

# Michigan Child Care Matters

Above and Beyond Issue 96

## From the Division Director

There is now another reason to read each issue of Michigan Child Care Matters (MCCM): earning training hours. We have developed tests based on the content of each issue of MCCM. When you successfully complete three tests on three separate MCCM issues in a calendar year, you will earn one clock hour of training. **Note:** Only one clock hour of your annual training requirements can be earned by reading issues of MCCM.

To take advantage of this opportunity, just email Colleen Nelson ([NelsonC7@michigan.gov](mailto:NelsonC7@michigan.gov)) with your name and license number. She will send you a registration number that you will use to register for free at [www.classmarker.com/register](http://www.classmarker.com/register).

Once you sign in, you will see a list of available tests from the current issue and several past issues of MCCM. Read and review the content of the MCCM issue and then take the test. When you have completed a test, you will receive your score; any questions you answered incorrectly will also be noted. You must score at least 80 percent to pass a test. If you did not pass, you will have the opportunity to take the test one more time. If you pass, print out the page displaying the test name, the

date you completed the test and your score. You may use these pages as verification of the tests you complete. If you do not receive a passing score after taking a test two times, that test will not count towards your one hour of training.

Beginning with this issue of MCCM, each article will include a symbol in the title of the article to identify the content as appropriate for center caregivers, home caregivers or all caregivers. Home and center caregivers will have tests geared to those articles.

We are excited about this new training opportunity for caregivers. Let us know what you think!

-  Article is appropriate for **all** child care providers.
-  Article is appropriate for **center** child care providers.
-  Article is appropriate for **home** child care providers.

**James S. Sinnamon**  
Child Care Licensing Division Director



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing  
Child Care Licensing Division  
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# Infant and Toddler Learning

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Child care homes and centers are responsible for planning developmentally appropriate daily activities that provide opportunities for indoor and outdoor play. Young children learn through play. Play is multi-faceted and is very important in the learning and emotional development of all children. It helps children learn relationship and social skills, develop and practice motor skills, develop thinking and reasoning skills, learn how to problem solve, and develop creativity.

As infants and toddlers grow and develop, the program and activities must also change and develop. Children learn through



exploring, engaging and playing in their environment. The caregiver plans individualized activities, materials and schedules according to the routines of each child's developmental stage. The caregiver observes and creates an age-appropriate learning environment that provides stimulation for each child. Since each child may tolerate different levels of stimulation, it is important to remember to have a balance so that a child does not

become overwhelmed if the room is too busy or bored if there is a lack of stimulation. The play materials, activities and setting should be interesting to the child and support exploration and learning based on each child's developmental level.

The caregivers should plan activities for toddlers and mobile and non-mobile infants that address the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs. For the infant program, the caregiver should have a variety of toys which are different in shapes, colors, textures, and sounds. The toys should be safe and provide the infant with a variety of experiences. When infants are non-mobile, the caregivers should bring the activities to the infant or the infant to the activity.

For the toddler program, independence should be encouraged as toddlers begin to want to self-feed, dress and explore. The activities should promote learning through discovery. Whether it is playing at the water table, stacking blocks or playing with appropriate toys and puzzles, toddlers will learn through play. The play materials can be made available on low shelving to support the child's new ability to explore and choose the play materials. Toys with different shapes, sizes and weights should be available

to allow toddlers opportunity to classify, sort and match. In addition, a dramatic play area should be integrated in the environment.

Toddlers like to dress up and play house with dolls and housekeeping props such as plastic dishes and spoons. It encourages imagination and develops social and communication skills.

Infants and toddlers require exercise and practice to develop gross motor skills. Within the infant's environment, there should be a safe area where the infants can practice their motor skills such as rolling over, crawling, sitting up, climbing, and eventually walking. For toddlers, play structures and equipment should be available to promote climbing, jumping, tumbling, and crawling.

As part of programming, outdoor activities should be available for infants and toddlers. Child care homes and centers are responsible for assuring that all children, including infants, are taken outside on a daily basis as weather permits. Outdoor areas should be safe and open so that caregivers can supervise all of the children at all times.

Infants need areas where they can crawl, and toddlers need areas where they can climb and run. Outdoor play encourages sensory experiences and promotes early language and physical development. Children should be given a variety of toys and play equipment that are safe and age-appropriate. Play equipment such as riding toys, tricycles, wagons, shovels, balls, and push toys are just as fun as having climbing play structures. Materials such as chalk, paint, crayons, and markers may also be brought outside for outdoor play. Caregivers may also incorporate literacy and language to outdoor play by bringing books outside for reading or to act out or by bringing a radio outside for music activities. Musical instruments can be incorporated into outdoor play as well.

