home visit activities to boost children's brain power.

1. "**Interaction:** Spend time watching me and responding to my cues. It tells me I'm important and special to you."

Set up a variety of opportunities for positive parent/child interactions by introducing age appropriate tasks centered around various themes relevant to young children.

2. "**Loving Touch:** *Cradle me, hold me. Give me lots of hugs. It keeps me calm and comforts me, and gives me courage to move on.*"

Sing songs and design activities that encourage hugging, kissing, and loving touch.

3. "**Stable Relationship:** *I need someone special to be there when I call. When I look around and see you I know I can go far.*"

Be sure parents and children know the routine and are prepared for transitions.

4. "**Safe, Healthy Environment:** *Plug the outlets, block the stairs. Keep lead away for sure! Make a safe, special place so I am free to explore.*"

Create a safe, special place for children to explore.

5. "**Self-Esteem:** *I can do it, yes I can, if you tell me so. Pay attention, give me praise and watch me go, go, go!*"

Use praise words with parents and children. Point out children's new accomplishments and interests to parents. Record developmental progress made during home visits and in play groups.

6. "**Quality Child Care:** *When you're gone I need to be with people you can trust to help me grow and teach me new, exciting stuff.*"

Select staff that knows how to blend the art and science of early childhood practice in the provision of good child care. The art is the ability to respond to the child in the moment in a way that supports development and learning while the science of child care encompasses knowledge of developmental stages and individual differences.

7. "**Communication:** *I may not talk, but don't be fooled, I understand a lot. Our little conversations mean so very much.*"

Encourage ongoing dialogue between parents and children. Help parents learn natural language techniques including parallel talk, self talk, and expansion. Also, teach parents the value of previewing and reviewing experiences with their children.

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8. *"Play: Play is fun, play is work. It's how I learn the ropes. When we play together, you help me more than you know."*
Provide a variety of play stations, including messy play, creative play, pretend play, problem solving play, and active play.
Encourage children to initiate their own play and parents to learn to follow their children's lead.
9. *"Music: 1, 2, 3 sing to me and make up silly tunes. Music is special time that's fun to share with you."*
Sing some familiar songs and introduce simple new songs each time you meet. Sing songs that have gestures and movement.
Play a variety of types of background music during play activities, including classical, jazz, contemporary, and nature music.
10. *"Reading: Read to me, show me books with lots of pretty pictures. Write my stories out in words I'll love to read forever."*
Provide opportunities for sharing books. Let children choose books, read big books, and offer a story sack library.

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Moving Forward

Learn more about the importance of parent/child interactions in encouraging brain development by reading books, watching videotapes, or visiting websites.

Develop home visit kits that encourage parent/child interactions and learning in natural home environments.

Look at examples of play group plans from other Birth to Three Programs.

Learn more about how parents and staff can use floortime activities to support child development.

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Learn more about language development and its terminology including parallel talk, self talk, and expansion.

Get on the mailing lists from the various training agencies (STAR NET, The Early Intervention System, Illinois Resource Center) as well as local universities and institutions of higher education to take advantage of continuing education opportunities.

Consider a subscription to *Young Children*, *Zero to Three*, and other journals and newsletters that address the issues related to young children and their families.

Join a professional group such as The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and its affiliates, The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI).

Obtain copies of "Ten Things Every Child Needs" brochures and videotapes from the McCormick Tribune Foundation by calling the toll-free number, 888/MTF-2224 or 312/222-3512. An order form is available on the web site, (<http://www.rrmtf.org/education>).

Quality Indicator II.A.2. The curriculum promotes positive parent/child interactions in the way sessions are designed and conducted by staff.

Laying The Foundation

Child development research supports the parent/child relationship as critical for providing infants and toddlers with support, engagement, continuity and emotional nourishment necessary for healthy development and later success in school. Within the context of the parent/child relationship, infants and toddlers build a sense of trust in their parents, themselves, and their world. This sense of trust provides young children with a secure base from which to explore and learn about their environment. In addition, it provides the foundation for learning about social turn taking, reciprocity, and cooperation. Furthermore, when the young child's activities are nourished and channeled in appropriate ways, children develop a sense of initiative and to be self-directed. Through repeated interactions with emotionally available parents, infants and toddlers also learn self-control and emotional regulation. It is during toddler-hood that empathy for others and pro-social tendencies for caring and helping develop. Experiencing and learning about all of the above capacities requires responsive parent/child relationships in the midst of inevitable stresses and challenges of life.

A new report by the Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network (FAN), which combined the work of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and a number of government groups and philanthropic funds, brought together the latest scientific evidence identifying the risk factors linked to school failure. The report found that parents could improve a child's chances of success in kindergarten by fostering a strong parent/child relationship that enhances confidence, independence, curiosity, motivation, persistence, self-control, cooperation, empathy, and the ability to communicate. The report recommended that government policies on early childhood development refocus to promote social and emotional development of the child. Specifically, the report states that it is interactions with other people and physical contact with the surrounding world that forms the neural networks in the young child's brain for emotion, thinking, and learning. (Chicago Tribune, Wednesday, September 6, 2000)

Getting Started

In both playgroups and home visits for infants and toddlers and their families, the staff can promote positive parent/child interactions in the way they design and conduct sessions.

- Plan sessions in advance so that materials are readily accessible and activities flow smoothly.
- Greet parents and children together and take the time to ask about and acknowledge the child's new accomplishments.
- Have a plan in place for greeting latecomers that comfortably integrates parents and children into the flow of the playgroups.
- Plan warm up activities that provide opportunities for parents and children to begin to focus on the planned activities in a natural way.
- Preview briefly what is planned for the benefit of both parents and children. Use pictures and real props to preview.
- Be prepared to take the lead from the parents and children in how long each activity is continued.
- Be a sensitive observer of child development and help parents learn to read and respond appropriately to their children's cues.
- Provide choices of various types of activities that allow parents and children to meet with success in a variety of ways.
- Serve as a resource to the parents as they follow their children's lead in play. Provide parents with the underlying developmental tasks embedded in the various play activities. Help increase parental understanding of how play and learning go hand in hand.

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- Station staff throughout the room to serve as resources to the parents as they follow their children's lead in play.
- Involve parents in helping their children get ready for snack by taking care of toileting needs, washing hands, and encouraging their children to taste new foods.
- Help parents to prepare their children for transitions, especially transitions that require leaving children in the care of others.
- Give parents feed-back on what their children did when they were at the parent education group. Keep weekly child progress notes to assist staff in becoming sensitive observers and reporters. Support parents to do the same.

Home visits involve additional opportunities for promoting positive parent/child interactions.

- Help parents see how daily routines such as bathing, dressing, and eating provide opportunities for parent/child interactions that can enhance the child's development.
- Capitalize on teachable moments that occur spontaneously during the home visit.
- Include other family members, especially brothers and sisters, in the planned play activities.
- Videotape parent/child interactions and help parents tune in to the things that they are doing to support child development.

Recognize the importance of teaching through modeling by using:

- A variety of natural language techniques for parents, including expansion techniques, self-talk, parallel talk, and closure techniques.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- A variety of techniques for encouraging emergent literacy, including sharing books, following written directions, and writing. (See II.B.5. on emergent literacy in this guide book section.)
- Behavior management techniques for parents, including giving choices, redirection, and positive reinforcement.
- A variety of problem solving skills for parents, including trial and error strategizing, questioning, and sabotage techniques.
- Sensory awareness for parents by tuning in to sights, sounds, textures, movements, smells, and tastes.
- Creative expression for parents by singing, dancing, pretending, and enjoying the process of artistic expression.
- A variety of techniques for encouraging physical development, including moving upward, downward, and all around.

Moving Forward

Review and examine the various frameworks and designs for successful playgroups and home visits.

Learn more about infant mental health. Subscribe to the Infant Mental Health Journal and consider joining the organization.

Find out more about the Zero to Three organization, publication and conferences.

Read more about attachment, the development of the child's sense of self, and early brain development.

Go to a workshop that provides information on videotaping parent/child interactions.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Visit other programs and observe parent/child interactions.

Take advantage of workshops offered in your area by The Illinois Resource Center, The Early Intervention System, STAR NET, and local universities.

Become a good model for parents by learning more about natural language techniques, behavior management and the young child, emergent literacy, and overall child development.

