

# Michigan Child Care Matters

Department of  
Human Services

ISSUE 86, WINTER 2010  
TODDLERS - 12 TO 35 MONTHS

## FROM THE DIVISION DIRECTOR James S. Sinnamon

**P**rofessional development. These two words capture the reasoning behind the licensing rules requirement for annual training.

Caring for children is a career and, as a caregiver, you are a professional. It takes a special person to get up every day and provide a nurturing, developmentally appropriate experience for children. It's not a job that just anyone can do. As a professional, you take pride in preparing yourself for the challenges you face every day as you work with children and parents.

Professionals in all fields enhance their growth and development through regular, ongoing training. Training provides child care providers with access to current trends in early childhood education and development. It improves the quality of care provided to children by helping caregivers recognize and correct health and safety issues. At its best, training challenges and stimulates caregivers to stretch themselves and their skills with children.

The focus of this issue is toddlers. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* has a concise "job description" for toddler care providers:

"Toddler care teachers can help toddlers find appropriate ways to assert themselves by

supporting their individuality, giving them choices whenever possible, and introducing social guidelines...The toddler care teacher fosters cooperation and facilitates the toddler's development of a strong sense of self."

As you work with the toddlers in your home or center, remember that you are a professional with special skills and training. Your interactions with children produce lasting changes in them and in yourself. Enjoy your time with them!

### Inside This Issue

- Page 2 Appropriate Toddler Programming
- Page 3 Toddler Eating Habits: What's a Caregiver To Do?
- Page 4 Positive Guidance and Discipline Techniques for Toddlers
- Page 7 Biting: Ouch, That Hurts!
- Page 8 Toddler Brain Development
- Page 10 Toddlers & Toileting
- Page 12 Feelings, Friends and Fun! The Social and Emotional Life of a Toddler
- Page 14 Toddler's Creed
- Page 15 Professional Development
- Page 16 CPSC Recalls



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing  
Child Care Licensing Division  
[www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare)



**EDITORIAL STAFF**

Jessica Coates  
Licensing Consultant

Marcia Demski  
Licensing Consultant

Dawnita Diaz  
Licensing Consultant

Catherine Edgar  
Licensing Consultant

Colleen Nelson  
Program Consultant

Kathi Pioszak  
Early Childhood Investment  
Corporation

Jackie Sharkey  
Area Manager

Kathleen Sinnamon  
Area Manager

Toni Stagray  
Licensing Consultant

Katrice Sweet  
Licensing Consultant

This publication provides relevant information regarding young children who are cared for in licensed child care settings. We encourage child care providers to make this publication available to parents of children in care, or to provide them with the Web address so they may receive their own copy. Most issues are available online at:

[www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare)

**APPROPRIATE TODDLER PROGRAMMING**

Catherine Edgar, Licensing Consultant  
Genesee County

Child care licensing rules define a toddler as a child ages 12 months through 35 months, with a young toddler being between 12-29 months and an older toddler being between 30-35 months.

The factors that contribute to quality programming for toddlers are much of the same as required for infants: Low caregiver to child ratios, small group sizes, and implementation of a primary caregiver for each child. The current child care center licensing requirement for caregiver to child ratios for young toddlers is at least one caregiver to four children. The caregiver to child ratio for older toddlers is at least one caregiver to eight children.

Appropriate toddler programming will have a daily schedule that allows for flexibility based on the individual needs of the children. Daily programming for toddlers should include sensory activities such as water or sand tables. These tables may also be filled with beans or rice to provide sensory exploration. Daily programming should also include opportunity for both fine and gross motor skills. Toys that allows for manipulation and organization, such as blocks and puzzles, are good for improving fine motor skills. Age-appropriate riding and climbing toys help to develop large motor skills in toddlers. Allowing time for creative expression and exploration should also be a part of the daily program. Toddlers learn through active exploration that is guided and supported by caregivers. Interesting and challenging playthings should be kept within a toddler's reach. Giving toddlers opportunities to help with clean up and daily activities also promotes a strong sense of belonging. Outdoor play must also be a part of the toddler's daily schedule each and every day. Toddlers should have their own outdoor play area with equipment designed specifically for their age.

Licensing rules state that the daily schedule for toddlers (as well as for all ages of children in care) must include language and literacy experiences for a minimum of 30 minutes per day. While reading to toddlers individually and in groups can fulfill this requirement, these experiences can also be achieved through games, songs and other verbal interactions. Licensing rules also require early math and science experiences daily for children in care. This can be achieved for toddlers through daily activities that may include counting, baking and measuring, as well as sensory exploration.