Other outdoor ideas may include planning for picnics and outdoor meals and snacks or

creating gardening opportunities that will allow the children to water, harvest, dig, and explore.

As infants begin to reach, pull up, crawl, and walk, it is important to create space where they can explore safely outdoors. Caregivers can bring out blankets or quilts or use a kiddie pool. A kiddie pool can prevent older children from running into the younger children who may not be as mobile. Different toys and materials can be placed in the kiddie pool.

Nature hikes or neighborhood walks also provide opportunities for great learning experiences as well as exercise. Caregivers sometimes avoid taking younger children out on walking excursions because infants and toddlers are not able to walk yet or may not be able to travel as far. Caregivers can use buggies, wagons or strollers to help transport the infants and toddlers.

Even when the weather is very cold or very hot, it is still important that caregivers continue to allow the children to experience outdoor play. Caregivers should use caution and closely observe the children for signs of being overheated or excessively chilled while outdoors. Time spent outside may be reduced if the weather is scorching or frigid. Caregivers should ensure infants and toddlers are dressed appropriately for the weather.

If it is unsafe to play outdoors, then bring the outdoors inside. If it is raining or snowing, then catch the rain or snow with pails and buckets and fill the sensory table. Children love to play with water, snow and ice regardless of if it is outside or inside.

The planning for infants and toddlers should also include language and reading. When a caregiver uses simple words and keeps a balance between listening and talking with the infant or toddler, he/she is promoting language development. Age-appropriate books, finger

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# Meeting the Environmental Needs of Infants and Toddlers

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Take a moment to think about a place that makes you feel comfortable, relaxed and safe. What are the qualities of that place? Is it



loud or quiet? Are the colors bold or soothing? Are the furnishings hard or soft? Can you easily find what you need? Infants and toddlers need an environment that provides quiet places, soft places, places to run and places to relax; the environment also needs to be functional for the adult caregivers. The Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers

has identified eight key concepts to ensure an environment meets the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs of infants and toddlers and the needs of their caregivers.

## 1. Ensure Safety

Infants and toddlers do not yet have the intellectual capacity to know what is safe and what might harm them. A safe environment will encourage exploration without requiring a caregiver to frequently say no.

Use developmentally appropriate equipment made of non-toxic materials and have non-slip floors, stable shelving and fixtures with rounded corners and steps toddlers can use to reach the sink or changing table.

It is recommended that safety gates be at least 36 inches tall to discourage parents and caregivers from stepping over them. A child could be injured if a parent or caregiver tripped on the gate when stepping over while holding a child or by landing on a child.

## 2. Promote Health

Heat and ventilation have an impact on the

health of young children in care. Infants and toddlers spend a lot of time on the floor, so keeping floors warm and clean is very important. It is best practice to implement a policy where outside shoes are removed or covered prior to entering the infant and toddler areas. Some centers have children bring shoes or slippers they wear only indoors and provide booties for adults to put over their shoes.

Wash hands (adult and child) frequently with warm water and soap, including before eating or preparing food, after diapering or toileting and after handling animals. Separate diapering and food preparation—the sink used for food preparation should never be used for hand washing after diapering or helping a child with toileting. Use toys and furnishings that are easy to clean and sanitize.

## 3. Provide Comfort

An infant/toddler environment needs to be comfortable for children and their caregivers. It should promote learning, growth and development without being over-stimulating. Furniture and equipment needs to be convenient for adults, sized appropriately for children and flexible to adjust to changing needs.

Walls, ceilings and floors can add comfort through the use of soft, neutral colors. Supplement natural light with the use of full spectrum light bulbs (sometimes called daylight bulbs). Reduce noise with fabric in furnishings and carpeting on the floor. Display pictures low on the wall where they can be enjoyed by the children, and consider frames that will protect the pictures while allowing you to change pictures easily.

## 4. Be Convenient

Keeping the environment convenient will enhance the comfort for children and

caregivers. Assure the diapering and food preparation areas are in a place where supplies are close by and in a place where you will still be available to other children if they need you. Maintaining the child-to-adult ratio is important and caregivers cannot leave children unattended during diaper changes or meal preparation.

A well-ordered environment encourages children to learn through exploration. It is uncluttered and predictable, allowing children to learn independence; it also encourages clean-up as children learn where things belong. Use low shelving so play items, are at eye level for infants and toddlers. Because toddlers have a hard time sharing, it is important to have duplicates of some favorite items, but be careful not to overload the environment. The arrangement of shelving units and furniture needs to provide room for children to move around without creating blind spots where children cannot be easily supervised by a caregiver.