Quality Indicator II.A.3. The development of a sense of trust and autonomy among staff, children, and families is a priority.

Laying the Foundation

It is important for children to develop a healthy balance of trust and mistrust. Trust grows in infancy in the everyday, ordinary interactions between parents and children. In order for this to be optimal, those interactions should be consistent, predictable and nurturing. A baby learns to trust through the routine experiences of being fed when she is hungry, and held when she is upset or frightened. Children learn that their needs will be met, that they matter, that someone will comfort them, feed them, and keep them safe and warm. Children feel secure and develop a sense of trust most readily when relationships are nurturing, people in their lives are consistent, and daily experiences are routine. Children also feel secure when adults understand and respond to their individual cues and anticipate and accommodate the effects of sights, sounds, movement on young children. Children's autonomy or independence is linked to their developing balance between trust and mistrust. Children whose basic needs are not met in infancy and early childhood often feel mistrustful, and have difficulty learning to believe in others and in themselves. The development of trust cannot be separated from the formation of a healthy attachment to the primary care giver.

The importance of learning to trust other human beings is vital in order to function successfully in society. It is crucial that this sense of trust begins to grow during the earliest years. While it is certainly possible to learn this later, it becomes much more difficult the older a child gets. Years of living in an interpersonal environment that is unresponsive, untrustworthy, or unreliable is difficult to undo in later relationships.

Getting Started

Children thrive when they perceive that the world is a safe place. Parents and staff can help infants and toddlers develop a sense of trust by:

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- Reading, interpreting, and responding appropriately to the individual cues of children.
- Observing children and offering them appropriate.
- Providing an emotionally secure and physically safe environment to explore.
- Interacting with children in a nurturing and supportive manner.
- Respecting children's preferences as an indication of a healthy sense of self.
- Communicating with children in an age-appropriate manner that they can understand.
- Praising children frequently for their accomplishments and independence.
- Encouraging the development of self-help skills.
- Providing a balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities.
- Designing activities which assist parents to promote their child's exploration and autonomy and anticipate transitions.
- Helping children/parents learn routines by previewing and reviewing.
- Keeping groups of children/parents and staff consistent.

Moving Forward

Read about attachment, separation and autonomy.

Learn about Stranger Anxiety.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Read about theories of psychosocial development including basic trust by theorist such as Erik Erikson, Margret Mahler, Daniel Stern, and Stanley Greenspan.

Read about the work of Alan Sroufe and Byron Egeland which explains how secure relationships impact behavior and social relationships.

Read about Megan Gunner's work about stress and the young child.

Quality Indicator II.A.4. Parents receive education and support to identify and cope with life stressors that may place their family at risk.

Laying the Foundation

Abilities, interests, personalities, and learning styles also vary among parents. The program, therefore, should offer parents a variety of opportunities and support for growth, so they can identify their own strengths, needs, and interests in order to find their own solutions to life's challenges. Relationships between the staff and the families are important. The desire of staff to collect information "up front" must be balanced against the necessity of allowing time for staff and families to develop meaningful one-on-one relationships. Early and frequent interactions and follow-up sessions help build trusting relationships. Once such relationships are established, parents will be more likely to openly discuss issues that interest or concern them. Sensitivity to family privacy is important and staff should respect the parent's right to choose how much personal information they share, as well as, if and how this information is to be recorded. Adaptation was made from Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40(a)(1) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1996, 126).

Interventions for the prevention of child maltreatment often include home visiting programs. Essential aspects of successful home visiting programs include establishing a supportive relationship with the family prior to educating the parents about child care skills, being responsive to family problems that require immediate attention prior to handling parenting issues, and providing adequate medical and social service resources for the home visitor's use.

In looking at characteristics that put children and families at risk, it is important to help families become aware of the strengths that keep them resilient. Resilience factors are the self-righting capacities that people, families, and communities call upon to promote health and healing in children who grow up under adverse conditions.

Getting Started

Parent education should be individualized and tailored to meet the unique strengths and needs of the participants. It is essential for each parent group to have a consistent facilitator in order to establish continuity and a sense of belonging. The role of the facilitator includes the following:

- Get to know each parent's name, as well as the names of their children.
- Help parents learn each other's names by using nametags and referring to parents frequently by their names.
- Conduct formal and informal needs assessments including the identification of family strengths and concerns.
- Identify and discuss shared interests and concerns of the parents.
- Use a discussion format, visual aids, and parent-friendly handouts to share information.
- Encourage sharing in groups by acknowledging and affirming the contribution of each member.
- Discuss issues of cultural diversity and encourage appreciation of cultural differences.
- Foster interactions among parents by encouraging discussions where everyone has an opportunity to share.
- Encourage parents to share their individual strengths.
- Laugh with the parents.
- Periodically schedule guest speakers from the community to address parent's interests and needs.
- Provide opportunities that encourage the development of individual friendships among parents.

Moving Forward

Learn more about the traits of resilience in at risk populations through web sites, seminars and libraries.

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Develop a resource list for families from which they can receive counseling and support services in your program's catchment area.

Learn about the Healthy Families Illinois Project. (Chicago phone number: 1-773-638-0111)

Quote: "Other things may change us, but we start and end with family." - Anthony Brandt

PROGRAM STANDARD II.B. THE CURRICULUM REFLECTS THE HOLISTIC AND DYNAMIC NATURE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT.

Because development in young children does not proceed in discrete domains but overlaps, the infant and toddler curriculum must be holistic, encompassing all areas of development. In order to effectively implement curriculum, staff must have a sound knowledge of infant and toddler development and recognize that the curriculum is intended to be used as a dynamic resource. The curriculum should unfold in response to the gifts each parent/child dyad contributes.

Quality Indicator II.B.1. A balance of all developmental areas: cognitive, communication, physical, social, and emotional is demonstrated in all activities and service provision.

Laying the Foundation

All domains of children's development are closely related and influence each other. Developmentally appropriate practice embraces the concept that children are active learners who need direct cognitive, physical, and social experiences in order to construct their own understandings of the world. Children need opportunities to form and test their own hypotheses through social interaction, physical manipulation, and their own thought processes by observing what happens, reflecting on their findings, asking questions, and formulating answers. In addition, developmentally appropriate practice acknowledges that play is an important vehicle for children's development in all areas. Play gives children opportunities to understand their work, interact with others in social ways, express and control emotions, and develop their symbolic capabilities. Furthermore, observing play gives adults insights into children's development, how children perceive their work, and what is essentially on children's minds. There are many variables that could impact a child's development including, but not limited to genetics, medical/health factors, culture, creativity, and environment.

Getting Started

Programs can develop their own curriculum or select and adapt from among a variety of curriculum approaches or frameworks that are available and designed to support each child's cognitive, communicative, physical, social, and emotional development. The relationship of the staff to the children and families is the key to a successful curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum must be responsive through ongoing observations of children and through the provision of supportive flexible learning opportunities. Remember, when children play, all areas of development are integrated in a natural way. Staff should set up a variety of play experiences on home visits and in play groups and help parents see how a variety of developmental skills can be taught during any one play activity.

- During a Messy Play Activity, such as playing with water or sand with a variety of dumping and pouring accessories, children use cognitive skills as they experiment, use communication skills as they talk about what they are doing, express themselves creatively in the process of sensory exploration, develop motor skills as they manipulate materials, develop social and emotional skills as they explore along side a peer, and develop self-help skills as they interact with the parent or staff member and help clean up.
- During a Pretend Play Activity, such as playing with dolls or toy cars and pretend play accessories, children use cognitive skills as they sequence pretend actions, use communication skills as they interact with the play partners, express themselves creatively as they set up the play, develop motor skills as they manipulate pretend play props, develop social and emotional skills as they learn to share and show empathy, and develop self-help skills as they dress up.
- During an Active Play Activity, such as playing with balls, a slide, or negotiating an obstacle course, children use cognitive skills as they plan their actions, use communication skills as they follow directions, express themselves creatively as they move their bodies, develop

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motor skills as they gain muscular strength and endurance, develop social and emotional skills as they take turns, and develop self-help skills as they put away toys or get ready for snack.

