

A Newsletter from your Technical Assistance Center, PCA-NJ

## Supporting Group Care in Infant and Toddler Classrooms

As providers of infant and toddler care, early childhood educators share in the great responsibility of enriching our youngest children's early learning experiences. Research shows us, as referenced in "Zero to Three: Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups," that the way a center addresses certain key elements of care has a lasting impact on the early childhood experience. Below are six key components that we should take into consideration when providing care for Infants and Toddlers. By appropriately addressing each of these areas, centers will not only build a strong foundation for learning, but will also provide opportunities for: families to feel welcomed; for centers to receive higher scores on the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale; for meeting some of the Grow NJ Kids standards; and for surpassing state licensing requirements.

***The group size*** – A small group size with lower ratios allows for fewer distractions, more focused activities and intentional interpersonal interactions among children and teachers.

***The physical environment (indoors and out)*** – To increase positive interactions between the children, classrooms and playgrounds should have age appropriate furniture and equipment and an abundance of accessible learning materials readily accessible. Since children at this age cannot be expected to share, developmentally, having multiples of the same toy also reduces the likelihood of biting, pulling toys from others and wandering aimlessly.

***Assigned primary caregiver*** – In the classroom, each child should have a person who is primarily responsible for meeting his needs; (diapering, feeding, interactions, observations, communicating with parents, etc.) The primary caregiver does not care JUST for this child exclusively, but holds the relationship and the responsibility for the child overall. These primary caregiver relationships help infants, toddlers and even their families to feel important, understood and protected. The assigned primary caregiver can also deliver and extend learning opportunities in age-appropriate ways because they *truly know* their children.

***Continuity of care*** – When caregivers spend consistent time providing quality care to the same children, they are able to form bonds and lasting connections with them. This should be a positive experience for both baby and teacher. However, when caregivers are routinely switched and the children are cared for by numerous people, both the teachers and the children lose the ability to form strong bonds, and teachers may be left guessing how and when to support the child's needs or wants.

***Cultural and familial continuity*** – Family values, beliefs and customs are best supported when a teacher speaks the child's home language. Since this is not always possible, teachers can ask the parents for help with translating some words or phrases that would be beneficial for building the relationship between the teacher and the child.

***Meeting individual needs in the group*** – Infants and Toddlers should not all be on the same schedule. Each child should have an individualized plan that meets his or her physical, emotional, and cognitive needs. This includes an individualized feeding, diapering, playing and sleeping schedule.



Resources:

<http://www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/child-care/caring-for-infants-and-toddlers-in-groups.html?referer=http://www.google.com>  
[www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf)  
[http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/programs/child/grow/gnj\\_k\\_self\\_052015.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/programs/child/grow/gnj_k_self_052015.pdf)

## Creating a Breastfeeding-Friendly Center



As early childhood educators and caregivers, we know that there are many important benefits when mothers choose to breastfeed their babies. Some of these benefits include stronger attachments between mother and baby, as well as health benefits, such as a reducing the risk of ear infections, respiratory infections, diarrhea, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and obesity (Perez, 2011). As we work toward improving quality in our programs, we want to consider ways that we can create an environment that supports breastfeeding.

There are many ways we can create a breastfeeding-friendly center! First, early childhood centers can be certain that they have a breastfeeding policy in place to support a family's decision to continue breastfeeding. The policy should send a message to families that breastfeeding mothers are welcome at the center and that procedures are in place to properly store, prepare, and handle breast milk. In addition to creating these policies and procedures, it is important that staff receive professional development that is tailored to model health care practices regarding breastfeeding. Finally, schools can support a family's choice to breastfeed by implementing some of the following practices into programs:



- Create a private area in the classroom or room in the center for breastfeeding and bottle-feeding.
- Add comfortable seating, lamps, and pictures in the breastfeeding area.
- Provide ample refrigerator and freezer space for storing breast milk.
- Post signage at your entrance stating that the center is breastfeeding-friendly program.
- Develop a resource book, library or bulletin board for families to reference breastfeeding information.
- Add breastfeeding-themed children's books to the classroom library and breastfeeding area.

\*See below for some examples.



In addition to the countless benefits for children who are breastfed, centers who support breastfeeding also meet NJ Licensing regulations, the quality standards included on the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised, and the Let's Move Childcare Checklist. What can you do at your center to meet these standards, and more importantly, to support breastfeeding families?