### **5. Be Child-Sized**

The furnishing and equipment in an infant/toddler space need to be sized appropriately for use by small bodies. Child-sized tables and chairs encourage independence and low shelving invites children to explore. Store toys on low shelves, no more than 24 inches high. Keep mirrors at floor level for infants so they can practice lifting their head and shoulders during tummy time.

### **6. Maximize Flexibility**

Any infant/toddler environment must be planned for the growing and ever-changing needs of the children. Keeping furnishings lightweight and easy to clean will allow you to shift spaces according to the developmental needs of the children. By moving a shelving unit or defining an area with pillows, you can configure a space for active or quiet play or to temporarily separate infants and toddlers.

### **7. Encourage Movement**

Infants and toddlers need space to move and practice developing physical skills. For infants the environment needs to provide space for tummy time, sitting, crawling, pulling up and learning to walk. Toddlers need space to practice new gross motor abilities. Avoid depending on equipment that inhibits a child's movement such as walkers, exer-saucers, swings, or jumpers. A thoughtfully designed environment takes into account toddlers growing independence and their inability to know what is safe and what is dangerous; create safe, low places to climb, run and jump.

### **8. Allows Choice**

The ability to make choices is critical to developing a sense of independence and self control. Infants and toddlers learn by interaction with the environment and it's important to have a variety of physical, emotional, social, and intellectual activities from which to choose. Create spaces that allow quiet or noisy play, being alone or being with a group, using gross motor skills and using fine motor skills.

By working with these eight key concepts, you can create a developmentally appropriate environment that encourages infants and toddlers to grow and learn while remaining safe and secure. ❖

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### **Infant and Toddler Learning, from page 3**

plays, songs, and music are tools that may be used to assist with language development.

When planning for this age group, activities should be developmentally appropriate. They should focus on how best to create an environment that supports social, emotional, cognitive, and language development that supports individual growth and development. It is the role of the caregiver to observe and support growth by providing learning opportunities and setting up the environment that contributes to a child's success. ❖

# Activity Areas for Infants and Toddlers

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In designing a developmentally appropriate environment for infants and toddlers, the most important thing to remember is that it be flexible enough to grow and change with the changing needs of the children in care at any given time. It should be a safe, happy, peaceful place where children can freely move through the environment choosing activities that interest them. The time spent preparing the room and the activity centers will be well worth the effort on a daily basis as children realize they are in a place designed specifically to meet their needs.

In the Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs, adopted by the Michigan State Board of Education in 2006, early development strands which support and nurture infants and toddlers are discussed. These include well-being, a sense of belonging, confidence in exploring, a growing skill in communication, and the opportunity to contribute. Ages birth to 3 years is the period of the most rapid growth and development. Setting up and providing a developmentally appropriate learning environment for infants and toddlers ensures they will learn at their own pace, achieve goals set for them by caregivers and have a positive experience from the get-go.

## Set Up Activity Areas

An activity area is a smaller space within a well-defined area that has its own special feel. Activity areas encourage children and caregivers to spread out instead of clustering in one part of the room. The mood of an activity area should reflect the activity; large motor will have a more vibrant feel than a quiet area for looking at books. Infant activity areas could include:

- A mirror low on the wall, perhaps with a low bar attached to the wall so an infant can

pull from a crawling or sitting position to a standing position.

- A place for tummy time.
- A basket of infant books to explore.
- An area with toys such as two or three stacking/nesting cups, soft blocks and an assortment of rattles.
- A sleeping area.

For toddlers you could also add an eating area, a place for gross motor activities and a dramatic play area.

## Create Boundaries

Activity areas can be defined by seating areas, shelving units, pillows, area rugs, or even wall color. Boundaries should define an area without blocking the view. Caregivers and mobile infants and toddlers should be able to see and move to different areas easily. Two or three small area rugs can help define an infant area much better than one large rug.

## Provide Clear, Visible Order

Keep similar items grouped together to promote a sense of order in the room and to prevent them from being scattered throughout the room. Also, remember that very young children need to see items in order to choose what they want to use; if you have toys stored in a toy box, young children will completely empty the box to make a choice about what to use. When toys are stored on low shelves, children can see their choices and are more likely to use only one item at a time. Of course, even older toddlers will still need the help of a caregiver to put unused items back on a shelf.

## Keep the Center Open

If the center of the room is open, children and caregivers can see into and access all activity areas. When defining your open area, look at

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# The Importance of Primary Caregivers

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**P**rimarily caregiving is the assignment of an adult caregiver to a specific child in a child care program. A child care center must implement a primary care system so that each infant, young toddler and older toddler has a primary caregiver. Each child must have a primary caregiver assigned at all times while in care. The purpose of primary caregiving is to ensure that each child's needs for intimacy and safety are met, thereby fostering trust in adults and enhancing positive social-emotional development of the child.