Continued on page 5

## TODDLER EATING HABITS: WHAT'S A CAREGIVER TO DO?

Toni L. Stagray, Licensing Consultant  
Saginaw County

Anyone who has been around toddlers knows their food likes and dislikes are ever-changing. A toddler may eat the same food for three days in a row – then refuse to touch it the next. The toddler years can be very unpredictable when it comes to eating habits. Offering a toddler-aged child one or two healthy food choices at a time is good practice. Caregivers are often concerned about adequate nutrition since toddlers may not eat “enough” or only want to eat the same foods over and over. In reality, nearly all toddlers will consume what they need as long as appropriate foods are offered. Be patient and persistent, but don't pressure. Special dietary concerns, including cultural preferences, must be considered.

Toddlers need a variety of food from all of the food groups. Milk, cheese, eggs, yogurt, or lean meats are good sources of protein. Breads, oatmeal, cereal, grits, potatoes, vegetables, and fruits contain vitamins and minerals needed for strong, healthy bodies. A toddler needs a small amount of fat in her diet to help the body and brain develop. Young toddlers (12-29 months) must be served whole homogenized vitamin D-fortified cow's milk, unless there is a medical reason not to do so. After this age, it is recommended that children be given reduced fat milk. The USDA Food Pyramid provides guidelines for daily servings for specific ages of children. Nutritional information and guidelines may also be obtained if one participates in a USDA-administered food program.

As a caregiver, your job is to decide what food is offered and the toddler will decide what to eat. Choosing foods to serve a toddler is a very

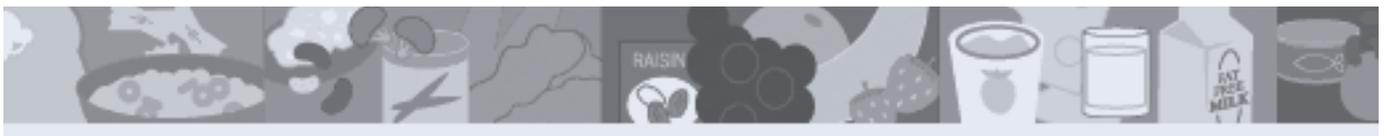
important job. A toddler's stomach is small and her energy needs are high. Toddlers cannot get everything needed in just three meals; therefore, snacks should be offered. Snacks should be nutritious as they are often a significant part of a toddler's daily intake.

An appropriate eating environment is important for toddlers to develop good eating habits. Caregivers should remember to:

- Provide a calm and relaxing atmosphere.
- Eat with children to provide a positive role model.
- Model table manners.
- Support conversation when eating with children.
- Let children feed themselves, whenever possible.
- Offer smaller servings or finger foods.
- Use child-sized utensils.
- Be encouraging and supportive during this learning process.
- Be aware of the toddler's verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Encourage toddlers to clean up after meals.

Licensing rules require that children younger than age three not be served or allowed to eat foods that may easily cause choking. This includes, but is not limited to, popcorn, uncut round foods, such as grapes, seeds, nuts, hard candy, and hot dogs. Toddlers should not be allowed to walk around while eating, as this increases the risk of choking on food.

Continued on page 14



## POSITIVE GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES FOR TODDLERS

Jessica Coates, Licensing Consultant  
Eaton County

Children under the age of three are curious and can be selfish and stubborn. This often results in a demanding toddler that can be frustrating to care for. Many problem behaviors with this age group can be prevented with a safe environment and adequate planning; but, if discipline is necessary, it is important to use an age-appropriate and positive technique.

Toddlers are just starting to learn about the world and their role within it. They want to explore their surroundings and learn how things work. Having an environment that is child-sized helps them interact in a space where they are likely to succeed. This helps them achieve the independence they are seeking and reduces the frustration that can often lead to disruptive behavior.

It is important to ensure that toddlers have an environment that is safe and that they cannot get into things that are dangerous or off-limits. Crawl around on the floor and look at the area from their level to discover potential problems. Once you have a safe environment, place objects within reach that a toddler's exploring hands can touch.

Having a consistent daily schedule so children in care know what to expect is critical. Toddlers thrive on consistency and, without it, feel uneasy and stressed. This uneasiness and stress can cause toddlers to act out. Consider their attention span when planning the day and allow time for transitions. Ensure the schedule has an abundance of varied activities. Short attention spans and a lack of engaging activities can lead to boredom, which often causes children to misbehave.

Try to offer as many acceptable choices throughout the day as possible. Toddlers have

very little control over their life and being able to make decisions on their own gives them a feeling of empowerment. Make sure you only offer a choice you are willing to follow through on and don't overwhelm the child by offering too many things to choose from.

You can also reduce negative behaviors by setting limits and being consistent in enforcing them, speaking in a low and calm voice to avoid a power struggle, and having age-appropriate expectations of the children in your care.

