Caregiving routines—such as arrival and departure, feeding, meals and snacks, toileting or diapering, and napping—provide a framework for the infant/toddler day and are a major part of the curriculum. These routines are the basis for a significant part of the learning and development that occurs from birth to 3 years. Routines also provide times for the teacher to observe and support development across all domains.

Establishing consistent routines for infants and toddlers in care settings fulfils two major goals:

1. Over time, routines offer predictability and security to the child. This is important to the child’s emerging sense of security and affects her willingness to explore and engage with the environment.
2. Routines can offer a setting for establishing continuity of care between the family and the care teachers.

Communication with families can bring up information about how routines are handled at home. This information can be implemented throughout the routines to increase the familiarity of the experience for the child.

Not only do infant/toddler routines establish a framework for the day and continuity across settings, they are also prime opportunities for care teachers to implement planned activities.

For example, diapering is not just another routine. Diapering process could be a great time for one-on-one interactions with the child and can support a wide range of development. Playing Peek-a-Boo during diapering reinforces object permanence, developing cognitive thinking skills. Talking about body parts teaches infants/toddlers physical development. And having positive one-on-one interactions consistently during routines encourages infants and toddlers to further build trust with their caregivers, reinforcing the care teacher-child relationship.

Caregiving routines are important times, offering unique opportunities for one-on-one interaction and for visual and tactile learning. It is extremely important to remember that a child does not have to manipulate an object to learn; every sight, sound, touch and smell provides an experience that creates an impression in the brain for the later use.

Shannon and Masha
Infant/Toddler Specialists
Northeast Key
Health and Safety during Routines

Arrivals and departures are important times for both parents and children. They can set the mood for the whole day. By skillful handling of separation issues and by using the contact with the parents to exchange information about the child and the program, care teachers can significantly help both parents and children to feel comfortable in the child care setting:

Arrivals and departures are major transitions for both parents and children and need to be handled sensitively.

Arrivals set the mood for the day:

Information exchange
- Find out how the child ate and slept, her or his mood and health, and any important events that might be influencing the child.
- Tell the parents if something special is expected today.

Parenting issues
- Assist the parent who is having a problem with the child.
- Share ideas and resources for handling the problem, if it’s appropriate.
- If the child is present, try to give attention to both parent and child.

Establishing relationships:
- Show confidence that the child will be fine.
- Go slowly!
- Ask the parent to stay for a few more minutes to make the transition more gradual.
- Understand age differences with respect to separations issues.
- Comfort the parent, if necessary.
- Help the parent understand the importance of saying good-bye.
- Encourage the parent to make a prompt exit after saying good-bye.

Departure behaviors can be unexpected.

Getting ready
- Organize the child’s belongings in advance.
- Let the child know she or he will be going home soon.

Not wanting to leave
- Reassure the parent that it’s not personal.
- Help the child find a conclusion to her or his activity.

Feeling deserted
- Reassure the child when mom or dad is late.
- Use the time to share a special book or a special toy.

Health and safety are serious issues in child care. Every program should have clearly defined, written health and safety policies and guidelines that comply with state regulations.

However, it’s important that health and safety practices do not interfere with other priorities of quality care such as social and emotional well-being, language, physical, and cognitive development.

Sanitation practices are absolutely necessary for keeping children and staff healthy. Thorough hand-washing and cleaning and disinfecting of equipment, toys, walls and floors, cribs/mats/cots and bedding, and food and toileting areas will help prevent the spread of illness in child care programs.

Careful monitoring of the environment and consistent safety measures can prevent most injuries.

See ITERS PA Position Statement, pages 2-7 for guidelines for health and safety practices:
There are two aspects of caregiving routines. The first is to do the properly in ways that protect the health and safety of the children and care teachers. The second is to make them a chance for exploring, building skills,

Feeding:
- Feeding is a complex routine, involving health, safety, and nutrition as well as social relationships and all kinds of learning.
- Thorough hand-washing is the single most important thing care teachers and children can do to prevent the spread of illness in child care. Try using a hand-washing song to ensure proper length of routine as well as teaching specific washing skills.
  
  **Tops and Bottoms**
  Tops and bottoms,
  Tops and bottoms,
  In between,
  In between,
  All around my hands,
  All around my hands,
  Squeaky clean,
  Squeaky clean.
- A care teacher’s style and timing for carrying out routines should accommodate the needs and preferences of each child.
- Using a transition song after hand-washing could be helpful to eliminate wait time before a meal as well as having toddlers keep their hands to themselves:
  
  **Open Shut Them**
  Open, shut them, open, shut them,
  Give a little clap, clap, clap.
  Open, shut them, open, shut them,
  Put them in your lap, lap, lap.
- Responding promptly to each child’s message of hunger contributes to the development of basic trust and security.