Infants and toddlers are assigned to a primary caregiver who is responsible for the daily care. The primary caregiver is assigned to the same infant(s)/toddler(s) every day. This allows a primary caregiver to learn and become familiar with a child's behavior, moods and needs. A child must not have more than four primary caregivers a week. While the licensing rule allows for children to have up to four primary caregivers in one week, it is recommended that centers arrange the staff schedule



so children can have the least amount of primary caregivers. When there is more than one primary caregiver assigned to any infant, young toddler or older toddler, the information regarding the child's food intake, health and temperament must be shared daily between caregivers. Furthermore, primary caregiving assignments must be documented in writing so that parents know who is caring for their child and with whom they need to communicate regarding their child. This can be done by posting the assignments in the child care room and discussing it with parents.

The primary caregiver is responsible for most of that child's daily routines such as: greeting and departures, comforting, feeding, diapering, napping, tracking individual milestones, and indoor and outdoor play. The primary caregiver also has the responsibility of communicating and providing written daily records to each family. The written daily records include the infant's food intake, sleeping patterns, diaper changes, developmental milestones, and changes in the child's usual behaviors. The written daily record is only required for children under the age of 1.

To offer continuity of care for infants and toddlers, child care centers might want to consider the following:

- Build a relationship between the parents and the primary caregiver. The primary caregiver gathers information during enrollment, daily communication via face-to-face contact and telephone calls or emails about the child's family, culture, temperament, cues, schedule, and personality, so that she/he can respond appropriately to the child's needs.
- Overlap schedules of caregivers. Primary caregivers' schedules should allow enough time so caregivers can communicate with one another about the children and about who will do what, with whom and when, and classroom maintenance. It also allows the children to transition between one caregiver and another.
- Arrange the caregiver's schedule around the needs and schedules of the children. Primary caregivers should work a shift that allows them to be available to the children they care for at important bonding and

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# Lesson Planning

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Some providers find it hard to complete lesson plans and some do not see the value of planning specific daily activities. Research explains that the first years of life are critical to brain development. As a provider, you have the opportunity to help lay the foundation for the emotional, physical, cognitive, and social development of the children in your program. You have a very important role to play in the development of young children, and this task must be taken seriously.

According to licensing regulations for both centers and homes, a provider must plan activities that promote physical development of both large and small muscles, social and emotional development, including group projects, cooperation and self-help skills and cognitive development, including language and early math and science skills. Increasing development in all domains is done through a variety of adult- and child-initiated activities that allow children to feel successful, develop independence, learn new skills and encourage creativity. Providers should plan a balance of active and quiet, group and individual, and indoor and outdoor activities.

Completing a lesson plan is not simply filling out a chart and hanging it on the wall. Lesson planning involves setting goals for the group as a whole and for each child, then providing the activities to accomplish the goals. The abilities and interests of each child must be taken into consideration when planning activities. The provider should consider keeping an observation log of the developmental milestones of each child. A strong knowledge of child development is needed to understand what children are able to accomplish in each stage and at each age. The provider must choose activities that build on the knowledge, interests and abilities of each child.

Providers should use a balance of child-guided and adult-guided activities when completing a lesson plan. Child-guided activities allow children to learn through their own exploration and interaction with their peers. Adults are still important in child-guided activities because adults need to ask questions to extend learning. Adult-guided activities allow children to learn from adults introducing concepts and modeling skills. Adult-guided activities typically involve concepts introduced to the entire group. Though each learning experience is different, teachers must use their judgment to determine how learning activities will be carried out and how to support each child.

Though children learn through their own exploration, simply providing a container of blocks is not enough to increase children's skills. It is important to think about learning goals for each individual child when planning activities to be sure there is a specific purpose. There is a huge difference when children are playing with a random selection of blocks and the provider is there to encourage cognitive development by talking with the children regarding the color, shape, size number, and balancing properties of blocks compared to when the provider is not interacting with the children at all to extend learning. Though we know that children learn skills through their own exploration, providers still have the responsibility to set the stage and ask open-ended questions to expand critical thinking skills.