Integrate a wide variety of developmental domains into the curriculum for infants and toddlers. The following recurrent developmental themes should be addressed in a variety of play settings as the children grow and develop throughout the year. Make adaptations as necessary to address the developmental challenges in all domains, especially when serving children with identified needs.

- Physical development including health/medical concerns underlies all areas of child development. All children should receive regular medical care and be fully immunized before coming to the program. The environment should be clean and safe and snacks nutritious. Precautions should be taken regarding food allergies.
- Cognitive development includes: learning problem solving skills, learning the functions and properties of objects, developing understanding of cause and effect relationships, learning classification skills, beginning sequencing skills, and becoming aware of numbers and sizes. The development of self-motivation, the capacity to plan, persistence toward a goal, the pride of accomplishment, and a sense of competence and mastery of the environment are other important cognitive skills.
- Communication development involves communicating ideas and feelings through gestures, sounds, words, body movements, and pictures. It includes expressive language skills such as developing vocabulary through naming, concept development, engaging in simple interactions, conversations, and answering questions. Receptive language skills such as following directions and understanding concepts and questions are included. Language usage is another important component of communication development. Reading stories, singing songs, reciting rhymes, and encouraging children to hold and manipulate books are

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also important literacy skills, which are essential to communication development. Labeling a child's play space with pictures and symbols is also a helpful technique to foster literacy development.

- Creative development includes ways that children express themselves through drama, music, dance, and art. Drama can be facilitated through pretend play that involves imagination and imitation, the use of replicas, sequencing pretend actions, and the use of real or pretend objects as pretend play props. Providing opportunities to sing, dance, participate in rhythmic activities, use musical instruments, and move creatively can facilitate music and dance. Art can be facilitated through messy play, which includes an openness to using the senses including one's hands to explore a variety of sensory materials and artistic mediums.
- Motor development addresses the development of fine and gross motor skills, and proprioceptive(deep touch) and vestibular(movement) abilities. Fine motor skills are developed through sensory exploration and opportunities to practice the coordination of specialized motions, including grasp, manipulative skills, eye-hand coordination, and imitative movements. Gross motor skills include the ability to coordinate arm and leg movements, develop physical strength, and improve balance abilities. The development of gross motor skills also enhances self-confidence, independence, and autonomy.
- Self-help development addresses self-care in the areas of feeding, dressing, and toileting. This includes the ability to access a primary caregiver when needed and move toward greater independence.
- Social and emotional development includes the development of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-control, a sense of humor, coping, and the ability to separate from parents and get along with others.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Moving Forward

Gain an understanding of the role of parents in fostering development of young children.

Become an expert on the value of play and play development.

Learn more about each area of child development including the prenatal and postnatal and the interrelated aspects of developmental domains.

Become aware of the various medical health issues that are specific to children, birth to three.

Learn more about the role of children's relationships in their development.

Become a specialist in infant and toddler developmental by taking classes specifically focused on the growth and development of children from birth to three.

Quality Indicator II.B.2. An integrated and individualized program is offered for children in the context of their families.

Laying the Foundation

Abilities, interests, temperaments, developmental rates, and learning styles vary among children. The program should accommodate a variety of children's strengths and needs and encourage learning across all domains of development. Adults respect individuality among children by responding to children's cues and designing activities reflective of the observed stages and interests of children. A program's responsiveness to individual children is accomplished through comprehensive curriculum and by providing various materials, activities, and experiences that support a broad range of children's prior experiences, maturation rates, styles of learning, needs cultures, and interests. Adaptation was made from Head Start Performance Standard 1304.21(a)(1)(i) (U.S. Health and Human Services 1999, 60).

Getting Started

To support an individualized yet integrated program, staff and parents should work together to plan multi-level activities that enable children to apply existing skills and develop emerging skills. The staff member observes child development, discusses observations, records developmental progress, and expands learning opportunities.

- Staff, together with parents, should **plan** learning activities that provide continuous opportunities for children of a variety of ages and abilities to experience success. Staff should model for parents how the complexity and challenge of an activity can be increased to help children enhance their performance.
- Staff, together with parents, should **observe** children during learning activities, carefully identify their interests, and match activities to the children's levels.

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- Staff, together with parents, should **discuss** what they observe about the children's progress, interests, development, learning styles, attention span, temperament, and problem-solving abilities.
- Staff should regularly **record** child progress that occurs during home visits or play groups. Information should be recorded in all areas of development and shared with parents.
- Staff, together with parents, should **expand** learning opportunities by identifying these opportunities in the home, including how to adapt activities and household routines in response to children's interests, strengths, and needs.
- Staff should **use** the development monitoring process as a springboard for teaching parents about child development and how to identify child development goals for the family plan.

Moving Forward

Consult different infant and toddler curricula to gain information about integrated and individualized programs.

Note the current parenting materials in the grocery stores, book stores and libraries that parents are noticing.

Consider developing "briefs" on some of the most asked questions from parents.

Quality Indicator II.B.3. Developmentally appropriate practices are implemented, and multiple theoretical perspectives are considered.

Laying the Foundation

Birth to three programs have valued and applied the work of others in identifying developmentally appropriate practice. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has developed the following concepts for early childhood programs.

1. Domains of children's development - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive - are closely related. Development in one domain influences and is influenced by development in other domains.
2. Development occurs in a relatively orderly sequence, with later abilities, skills, and knowledge building on those already acquired.
3. Development proceeds at varying rates from child to child, as well as, unevenly within different areas of each child's functioning.
4. Early experiences have both cumulative and delayed effects on individual children's development; optimal periods exist for certain types of development and learning.
5. Development proceeds in predictable directions toward greater complexity, organization, and internalization.
6. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts.
7. Children are active learners, drawing on direct physical and social experience, as well as, culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understandings of the world around them.
8. Development and learning result from interaction of biological maturation and the environment, which includes both the physical and social worlds in which children live.
9. Play is an important vehicle for children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, as well as, a reflection of their development.
10. Development advances when children have opportunities to practice newly acquired skills, as well as, when they experience a challenge just beyond the level of their present mastery.

11. Children demonstrate different modes of knowing and learning and different ways of representing what they know.
12. Children develop and learn best in the context of a community where they are safe and valued, their physical needs are met, and they feel psychologically secure" (National Association for the Education of Young Children 1997, 10-15).

Getting Started

Development occurs more rapidly during infancy and toddlerhood than during any other time in an individual's life. Development occurs as a result of the interaction of the individual with environment over time. Genetic contributions from both parents and cultural and familial practices play an important role in the development of the child. Changes result from physical growth, maturation, and experience. Multiple theoretical perspectives must be considered when looking at infant and toddler development. Some of the classical theoretical perspectives to consider are:

- **Chess and Thomas** in their 1950 New York Longitudinal Study, theorized that much of the behavior seen in infants and toddlers is a result of **temperament**. Temperament is inborn and includes such things as activity, rhythmicity, effects of novel stimuli, adaptability and flexibility, threshold of responsiveness, quality of mood, distractibility, and attention span and persistence. Temperament links behavior to physiology. Chess and Thomas identified three clusters of characteristic temperaments, which occurred frequently and labeled these cluster as easy, slow to warm up, and difficult. Temperament is an important concept to consider in the **transactional model**, which looks at the goodness of fit between parent and child.
- **Jean Piaget**, a Swiss psychologist, studied the progressions of cognitive development in children. He proposed that a child continuously adapts to and organizes the environment by **assimilating** (using known patterns of behavior to deal with the environment in new and familiar situations) and **accommodating** (modifying cognitive structures in response to environmental pressures). During the **sensory-motor** stage, which occurs approximately from birth through 2 years, the infant's cognition is **non-**

symbolic and learning occurs through direct action on the environment. The hallmark of the end of this stage is called **object permanence**, when the infant learns that objects exist even when they are out of sight. In the **pre-operational** stage, which occurs approximately from 2 through 8 years, children begin to think **symbolically**.