Even when all of the above preventative measures are used, discipline will most likely still be necessary. Discipline and punishment are very different. Punishment involves shame, ridicule or threats and may incorporate harsh physical methods. Punishment scares children into stopping their behavior immediately.

Discipline involves guiding children to make good choices and helping them learn self-control. It is a learning experience that is more time-consuming but, over time it is the most effective method.

Toddlers can often be easily redirected or distracted. When children do something inappropriate, redirect them to a similar activity that is permitted. An example of this would be removing a child from a sandbox where he is throwing sand and offering him a ball to throw instead.

Distracting toddlers to completely different activities removes them from an inappropriate action and engages them in something that is acceptable. This works especially well on younger toddlers because their short attention spans allow them to be easily distracted. When noticing a toddler who is engaging or about

to engage in an unacceptable activity, call his name to distract him and offer an alternative activity that is acceptable.

When correcting a toddler's behavior it is important to not criticize him. Statements such as "you know better than that" lead him to feel inferior. Positively state to the toddler what you want him to do. Simply state, "we walk inside" or "you can throw a ball instead of sand."

Many times a toddler's attempt at getting attention can result in him engaging in negative activities such as name-calling, tattling and temper tantrums. Drawing attention to the undesirable behavior can often make it worse. Usually these are not incidents that present a safety concern and they can be ignored. When a toddler doesn't get the attention he is seeking, he will eventually stop.

In order for this to work, positive attention must be given to a toddler on a regular basis. Point out the nice things that he does. Eventually he will crave the positive attention and strive to behave in an acceptable manner.

Some misbehavior results in a natural consequence. This is the natural flow of events that result from an action. The toddler who refuses to wear gloves on a cold day will quickly learn that not wearing gloves results in cold hands. Natural consequences should only be allowed to occur when the child is not putting himself in danger.

A logical consequence that is associated with a toddler's misbehavior is another effective technique. A toddler who insists on climbing up the slide instead of going down it like he has been instructed should not be allowed to play on the slide. This teaches the child that not using something appropriately can result in not being able to use it at all. The loss of a privilege can also be an effective consequence to an undesired behavior.

Time out is a method that many providers opt to

use; however, it is not an appropriate discipline method for children under the age of three. Toddlers and infants do not have the cognitive ability to understand the purpose of a time out or learn from the experience.

It is important for toddlers to learn how to follow simple rules, respond to caregivers commands, have self-control, and deal with frustration. Having an appropriate, structured environment and using positive discipline techniques helps a toddler learn these skills. ❖

---

**Appropriate Toddler Programming**, from page 2

Appropriate toddler programming should be predictable, yet flexible. There should be limited time that children have to wait between different activities and the schedule should provide for a smooth transition between different activities. The physical environment should be arranged so that each child can engage in exploration throughout the day and allow for children to choose not to participate in group activities by providing a safe, appropriate place for them to engage in another activity. Finally, appropriate programming for toddlers should allow each toddler to enjoy goal-oriented and problem-solving play within a safe environment that meets their physical, social and emotional needs. ❖

*Child care center licensing rule R400.5202a requires primary caregiving until a child is 36 months old. See the Child Care Center Rules Technical Assistance and Consultation Manual on that rule for more information on primary caregiving.*

## Guiding Toddler Behavior

- Guidance does **not** mean punishment
- Guidance **does** mean helping children to learn **positive** ways to interact

## What You Can Do

- Distract, divert, redirect
- Avoid turning normal behavior into an “issue”
- Use **simple** meaningful words
- Say and show what you **want** them to do
- Give real and simple **choices**
- Have **duplicate** toys (because young children are unable to wait patiently)
- Be warm, loving, caring
- Use soothing skills and activities
- Never yell
- Avoid isolation and time-out
- Avoid power struggles

## Guidelines for Preventing Behavior Problems

- Base expectations and experiences on **development**
- Give children a sense of **power**
- **Avoid** power struggles
- Let children make **real choices**
- Help children **problem-solve**
- **Ignore** negative behavior
- Focus on **desirable** behavior
- Model and say what you **want** to happen
- Avoid “Time-out” – Provide “Time-in”
- Practice and share **soothing skills**
- Help the child to identify **feelings**
- Focus on empowering the **victim**
- Instead of praise, use **encouragement**

## Encouragement Statements

*I know you can do this.*

*I know this is hard.*

*What can you do to ...*

*What will it take to ...*

*What kind of help can I give to ...*

*Adapted from “Ends of the Rainbow” Infant/Toddler Video Series Viewer’s Guide.*

## BITTING: OUCH, THAT HURTS!

Dawnita Diaz, Licensing Consultant  
Ottawa County

One of the challenges all providers face with toddlers is biting. While biting is part of the toddler years, it can present significant issues for parents, providers and children in care. It is important to understand the reasons why toddlers bite, how to react when biting occurs, and how to communicate with parents when biting happens.