Being prepared with a lesson plan designed with specific goals will help eliminate stress. You will not have to worry about what to do with the children for the next hour before lunch; you will be prepared with activities relating to the children's individual interests. Complete lesson plans also help to eliminate disruptive behaviors. Planned activities based

on the children's interests geared toward specific learning objectives will help eliminate boredom that often leads to disruptive behaviors. Providers have obligations to the children and families they serve to provide positive learning environments. This is best done by being prepared and completing lesson plans based on learning goals and developing skills of individual children. ❖

### **Infant and Toddler Activity Areas,** from page 6

fixed elements (walls, doors, windows), then at any large equipment. An open center doesn't mean a space so large that children see it as a place to run from one end to another. It is more like the center of a wheel with activity areas as the spokes. The caregiver can vary her position around the center to maintain close contact with those children who may need more help. This lets the children know she is there if they need her but encourages them to explore.

### **Use Varying Levels**

The use of different levels encourages infants and toddlers to explore all aspects of physical development. Creating varying levels does not need to be complicated or expensive. For mobile infants, you could use pillows for them to crawl over or a tunnel for them to crawl through. Early walkers can learn to climb steps using two or three phone books or catalogs firmly taped together or an unwanted exercise step platform. A low stage is a larger project, but it could become the reading nook or a place to sing and dance. Use caution if you are going to include a loft or climber with a platform more than 30 inches high and make sure you provide cushioning in all potential fall zones. Once children have learned to pull to standing, consider including a sturdy adult chair the children could climb in to sit and read or just watch the room.

Avoid changing the room setup once you find what works; infants and toddlers thrive on routine and consistency. But you can and should rotate items in each activity area on a regular basis. With careful thought and planning, the environment itself will become a learning component of your classroom and children will come in each day looking forward to their day with you. ❖

### **The Importance of Primary Caregivers,** from page 7

caregiving parts of the program day, such as rest and feeding times and at arrival and departure.

- Use caregivers familiar with the classroom and the children to cover the primary caregiver's vacation or sick time to reduce disruption and the child's anxiety.
- Reward caregivers for longevity with the child care program to reduce high turnover.

Primary caregivers who provide care for infants and toddlers can have a positive impact on a child's early development. Assigning a primary caregiver to each child promotes a one-on-one relationship that helps nurture a child's individualized growth and development. Infants and toddlers develop trust in knowing that their needs will be met as the primary caregiver learns to respond appropriately to the children's needs. Trust is essential for the emotional and social development of infants and toddlers. This creates an attachment relationship with the primary caregiver. When infants and toddlers develop secure attachments, they are more likely to explore their environment and develop a sense of security and comfort. ❖

**The American Academy of Pediatrics and many other groups recommend that women breastfeed exclusively for about the first six months of the infant's life.**

**Breastfeeding mothers are often daunted by the prospect of continuing to breastfeed as they return to work. Providers can reduce a breastfeeding mother's anxiety by welcoming breastfeeding families. See the Technical Assistance and Consultation Manual for more information.**

# Terrific Transitions

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Transitions happen throughout the day in every child care program. Transitions occur when changing from activity to activity and at arrival and departure. Sometimes they require a child to move between quiet, sedentary activities to loud, active ones. They are usually short in length, but unexpected delays can cause them to last longer than anticipated. It is important to prepare children for transitions and to plan them so that they keep the children's attention and prevent them from getting frustrated. Proper planning and execution of transitions will allow everyone to move seamlessly to and from activities throughout the day. This reduces behavior problems and helps provide a sense of security for the children in care.

The first way to approach transitions is to eliminate as many of them as you can. Sit down and review your daily schedule. Are there too many activities packed into one day? Can certain activities be combined so that they occur simultaneously? For example, having snacks available as an option during center choice time allows children to eat snacks when they are ready and eliminates the transition before and after snack time. The fewer transitions there are throughout the day, the easier it is for children and caregivers.

Proper planning also affects transition success. Plan a daily schedule and implement it every day. Children are more at ease when they know what to expect. It can be easier for them to transition from one activity to another if they know ahead of time that lunch always comes after outdoor play. This also reduces anxiety caused from children not knowing what to expect next. Having a picture of each activity in the schedule that is arranged in order and posted at the children's level allows them to follow along throughout the day. This helps

reduce anxiety and mentally prepares children for the next activity.

It is not critical to stick to the specific time frames established for each activity. If it is unseasonably warm outside and the children are really enjoying outdoor play, then it is a good idea to extend that activity and shorten another one in return. This will also prevent the children from getting upset when it is time to go in and they are really enjoying their time outdoors. Use the children as a guide when planning the schedule. If you find yourself always having to change the schedule because of too much or not enough time allotted for an activity, then maybe it's time to reevaluate the schedule as a whole.