- **John Bowlby**, a British psychiatrist studied infants who were separated from their parents. He developed theories on **attachment**, which refers to the infant's behaviors, feelings and cognition directed toward the primary caretaker. Attachment is an emotional tie, which develops and endures over time and leads to the child seeking physical closeness with the attachment figure. Bowlby felt that attachment-promoting behavior was innate and had the biological function of protecting the child from danger by increasing parental interest and proximity. Attachment promoting and strengthening behaviors include smiling, crying, and vocalizing.
- **Mary Ainsworth**, who studied one year olds during separations and reunions with their primary caregivers in her laboratory, described various kinds of **attachment patterns** which have important implications for later development. She found that insecure, anxious, and weak attachments may predict later problems. She discussed several types of attachment. **Anxious resistant attachment** occurred when parents were inconsistent, frequently separated from the child, or used threats of abandonment to control the child. **Anxious avoidant attachment** resulted from constant rebuffs and rejections by the parent. **Secure attachments** developed when parents were sensitive and able to adjust their behavior to the infant's needs.
- **Erik Erikson**, a psychoanalyst, theorized that normal development required mastery of a series of **psychosocial crises** through the life cycle. He felt that if an infant failed to develop basic trust, all further developmental tasks would be compromised. Stage 1 ranged from birth through 18 months, in infancy, with the fundamental issues being **basic trust versus mistrust**. Drive and hope were the strengths achieved upon favorable outcome. Stage 2 ranged from 18 through 42 months, in toddlers, with the fundamental issues being

autonomy versus shame and doubt. Self-control and will power were the strengths achieved upon favorable outcome.

- **Margaret Mahler**, studied **object relations** or connections to others in early childhood. She described the process by which a child becomes a separate, autonomous being through several developmental phases. The **Normal Autistic** phase, from birth through 1 month, involved no differentiation of inside versus outside. The **Normal Symbiotic** phase, from 1 through 5 months, involved increased attention and awareness of the external world. The **Differentiation** phase, from 5 through 7 months, involved comparison of familiar and new. The **Practicing** phase, from 7 through 16 months, involved the use of parent as "home base" and "emotional refueling." The **Rapprochement** phase, from 16 through 24 months involved frequent conflict between assisting child and promoting independence. The **Object Constancy** phase, from 24 through 36 months, involved understanding of parent as a separate person and better toleration of separations.
- **Daniel Stern** questioned and studied the development of the sense of self. His theory hypothesizes that children have a sense of self from birth. However, the sense of self is different at every phase of development. At birth, an infant has an **Emergent** sense of self as she transitions from the world in the womb to the outside. Next to develop is the **Core** sense of self, which is a sensory type of sense of self. The **Subjective** sense of self is next as the baby begins to develop along cognitive lines and is able to understand cause and effect and object permanence. Finally, the **Verbal** sense of self finds the child able to use words to express his wants and needs, as well as, able to identify himself as different from others.
- **Lev Vygotsky** was a Russian learning theorist who died quite young. During the development of his theory of cognitive development he offered the notion that learning is socially constructed. He said a child can learn more and go further with assistance of a more competent peer. His theory includes such language as the **Zone of Proximal Development**, which implies that a child can actually work slightly above his own level if given the proper types of support, which are referred to as **Scaffolding and Mediating**. <http://www/uams.edu>

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- There are many other learning theorists that it might be helpful to include: Burton White, Rose Bromwich, Jerome Kagan, Craig Ramey, and Inge Bretherton.

Moving Forward

Discuss one or more of the previously mentioned theorists at a staff meeting.

Subscribe to a child development journal.

Join at least one child development organization.

Read more about the theories of Chess and Thomas, Piaget, John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, Erik Erikson, Burton White, and Margaret Mahler.

Continue to learn about the new brain research findings.

Attend workshops, conferences, and continuing education courses.

Network with others to discuss child development theories.

Consider taking some advanced classes in child development. Specialize in infant/toddler studies.

Quality Indicator II.B.4. A variety of high quality, developmentally appropriate activities and materials are utilized in a safe and supportive environment.

Laying the Foundation

Through meaningful interactions with adults and other children in the context of a rich environment, children gain knowledge and understanding of the world. Adults enhance all areas of development by supporting infants and toddlers with a broad array of experiences that are interesting to the child and promote sensory, motor, and creative exploration. Developing and implementing curricula for infants and toddlers is based primarily on relationships, routines, and daily experiences. Strategies should support child development, allow exploration in both home and center environments, and include both indoor and outdoor experiences. Adult support, supervision, and guidance should be provided during all activities, for safe and active learning. Adults should be responsible for reading the child's individual cues and signs so that they can modify the activities to meet the unique needs of each child.

Getting Started

Equipment, furniture, toys, and materials have a direct impact upon child development. To support educational objectives and an individualized program of services, as well as show respect for children and families, the equipment, furniture, toys, and materials are matched to the developmental levels, interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles of the children. A variety of attractive materials and toys are accessible in order to encourage exploration and learning in infants and toddlers. Adequate provisions should be made for children and parents with disabilities to ensure their safety, comfort, and participation.

- Ensure that facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Accommodate special diets or feeding needs.
- Ensure consistency and stability of the physical environment for children with visual or hearing impairments.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Consider the following when planning and maintaining the environment, furnishings, and materials:

- Provide appropriate areas for individual, small groups, and larger spaces for parent/child interaction activities.
- Provide options for active and quiet play.
- Select child-sized equipment and furniture, including safe, sturdy seating with sides/arms that support sound child development and age-appropriate practices.
- Provide infant seats.
- Ensure that toys and materials are scaled to a size appropriate to the children who use them.
- Check frequently to ensure that the toys and equipment are in good condition, and remove or replace those that are broken.
- Provide an area rug or carpeting.
- Select equipment designed to give children choices, such as low, open shelves and bookcases.
- Ensure that equipment, furniture, toys, and materials are available in sufficient quantity to avoid excessive competition and long waits.
- Place safety mirrors where children can observe themselves.
- Provide diaper-changing table with non-porous, non-absorbent surface and an accessible sink for hand washing.
- Provide a refrigerator.
- Provide a container for isolating, cleaning, and disinfecting toys that have been in children's mouths.

Introduce play activities and materials that enhance all developmental areas.

Music Play

- Engage in rhythmic activities.
- Engage in singing.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Use musical instruments, audio equipment, cassettes, compact disks, and music videos.
- Encourage expression through creative movement and dance.

Messy Play

- Provide a sensory table with a variety of accessories including such things as containers and tools to scoop.
- Provide a floor space that can be easily cleaned up and is near a sink.
- Engage infants and toddlers by encouraging sensory exploration.

Creative Play

- Offer a rich variety of projects and sufficient materials to support children's interests.
- Support exploration of art materials.
- Offer increasing complexity in manipulative materials.
- Provide a table and floor areas near a sink to allow for easy cleanup.

Pretend Play

- Provide opportunities to learn through pretend play experiences.
- Provide play experiences for children to learn the functions of objects such as the housekeeping and transportation areas.
- Stimulate imagination through drama such as kitchen sets with accessories and dolls and doll beds.
- Provide dress-up clothes hung on safe hooks, plus a mirror.
- Provide accessories for transportation play, such as cars and trucks and pretend roads including small blocks.
- Provide a puppet stage with puppets.

Gross and Fine Motor Play

- Arrange physical space so children have room to roll over, crawl, walk, and test new movement skills.
- Provide opportunities for infants and toddlers to learn through active exploration.
- Provide low climbing structures that are well-padded and safe for exploration.
- Provide safe, large materials for stacking, such as blocks.
- Change the play for infants by frequently changing their positions or moving them from one area to another.
- Change or rotate objects to challenge infants and toddlers to explore.
- Encourage movement and playfulness.
- Participate in children's physical activities with them.
- Model interactions that guide children's safe, active indoor and outdoor play.
- Identify opportunities for jumping, hopping, climbing, and running.
- Encourage the use of pushing and pulling and riding wheeled toys.
- Provide time for children to demonstrate and practice new skills.
- Plan experiences for developing motor skills and physical strength through repetition of actions.
- Help children to understand safety rules.
- Provide pegs, puzzles, and blocks organized into containers so that the children can begin their play by learning the concept of in and out as they manipulate small materials.
- Provide a variety of markers, paints, and other materials that children can use.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Provide a variety of materials that allow the child to use different grasp and prehension patterns with including things that they can poke, push, and pinch.

