

CARE Reflective Checklists

by Mary Mackrain

One of the most effective ways to prevent social, emotional and behavioral disorders is to encourage the development of healthy social and emotional skills during infancy and early childhood. Research supports the idea that when environments are nurturing, safe and consistent, they can help to reduce the risk of harm and foster resiliency. The four reflective checklists following this page will help caregivers and home visitors support the *social and emotional quality* of infant and toddler care settings. The reflective checklists that will help adults to reflect on social and emotional practices include:

■ Connecting with Families

Connecting with families reflects the many ways that caregivers partner hand-in-hand with families and their infants and toddlers. Family members are the most important people in young children's lives, and caregivers need to talk to, listen to, and learn about families to build individualized support and continuity of care. These partnerships are critical to providing the best care for infants and toddlers and for fostering a sense of safety and attachment.

■ Activities and Routines

Activities include child and adult initiated opportunities in which infants and toddlers use and explore a variety of skills at their individual developmental level. Routines are the consistent, predictable daily experiences such as feeding, sleeping, diapering, and clean-up time. When activities and routines are consistent, dependable, and individualized, infants and toddlers gain the sense of security and trust (building healthy attachments/relationships) they need to explore the world with enthusiasm.

■ Responsive Caregiving

Responsive caregiving includes the ways adults interact with infants and toddlers and how they support and provide frequent opportunities for children to interact with each other. These interactions support the development of both trusting relationships and a sense of security in the child's surroundings. When adults respond gently and lovingly, infants and toddlers learn that they matter. They, in turn, can grow to be responsive to others in their lives, building attachments forever!

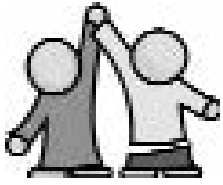
■ **Environment**

The infant/toddler environment includes the physical space where children play, whether indoors or out, the toys and materials children use, how things are displayed, and the people who help each child feel valued and supported. Environments are comfortable, safe places where infants and toddlers explore and learn, building relationships and initiative. Environments set up in a child-friendly way support self-regulation skills as infants and toddlers play and learn.

How to Use the CARE Checklists

Group care providers can take time to review each item and rate themselves thinking about their caregiving practices. Home visitors can use the Connecting with Families checklist to reflect on their own practices with families. They can use the other three checklists to reflect care-giving practices within the home. Additionally, for each of the items checked off as happening “Almost Always” or “Sometimes,” caregivers can record examples of things done in the “My Examples” column. Take time to reflect on all the wonderful things being done to support infant and toddler social and emotional health! Next, look for any items that are not happening yet and choose one or two that could be improved. For strategies to support items marked as “Not Yet,” consider using: 1) Your own creative ideas or resources, 2) Use the DECA-I/T Program Strategies Guide, or 3) Go to the Devereux Early Childhood website, www.devereuxearlychildhood.org to get some free tips and planning forms.

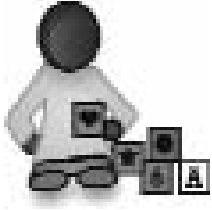
Reflective Checklist for Connecting with Families



Connecting with families reflects the many ways that caregivers partner hand-in-hand with families and their infants and toddlers. Family members are the most important people in young children’s lives, and caregivers need to talk to, listen to, and learn about families to build individualized support and continuity of care. These partnerships are critical to providing the best care for infants and toddlers and for fostering a sense of safety and attachment.

In My Care Setting I.....	Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Yet	My Examples
1. Take time to listen and ask questions about each child’s culture, community, and family caregiving practices.				
2. Support children’s home language(s) and culture(s).				
3. Work together with families to learn about dreams and goals for their child.				
4. Share child development information with families.				
5. Ask families about their child’s strengths and favorite things to do.				
6. Listen to and use information from families to individualize care for their child.				
7. Greet all families during hellos and good-byes.				
8. Take time to connect with families about their child’s day.				
9. Offer a variety of ways that families can choose to be involved in the program.				

Reflective Checklist for Activities and Routines



Activities include child and adult initiated opportunities in which infants and toddlers use and explore a variety of skills at their individual developmental level. Routines are the consistent, predictable daily experiences such as feeding, sleeping, diapering, and clean-up time. When activities and routines are consistent, dependable, and individualized, infants and toddlers gain the sense of security and trust (building healthy attachments/relationships) they need to explore the world with enthusiasm.

In My Care Setting I...	Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Yet	My Examples
1. Maintain a predictable daily schedule.				
2. Ensure smooth transitions for infants and toddlers.				
3. Plan daily routines (such as feeding, sleeping, and diapering) around each infant's and toddler's needs and abilities.				
4. Use daily care routines as times to connect with infants and toddlers.				
5. Invite infants and toddlers to take part in daily routines.				
6. Help infants and toddlers with hellos and good-byes.				
7. Encourage infants and toddlers to explore and choose what is interesting to them.				
8. Ensure time for active and quiet play each day.				
9. Talk, read, and sing with infants and toddlers every day.				

Reflective Checklist for Responsive Caregiving



Responsive caregiving includes the ways adults interact with infants and toddlers and how they support and provide frequent opportunities for children to interact with each other. These interactions support the development of both trusting relationships and a sense of security in the child's surroundings. When adults respond gently and lovingly, infants and toddlers learn that they matter. They, in turn, can grow to be responsive to others in their lives, building attachments forever!

In My Care Setting I.....	Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Yet	My Examples
1. Hold, rock, and cuddle infants and toddlers.				
2. Respond to the cues (coos, smiles, cries, turning away, etc.) of infants and toddlers.				
3. Talk to infants and toddlers about their feelings and emotions.				
4. Support infants and toddlers as they interact with others.				
5. Acknowledge and support infants' and toddlers' efforts and accomplishments.				
6. Encourage infants and toddlers to use comfort items.				
7. Use each infant's and toddler's name throughout daily interactions.				
8. Engage in one-on-one play with infants and toddlers.				
9. Develop a trusting relationship with all children and their families.				
10. Take time to observe each infant and toddler regularly.				
11. Support each infant's and toddler's family culture and home language(s).				

Reflective Checklist for Environment



The infant/toddler environment includes the physical space where children play, whether indoors or out, the toys and materials children use, how things are displayed, and the people who help each child feel valued and supported. Environments are comfortable, safe places where infants and toddlers explore and learn, building relationships and initiative. Environments set up in a child-friendly way support self-regulation skills as infants and toddlers play and learn.

In My Care Setting I.....	Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Yet	My Examples
1. Make sure there are enough adults to safely care for infants and toddlers.				
2. Keep the room and materials clean and safe for infants and toddlers.				
3. Create a homelike environment to reflect all of the children's families.				
4. Provide materials children can explore with their senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling).				
5. Have duplicates of favorite play items.				
6. Have cozy spaces where infants and toddlers can safely take a break from the group.				
7. Provide individual spaces where infants and toddlers can store their special things.				
8. Display toys within reach so infants and toddlers can see what is available and make choices.				
9. Have comfortable places to sit with infants and toddlers for one-on-one time.				