

If children ask questions and you do not know the answers, tell them you do not know, but you will find out. If children want you to show them how to do something you do not know how to do, be honest with them and explain that you do not have the expertise to do it. This openness helps children see that learning is a lifelong process.

Note: *Freely admit the mistakes you make when you are working with children. Your willingness to do so models for children that making mistakes is okay. Once children understand this concept they are free to be more creative.*

Helping children grow and learn

Children are born with the ability and desire to learn. Research concludes that quality child care programs can significantly increase the emotional, social, intellectual, and physical outcomes of the children in care. The more providers know about the development of children, the more prepared they will be to meet the emotional, social, intellectual, and physical needs of the children in their care.

Emotional Needs

Children need opportunities to:

- ◆ Feel loved and respected, without having to earn it
- ◆ Feel safe and secure (if they have a problem too big to handle they must be confident that help will be there)
- ◆ Feel powerful, independent, and comfortable with their own limits
- ◆ Be treated fairly
- ◆ Be listened to with respect
- ◆ Make mistakes without feeling shamed or embarrassed.
- ◆ Feel secure in what is expected of them and what they can expect from others, and
- ◆ Learn how to do things for themselves as much as possible.

Social Needs

Children need opportunities to:

- ◆ Feel pride in themselves, their families, and their cultures
- ◆ Interact frequently and comfortably with adults
- ◆ Have opportunities for time alone and time with others, depending on their moods and interests
- ◆ Organize their own activities, and at other times have activities organized for them
- ◆ Learn how to solve problems with other children without using aggression
- ◆ Learn how to cooperate and take turns
- ◆ Observe others and what goes on around them
- ◆ Learn to respect individual, family, and cultural differences
- ◆ Learn about their cultural heritage and the cultures of others through toys, pictures, foods, books, and positive presentations
- ◆ Learn that rules exist so people can live together comfortably and fairly
- ◆ Learn to accept limits, and
- ◆ Learn what it means to be a friend.

Intellectual Needs

Children need opportunities to:

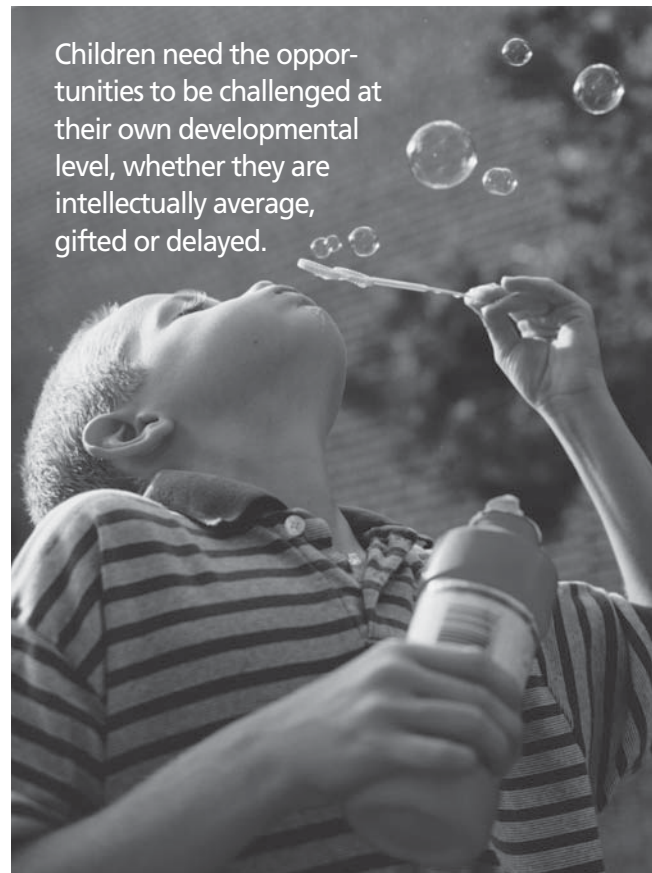
- ◆ Explore and ask questions
- ◆ Come up with their own answers, in their own time
- ◆ Learn about their world through all their senses
- ◆ Create things and think of ideas
- ◆ Explore the world of fantasy and make-believe (and learn the difference between pretend things and things that are real)
- ◆ Use real-life materials and tools in appropriate and constructive ways, and
- ◆ Be challenged at their own developmental level, whether they are intellectually average, gifted, or delayed.