When planning a transition, consider whether the children can gradually transition into the next activity instead of everyone doing it at the same time. Instead of the entire class lining up to wash their hands at once, have the children go a few at a time. You can play a game that slowly eliminates children, such as Simon Says, to decide who gets to wash their hands, or have all the children who are wearing a blue shirt go, continuing to pick clothing items until all of the children have been picked. You can also call children by their birthday month, the first letter of their name, etc. This type of activity can also be used when children need to line up so that they don't all rush to the door at the same time.

Proper planning also includes having the materials ready for each activity. Don't transition into snack time until the tables are clean and the snack is ready to be served. Don't transition into the art activity until all the materials are out and ready to be used. This limits the length of transition between activities and allows you to assist during the transition

period. An extra set of hands and eyes can really help a transition run smoother.

It is important to let children know that a transition is approaching. Walk around the classroom and calmly let the children know that the activity will be ending soon and what the next activity will be. Some caregivers have the children take turns being the “five minute warning” helper. This child will walk around the room five minutes prior to the transition and let the children know that they have five more minutes of play left. Some children who have more difficulty with transitions may need several advanced warnings that a transition is coming soon. Having that child assist with a special task prior to the transition to the next activity, such as helping to hand out plates for a snack, can help him/her transition into the new activity easier. If children have a hard time leaving when their parents arrive, an advanced warning can allow them to mentally prepare themselves that they will be leaving soon.

There are many activities that you can implement to make a transition fun and help the activity run smoother. You can sing a special song during cleanup time, arrival or dismissal. Having the children hop, skip or walk like an animal keeps them focused while moving from one place to another. You can choose a new animal to walk like every day. It is a great idea to have a list of songs, games and other transition activities that you can refer to so that you have a lot of options from which to choose. A search engine query online will yield a wealth of ideas.

Sometimes it may be necessary for the children to wait for a period of time during a transition. If this occurs, you can play group games, such as I Spy, Simon Says or 20 Questions. You can also play the number game. This involves a child choosing a number in his or her head and then having classmates try to choose the number. If a child chooses the wrong number, he or she is told if the secret number is higher

or lower than the guess. The child who chooses correctly gets to lead the game next.

For programs in which children all arrive at the same time, you can have an activity waiting for the children to work on independently, such as a coloring page or worksheet, or have books available for them to look at until all children are in the room and parents have left. You can also have an arrival song that you sing as the children arrive in the room and meet you at the rug to begin large group time. Dismissal transitions can include trivia cards, flash cards, I Spy, or other turn-taking games. When a child’s parent arrives, he or she gets to guess an answer before leaving. If all children are dismissed at the same time, make sure that you pick something that will end prior to dismissal or that can be stopped at any time.

Once you find a plan that works, try to be consistent.

Once you implement a transition plan, you need to evaluate its effectiveness and make adjustments as necessary. Be flexible and try different techniques when previously tried ones don’t work. Ensure there is enough time during the transition to allow the children to work at their own pace. Once you find a plan that works, try to be consistent. When children know what to expect and know what is expected of them, they can take the lead and allow you to focus on children who need more help with the transition.

Transitions are a small, yet very important part of the day in child care. They can either cause anxiety, chaos and confusion or provide structure and promote self-management. With proper planning, implementation and evaluation, transitions can be a positive experience for everyone. ❖

# Positive Discipline and Programming

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Caregivers try to do what's best for children, but the best intentions do not always produce the best results. When using discipline to help shape children's behavior, positive techniques work. The words "discipline" and "punishment" are often confused, but the two are very different. Discipline means to teach and train. Punishment involves purposeful infliction of a penalty that may cause physical, mental or emotional pain, which is unnecessary and counterproductive. Punishment may have an immediate result, but it is not effective long-term; discipline is a learning process that takes place over time.

There are many ways to positively discipline children, which are seen in programs that implement well-thought-out plans. This includes the way the room is set up, the equipment that is available to the children, the implementation of lesson plans, how caregivers positively speak to the children, and the way caregivers approach situations. Caregivers are the role models for what children learn about their behavior.

The goals of positive discipline include: create an atmosphere of mutual respect, provide a secure environment to foster independence, connect to children to help them feel valued and special, influence the spirit of children in a positive way, and teach children to self-correct their own behavior choices. Below are common examples for each of these goals.

## ***Create an atmosphere of mutual respect.***

It is important to get to know each child and his or her capabilities and needs. Think ahead about whether or not a child is capable of handling a situation. If not, make plans so that you can stop a problem before it starts.

**Example:** Preschoolers often like to slide down a slide in other ways than what is acceptable. Station a caregiver next to the slide to redirect children to help them understand the rules and expectations. Children have to hear the rules over and over before they remember them.