Toddlers bite for various reasons. During the toddler years, children are teething and may bite to relieve the pain they feel as their teeth appear. A toddler often puts items in his mouth as part of exploration. This developmental stage is also one of limited language. When a toddler becomes frustrated, excited or tired, he may bite to communicate these feelings.

When one child bites another child in care, it is important for child care providers to have a plan in place to handle the situation. **Never** bite a child in response to their biting! Be aware of the biter's behavior and address his needs. Provide the biter with an alternative activity such as biting on a cold cloth if he is teething or separating him from a peer he may be targeting. Encourage the biter to use his words to express his needs and feelings. Look for patterns that may lead to a biting episode. Supply adequate space and activities to reduce frustration and competition for toys and play space. Supervision is the key to reducing ongoing problems with biting in the child care setting.

After a biting incident it is important to communicate with the parents of both children. The parent's of the child who was bitten should be informed of the event and told what measures are being taken to prevent further biting incidents. The biter's parents need to be informed that their child bit another child

in care. Communicate with the parents about their toddler's current state and how they handle frustration, excitement or other emotions at home. Discuss possible patterns or situations where their child may be more likely to react by biting.

It may be helpful to have a written policy regarding biting for the protection of all the children in care. Ongoing incidents of biting may be due to a problem with supervision. The provider may determine in conjunction with staff and parents that the child care setting may not be appropriate for the child who consistently bites others. It is important to communicate the expectations and steps that will be used to prevent biting from occurring in the child care setting. The safety of all children in care is the responsibility of all providers.

Biting not only hurts, it can cause physical injury. Biting may be a brief stage while a toddler learns and improves his ability to communicate. Providers need to be prepared for an incident of biting that may take place. A good plan includes what steps to take once a child has been bitten, how to handle the behavior of the biter and the communication that will take place with the involved parents. The goal is for providers to ease the hurt everyone feels when a child is bitten. ❖

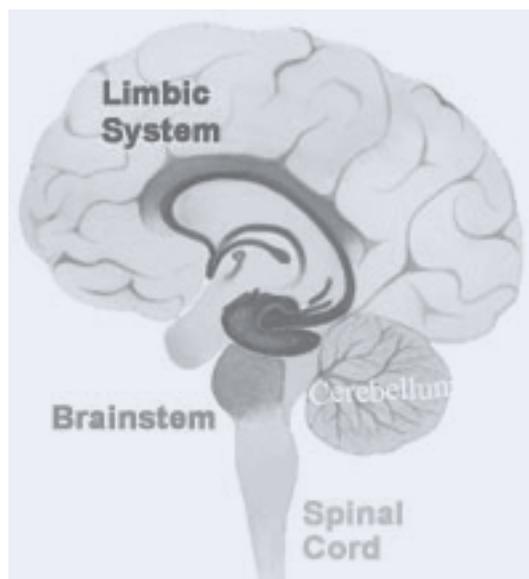


## TODDLER BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Darlene Sandel, Licensing Consultant  
Oakland County

**T**oddler's brains develop in very important ways during the second and third years of life. To best understand and help facilitate toddlers' brain growth, it is important to first understand a little bit about the brain itself. Brains begin to develop from the bottom up. The brain stem, which is located at the base of the brain, needs to be functional at birth, as it is responsible for automatic functions such as heartbeat, breathing and body temperature control. Next to develop is the cerebellum, which is located above the brain stem and is associated with movement. Third to mature is the limbic system, which is considered the emotional center of the brain. Last is the cerebrum, where thought processes occur, including learning, abstract thinking, reasoning and logic. It is vital that each part of the brain be stimulated and nurtured in order to develop to its highest potential.

The brain stem continues to develop throughout the toddler years. Proper brain stem functioning is important, and early childhood experiences have a lifelong impact on how it works. A toddler must feel safe, loved, nurtured, and important. Supportive and secure attachments to parents, other family members, caregivers, and friends, allows the brain stem to develop as it should. This enables toddlers to handle ordinary stressors appropriately. If a toddler lives under stress for significantly long periods and experiences fear or insecurity, the limbic system frequently releases the hormone



cortisol which negatively affects the brain's development. The toddler may view the world as unsafe and his reactions may become more physical than verbal, often striking out at others. These reactions originate in the brain stem rather than using other parts of the brain to form thoughtful, appropriate and safe solutions. As the toddler's body becomes used to high levels of cortisol, he may constantly place himself in dangerous situations. This behavior will likely continue into adulthood. Additionally, when the child does not feel safe and constantly views others as threatening, it is difficult for him to learn or develop higher-level thinking.

