Child Care Technical Assistance Network

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Infant/Toddler Resource Guide

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Culturally Responsive Care

Download the article, *Culturally Responsive*.

Article - Culturally Responsive Care (/resource/program-infanttoddler-cares-pitc-six-essential-program-practices-relationship-based-care-2)

Use this resource to help communicate the importance of culturally responsive care. It will help promote essential program practices to ensure quality in family child care and center-based programs that serve infants and toddlers.

Rationale

High-quality relationship-based care is central to children's early brain development, emotional regulation, and learning (Center on the Developing Child, 2012). The Program for Infant/Toddler Care recommends six essential program practices as a framework for relationship-based care. One of these practices is culturally responsive care—the practice of caring for children from culturally diverse families in ways that are consistent with their home practices and values (Lally & Mangione, n.d.).

Caregivers take an important step toward practicing culturally responsive care when they partner with families to learn about the care practices and rituals of children's home cultures, and then use this information to inform interactions and care routines (Derman-Sparks, 2013). Care that connects with infants' and toddlers' home experiences helps them develop a sense of who they are and value their home cultures (Virmani & Mangione, 2013). Supporting consistent care at home and in child care settings supports healthy development for infants and toddlers and sets the stage for integrated learning (Derman-Sparks, 2013; National Research Council, 2000).

Why Is Culturally Responsive Care Important for Infants and Toddlers?

- Honoring diversity strengthens relationships with families and children, which enhances quality of care and education (Virmani & Mangione, 2013).
- When a responsive caregiver builds relationships with an infant, the infant's ability to trust and seek support is enhanced (Howes & Spieker, 2008).
- Culture is the fundamental building block of identity (Lally, 1995).
- Developing relationships with families and seeing them as partners in care is essential for providing a culturally responsive, high-quality infant and toddler care experience (Raikes & Edwards, 2009).
- Primary caregiving offers the opportunity to build relationships with families. Strong relationships make it easier for families to share beliefs, rituals, and routines that are valued in their home cultures (Gilford et al., 1993).

How Does Culturally Responsive Care Promote Positive Child Outcomes?

- Culturally responsive care respects each infant's way of communicating and supports language development (Center on the Developing Child, n.d.; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, 2005).

- Children who understand their own cultures develop a sense of belonging, personal history, and security in knowing who they are and where their family comes from. These qualities increase their capacity to develop a respectful understanding of other cultural perspectives (Lally, 1995).
- We learn to communicate and understand our world through the culture in which we live (Ray, 2015).
- Culturally responsive policies and services support infant and toddler learning and development (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000).

Planning to Implement Culturally Responsive Care in Diverse Child Care Settings

Goal: High-quality infant and toddler programs provide culturally responsive care to children and their families.

- Implement written guidance to support culturally responsive care throughout the program. This guidance includes staff and family handbooks that share the importance of, as well as practices for, cultural responsiveness./li>
- Create job descriptions for infant and toddler caregivers that include expectations for culturally responsive practices. These expectations include examining one's own values and beliefs, forming relationships with families, learning about their home cultures and caregiving routines, and weaving home care experiences into daily practice.
- Attend, create, or advocate for professional development about culturally responsive caregiving practices.
- Support ongoing conversations with families and caregivers about culture and infant and toddler development.
- Use an intentional review process to continually strengthen culturally responsive care practices across the center or family child care program.

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