Physical and Health Needs

Children need opportunities to:

- ◆ Move about freely in a safe environment in order to experience their world
- ◆ Practice newly developing small muscle and large muscle skills
- ◆ Learn how to take good care of their bodies, so they can keep themselves strong and healthy
- ◆ Have active times and quiet times, depending on their mood and energy level
- ◆ Learn how to recognize, avoid, and respond to dangerous situations, and
- ◆ Sit, play, and lie down in a variety of positions and on a variety of hard and soft surfaces.

The following developmental profiles will help you to provide age-appropriate opportunities that will support children from birth through school-age in all areas of their growth and development. It is important to provide the children in your center with the skills necessary to understand themselves, get along with others and to be successful in school.



Children need the opportunities to be challenged at their own developmental level, whether they are intellectually average, gifted or delayed.

Developmental profiles

Infants (1 to 12 month-olds)

Emotional Development

Infants are developing a foundation for trust and attachment. When babies have their needs met they learn to trust. When adults respond quickly and appropriately to infants' cries of distress or signals for play, infants learn that they are important. They learn that what they do makes a difference. They learn that they can express their emotions, whether pleasant or unpleasant, and that someone understands how they feel.

Infants need a continuing relationship with a few caring people. Young children thrive when they share a strong bond with a person who cares for them day after day. Consistent attention from the same caregiver helps to meet an infant's need for stability and familiarity.

To meet the emotional needs of infants, make sure you:

- ◆ Hold, touch, and cuddle them, making frequent eye contact and talking with them (especially during routines such as feeding and diapering)
- ◆ Encourage them to develop their physical abilities such as rolling, sitting, and walking
- ◆ Provide time and space for movement and play
- ◆ Spend time interacting with them, holding them, rocking them and sitting on the floor with them in your lap
- ◆ Talk to them often in loving tones using descriptive words (make this part of your routine care)
- ◆ Respond to and expand on cues coming from the child ("Are you getting hungry? Let me get you a bottle")
- ◆ Interpret their actions to other children to help them get along in the group ("Anthony has the ball and you would like one too. Here's another ball for you.")
- ◆ Encourage contact between infants, but be careful to protect younger infants from the explorations of older, mobile ones, and
- ◆ Give them hugs, smiles, and laugh with them.

Social Development

Newborns arrive with their own set of personal social skills. In order to encourage these social interactions, communications and relationships, caregivers should:

- ◆ Respond promptly in a gentle and reassuring way to infants' various methods of communication (smiles, cooing, eye contact, body language, crying, etc.)
- ◆ Initiate interactions with infants to encourage communication
- ◆ Reinforce infants' responses by showing interest and delight
- ◆ Take cues from infants to avoid over and under stimulation, and
- ◆ Make eye contact, while talking and singing to them during care routines and play times.

Intellectual Development

Babies are born learning. Infancy is a time of rapid brain development. They are totally dependent upon the important adults in their lives, including caregivers, to provide the right experiences at the right times to reach their optimal intellectual development.

Infants learn through their eyes, ears, noses, mouths and fingers. They need lots of opportunities to explore their world. Daily routines, including feeding, dressing and diapering, are the most important teaching moments.

Talk to infants. Tell them what you are doing and why. Explain to them what is happening; laugh and play with them. Celebrate life together. Even though they cannot talk yet, they are learning language, the meaning of words, and beginning to understand and read faces and body language.

As children approach their first birthday, they love to put things into containers and then take them out. They love to stack things and then knock them down. Keep older infants' play equipment down low and in familiar places.

