



Interactions in the Early Childhood Classroom

Presented by:

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General Responsibilities of the Caregiver

- You must know and comply with minimum standards
- Know which children you are accountable for
- Know every child's name and age
- Supervise children at all times, adjusting to each child's different age and ability
- Ensure that children are not out of control
- Be free from duties not directly involving the children, such as administrative duties, meal preparation, and/or janitorial duties
- You must interact with children in a positive way
- Foster developmentally appropriate independence in children through planned, flexible activities
- Show appreciation of children's efforts and accomplishments
- Communicate with other staff members
- You must know the indoor and outdoor layout of the child care center
- Be aware of neighborhood circumstances, hazards, and risks

What your Activity Plan Should Include

- The group the activity plan is designed for and the dates
- A variety of activities daily
- Indoor and outdoor play in which children use large and small muscles
- A balance of active and quiet play including group and individual activities, both indoors and outdoors
- Regular meal and snack times
- Supervised nap times
- Both child-initiated and adult-initiated activities
- Sufficient time for activities and routines so that children can progress at their own development
- No long waiting periods between activities

Key Ingredients to Interactions

- Characteristics of individual staff members
- Age appropriate conversations
- Having a mixture of child-initiated and adult-initiated conversations
- Staff is to interact while maintaining supervision and health and safety
- Staff maintains guidance of the group
- Communication between staff members

Step One

Teachers interact frequently with children showing affection, interest, and respect

- Teachers interact nonverbally by smiling, touching, holding
- Teachers speak with children at eye level
- Teachers talk and listen to children during activities and routines
- Teachers seek meaningful conversations
- Teachers give one-on-one attention to infants during feeding and diapering

Step Two

Teachers are available and responsive to children

- Quickly comfort infants in distress
- Reassure crying toddlers
- Listen to children with attention and respect
- Respond to children's questions and requests
- Teachers are aware of the activities of the entire group, even when dealing with a smaller group; staff position themselves strategically and look up often from the involvement
- Teachers spend time observing each child without interrupting an activity-involved child

Step Three

Teachers speak with children in a friendly, positive, courteous manner

- Speak with individual children often
- Ask open-ended questions
- Call children by name
- Include children in conversations, describe actions, experiences, and events; listen and respond to children's comments and suggestions
- Teachers talk with individual children, and encourage children of all ages to use language

Step Four

- Teachers treat children of all races, religions, family backgrounds, and cultures with equal respect and considerations
- Teachers provide children of both sexes with equal opportunities to take part in all activities

Step Five

- Teachers encourage children's development of independent functioning, as appropriate
- Teachers foster the development of age-appropriate self-help skills such as picking up toys, wiping spills, personal grooming (toilet and hand-washing), obtaining and caring for materials, and other skills

Note: Cultural perspectives of family or community may influence expectations for independence

Step Six

Teachers facilitate the development of responsibility, self-regulation, and self-control in children

- Teachers set clear, consistent, fair limits for classroom behavior and in the case of older children, help them set their own limits
- Teachers use children's mistakes as learning opportunities, describing the situation and encouraging children's evaluation of the problem rather than imposing the solution
- Teachers encourage appropriate behavior, patiently reminding children of rules and their rationale as needed

Step Six (cont.)

Teachers do not use corporal punishment or other negative discipline methods that hurt, humiliate, or frighten children

- Food or beverage is never withheld as a form of discipline
- The environment is arranged so that a minimal number of “No’s” are used, especially with younger children

Step Seven

The overall sound of the group is pleasant most of the time

- Happy laughter, excitement, busy activity, pleasant conversation rather than harsh, stressful noise or enforced quiet
- Adult voices do not predominate

Step Eight

Teachers support children's emotional development, assisting them to be comfortable, relaxed, happy, and involved in play and other activities

- Comfort and reassure children who are hurt, fearful, or otherwise upset
- Help children deal with anger, frustration, or sadness by comforting, identifying, and reflecting feelings
- Intervene quickly when children's responses to each other become physically aggressive, discuss the inappropriateness of such action, and help children to develop more positive strategies to solve conflict
- Encourage children to verbalize feelings and ideas, including both positive and negative emotions. Supply words for very young children to describe feelings, discuss alternative solutions with children 2 years and older

Step Nine

Teachers recognize and encourage pro-social behaviors among children, such as cooperation, helping taking turns, talking to solve problems, and concern for others.

Expectations of children's social behavior are developmentally appropriate. Teachers support children's beginning of friendships and provide opportunities for children to learn from each other as well as adults.

- Infants interact (look, touch gently, vocalize) freely with one another as teachers observe, alert to respond and model safe interactions
- Two pieces of the same popular equipment are available so toddlers are not forced to share too often
- Preschoolers are encouraged to cooperate in small groups
- Kindergartners work with small, flexible groups on extended projects and participate in group problem solving
- School age children have the opportunities to participate in group games or to work or play alone

Step Ten

Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to enhance children's learning and development throughout the day

- Stimulate children's thinking and extend their learning using verbal methods such as posing problems, asking questions, and making comments and suggestions
- Introduce children to new experiences, ideas, and challenges
- Coach and/or directly guide children in the acquisition of specific skills as needed, being careful to challenge, but not frustrate any child

Other Helpful Tips (Review)

- Always smile and laugh. Have fun! Remember to get down to the children's eye level. Make sure you interact during meal times
- Respect the children. When a child comes to you with a problem, look them in the eyes, repeat what they say to you, then address
- Watch your tone of voice. Use words like, "How do you feel about...". Avoid using nicknames
- Ask about the children's day, listen to their response
- Initiate conversations
- Encourage a non-bias classroom
- Have children agree to limitations
- Use soft music in the classroom, use soft voices, lead by example
- Encourage children to help clean up