The cerebellum, an area densely packed with connections to other areas of the brain, is not directly responsible for thinking or learning, but it must be stimulated during the toddler years to help the toddler reach his full potential. Toddlers must move and exercise to encourage the development of this area. During physical activities, the cerebellum is stimulated and the connections (neural circuits) in this area grow and make connections with other areas of the brain. These connections are related to abstract thinking and mental focus. Activities such as swinging and spinning are especially effective in encouraging neural circuit growth that supports the ability to focus and succeed academically in later years. On the other hand, if toddlers are inactive, connections weaken and thinking and focus suffer.

The limbic area is known as the emotional

center of the brain, but it also affects learning. The first two years of a child's life are critical to the development of the emotional center of the brain. This area works differently than any other part of the brain because it secretes different chemicals into the bloodstream, which then circulate throughout the body. These chemicals affect actions and feelings. When a toddler feels stressed or threatened, cortisol is released. When cortisol circulates in the brain, it prevents the neural connections from being made and strengthened. No matter how much physical activity a toddler engages in, no matter how much stimulation and learning he is exposed to, the brain will not properly develop and make the necessary connections between the different areas. Learning ability and memory development will be limited. Conversely, if a toddler experiences loving, warm environments where adults respond appropriately to his needs, the toddler's limbic system will signal the brain to release "feel good" hormones such as serotonin. The toddler will be emotionally secure and be able to form healthy relationships, as well as learn and develop higher-level thinking skills.

A toddler's environmental experiences affect his growth in the cerebrum of the brain. The parts of the cerebrum that are connected to sensory input are developing during toddlerhood. Toddlers explore and learn from concrete objects that they can see, hear, feel, smell and taste. It is important that toddlers be given opportunities to be visually stimulated with books, patterns and color - red, blue and green are the most energizing to toddlers. Toddlers should be:

- Sung, read and talked to.
- Allowed to feel different textures, such as rice, sandpaper, "goo" and different fabrics.
- Presented with strong and appealing smells such as lavender, peppermint and orange.
- Encouraged to try new foods of various colors and textures.

If any of these senses are not stimulated, the

neural connections in the brain will weaken and become ineffective and new ones will not form.

Hand in hand with providing the appropriate experiences for toddlers, nutrition and rest must also be considered. Toddlers' brains are working very hard and grow to 80 percent of an adult-sized brain by three years of age. Their brains are 2 ½ times as active as adult brains and use 20 percent of the calories a toddler consumes. Toddlers need diets rich in protein, iron, fat and plenty of water. However, just like our bodies, the brain needs rest after working so hard. It is also important that we don't over-stimulate children. Toddlers need both nighttime sleep (up to 14 hours) and one to two naps daily. During sleep the brain does its housekeeping and reorganizes itself.

At no other time in life than early childhood is the brain so impressionable. Toddlers are capable of enormous learning and growth with appropriate, positive and nurturing experiences. However, their brains are also more vulnerable to developmental problems should abuse, neglect or trauma occur. As Lawton and Rhea Chiles of the Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies state, "It is easier to build the brain of a young child than repair the brain of an adult." ❖

Licensing rules require all of the following for toddler sleeping:

- Toddlers must rest or sleep alone in approved cribs, porta-cribs, or on approved mats or cots.
- Car seats, infants seats, swings, bassinets and playpens are not approved sleeping equipment.
- Toddlers who fall asleep in an unapproved sleeping space must be moved.

## TODDLERS & TOILETING

Katrice Sweet, Licensing Consultant  
Eaton County

One of the hardest transitions for toddlers is moving from diapers to using the toilet. Parents are sometimes in a hurry to have their child toilet trained so they can save money or enroll their child in preschool. As a caregiver, you may feel that you don't have the time to toilet train a child or that the child is not ready. It is very important to remember that both the caregiver and the parent must work together as a team with the child in order to avoid negative emotions and power struggles.

In order for toilet training to be successful, the child must have bladder and bowel control to physically be able to use the toilet. The child needs to recognize the feeling of pressure just before urinating or moving her bowels and associate that pressure with the physical action. She also has to be able to respond to the feeling by stopping her activity, walking to the bathroom, pulling down her pants and sitting on the toilet.



Signs a child is ready to use the toilet include:

- Staying dry for two hours at a time.
- Recognizing when she is urinating or having bowel movement.
- Being able to pull pants up and down.
- Being able to get on and off the toilet.
- Following simple directions.
- Wanting to wear underpants and use the toilet.
- Being able to communicate either with words or gestures.
- Pulling her diaper off.
- Telling an adult when wet or soiled.