Problem Solving Play

- Rotate the selection of toys to provide variety and new experiences.
- Offer a variety of problem situations to extend children's thinking.
- Plan experiences for children to learn the properties of objects.
- Plan experiences for children to classify materials into groups.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn about beginning number concepts.
- Ensure that materials possess interesting shapes, textures, and colors that promote exploration, experimentation, and learning.
- Provide toys responsive to the child's actions.
- Provide appropriate materials and toys for infants to grasp, chew, and manipulate.
- Provide manipulative toys such as puzzles, pegs and pegboards, nesting blocks, shape sorters, and bead and string sets.
- Make toys available on open shelves so children can make their own selections.

Health and Safety - Additional information on health and safety guidelines is included in Quality Indicator I.E.1.

- Risks are avoided if equipment, furniture, toys, and materials are safe, durable, and well maintained. To maximize floor space, minimize clutter, and ensure that items can be easily and safely located, items should be stored in a safe and orderly fashion.
- Provide toys and equipment that meet the national children's safety standards.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Ensure that children receive well-baby health visits, and that they are fully immunized.
- Assist families in identifying materials and furnishings in the home that are safe and durable and facilitate children's learning and exploration.
- Educate parents about the danger of toxic substances and steps to be taken to minimize the exposure of children at home and at the center.
- Establish procedures for buckling and transporting children in strollers that meet national child safety standards.
- Install all equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use furniture that has safe, rounded edges.
- Use equipment and furniture that is sturdy enough to allow children to pull themselves up.
- Do not use infant walkers because of the considerable risk of injury.
- Help children understand safety rules regarding toys and materials.
- Ensure that furnishings and equipment cannot be pulled over by the children.
- Store materials in locations not used by children.
- Ensure that materials meant for adults, such as scissors and electrical appliances, are inaccessible to children.
- Store large equipment in an enclosed storage space to reduce clutter.
- Clean and disinfect toys on a regular schedule following health guidelines.
- Isolate or clean toys that are placed in children's mouths or in contact with body secretions.
- Ensure that electrical outlets are covered.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Monitor ventilation and air quality.
- Assure that all painted surfaces are lead-free.
- Sweep or mop uncarpeted floor areas with a sanitizing solution daily.
- Vacuum carpeted areas daily, and clean them regularly, using hypoallergenic products.
- Clean and sanitize all kitchen equipment.
- Clean and sanitize bathrooms daily.
- Keep facilities free of insects, rodents, and other pests.
- Place fire extinguishers in accessible locations and ensure that staff knows how to use them.
- Make sure all exit doors are unobstructed and operate easily, opening outward.
- Have entrance and exit routes clearly marked.
- Ensure that heating and cooling systems are inspected annually and are insulated to protect children and staff from all danger.
- Store cleaning materials in their original labeled containers, separated from food, and out of children's reach.
- Dispose soiled diapers in containers separate from other waste.
- Keep garbage and trash in an area inaccessible to children and away from areas used for the storage or food preparation.
- Remove garbage and trash daily.
- Implement a comprehensive maintenance program for toys, equipment, and furnishings.
- Conduct regular fire and evacuation drills.
- Prohibit the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs in all spaces used by the program in the evening as well as during the day.
- Ensure that all plants are inaccessible to children.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Attend to special safety requirements of outdoor play spaces:

- Ensure that playgrounds are designed, installed, inspected, and maintained with children's safety in mind so that the equipment does not pose the threat of serious falls and will not pinch, crush, or entrap the head or any part of a child's body or clothing.
- Ensure that all playground equipment is installed over shock-absorbing materials and securely anchored to the ground.
- Ensure that outdoor play areas are free of broken glass, stones, sharp objects, standing water, poisonous plants, and other hazards.

Moving Forward

Identify and subscribe to some good catalogs for ordering toys, equipment, and supplies for infant and toddler programs such as: *Environments*, *Creative Play Things*, *Sassy Toys*, and *Childcraft*.

Become informed about safe and appropriate playgrounds for young children birth to age three.

Identify and consult with a nurse regarding appropriate concerns if your program does not have one on staff.

Learn about Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) codes and standards.

Quality Indicator II.B.5. An emergent literacy focus is observable in the activities, materials, and environment planned for the child.

Laying the Foundation

The research in the areas of emergent literacy suggests that the roots of both reading and writing are established in all language experiences of very young children. Over the past ten years, the concept of emergent literacy has been gradually replacing the notion of "reading readiness." Literacy refers to the inter-relatedness of language components and includes speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing. The theory of emergent literacy has developed from a vast amount of research from the fields of child development, psychology, education, linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. It has virtually redefined the field of literacy and has informed some educators and parents the term "reading readiness" no longer describes adequately what is happening in the literacy development of young children. Specifically, emergent literacy suggests that the development of literacy is a process that takes place gradually within the child beginning at birth and that there is actually no one point in time when a child is ready to begin learning to read and write.

From a large body of research that focused on the study of families with children who were reading before they entered school, the theory of emergent literacy evolved to encompass the following elements:

1. Learning to read and write begins very early in life.
2. Being read to plays a special role in the literacy development of the young child. **Being read to on a daily basis is one of the greatest gifts that parents can give their children.**
3. Reading and writing develop concurrently and are interrelated in young children.
4. Literacy develops from real life situations in which reading and writing are used functionally.
5. Children learn literacy through active participation with people or materials.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

6. Learning to read and write is a developmental process. Children pass through the developmental stages of reading and writing acquisition in a variety of ways and at different ages.

Research has shown that it is possible to accent and highlight literacy activities in play environments for young children by providing a print rich environment. Specifically, when open ended activities involving books and paper and pencil activities were provided for young children, the researchers found the children had an almost "natural affinity" for them. Thus, the role of the educator and parent in the emergent literacy perspective becomes one of setting conditions that supports self-generated and self-motivated learning. <http://www.ets.uidaho.edu>

Getting Started

The following suggestions are ways to incorporate emergent literacy into educational programs for parents of infants and toddlers:

- Emphasize how reading **daily** to their children is a key component in facilitating early literacy acquisition.
- Emphasize how providing the opportunity to their children to scribble, draw, and color daily is another key component in facilitating early literacy acquisition.
- Encourage oral traditions in families through story telling.
- Help parents become aware of book sharing practices that expand the child's literacy development:
 1. Label or name and comment on the book's illustrations.
 2. Make up a story about the pictures in the order they appear.
 3. Attend to and read the printed text.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Provide suggestions for interactive book sharing:
 1. Be open to your child's strategies as he asks for a book or wants to be read to.
 2. Let children choose the books they want to share.
 3. Share books more than once and support an enjoyment of or attachment to favorite books.
 4. Read books with repetitive lines and illustrations.
 5. Choose books based on your child's experiences and interests.
 6. Relate books to your child's individual experiences.
 7. Encourage your child to contribute in some way.
 8. Initiate play activities that are related to the stories read with your child.
 9. Choose books with only one to three lines of print per page if reading the text.
- Point out how the language and social interactions, which occur during book sharing experiences, enhance the parent/child relationship, develop language skills, expand vocabulary, familiarize the child as to what print involves, and serve as a model for reading.
- Inform parents that children who grow up seeing their parents read magazines, books, and newspapers will often choose these activities themselves.
- Point out the important things children can learn when they see their parents use print to accomplish real goals and tasks in their daily lives.
- Encourage parents to use libraries, children's museums, and other community resources to enhance their children's emergent literacy skills.
- Help parents become aware of other family characteristics, in addition to sharing books with their children, that contribute directly to reading achievement, including a positive attitude toward education, parental aspirations for their children, conversations and reading

materials in the home, and cultural activities.

<http://idea.uoregon.edu/~ncite/documents/techrep/tech19.html>

The following are suggestions for creating an emergent literacy environment for infants and toddlers:

- Create opportunities for children to see their parents use print such as signing an attendance book for play groups, filling out nametags to be worn in groups, or singing songs from a printed song sheet.
- Create opportunities for children to see staff use print such as writing children's names on their artwork, writing captions on children's photographs, or recording new accomplishments in writing to be shared with a parent.
- Provide opportunities for children to experience books, which are attractively displayed and easily accessible to children throughout the playroom:
 1. Look at a wide variety of books, including board books, paper books, touch and feel books, big books, photo albums, and home made books.
 2. Provide books from children's own and other cultures.
 3. Listen to stories individually or in small groups.
 4. Providing opportunities for children to ask and answer questions while looking at books.
 5. Encourage children to name what they see in books.
 6. Ask children to comment on how they feel about what is happening in a story.
 7. Look at books independently or along side other children during free play.
 8. Make books together using child generated text and children's artwork, pictures from magazines, or photographs.
 9. Expose children to books on tape, videotape, or computer discs.