Diapering:
- Diapering, like other daily routines, is an important learning activity when it engages the child and allows participation at the child’s own level of ability.
- Time spent changing a child’s diaper is a valuable opportunity to give full attention in a one-on-one setting.
- Care teachers who talk with and encourage participation by the child during diapering support feelings of competence and facilitate language development.
- A well-planned diapering area is convenient for the care teacher and comfortable for both the teacher and the child.
- Sanitation is very important for preventing the spread of illness in child care, so teachers need to learn proper diapering procedures and to carry them out consistently.
  
  **Open Shut Them**
  Open, shut them, open, shut them,
  Give a little clap, clap, clap.
  Open, shut them, open, shut them,
  Put them in your lap, lap, lap.
- Responding promptly to each child’s message of hunger contributes to the development of basic trust and security.

Napping:
- To minimize health and safety risks to infants during naptimes, care teachers need to learn how to check cribs for safety, carry out sanitation procedures, and follow the guideline for lowering the risk of SIDS.
- Children birth to 18 months should have naps as needed throughout the day.
- Children 18 months and older may have a scheduled naptime, but programs and care teachers need a plan for children who need naps at other times of the day.
- Nap times are important times for developing trusts, self-regulation, and feelings of competence.
- Nap routines offer opportunities for language development through songs, stories, and quiet conversation.
- The way that all caregiving routines are carried out, development of the child’s age and stage of development, as well as other factors such as consistency with home and family culture, temperament, and other individual differences.
Transition into Routines

- When transitioning from one activity to another, give children a warning. This could be an auditory cue ("We will be having snack in a few minutes") or visual cue (turning down the lights for nap, setting snack on the table, etc.), or ideally both visual and auditory used in combination.

- Avoid having children wait during transition times. Waiting means sitting or standing still without having anything to do, and this is very difficult for young children to do for even a short moment. If children must wait during transition times, provide some activity. For example, sing songs with the children, encourage them to acknowledge one another or hold hands (older toddlers), or give them simple toys such as puzzles or books.

- Use predictable routines for diapering/toileting, cleaning up, hand-washing etc. The routines may include the use of some clearly marked opener/closer such as a song or a finger-play. For example, using "Open Shut Them" finger-play before a meal or "Top and Bottoms" for hand-washing. See page 3 for the songs.

Interactions during Routines

How care teachers talk is at least as important as how much they talk. When adults expand and repeat children’s words, language development improves. Why? Infants and toddlers best understand, and best use, the language they hear if they can connect it to specific words and/or activities. The more an adult can respond to an infant’s gaze with related language instead of redirecting the child’s attention elsewhere, the more easily the infant can make connections between concepts and words. Being intentional about interactions patterns used with infants and toddlers can help the child sort through all of the information and organize it for future use more effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction Strategy</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Examples in context of routines:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Self-talk            | The adult talks about what they are doing as they are doing an activity. | "I’m getting your diaper and wipes ready."
|                      |             | "I’m warming up your bottle for you."
| Parallel talk        | The adult talks about what the child is doing as they are doing an activity. | "You are eating your crackers and drinking your juice"
|                      |             | "You are getting your blanket ready for naptime"
| Descriptive language | The adult describes the materials the infant or toddler is playing with, is interested in, or narrates a mutual activity between care teacher and child. | "Anna has a red and black ladybug Pillow-pet for nap"
|                      |             | "We have yellow apples for snack today"
|                      |             | "You are finding all the puzzle pieces from the fruit puzzle"
| Asking questions     | The adult asks open-ended questions to provide opportunities for back-and-forth communication. | "What are you having today for snack?"
|                      |             | "Where’s your ears/eyes/nose?"
|                      |             | "What’s next?"
|                      |             | "Where does this go?"
Infant/Toddler Consultants

Masha Levin  
610-703-8604  
mlevin@cscinc.org  
Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Wayne Counties

Shannon Cohick  
610-762-1470  
scohick@cscinc.org  
Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wyoming Counties

Resources/References

Zero to Three, National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families:  www.zerotothree.org

Program for Infant/Toddler Care:  www.pitc.org

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning:  http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/

WE WANT YOU...for the Infant/Toddler Project

- Are you a director overseeing infant/toddler classrooms?
- Are you an infant/toddler care teacher?
- Do you work in a STAR 2 program?
- Do you want to get FREE support related to challenging behaviors, scheduling, classroom environments, lesson planning, managing your classroom, interactions, building relationships and parent engagement, or any other aspect of infant/toddler care teaching?

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COACHING!!!

Resources, lending library, earn up to 6 DPW hours...