Discipline is a slow, bit by bit, time-consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting a certain way.  
- J. Hynes

**Example:** When an activity is no longer working, stop and move on to something else. If during circle time children are no longer listening or are getting up, stop and move on to another activity.

Giving children choices teaches them how to make decisions in situations in which they have some control. It will build their self-esteem and develop their problem-solving skills and independence. It teaches them to take ownership of their choices and makes them feel that their point of view is valued. Give young children a small number of choices that are acceptable to you.

**Example:** Give children choices of play areas in which they would like to start their free choice time. Stay within the allotted number of children allowed in each area.

This also works when negative behavior occurs.

**Example:** If a child purposely throws a toy across the room, give the child a choice to pick it up himself or have you help him pick it up. Children will often pick it up themselves because they are usually seeking their independence. Both ways, the toy is picked up and it is the child that had the responsibility. Treat children the same way you do other important people in your life—the way you want them to treat you and others. Take a child aside to talk to him about his needs, instead of embarrassing him in front of others.

**Example:** A child finds some rocks outside and carries them up on the slide. Rocks and other objects are not allowed on the slide. Ask him if you can hold the rocks for him until he slides down. Respecting the fact that the rocks are special to him teaches him to respect others and their items. The rule regarding objects on the slide will also be reinforced.

***Provide a secure environment to foster independence.***

Children learn discipline through consistency and repetition of your expectations of them and what they can expect from you. Provide limits and guidelines in a fair, firm, consistent, and loving manner.

**Example - Natural consequences:** Teach children that behavior has consequences. If he breaks the toy, it will no longer be available for play.

**Example:** Until children learn to wait their turn, they often interrupt a caregiver who is talking with someone else. Give children a cue, such as squeezing your hand, to remind them of the behavior you want them to exhibit. This will let you know that a child wants to talk with you, and as soon as you can, you will stop your conversation and find out what he has to say.

***Connect to children to help them feel valued and special.***

Let children know that you have their best interest at heart by connecting with them before correcting them. Speak in a loving manner and pay attention to each child's unique personality and needs. When a child is exhibiting positive behavior, be sure to praise, thank and call attention to it.

**Example:** Brainstorm with children possible solutions to a dilemma, problem or predicament. During circle time, address issues of sharing within a center where no caregiver is stationed. Have children come up with their own rules. Compliment the children on their suggestions. When you correct the children,

they can be reminded that they came up with the rules themselves.

***Influence the spirit of children in a positive way.***

Just like adults, children need to know that they are doing things right and that they are valued. They are more apt to please the people that value them. Let children overhear you speaking positively about them – bragging about their good qualities and actions to others.

**Example:** Establish traditions which children can look forward to and which provide them with feelings of belonging and security. Have a child of the day who gets to be the line leader, help pass out snacks, etc.

***Teach children to self-correct their own behavior choices.***

Children repeat behaviors that work and eliminate behaviors that don't work. It is important for caregivers to focus on appropriate behaviors. Ignore negative behavior that is annoying, but not if it is dangerous, destructive or embarrassing.

Children also must have role models who are willing to show their own failure. Adults must apologize for wrongdoing and take responsibility for a healthy, loving environment.

**Example:** Apologize easily when you goof or lose it. Say things such as, "I was wrong" or "I'm sorry."

**Example:** Apologize for another child – I'm sorry he knocked you down, but do not make a child apologize. You might be making the child lie or think that wrongdoing can be rectified with an apology. Instead, talk to the child about what he/she did wrong and how to correct the behavior.

Often misbehavior is a sign that a child is discouraged or is not clear on what the appropriate behavior is supposed to be for a

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# Let's Play - The Importance of an Appropriate Environment

Toni Stagray, Licensing Consultant  
Genesee County



“Play is an expression of our creativity, and creativity is at the very root of our ability to learn, to cope and to become whatever we may be,” said Fred Rogers, also known as Mr. Rogers. So then, how does the learning environment for children support and encourage this creativity and development? The environment must be safe, flexible, child-oriented and take into consideration the daily tasks involved with caring for young children.

“Research shows that the more child-scaled the environmental space, the higher the quality and complexity of children’s play will be, and the longer they will be preoccupied in the play,” says Randy White, CEO of White Hutchinson Leisure and Learning Groups, Inc. An active, child-sized environment lets children know they belong, teaches them to become comfortable with routines and teaches them to understand the nature of boundaries and acceptable behaviors. When the environment is designed appropriately, they can reach what they want, climb when they need to and explore what interests them.