10. Respond to children's request to share books.
 11. Share favorite books with children repeatedly.
 12. Create a story sack library with books and related materials.
- Provide opportunities for children to informally **experience concepts about reading books**:
 1. Pages are turned from right to left.
 2. Print is read left to right.
 3. Books need to be right side up to see the pictures and read the words.

 - Provide opportunities for children to **develop phonemic awareness**, which involves hearing the differences and similarities among sounds by exposing children to:
 1. Singing.
 2. Listening to music.
 3. Saying nursery rhymes.
 4. Acting out nursery rhymes.
 5. Looking at and reading nursery rhyme books.
 6. Displaying nursery rhyme posters in the playroom.
 7. Performing finger plays.
 8. Reading children's poetry.
 9. Reading books with repetitive sounds, words, lines, or verses.

 - Provide opportunities in number experiences for children in their daily activities:
 1. Provide objects for counting and one-to-one correspondence.
 2. Provide objects for sorting and categorizing.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Moving Forward

Review the latest research on Emergent Literacy and the young child.

Attend conferences and workshops that focus on reading, writing, books, and other literacy related topics as they relate to young children and their families.

Enroll in a higher education course, pre or postgraduate, in Literacy Development of the Young Child.

Learn about the developmental stages in a child's reading and writing acquisition.

Quote: "Each child is an adventure into a better life - an opportunity to change the old pattern and make it new." - Hubert H. Humphrey

PROGRAM STANDARD II.C. THE CURRICULUM PRIORITIZES FAMILY INVOLVEMENT WHILE RESPECTING INDIVIDUAL PARENTAL CHOICES.

The curriculum reflects the high priority of family involvement at whatever level each parent chooses. The curriculum design provides for various levels of parent participation, ranging from enrichment and mentoring to more intensive educational opportunities. The staff welcomes, encourages, and supports all levels of parent participation and respects the individual choices and needs of each family.

Quality Indicator II.C.1. Opportunities are provided for varied levels of parent participation.

Laying the Foundation

The curriculum and services of the program are designed by staff to offer a variety of choices and levels of participation to parents. The more actively involved parents become, the more opportunities they will have to impact what happens in the program. Because parents know their children's temperament, developmental abilities, and interests, they are integral partners in the processes of planning and implementing curriculum. Parent participation is also valuable as it assists them to increase their own knowledge of child growth and development. Thus parents are able to help program staff make the curriculum more meaningful for their children. Adapted from Head Start Performance Standard 1304.21(a)(2)(i) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1999, 63).

Getting Started

The levels of parental involvement in the program can be conceptualized as a continuum. Staff should be aware of this continuum while at the same time respecting individual parental choices. Suggestions for choices can be offered by staff to parents as they demonstrate the desire to deepen their level of involvement. Parental temperament, culture, and many other variables will affect their interest and level of involvement. The following

listing incorporates this continuum and identifies various levels of parent involvement.

- Come to the program as a social outlet.
- Expect the teachers to watch and interact with their children.
- Quietly observe what is happening in the play groups.
- Quietly observe what is happening in the parent education groups.
- Begin to take part in some activities with their children.
- Begin to participate in parent education group discussions.
- Begin to form friendships within the group.
- Actively participate in all activities with their children.
- Actively participate in parent education group activities.
- Reflect on what their children are doing and share ideas for enhancement.
- Reflect on what is happening in the parent education group and share ideas for enhancement.
- Celebrate the accomplishments of their friend's children.
- Celebrate the personal development of their friends.
- Begin to form friendships that go beyond group time and the program.
- Feel a sense of belonging to the parent education group and take ownership for what happens.
- Become involved in more than one program activity.
- Enjoy when guest speakers come and provide special information.
- Access and use suggested community resources.
- Influence other family members, especially partners, to become involved in the program.
- Recruit friends to come to the program.
- Are willing to mentor new participants in the program.
- Begin to make suggestions for improvements or new program activities.
- Share and/or demonstrate child-teaching abilities that have had an impact outside of the program.
- Apply discussions from the parent education groups outside of the program and share evidence of this in conversations with staff and other parents.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Get involved in the planning and evaluation of various program components.
- Take advantage of personal development opportunities in the community.
- Volunteer for the program.
- Volunteer to serve as role models for other parents.
- Become employed by the program or other similar program.

Moving Forward

Evaluate parent involvement in all program activities. Identify what is happening and what could be happening.

Talk to and learn from parents about their level of involvement in the program by using interviews, program evaluations, and exit surveys.

Learn what it means to be nonjudgmental and culturally sensitive.

Learn more about observation as a tool to understand children and families.

Talk with and visit other birth to three programs to learn about and observe other parent involvement models.

Sponsor a Parent Involvement Workshop for staff and parents. Invite a neighboring program staff and parents to attend.

Quality Indicator II.C.2. Opportunities are provided for parents to increase their levels of program involvement through education and enrichment.

Laying the Foundation

It is important for programs to offer a menu of services to parents and to support increasing their levels of involvement and participation. This menu of services should include options for parents to learn more about child development and parenting. In addition, parents should have opportunities to improve their life management skills. Parents may benefit from social support activities. It is important to stress health and wellness in the menu of service options. Recognizing that the parents' need for continuing education and vocational and career guidance is also important. When parents are ready, they begin reaching out to other parents and become involved in program development activities such as serving as program volunteers or eventually being employed by the program.

Getting Started

Leadership and staff must remember that every parent brings to the program a unique set of interests, talents, desires, and needs. The level of involvement will be greatly determined by a number of variables that may or may not be known to program staff. Staff should remember they do not always know the real life experiences of the parents they serve. Therefore, they should proceed cautiously particularly in their expectations of increasing parent involvement. The following parent involvement activities offer many choices to the program:

Child development and parenting:

- Infant massage groups
- Parent/child field trips
- Parent/child story time groups
- Parent/infant play groups
- Parent/toddler movement groups
- Parent/toddler play groups

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Behavior management information
- Child development information in all developmental areas
- Child health and wellness information
- Positive parenting strategies
- Toilet training information

Life management skills:

- Assertiveness training
- Home improvement workshops
- Life goal setting
- Money management
- Organizational abilities
- Stress reduction
- Use of community resources

Social support:

- Cooking groups
- Couples outings
- Craft groups
- Meeting outside of the regular program time
- Parent generated baby sitting cooperatives
- Social support groups around a specific theme
- Social support groups on parenting

Creative expression:

- Artistic expression (dancing, painting, singing, writing, etc.)
- Dance classes, especially those relevant to the cultures served by the program
- Journaling
- Scrapbooking

Enrichment experiences:

- Culturally relevant and diverse field trips
- Guest speakers from the community
- School and community-wide activities outside the program

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Health and wellness:

- Exercise classes
- Family planning information
- Health and nutrition classes
- Referrals to dental and health clinics
- Self-esteem building
- Stress reduction

Peer mentoring:

- Mentoring new parents
- Networking with parents in similar life situations

Adult continuing education:

- Computer classes
- English as a Second Language classes
- Extension Services classes
- GED classes
- Park District classes

Vocational or career development:

- Community College classes
- Learning marketable skills
- Vocational inventories or counseling

Program development:

- Advisory Committees
- Interagency Council Committees
- Organizing and donating clothing or toys for an incentive boutique for other parents
- Program Development Committees
- Program Evaluation Focus Groups
- Recruiting
- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Book Selection Committees
- Writing articles for the program monthly newsletter

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Program volunteers:

- Assisting with child care
- Assisting with implementation of family events
- Assisting with improving the program environment
- Assisting with materials preparation
- Assisting with snack preparation
- Contributing items from home to enrich the cultural environment of the center
- Donating time to help with office activities
- Planning family events
- Sharing talents at community events
- Sharing talents at program special events
- Sharing talents at program-wide events

Program or school employees:

- Becoming employed full time by the program
- Becoming employed in some other capacity in the program or school
- Becoming employed part-time by the program

Moving Forward

Survey and interview parents regarding their interests and levels of desired participation.

Identify barriers to parent participation and develop a plan to address these barriers.