According to Zero to Three Institute, it is important to approach toilet training matter-of-factly and without a lot of emotion. It is just another developmental skill the child is learning. Showing extreme excitement with successes and anger with accidents lets the child know that this is something you want badly. The child soon realizes that she has control over something you want and refusing to use the toilet is a way for her to show you that she has control in this situation.

Keys to successful toilet training:

- Give the child words to use for urination and defecation that are easy to say and used consistently between home and child care. Avoid words that imply shame, such as stinky, dirty your diaper, poop on yourself.
- Dress the child in loose fitting clothing that is easy to pull up and down.
- Help the child make the connection between what she feels and what she needs to do. When the child shows signs that she is about to go, such as standing quietly, squatting or hiding behind a chair, take her into the bathroom and try to get her on the toilet. Use words to describe what is happening. Again, the words must be consistent between home and child care to help the child make the connection between the words and actions.
- Acknowledge fears the child may have regarding the toilet training process. The

loud flushing from the toilet may be frightening. The child may be afraid she will fall into the toilet and be flushed herself. Be sure to take steps to ease those fears by letting the child leave the room before you flush, practice flushing the toilet over and over to watch the water go down, have a toilet ring so she doesn't feel like she is going to fall in or have a step stool she can plant her feet on while she is sitting on the toilet.

- When accidents happen, and they will, let the child help with the work involved. She can take off her own wet pants, help clean herself up and put on new pants by herself. Give her ownership.

#### Things to consider regarding toilet training:

- Avoid starting the toilet training process when there are new changes in child's life, such as a family move, switching from crib to bed, weaning off bottles or pacifiers, expecting a new sibling or during a major illness or crisis.
- Diapers and pull-ups can sometimes hinder the toilet training process. The child cannot always feel the wet diaper after urination because of the absorbency of the diaper; therefore it can be hard to associate the pressure of having to urinate with the wet feeling of soiled pants. There are a variety of training pants available that may be used during this process.
- Try to avoid terms such as "big boy/big girl pants." The child may not be ready to be big, especially if there is a baby around and she wants that attention as well. If you suspect the child wants the attention she sees the baby getting on the changing table, try to prolong the time you spend with the child as she uses the toilet. Take extra time washing hands. Give her attention throughout the toileting process.
- Too much praise can also put undo stress

on a child. She may feel guilty or bad when she isn't successful.

- Forcing a child to use the toilet can cause intense power struggles. These power struggles can lead to tantrums but can also lead to the child holding her urine or bowel movements, which can cause physical problems like constipation.

Many people struggle with the question, do I use a reward system or not? On one hand, a reward may help a child grasp the process faster, getting instant gratification for using the toilet. On the other hand, what is it teaching the child in the long run? If a child gets a reward for doing something that is a normal part of development, it could lead to the child feeling she should get a reward for any accomplishment. Rewards can also put undo pressure on the child and cause extreme anxiety. The child may feel like a failure because she had an accident and did not get the reward. When toilet training isn't made into a big deal, children are more likely to follow their internal milestones.

If you feel yourself getting angry over accidents, or you see power struggles emerging, it may be a time to step back and put the process on hold. Wait for a few days or a week and try again. Try to remember that toilet training can be a very complicated process for young children and what works for one child may not work for another. Children must be both physically and emotionally ready for the toilet training process in order to be successful. You can support the child's effort through your communication, preparedness and patience. ❖

## FEELINGS, FRIENDS AND FUN! THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LIFE OF A TODDLER

Mary Mackrain, Child Care Enhancement Program Director

**P**roviding care for toddlers can be inspiring, heartwarming, fun and at times, a bit challenging! Toddlers are discovering the world around them, learning about their own feelings and other people. They are gaining independence, yet still want their caregivers close by. Sometimes they feel strong emotions that are hard to cope with and understand. All of these things center on developing social and emotional health.

Social-emotional health is one of the most critical factors in a child's healthy development. Social and emotional health starts at birth and shapes a young child's brain structure. As social and emotional health emerges, the quality of that brain structure creates either a strong or a weak foundation for all development that follows.

Social-emotional health is the child's developing ability to:

- Express and manage feelings.
- Form close trusting relationships.
- Explore and learn.

By supporting the social and emotional health of toddlers now, we are helping them to learn how to get along with others, ask for help, and take initiative to get their needs met--all critical skills. Toddlers with social and emotional health may have a life journey that is easier to navigate. For example, if a toddler seeks a hug when upset and his caregiver holds him until he is calm, then he may be able to calm himself in stressful situations in safe and healthy ways--because he was shown how.

