

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Toddlers (18 - 36 months)

Environment: Inclusive of indoor and outdoor areas

- space to move freely
- safe
- clean
- levels to crawl, walk onto and around
- individual/private spaces
- various textures - especially softness
- separate, defined spaces for eating, diapering/toileting, sleeping
- toys/materials displayed on open, low shelving; toys should be large enough not to be swallowed; toys should be cleaned/laundered daily (stuffed animals are a breeding ground for germs)
- large motor area - throwing, riding, climbing, crawling, running, jumping. etc.
- push/pull toys area
- dramatic play area/materials
- block play area/materials
- small motor area/materials
- book area with appropriate books
- sink used while diapering/toileting and hand washing must be separate from sink used for food preparation and hand washing

Activities/ Materials

- sensory play materials - water, textures, play dough, paint
- push and pull toys
- riding toys
- soft balls and bean bags to throw
- climbing equipment
- books
- blocks -different types
- large Lego's
- music and movement with instruments
- dramatic play materials: bags/purses, shoes, clothing, dishes, etc.
- puzzles, manipulatives
- art supplies - crayons, paper, finger paint, brushes and paint, glue, collage material

Characteristics of the Adults

- warm, nurturing personality

- tolerates movement/noise
- models appropriate behavior
- reads to, talks with, and listens to toddler
- accepts different caregiving methods and techniques
- recognizes and accepts differences
- willing to learn
- reliable
- healthy
- understands the emerging autonomy of the toddler - does not take it personally when the toddler says "NO"

Schedule

- individual schedule for diapering/toileting
- time for self-care activities: washing hands, dressing, brushing teeth, feeding self (toddlers should sit at a low table and chair to eat and drink, but should not walk around with food or drink)
- individual time with primary caregiver/provider - held, sung to, read to
- time to play individually or in a small group, choosing toys/materials with which to play
- minimum amount of organized activity time in a large group - limited to eating and a short story or song
- daily outdoor time
- time to cope with separation
- primary caregiver/provider - responsible for the important elements of care
- parents are welcome at any time

Note: A three-year study of infants through toddlerhood in a child care center of highest quality, conducted by Hignett, Cory, Rossiter, and Rodrigues, found the following four program features to be vital in aiding infants through the early years of care:

1. Each infant is assigned upon entry a primary caregiver who is responsible for the important elements of the infant's care day, such as feeding, diapering and sleeping.
2. The child continues in the assigned caregiver's care until the child reaches age 3, if the child remains with that program.
3. Each caregiver is responsible for no more than four infants.
4. The physical environment has the ability to control light, heat and cold, and extraneous noise from the rest of the building.

(From *Young Children*: November 1988, written by William F. Hignett.)