

## 10 Components of Quality Child Care for Infants and Toddlers

- 1) Licensed Programs Following Appropriate Health and Safety Practices
  - Separate area for food prep, diapering and toileting.
  - Detailed procedures for emergencies posted.
  - Health plan in place.
  - Nutritious meals and snacks
- 2) Staff Well Trained in Early Childhood Development
  - Caregiver education and level of participation in ongoing training in the field of early childhood development and care is critically important.
  - Caregivers should apply their knowledge of early childhood and use curricula and materials to plan appropriate activities.
  - Routines to promote learning and meaningful opportunities for conversation and interaction with children.
- 3) Age Appropriate Environments
  - Room arrangement should allow for both quiet and active play, dramatic and messy play large group activities and individual care.
  - Multiple sets of toys available for access at the child's eye level to promote independent choosing and use.
  - Arrangements of classrooms based on the facilitation of learning by young children, rather on the preference of caregivers.
  - Infants and toddlers must have separate outdoor space for play.
- 4) Small Groups with Optimal Ratios
  - Create a greater sense of intimacy and safety.
  - Allow for rich dialogue, less noise and less activity, which are optimal conditions for this age group.
  - Build stronger relationships and enable the ability to adopt activities to meet challenging interests and needs of the group.
  - The recommended group size is six to eight. (for infants no larger than ten for toddlers)
  - The best adult-to-child ratio is one adult for every three to four infants and one adult for every 5 toddlers.
- 5) Primary Caregiver and Continuity of Care
  - Relationship between caregivers and children are crucial in quality childcare.
  - Each child enrolled in group care should be assigned a primary caregiver that has the principle responsibility for that child, building a positive, constant, intimate relationship with the child and the family.
  - Having one caregiver from entry into childcare until the child is three years old is optimal for the child's development given that each change from one caregiver to another takes a toll.
  - Having to learn and relearn a caregiver's ways may slow the child's overall development and leave them reluctant to form new relationships.
- 6) Active and Responsive Caregiver to Support Children's Development
  - The caregiver takes cues from each child to know when to expand on the child's initiative, when to guide, when to teach, and when to intervene.
  - The caregiver is alert to signs of stress in a child's behavior and responds with appropriate stress reducing activities and techniques.

The caregiver facilitates the development of self-esteem by respecting and accepting children, regardless of their behavior.

7) Emerging Language and Literacy

Caregivers expand on the sounds made by infants and toddlers, and add words and ideas to what very young children express, feel, or say.

Caregivers promote the development of language through the use of simple words and maintain a balance between listening and talking with the child.

Staff creates a learning environment that includes age appropriate books and other print material.

The use of songs, nursery rhymes, and finger plays promote language and literacy development.

8) Curriculum Observation and Individualized Programming

Learning is an interactive process in need of a variety of choices in activities and materials.

Caregivers must understand the temperaments, moods, and preferences of each child and should adopt their care to meet individual needs.

Young children sleep, eat and play in regular routines rather than forcing rigid conformity.

Individualizing activities, materials and schedules according to the developmental stage of each child.

9) Family Involvement and Cultural Continuity

Incorporating practices reflecting the values and beliefs of the families and the culture of the communities.

Use of the child's home language, following cultural norms related to daily, routines, and celebrating diverse cultures.

Communicate each day with families, welcome parents into their child's classroom and organize special events that include the child's family members.

10) Comprehensive Support Services

Community agencies are essential to provide a medical home, mental health and social services, and therapeutic interventions.

Ongoing communication can ensure continuity of care across multiple disciplines and promote holistic support services and treatment.