Some things toddlers do every day that show they are building social and emotional skills include:

### Expressing and managing feelings by:

- Smiling and laughing.
- Beginning to protest and say, "No."
- Expressing many feelings such as happy, sad, scared and angry.
- Using a blanket or familiar item for comfort.

### Forming close and trusting relationships by:

- Playing next to a friend.
- Beginning to show interest in how others are feeling.
- Checking in with a familiar adult during play.
- Making needs known to familiar adults.
- Responding to their name.
- Showing pleasure when interacting with familiar adults.

### Exploring and learning by:

- Showing interest in other people and play things.
- Showing interest in everyday play.
- Seeking repetition such as wanting the same book read over and over.

Everyday activities can help to support social and emotional health in toddlers. Here are a few simple ideas:

1. Help toddlers express feelings in words.

*"When Sara took your bear you felt really angry."* With an adult's help, toddlers learn how to name their feelings and to manage their emotions. Over time toddlers begin to do this more independently, but for now they need your help. Taking time to do this lets

toddlers know their emotions matter.

## 2. Read books together about feelings.

Not only does this activity build adult-child connections through one-on-one time, it also helps toddlers begin to match pictures with words, “*I see a sad boy.*” Many times local libraries have a good assortment of toddler books that talk about feelings. Some suggestions are: *The Feeling Book* by Todd Parr, *How are You Feeling* by Saxton Freeman, and *Lots of Feelings* by Shelly Rotner.

## 3. Be close by to help with conflicts.

Toddlers are just beginning to play together with their friends. Sharing and turn-taking continue to develop into the later years, and toddlers still need adult help to work through these skills. When toddlers are having conflict, these simple steps from Betsey Evans may be helpful

(<http://www.kidsandconflict.com/index.htm>):

- Approach the situation calmly and make sure everyone is safe.
- Get down on the children’s level and use a calm voice.
- Acknowledge each child’s feelings.
- Gather information, allowing each child a turn to talk.
- Restate the problem.
- Ask children for ideas on how they will solve the problem. If necessary, suggest appropriate solutions.
- Choose an appropriate solution that everyone can agree on.

## 4. Use clear limits and alternatives to challenging behavior.

Sometimes it is easy to find yourself saying to toddlers, “*No, don’t climb on that!*” or “*Stop, do not touch that, it is not safe.*” What is helpful is pairing the limit with an alternative, for example, “*You may not climb*

*on the table. It is not safe. I can help you climb up the slide outside, or we can go for a walk.*” The more choices we give toddlers the more likely they will be able to explore and learn in safe ways.

## 5. Make sure each child in your care feels loved.

The simple everyday things we do with toddlers like calling them by name, looking into their eyes, giving hugs, laughing when they are silly, and sharing a smile, all help to make them feel special. When young toddlers feel comfort and security, they are more likely to take initiative to learn and grow.

Children all develop at differing rates, but here are some signs that a toddler might have social and emotional concerns:

- Shows little preference for any one adult.
- Lacks interest in other people or play-things.
- Has extreme and very frequent tantrums.
- Often appears sad or withdrawn.
- Shows a loss of language or social skills.

If you have questions or concerns about a toddler’s social and emotional health, please call the Child Care Enhancement Program to be linked with a social and emotional consultant in your area. There are eligibility requirements for these free and confidential services. To find out more contact Mary Mackrain, Child Care Enhancement Program Director, at [mackrain@aol.com](mailto:mackrain@aol.com). ❖

**TODDLER'S CREED**

If I want it, it's mine.  
If I give it to you and change  
my mind later, it's mine.  
If I can take it away from  
you, it's mine.  
If I had it a little while ago,  
it's mine.  
If I played with it yesterday,  
it's mine.  
If it is mine, it will never  
belong to anybody else,  
no matter what.  
If we are building something  
together, all of the pieces  
are mine.  
If it looks like mine, it's mine!

**Toddler Eating Habits**, from page 3

It may take some time for toddlers to develop a taste for new foods. Food may need to be offered over and over or in another form before a child will decide to try it or decide they like it. Food should never be used as a punishment or a reward, as this can negatively affect a child's view of certain foods or lead to poor eating habits. Early experiences with food and meals follow a child throughout life. According to author Ellyn Satter, toddlers are at high risk for learning to use food for emotional reasons. It may be tempting to offer food to quell the "toddler storm." Instead, try to stick to a schedule and figure out if the child is hungry or sad, full or tired. If a toddler is not hungry, offer attention, hugs or naps rather than food.