Look at a variety of program brochures and handbooks to learn about opportunities for parent involvement.

Visit other programs to observe other parental involvement models.

Participate on local boards or committees that would provide networking experiences.

Quality Indicator II.C.3. The curriculum and activities support family literacy.

Laying the Foundation

Literacy by itself means the ability to read and write. The term "family literacy" describes a complex concept. The International Reading Association's Family Literacy Commission offers the following ideas as a definition of family literacy. Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children, and extended family members use reading and writing at home and in their community. It occurs naturally during the routines of daily living. Examples of family literacy might include using drawings or writing to express ideas, composing notes or letters to communicate messages, keeping records, making lists, reading and following directions, or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, and writing. Family literacy activities may be initiated purposefully by a parent, or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives. These activities may also reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved. <http://www.ets.uidaho.edu/cdhd/evenstart/evenstart-whatish.htm>

Family literacy programs provide participants with the self-confidence, peer support, and family management skills that lead to employment and job retention. They provide adults with the skills they need in the workforce and their children with the tools they need to succeed in school. In addition, parents learn how to help their children in school, and their children receive benefits that last longer than the program.

Getting Started

The design of many family literacy programs includes four integrated components: literacy instruction for parents, emergent literacy activities for children, parent and child together time, and parent group time. The following suggestions incorporate family literacy activities into the birth to three program:

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Recognize that learning will only occur after a trusting relationship is established. Hire staff that respect the life experiences of
- participants and communicate in a way that builds parents' self confidence and self-respect.
- Offer play groups that involve the parents and children in interactive literacy activities.
- Support parents to enhance family literacy.
- Encourage families to keep journals that record child development information and personal reflections.
- Provide literacy learning in parent education groups in the context of early childhood development, parenting, and the use of community resources. Use engaging curriculum, activities, and learning materials that provide valuable and useful information about parenting, and are culturally and linguistically relevant.
- Invite people from the community to make adult literacy presentations and lead discussions.
- Encourage parent/child daily reading in a variety of ways:
 1. Provide parents with tips on how to share books with their children.
 2. Provide families with books for home use and a calendar for charting family reading.
- Promote learning to use computers an important literacy skill.
- Encourage parents to use available computers to work on projects relevant to them.
- Familiarize families with community literacy resources, such as the public library and museums. Help families obtain library cards. Let them know about free days at the museums.
- Encourage parents to write, design, and produce a program publication to promote the development of many skills and allow families to share information such as favorite books, recipes, autobiographies, family histories, and the program's timely sharing of news.
- Support families to learn about the different modes of local transportation and how to use them. This helps families become familiar with the community and its resources. <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digests/dig144.html>

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Moving Forward

Learn more about Family Literacy through personal study, workshops, and conferences.

Evaluate the family literacy component of the program through parent satisfaction surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

Place family literacy on the agenda of at least one staff meeting.

Visit the National Center for Family Literacy Website. <http://www.famlit.org/>

Visit the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.
<http://www.barbarabushfoundation.com/ll.html>

Research the community to learn about other family literacy programs.

Sponsor a Family Literacy Fair incorporating community partnerships.

Quote: The meaning of things lies not in the things themselves, but in our attitude towards them." - Antoine de Saint Exupery

PROGRAM STANDARD II.D. THE CURRICULUM SUPPORTS AND DEMONSTRATES RESPECT FOR THE FAMILIES' UNIQUE ABILITIES AS WELL AS FOR THEIR ETHNIC, CULTURAL, AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY.

The curriculum reflects the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the participating families and their communities. The curriculum is dynamic as families and staff work together to consider and integrate the individual abilities and cultures of the families.

Quality Indicator II.D.1. The program provides activities, materials, and an environment that reflect a variety of cultures.

Laying the Foundation

Children and their families come to the program rooted in a culture, or cultures, which provides the foundation of beliefs and values and creates a view of their place in society. It is important that programs demonstrate an understanding of, respect for, and responsiveness to the home culture of every participant. Program staff should be aware of their own core beliefs and values and be attuned to the role culture and language play in their own lives. In addition they should recognize the role of culture and language in the lives of the children and families they serve as well as the surrounding community's values and attitudes.

Incorporating the home culture throughout the curriculum supports the development of social competence in children, affirms the values of each family's culture, and encourages communication and interactions with others. Understanding human diversity helps children to grow up confident of their own identity and respectful of the identity of others. Understanding and respecting the culture, social background, religious beliefs, composition, and child rearing practices of each family provides a foundation for building meaningful relationships with individuals, which enhances parent participation, and ultimately, the development of each child.

Programs need to pursue opportunities to support the home culture, while also recognizing the significance of a common culture shared by all. By encouraging families to engage in dialogue about culture and cultural diversity, it is hoped that programs will facilitate the building of a more harmonious and peaceful community where all children grow and families flourish.

Getting Started

Provide a multicultural program environment:

- Develop a program décor that reflects the cultures of all children in an integrated and natural way.
- Display artwork by artists of various backgrounds, including prints, sculptures, and textiles.
- Provide an abundant display of photos of children and families of various backgrounds who participate in the program.
- Provide a balance of images of mothers and fathers of various backgrounds and their children.
- Include images of grandparents of various backgrounds and their children.
- Include images representative of diversity in family styles.
- Include images of important individuals that reflect racial/ethnic, gender, and ableness diversity.

Incorporate multicultural activities into the child development curriculum:

- Choose books that reflect a diversity of gender roles, family compositions, and racial and cultural backgrounds and avoid stereotypes.
- Organize the dramatic play area to encourage diversity of gender play.
- Organize the dramatic play area to encourage cultural diversity by providing cooking, work, and personal objects reflecting a variety of cultures.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Post pictures in the play room that show families from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- Provide a housekeeping area and manipulative materials that depict diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender.
- Provide large mirrors so children can view their physical features, compare their features to others, and see themselves in a variety of roles.
- Provide opportunities in the curriculum for children to hear various languages.
- Introduce music that reflects various cultural styles, including singing, instruments, background music, and music for movement and dance.
- Use art materials, including paints, paper, crayons, markers, and play dough, which include a variety of skin tones (Sparks, Louise Derman 1992).
- Incorporate a multicultural perspective into the parent education program:
 - Demonstrate a genuine respect, including actions, for each family member's beliefs, culture, child rearing practices, and life styles.
 - Provide opportunities for family members to share and learn about ethnic, racial, and religious customs.
 - Present the anti-bias curriculum philosophy that espouses that differences are good.
 - Engage in community building activities such as multicultural celebrations.
 - Make provisions for dialogue about issues of racism, discrimination, and social justice.
 - Provide program materials, child development handouts, and parenting magazines in the participant's primary languages.
 - Seek linkages with culturally specific organizations to facilitate the utilization of community resources (Ahsan and Cramer 1998).

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

Moving Forward

Expand your knowledge of cultural diversity and multiculturalism in the United States.

Consider learning some key vocabulary, words and phrases in the language other than English spoken by the population served by your program.

Learn more about Anti-Bias Curriculum by Louise Derman Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force.

Quality Indicator II.D.2. Program services are provided in the family's primary language whenever possible.

Laying the Foundation

Language and culture are the fundamental building blocks of self-identity. Young children gain a feeling of belonging, a sense of personal history, and the security of knowing where they come from and who they are from their family. Where bilingualism is an expectation of the community and a source of pride, it is reasonable to expect that families would encourage a child's growing proficiency in two or more languages. In communities where only one language is allowed to flourish and other home languages are devalued, linguistically diverse young children may experience emotional difficulties when the development of their home language is discouraged.

Research that looks at early thinking, language, and culture supports the concept that there exists a strong interaction between the development of language, cognition, and culture. Infants and toddlers learn a language through experiences and interactions with their families and community members. Children should be able to communicate their needs, fears, and desires to birth to three program staff that understands their words, not just the nonverbal cues. By using the child's home language the message is sent to the child that his or her family and community is respected and valued. No family should ever be asked to abandon their home language and speak only English with their children. This would deprive children of the linguistic and cultural link that will help them develop a strong sense of identity and the cognitive basis for future learning.

