Interactions Between Adults and Infants and Toddlers

7.05: Interactions Among Adults and Children

The following requirements apply to all programs, including family child care, small group and school age and large group and school age child care.

(1) Educators must be responsive to children's individual needs and support the development of self-esteem, self-expression, autonomy, social competence, and school readiness.

(2) Educators must be nurturing and responsive to children by:
   (a) frequently expressing warmth to individual children through behaviors such as holding babies, social conversations (including response to babies' vocalizations), joint laughter, eye contact, and smiles, and communicating at children's eye level
   (b) providing attentive, consistent, comforting, and culturally sensitive care;
   (c) being consistent and predictable in their physical and emotional care of children, and when implementing program rules and expectations
   (d) recognizing signs of stress in children's behavior and responding with appropriate stress-reducing activities

Rationale for the Regulations

Children who are valued and respected, engage more in positive interactions, in their environment leading to a greater ability to learn and explore. Educators benefit from a healthy positive relationship as much as the child. Interactions between child and educator should occur frequently and beyond typical caregiving times such as feeding or diapering. Engaging with a child during a “free play’ time when nothing else is to be done (other than play) tells the child you are important to me and helps build their identity as a person who is valued. Having intentional interactions will allow the educator and child to develop reciprocal relationship where both are in synchrony.

Relationships are the key to developing a secure attachment between infants, toddlers, and their educators. These relationships are built upon a series of interactions that occur between the child and their educator. Interactions should be done in a calm, respectful manner where with a focus on the child and their needs, are the focus. Educators should engage children and allow children to take the lead during the interactions, paying close attention to the child's needs and wants. These interactions should be rich in language where the educator uses their voice tone and face to express themselves while noting the child’s response. Language used with both infants and toddlers should be descriptive and use labeling for the child to identify what is happening. Interactions should frequently occur between just one adult and one child or between two children with an adult close by for facilitation.

How does this look in an infant toddler classroom?

- Educators frequently hold infants or interact with them on the floor during tummy time.
- Educators understand the different cries or facial expressions of the infants and are in tune with their needs.
- In a toddler room, educators are often sitting on the floor engaging toddlers in a one on one basis.
- Educators plan activities based on the toddler’s interests and developmental level, recognizing the unique characteristics of each toddler as well as their family.
- Educators and allow for long periods when children can actively engage in activities and exploration.
Floor Time

Rationale

Educators-Adults, who are intentional in their interactions with children are more likely to recognize and understand the child’s needs, temperament, and abilities. This supports the attachment between the primary educator-adult and child, which in also turn supports health development. When adults sit on the floor they are letting the child(ren) know “I am here for you.” This supports the child’s need for feeling safe and secure while allowing them to explore the environment.

Educators-Adults should sit on the floor regularly so they are accessible to children who can move. Educators-Adults who sit on the floor are at eye level with many children providing richer language and social interactions. This time should be seen as “wants nothing time” (Gonzalez-Mena 2009) in which there is no instruction from the educator-adult, and allowing the child is allowed to the lead in the interactions. Both educators adults and children should spend as much non-caregiving time interacting as possible. Educators-Adults need to be intentional in providing floor time not only for a child’s physical development but to as well as provide opportunities for the child to play/interact/engage with the educator-adult.

Meeting and Exceeding the Regulations

Throughout the day educators-adults should

- Sit on the floor and interact with the children.
- Educators-Adults should, at times allow children to initiate the interactions, engage them first.
  - Non-mobile infants may turn their head and babble in the direction of where the educator-adult is sitting.
  - Mobile infants will crawl or sit close by near the educator-adult.
  - Toddler’s will bring items and talk to educators-adults.

Tummy Time

Rationale

When appropriate, infants should be kept in the least restrictive environment and should be allowed to move safely and freely about their environment. Infants need to be placed on the floor on their stomachs for extended periods during the day. Tummy time should be a regular practice in an infant room. The use of swings, exersaucers, and bouncy seats, or bumbo seats should be limited to usage for safety reasons in infant care.

Infants need to spend time on their stomachs. By providing “tummy time” educators-adults are supporting the infant’s development. Physically, infants need to develop the trunk muscles which provide a foundation for further development. Children who are placed in equipment in which
they are confined are not given the opportunity to develop. This equipment also does not promote interactions between educators and children or children.

**Meeting and Exceeding the Regulations**
The environment in the infant classroom should:

- include a variety of textures and surfaces (soft and hard).
- have spaces where non-mobile they can lay, interact and observe the room.
- provide mobile infants with spaces that allows movement and the ability to pull themselves up onto bars with support. and low surfaces for cruising.
- find educators sitting on the floor when possible to provide a safe environment.
- Allow the use of "nest" structure on the floor or crib which is large enough for an infant to roll over. This allows mobility when can be used if an educator cannot sit by a non-mobile infant.

**Diapering**

**Rationale**
An everyday task such as diapering is a prime time for a respectful interaction, and socialization, and self-help development. Diapering should be done at least every two hours unless otherwise needed or expected by the family. During diapering, Educators should talk to the child about what is happening even before they pick up a child. This alerts a child to the transition from activity to activity, and shows respect for the child and their need to complete a task before moving on. Diapering changing should be rich with descriptive language of what is occurring. As children gain more control over their body’s movements, they may be able to participate in the process by lifting their bottom, holding their feet, or washing their own hands afterwards.

Educators who show respect for the children in their care by recognizing the importance of meeting the child’s needs in a calm and caring manner. Children who receive care that is respectful, engaging, and rich in language are supported in their own development. Simple interactions during everyday tasks also provide a basis of trust and understanding between two people. These interactions tell children, “You are important.”

**Meeting and Exceeding the Regulations**

- Before the diapering even begins the educator provides a verbal prompt to the child, “Sam it is time to change your diaper.”
- The educator moves towards the child and should tell the child what is going to happen; if they will be picked up or will walk over to the diaper changing area engages the child in conversation about the diapering process as they begin the process.
- The educator will talk to the child during the diaper change describing what may be happening or about to happen.
- When working with toddlers, educators should allow the child to participate in as much of the care as possible; such as pulling up or down pants, holding the diaper in place, and washing/drying their hands.
Feeding Rationale

Infants and Toddlers should be given food and drink according to their family’s instructions. Food and feeding can have significant meaning to one’s cultural beliefs and practices. Recognizing the family as a child’s primary influence, educators need to follow the wishes and practices of the family that are within the EEC regulations. Educators who should eat with the children and-model healthy eating and social skills, for the children in their care. Providing equipment that meets the child’s physical development provide a safe environment which promotes further learning.

Meeting and Exceeding the Regulations

- Educators who should sit with children during snack or lunch should participate in the meal and demonstrate health eating practices.
- Feeding times are an authentic opportunity to teach children new vocabulary, model sentence structure, give children time to practice telling stories. Feeding times should not be a quiet time.
- Infants must be held while being fed. Complete focus should be on the infant. Talking with other educators, reading, eating, or simply staring into space is not appropriate. The educator should maintain eye contact, speak softly, narrate what is happening, tell a story, or sing a song. Interaction is essential.

Resources