Caregivers are a part of the team that helps to teach toddlers about healthy food choices. Enjoy this time in a toddler's life by exposing her to new foods and teaching her to eat appropriately and develop healthy eating habits. ❖

First aid/CPR training must be received from a person certified as a Red Cross instructor or a trainer from another organization approved by the department. See the department's Website ([www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare)) for the current list of approved organizations. If first aid or CPR training is completed online, an in-person skills test must be completed for the training to be valid. The in-person skills test must be administered by one of the approved organizations.



## UPCOMING AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Michigan Collaborative  
Early Childhood Conference  
January 27-29, 2010  
Dearborn, MI  
[www.MiAEYC.org](http://www.MiAEYC.org)  
(517) 336-9700  
(800) 336-6424

MiAEYC Administrator Conference  
March 2, 2010  
Clinton Township, MI  
[www.MiAEYC.org](http://www.MiAEYC.org)  
(517) 336-9700  
(800) 336-6424

MiAEYC Early Childhood Conference  
March 25-27, 2010  
Grand Rapids, MI  
[www.MiAEYC.org](http://www.MiAEYC.org)  
(517) 336-9700  
(800) 336-6424

Michigan Head Start Association Annual Early  
Childhood Training Conference  
April 28-30, 2010  
Kalamazoo, MI  
[www.mhsa.ws/](http://www.mhsa.ws/)  
(517) 374-6472

Michigan 4C Association, [www.mi4c.org](http://www.mi4c.org),  
(866) 424-4532

Michigan State University Extension, <http://bkf.fcs.msue.msu.edu/>, (517) 432-7654

HighScope Training Opportunities, [www.high-scope.org](http://www.high-scope.org), (734) 485-2000, ext. 234

A comprehensive list of conferences, including national conferences, that are scheduled for 2010-2011 can be found at:  
[www.michigan.gov/documents/Early\\_Childhood\\_Conferences\\_2006\\_149277\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Early_Childhood_Conferences_2006_149277_7.pdf)

## GREAT START CONNECT



As part of the Great Start Child Care Quality Project, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) has launched a new system of online early learning resources called Great Start CONNECT.

**Who is Great Start CONNECT for?** It's for you - Michigan's 14,000 licensed and registered child care providers and the families who want to find you!

**How does Great Start CONNECT work?** It's easy! Simply log-in and upload information about your child care and early education setting, skills, programs and openings. You can even add photos!

**Sounds good to me. What do I do?** Simply log-in to Great Start CONNECT today at [www.greatstartforkids.org](http://www.greatstartforkids.org). Click on "Great Start CONNECT;" select "Log-in," then enter your valid e-mail address and your GS CONNECT password to update your information. Select "Resources" for the Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Centers and a listing of professional development opportunities in your area.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
 BUREAU OF CHILDREN AND ADULT LICENSING  
 7109 W. SAGINAW, 2ND FLOOR  
 P.O. BOX 30650  
 LANSING, MI 48909

PRSRRT STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 Lansing, Michigan  
 Permit No. 1200



### CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION (CPSC) INFANT/CHILD PRODUCT RECALLS (not including toys)

These recalls have been added since Issue 85 of MCCM (September 2009):

- CPSC, LaJobi reannounce 2001 recall of cribs due to entrapment and strangulation hazards; concern that cribs could now be at second hand or thrift stores.
- Infant entrapment and suffocation prompts Stork Craft to recall more than 2.1 million drop-side cribs.
- Grand World recalls “Bobby Chupete” pacifiers due to choking hazard.
- Maclaren USA recalls to repair strollers following fingertip amputations.
- Big Lots Stores, Inc. recalls to repair bunk beds due to collapse and fall hazards.
- Baby Jogger recalls strollers due to fall hazard.
- Cloth Books recalled by Sterling Publishing Co. Inc. due to strangulation hazard.
- Burley Design recalls child trailers due to risk of injury.
- Target Recalls Circo booster seats due to fall hazard.
- Jump ‘n Jive Doorway Jumpers recalled by Graco due to choking hazard.
- Dorel Juvenile Group expands recall of Safety 1st Stair Gates due to fall hazard.
- Baby Hammocks recalled by Kaplan Early Learning due to fall and strangulation hazards.
- Baby Hammocks recalled by Nova Natural Toys & Crafts due to fall and strangulation hazards.
- Little Tikes recalls Clubhouse Swing Sets due to fall hazard; new assembly directions to be provided.
- BabySwede LLC recalls Bouncer Chairs due to laceration hazard.

Details on these product recalls may be obtained on the CPSC’s Web site at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

Copies Printed: 15,000  
 Cost: \$6,261.93 (.42 ea.)  
 Authority: DHS Director



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
 Department of Human Services

Department of Human Services (DHS) will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to a DHS office in your area.