### ***\*Children's Books about Breastfeeding:***

[Mama's Milk](#) by Michael Elsohn Ross;  
[Maggie's Weaning](#) by Mary Joan Deutschbein;  
[Breastmilk Makes My Tummy Yummy](#) by Cecilia Moen; [We Like to Nurse, and We Like to Nurse, Too](#) by Chia Martin and Mary Young; and [Mommy Feeds Baby](#) by Christina Jo Hendricks Perez

### **More information on Breastfeeding:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/>

<https://www.mtu.edu/worklife/pdfs/lactation-handling-storage-milk.pdf>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Storing-and-Preparing-Expressed-Breast-Milk.aspx>

[http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm) <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00022.pdf>

## Screen Time and Our Youngest Children



Many early childhood programs have integrated technology into their curriculum by incorporating the use of Smart Boards® and iPads® into their classrooms. Although early childhood educators may have had the best intentions in doing so, the American Academy of Pediatrics specifically addresses limiting screen time for young children. Screen time refers to using devices such as televisions, DVDs, CDs, videos, computers, smart phones, and tablets. The Academy advises us that there should be **no screen time for children under 2 years of age** and that children over the age of two should have their total media time limited to no more than 30 minutes a week.

To ensure that your program is implementing Grow NJ Kids Standards and embedding National Health and Safety practices regarding screen time, consider the following guidance:

- Create a written policy on the use of technology to give teachers and caregivers guidance on the appropriate use of technology.
- When using technology with children older than two years of age, be certain the activity is hands-on and engaging, such as using a DVD that promotes physical fitness.
- Refer to the Let's Move Checklist for further guidance on screen time.
- <https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/>
- Share resources with families to educate them on screen time.



Children are likely to be exposed to technology often in their homes, which makes it important that we limit screen time while they are in our care. As early childhood educators, we need to remember that children's brains are rapidly developing during the first few years of life and that exploration, socialization and physical activity are far more beneficial than screen time.

*Here's a great opportunity to educate your families on importance of limiting screen time with young children!*

**May 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> is National Screen Free Week.**

For more information please visit [www.screenfree.org](http://www.screenfree.org).

## Need to Know!

*Save the date for these upcoming opportunities...*



### Webinars

*Open to all GNJK programs*

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter(s)	Description
May 18	12:00 - 1:00	<b>“Family Engagement”</b>	Kim Leary, Sr. TAS	This webinar will focus on how to establish and engage enrolled families and support their participation in their child’s learning. <b>Registration URL:</b> <a href="https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/regi">https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/regi</a>

### GNJK Peer Learning Communities (PLC) *County– specific*

Date	Time	Location	County
May 12	1:00-3:00	Child Care Resources of Monmouth County	Monmouth
May 18	12:00-1:00	Urban League of Hudson County 253 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Jersey City, NJ	Hudson
May 19	12:00-2:00	Montgomery Presbyterian Church, 638 Mill St, Belleville, NJ	Essex



## Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey™

PCA-NJ operates a broad range of preventative services designed to support the improvement and quality of professional workforces and programming, resulting in significant positive impacts on family functioning and health in all 21 counties. *PCA-NJ programs include:*

- ◆ Grow NJ Kids TAC
- ◆ Healthy Families
- ◆ Parents as Teachers
- ◆ Parent Linking Program
- ◆ Enough Abuse
- ◆ Middlesex County Council for Young Children
- ◆ Human Trafficking
- ◆ The Essex Pregnancy & Parenting Connection
- ◆ Parent Education & Technical Assistance
- ◆ The Period of Purple Crying

### *Needs Assessment Survey*

Please help us cater to YOUR needs by completing our Needs Assessment survey. Follow this link and share your thoughts about PLCs.  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/>



### *Training*

Click on the link provided below to view all currently offered professional development opportunities specifically designed for GNJK centers.

[Trainings](#)

**Central Region TA Center** 103 Church Street, Suite 210 New Brunswick, NJ 08901 732.246.8060

**Northeast Region TA Center** 550 Broad Street, Suite 1105 Newark, NJ 07102 973.371.5301

[www.preventchildabusenj.org/programs/growtac](http://www.preventchildabusenj.org/programs/growtac)