<http://www.nccic.org/pubs/sanchez99.html>

Getting Started

Programs affirm and respond to cultural diversity by providing services in the family's primary language:

- Assure that the program's mission statement, goals, and objectives are written in the language(s) spoken by community members.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Assure that all program materials and forms used by parents, including consent forms, needs assessments, screening protocols, and family plans are in the parent's primary language.
- Assure that all written materials reflect the literacy levels of the families in the community.
- Support parent participation by providing parent education materials, such as handouts, parenting magazines, and books in the parents' primary language.
- Provide a literacy rich environment that reflects all of the languages of the community.
- Make translation services available through bilingual staff, volunteers, or other community resources.
- Foster communication development in the primary language of the children, yet begin the process of learning English language skills.
- Offer group times in the parents' primary language.
- Communicate with parents in their primary language and encourage them to develop English skills:
 1. Enroll in English as a Second Language classes.
 2. Practice functional communication skills with English speaking staff.
 3. Build linkages between parents that encourage practicing functional communication skills.
 4. Encourage parents to read simple children's books in English.
 5. Encourage parents sing simple children's songs in English.
- Encourage English speaking staff to learn key words in the primary language of the children and families.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Provide opportunities for English speaking staff to learn the primary language of the children and families through study groups, audio-tapes, computer language teaching programs, self-study books, peer mentoring by bilingual staff, and enrollment in formal classes.
- Expose children, parents, and staff to the languages spoken in the community.
- Strive to hire bilingual staff from within the community served.

Moving Forward

Purchase and use self-study books and tapes in the primary languages of participants.

Learn more about the impact of linguistic continuity on the young children whose primary language is not English.

Attend the Illinois Resource Center's workshop on teaching a second language to young children.

Quote: "How many hopes and fears, how many ardent wishes and anxious apprehensions are twisted together in the threads that connect the parent with child!" - Samuel Griswold Goodrich

PROGRAM STANDARD II.E. THE CURRICULUM PROMOTES A FRAMEWORK THAT IS NURTURING, PREDICTABLE, AND CONSISTENT, YET FLEXIBLE.

The curriculum provides program activities, schedules, and routines that adjust to the needs of the children and their daily happenings. Flexibility is demonstrated as individual participant's cues and life's stressors are responded to and accommodated in a nurturing and caring manner. The program staff recognizes the importance of predictability in the program schedule yet remains open to capitalizing on "teachable moments."

Quality Indicator II.E.1. Schedules and routines are familiar and available in print.

Laying the Foundation

The two greatest sources of stress are not having a sense of control and a lack of predictability in one's life. Familiar schedules and routines provide a secure base for children and their parents. Without these familiar components of the program, families and children may experience various emotional responses. Emotions are a function of the nervous system and are so powerful that they can override rational thinking and innate brain stem patterns. Human beings tend to follow their emotions. Emotional stability is promoted in children when routines are predictable.

It is also critical to recognize the importance of transitions in the daily schedules and routines of birth to three programs. Transitions occur frequently during programming for young children and their families such as from one activity to another, with materials, and between environments. The most significant transition for young children and their parents occurs when they are separated for even brief periods of time. Appropriate activities facilitate transitions for both children and parents. The current brain research concludes that young children have difficulty learning when they are stressed. Providing emotional support at transition times and

having well planned transitional activities greatly reduce stress levels in young children and positively impact the program schedules and routines.

Getting Started

The following strategies can provide support to the program's schedule and routines and the various transitions that take place:

Program Communication

- Provide a newsletter or brochure outlining all of the services the program provides. Include times, days, locations, addresses, phone numbers, and the names of contact persons.
- Develop monthly program calendars and distribute them to parents.
- Encourage parents and children to mark the play group days on their calendars at home. This is a good way to support the development of emergent literacy.
- Post calendars and schedules at the program site that outline program activities.
- Frequently review upcoming dates of special activities with parents during parent groups.
- Individualize the program for those parents who might need extra support by having staff make regular phone calls.

Play Groups

- Give parents simplified written agendas that are easy enough for them to follow without disrupting their ability to interact with their children.

(Curriculum and Service Provision cont.)

- Encourage parents to take their play group agendas home and refer to them with their children by repeating some of the songs and activities.
- Label activity areas so parents can easily determine where to go.
- Minimize waiting time during group activities by example, having plenty of materials available for children and parents.
- Allow enough time so that routines and transitions are unhurried and purposeful.
- Provide children with opportunities to participate in routines to facilitate change, such as picking up toys or putting books away.
- Consider decreasing the developmental demands placed on the child during and after transitions.
- Use high interest activities, such as snack time, to facilitate transitions.
- Use the technique of distraction to facilitate transitions.
- Support parents to prepare their children for the separations when they leave to attend parent groups.
- Advise parents to never sneak away from their children.
- Model various ways to facilitate transitions.
- Reinforce parental use of positive techniques to facilitate transitions.
- Celebrate reunions after difficult transitions.

Home Visits

- Develop schedules for home visits that respond to a child's natural/internal timetable and the family's routines.
- Use the techniques of previewing and reviewing to frame activities for children and parents during home visits.
- Develop a home visit format that is predictable from week to week.
- Design home visit activities that match the short attention span of young children and allow for repetition.
- Follow the children's lead in home visits to encourage optimal learning.
- Give children and parents notice to prepare for change, explaining to them what is happening during the home visit and what will happen next.

Moving Forward

Visit other programs and observe schedules and routines and how they facilitate and manage transitions.

Learn more about the importance of emotional developmental stages that occur in the birth to three years including stranger and separation anxiety.

Read about the role of emotions in development especially in the areas of stress response, threat, and the impact on learning and relationships.

Quality Indicator II.E.2. The program responds to the participant's individual cues and makes accommodations.

Laying the Foundation

All behavior has meaning! It is the responsibility of all infant and toddler program staff to observe a child's behavior, read and interpret their cues, and then provide experiences that address each child's unique needs. All children from birth to age three need early experiences that honor their unique characteristics and provide love, warmth, acceptance, and positive learning experiences. There is no "one size fits all" curriculum for infants and toddlers and their families. Implementing curriculum in birth to three programs is a blending of science and art. The science component represents a sound knowledge of child development, which is needed by all professionals developing programs for young children. The art component represents the innate ability and disposition to capitalize on the teachable moments that will unfold naturally as children explore their environments.

Furthermore, all families with young children benefit from support and information provided in a way that respects their unique characteristics. Adults as well as children exhibit behaviors that have meaning and require interpretation. However, reading the cues of adults is complicated by their individual cultural influences, their unique life experiences, and their ability to use language. It is the responsibility of program staff to learn about the culture of the participants they serve, as well as understand body language and attempt to see past the words a person chooses to use and understand what is being said. When parents receive such support, they are often better able to achieve their own personal goals and provide a safe and nurturing learning environment for their very young children.

Birth to Three Programs should be designed to be flexible and responsive as they provide child development information and family support. There are many services that programs can offer, but it should be recognized that each infant and toddler program and each group will be unique.

Getting Started

Programs can use the following suggestions in making responses and accommodations to the individual cues of young children and their parents.

Children

- Prepare the environment to introduce a wide variety of sensory experiences including the introduction of new foods, but do not force acceptance.
- Observe carefully to determine interests, needs, and unique differences.
- Follow their lead to determine when to start and end activities.
- Structure activities to encompass a wide range of developmental levels.
- Allow involvement in activities at the level that is comfortable for them.
- Offer enhancement and expansion of ongoing activities in a non-intrusive manner.
- Provide adaptations to assure success.
- Develop an internal resource to take advantage of teachable moments and respond to unique needs.
- Set up quiet areas so that children and parents who need a break can do so comfortably.
- Provide adaptations to assure success.

Parents

- Listen empathically to what the parents are saying both verbally and nonverbally.
- Tune in to the parent's emotions, and offer support as needed.
- Observe parent/child interactions closely, and do not intrude when things are going well.
- Give suggestions when parents and children are not in synch by modeling or asking questions, without taking over.
- Teach parents to turn incidents around that at first seem upsetting into celebrations.
- Provide information for parents, when needed, to access resources beyond the limits of the program.

Moving Forward

Spend time with a variety of experienced play group leaders to learn about how to capitalize on teachable moments.

Learn more about floor time and following the lead of the child.

Learn about body language and other forms of nonverbal behavior.

Quote: "In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future." - Alex Haley