Don’t delay, call or email your consultant-today...

Providing Choices to Increase Cooperation during Routines

Why Is It Important to Provide Choices?
- Providing choices for children throughout the day encourages communication and language development.
- Giving choices allows children to choose an object or activity in which they are most interested.
- By having more than one object or action to choose from, children have more opportunities to share control over the situation.

Ways to Provide Choices:
- Present the child with two options and ask the child to choose one, allowing them to practice communication.
- Give choices only when children really have a choice. You as the care teacher have to be ok with the choices that you are offering.

- DO ask “Do you want to walk to get your diaper changed or do you want me to carry you?”, “Do you want apples or crackers”, etc. This questioning strategy gives a child a choice and puts them in control of the situation. In turn, this may lessen the resistance to the routine that needs to be completed.
- DO NOT ask: “Do you want to get your diaper changed?” or “Do you want to wash your hands?”. The answer to that, as you may guess, could be a big “NO”.

DO ask “Do you want to walk to get your diaper changed or do you want me to carry you?”,”Do you want apples or crackers”, etc. This questioning strategy gives a child a choice and puts them in control of the situation. In turn, this may lessen the resistance to the routine that needs to be completed.

DO NOT ask: “Do you want to get your diaper changed?” or “Do you want to wash your hands?”. The answer to that, as you may guess, could be a big “NO”.

GET FREE SUPPORT related to challenging behaviors, scheduling, classroom environments, lesson planning, managing your classroom, interactions, building relationships and parent engagement, or any other aspect of infant/toddler care teaching?

DON’T MISS OUT ON THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COACHING!!!

Resources, lending library, earn up to 6 DPW hours...

Don’t delay, call or email your consultant-today...

WE WANT YOU...for the Infant/Toddler Project
**Routines and Rituals**

- Routines support safety and reduce anxiety about what is going to happen next.
- Establishing and practicing predictable daily activities provides structure and a sense of security for children who are experiencing stress and anxiety about what has happened in the past or what might happen in the future.
- Routine activities are enhanced and become rituals when they are individualized.
- Individualization can be done by reinforcing and celebrating a child’s unique background, personality traits and interests.
- While routines can be boring, turning everyday moments into rituals provides anticipated opportunities for fun, connection and meaningful interactions. For example, children love to participate in culturally specific activities, such as saying a special prayer before bedtime or meals, specific food preparation on certain days of the week, certain games played in the evening and expressive activities, such as singing songs or creating crafts that celebrate a certain holiday or family tradition.
- Safety is experienced when rituals are expected and when they are practiced regularly. Rituals not only allow children to express themselves but also provide them with an opportunity to draw upon unique strengths and the pride of their background and culture.

**Set a Positive Tone for Separating**

- It’s remarkable how sensitive children are to our moods. Even a tiny baby can tell when mom is upset, and often will start to fuss or get anxious. Toddlers may act out or become clingy if their parents seem unhappy or angry.
- So the tone you set for saying goodbye will influence whether your child clutches and wails, or runs off happily to play. Smile and speak with a positive inflection, no matter how sad you may feel inside. Remind your child of the fun things he will do during the day.
- When you let your own anxiety or unhappiness show through your facial expression or manner, the message your child will hear is: “Mommy thinks something’s wrong with leaving me in child care.” Is it any wonder that he will conclude that he’s not going to be safe and loved without you there?

**Make a Clean Break**

- It’s important not to linger when your child is having a hard time separating. If you prolong the goodbye based on how much she screams and cries, you can guarantee that tomorrow she’ll sob harder and longer.
- Sure, give an extra big hug and kiss when your child’s upset, but then detach yourself and give a smiling goodbye. It’s okay to dawdle in the hallway until you hear her cries subside, but make sure you stay out of sight, though.
- Make sure you don’t forget something that will force you to go into the same room as your child after you’ve already separated. Ask a teacher, director or assistant director to deliver the items that you forgot.

**The Distraction Strategy**

- At the moment of separation, you may be able to distract an infant from being upset. Point to a favorite toy, or ask the teacher to carry her to a window to see birds or trees. Then say goodbye and skedaddle out the door.
- With an older toddler, ask a question about the day’s activities. Remind her of a story she wanted to tell her teacher or one of her friends. Point out that her favorite tricycle is free. Sometimes you can forestall a crying fit by a well-timed distraction.

**Use a Comforting Object**

- You may also want to give your infant or toddler something from home to have or carry through the day.
- Objects carry power. For infants a pacifier and a blanket can provide a source of comfort. For toddlers, a blanket, or lovey, or special toy can provide a sense of home and security. These objects may begin to help your child self-soothe and regulate their emotions throughout the day.