To meet the intellectual needs of infants, make sure you:

- ◆ Provide an appropriately challenging, safe environment for them to explore and manipulate
- ◆ Provide light, colorful objects for babies to look at, reach for and grasp
- ◆ Play naming and hiding games such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
- ◆ Provide simple toys
- ◆ Talk to them, make eye contact, point out familiar objects to them
- ◆ Engage in many one-to-one, face-to-face interactions with them
- ◆ Share lullabies and music from around the world
- ◆ Respond to sounds they make, occasionally imitating the infant's vocalizations
- ◆ Describe the infant's and adult's actions and the events that occur in the environment ("Oh, you like that song. Shall I sing it again?")
- ◆ Display interesting things to look at
- ◆ Sing to them and appreciate their vocalizations and sounds
- ◆ Place pictures and photos in their cribs and along the bottom of the wall at their eye level
- ◆ Play games pointing out their body parts and naming familiar objects in their environment, and
- ◆ Read picture books (both non-fiction and fiction) daily.

Physical Development

As infants grow, you will notice their periods of alertness getting longer. The time they are awake between sleeping and feeding increases.

Infants need a chance to exercise their arms and legs. They need to experience varying body positions. They may enjoy massages and soft tickles. They need brief periods of "tummy time" on the floor to raise their heads, strengthen their backs, push up on their arms and later to rock from front to back and begin crawling.

Older infants become more mobile, exploratory, and social. They begin to pull themselves up on furniture. They crawl, climb small stairs, and go up low ramps. They also begin walking with assistance.

To meet the physical needs of infants, make sure you:

- ◆ Support infants' attempts to roll, sit, walk and grasp
- ◆ Provide open carpeted space as well as hard surfaces for crawling
- ◆ Provide low sturdy furniture for children to pull up and hold on to while learning to walk
- ◆ Provide accessible outdoor activities daily
- ◆ Provide simple objects for infants to reach for, grasp, and explore
- ◆ Allow non-mobile infants to move comfortably, lying freely on their backs while looking about, kicking, reaching, practicing eye-hand coordination, and
- ◆ Allow mobile infants to move about freely, exploring in a safe environment.

Toddlers (1 to 2 ½ year-olds)

Emotional Development

Warm, accepting, close relationships provide the foundation for healthy emotional development for toddlers. Your sensitive and responsive interactions with a child are more important than any toy. Toddlers need opportunities to explore, be responsible and make significant choices. This promotes mastery over their environment and confidence in their abilities.

You should encourage them to do things for themselves, such as feeding and dressing. Plan activities that allow for independence, yet be careful not to frustrate them with an activity that is still too difficult.

Toddlers often respond to situations without being aware of their emotional state. You should help toddlers sort out their feelings by giving words to them when they are scared, angry, or excited. Helping toddlers identify their emotions and use language is an important part of your job. For example, some toddlers may bite their playmates when angry or frustrated. Their verbal skills are not developed enough to respond with words, so they resort to biting.

To meet the emotional needs of toddlers, make sure you:

- ◆ Allow them to feed and dress themselves and encourage the development of self-help skills when they are ready
- ◆ Encourage and support their developmental achievements such as walking, talking and climbing, and
- ◆ Listen and expand toddlers' emerging language. An example of expanded language is:
 - Child says, "Truck!"
 - You say "Yes, it is a big blue truck that makes a lot of noise."

Social Development

Toddlers' speech is developing rapidly. They are learning up to nine new words a day. Caregivers should listen carefully and with interest to what toddlers have to say, repeating and expanding their messages. You should realize that toddlers do not always understand verbal messages. They depend more upon modeling, practice, and familiar routines to understand appropriate behaviors and expectations.

Toddlers are increasingly interested in their peers and often play beside their friends rather than with them. You will need to teach and model the interactions with the others that you want them to develop, like sharing and taking turns. It is not developmentally appropriate to expect toddlers to actually share or take turns. Nevertheless, your job is to model, model, model.

To meet the social needs of toddlers, make sure to:

- ◆ Talk, sing, and play with each child daily on a one-to-one basis and in small groups
- ◆ Respond and expand upon emergent language coming from the child
- ◆ Interpret their actions to other children to help them get along in the group ("Gloria had it first. Would you like this one?")
- ◆ Assist toddlers in social interactions. ("Tyrell is playing with the blue ball; let's play with the red one until he is finished.")