If you are just beginning to think about arranging a space for children, ask yourself this question: How can the environment support my philosophy and curriculum? *Community Playthings* recommends these steps when planning your child care space:

- Begin by making a floor plan. Draw the room to scale and add windows, doors, sinks, and storage areas.
- Mark in the flow paths: Draw the most direct routes between entry and all other doors, water sources and storage closets.



- Circle the protected corners: Save prime space for quiet or traffic-free activities. Protected corners should be as distant as possible from doors and flow paths.
- Divide the room into wet and dry regions.
- Divide the room into zones: Entry and messy zones in the wet region; active and quiet zones in the dry region.
- Plan activity areas in the appropriate zones.
- Create a space for each area: This includes storage for items used in the area. The layout should communicate activities and boundaries.

Remember to be flexible and be prepared to make alterations if the room arrangement does not seem to be working as positively as you imagined it would. An appropriately equipped and arranged space will ensure that boredom does not occur; children will remain safe and free to explore and learn about their environment. It will also ensure that caregivers can have positive interactions with young children. ❖

Stay up to date with our latest happenings by following @MichiganDHS on Twitter. We'll post licensing updates, recall notices and other resources using the #ChildCare hashtag.

# Going Above and Beyond in Home Child Care

Catherine Edgar, Licensing Consultant  
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As a family or group home child care provider, you have the unique opportunity to provide the comfortable setting of a home while also giving some of the structure and education that a child care center offers. By going above and beyond current licensing rules, you will be able to provide better care while engaging children in activities that promote and encourage creativity and learning.

There are many benefits to getting children of all ages outside every day. Licensing rules require that children go outside daily, except during inclement/extreme weather. It is easy to incorporate science into this daily experience by having older children see how many different plants or insects they can identify. For younger children, you can point out different items in the outside environment. In the winter you can have them paint the snow by using colored liquids. You can also take a variety of measuring instruments outside, such as a thermometer, ruler and measuring cups, and have the children use these tools to measure sand or rain in the summer and snow in the winter. Another easy way to get children of all ages outside is to take them on a walk.

Child care home licensing rules require you to provide at least 30 minutes of early language and literacy throughout the day. There are many ways to achieve this through reading, singing and games. Because literacy is so important, it should be incorporated into most aspects of your daily program. Try adding a daily circle time with a show-and-tell component. You can take literacy outdoors as well by going on a nature walk around the yard and naming plants and trees.

Studies have shown that too much television can have a negative impact on children. Home licensing rules allow for no more than two hours of television, movies, electronic devices,

and computers per day. A simple and effective way to go above and beyond in your child care is to simply turn off that television and engage the children in hands-on activities that promote creativity and learning.

There is nothing in the licensing rules stating that you have to provide television or movies to children in care. If children have engaging toys and activities, they won't even miss it. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of 2 not watch any television. Some home providers may feel as though they do not have enough activities to keep a child engaged for most of the day without the addition of television or movies. Children will engage in play longer with open-ended toys and materials such as blocks, Legos and arts and craft supplies. Rotating toys and materials will also make them more interesting to children. You can also check out themed bins of toys and materials through your local Great Start to Quality Resource Center (877-614-7328). This will allow you to provide your children in care with new and interesting materials without having to spend money.

Another way to go above and beyond is through professional development. This can be achieved through college classes, conferences and local training, as well as online training. Be sure to sign up for email updates through the licensing website and check out Great Start Connect's website ([www.greatstartforkids.org](http://www.greatstartforkids.org)) for upcoming trainings in your area.

Going above and beyond is beneficial to the children that you care for and can also earn you the reputation as one of the premier child care homes in your area. In this day and age, that little extra can go far in the success of your business. ❖



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## Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Infant/Child Product Recalls (not including toys)

These recalls have been added since Issue 95 of MCCM (December 2012):

- Mutsy USA recalls EVO strollers due to strangulation hazard.
- Play yard sheets recalled by 4moms due to entrapment hazard.
- World Imports recalls bunk beds due to violation of safety standards.
- Bugaboo recalls strollers due to fall and choking hazards.
- City Versa strollers recalled by Baby Jogger due to fall hazard.
- Dream On Me recalls bath seats due to drowning hazard.
- Dream On Me recalls children's bed rails due to suffocation and strangulation hazards.

Details on these product recalls may be obtained on the CPSC's website ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)). Post this page in your facility to be in compliance with the Children's Product Safety Act (2000 PA 219).

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### Positive Discipline and Programming, from page 13

given situation. Repeat rules often. Just like teaching children other subjects, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, teaching them how to behave in all situations is the job of all caregivers. It is essential to do that in a positive way so that the children become independent and respectful adults. ❖



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