SERVING MOBILE INFANTS

Sharing Knowledge with Infant –Toddler Teachers and Home Visitors

Sharing Knowledge with Infant – Toddler Teachers and Home Visitors Series

This booklet describes development, attachement, and exploration for infants from 8 to 18 months, and may be used by Staff members who are working with teachers and home visitors. The document was developed by the Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) @ ZERO TO THREE in collaboration with the Office of Head Start.

Introduction

The Sharing Knowledge with Infant-Toddler Teachers and Home Visitors Series for Early Head Start (EHS) and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) teachers presents basic information on child development, working with families, and the comprehensive services offered by EHS and MSHS. These modules may be used during an orientation period to provide an overview of basic information on serving infants and toddlers and their families or as part of in-service training for more experienced staff members to review and expand their knowledge.

Each module provides basic information in a series of short presentations. Accompanying each section, there is an activity designed to help the teacher or home visitor do the following:

- **Reflect on the qualities and beliefs he or she brings to the work**
- **Problem solve, explore possible alternatives**
- **Practice skills such as observation**

These activities should be reviewed with a director or supervisor to promote reflection and ensure understanding.

This module on serving mobile infants emphasizes the importance of relationships, child development, and how mobile infants build on their foundation of security to actively explore toys and objects as well as begin moving around with purpose in their environment.

Thinking About It...
How the Mobile Infant Grows and Develops

Very young infants require an extremely close, intimate relationship with their parents and teachers. As babies trust that the adults in their life will keep them safe, they put their energies toward movement and exploration. Some adults love this growing independence; others miss the closeness of early infancy.

As a teacher or home visitor, how do you personally react to the increased movement of the mobile infant—particularly, their new ability to cover distance and "get into things"?

Write your thoughts and questions here.

How the Mobile Infant Grows and Develops

The period from 8 to 18 months is a dramatic period of change for babies. They begin to scoot, crawl, and even walk and run. Everything is interesting, although new experiences may be a little frightening. During this time, babies begin to use language to communicate, work on toys that challenge them, and rely on trusted adults to protect them from wandering too far. Mobile infants begin to demonstrate their attachment to special adults by moving toward them for safety.

This new mobility requires a new watchfulness on the part of adults. Home visitors promote that sense of security between the parents and baby and help parents understand the baby's changing needs. The teacher builds a trusting relationship with the baby and promotes the parent-child relationship, supporting all the new strategies of exploration.

An infant-toddler home visitor or teacher using this module should learn the following:

- **How the attachment relationship becomes more visible**
- **How the attachment relationship is fostered through primary caregiving and continuity of care**
- **How responsive care changes with the age and development of the baby**
- **How to create an engaging and responsive learning environment for a mobile infant**
- **How to encourage a mobile infant's interest in peers**

Thinking About It...
The Attachment Relationship

As adults, we may bring lessons from our own early attachment relationships into our current relationships. For infants, attachment relationships develop in predictable patterns according to how adults respond to children's needs. Reflect on your own experience in relationships by answering the following questions:

- **Think about people who made you feel known and valued. How did they show you that they cared about you and wanted to understand you?**

- **Were there adults you were a little afraid of going to for help? What made you afraid?**

- **Were there adults who seemed to pay attention to you when they wanted to, but not necessarily when you needed them? How did that feel? How would you imagine that might feel for a young child?**

As you watch the babies you serve, think about the following questions:

- **Who do they turn to when they want comfort?**

- **Are the adults consistently responsive?**

- **Do you see babies who don't seem to know how to get comfort?**

The Attachment Relationship

Brianna pulled herself up on the protective gate across the classroom and sobbed when her favorite teacher Nancy left the room. Although she had known the co-teacher for just as long, she seemed to rely on Nancy's presence to feel safe. She wouldn't let anyone else comfort her and she would wait near the door for Nancy's return.

The attachment relationship describes the way a baby uses the presence of and relationship with an adult to feel secure. For young infants, this relationship helps them to feel calm and know that the world is predictable. For mobile infants, the relationship provides a sense of safety that allows them to use their new skills to move out into the world.

Not all babies have secure attachments. In most cases, the adult's actions seem to affect the baby's feelings of safety. Adults have "patterns" in their actions toward babies, including being usually quick to respond, unpredictable, or cold and angry. These adult actions develop into "patterns of attachment" in the baby. Babies may develop different patterns in response to different adults.

The categories of attachment are listed as follows (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978):

- Secure attachment
  - The adults respond consistently, sensitively, and effectively
  - At the age of 1 year, babies explore and check back with adult
  - Babies rely on the adult for comforting
- Anxious-ambivalent attachment
  - Adults begin contact only when they want to
  - Babies at age 1 year struggle to focus on exploration and play
  - Babies find it difficult to use adult for comforting
- Anxious-avoidant attachment
  - Adults are not emotionally available and may become enraged
  - Babies stay close enough to adult to feel safe with back turned to adult
  - Babies appear to be engaged in play with toys but are watching the room for signs of danger
- Disorganized-disoriented attachment (Main & Solomon, 1986)
  - Baby experiences the adult as frightening, even as baby seeks the adult for safety
  - Baby moves to adult, but body language indicates fear (head turned away from adult, dazed behavior, fearful expression, detouring behavior)

Secure attachment supports the baby's desire for exploration. It also forms a model for relationships in the baby's mind, so the baby approaches later relationships thinking they will be mutual. Anxious-ambivalent babies will believe that later relationships are under the other person's control. Anxious-avoidant babies may later find it hard to develop intimate relationships and may be aggressive in social situations. Disorganized-disoriented babies may appear confused and apprehensive in relationships.

Infant-toddler program teachers and home visitors have several ways to support each baby's early attachment relationships. First, by helping parents and other family members understand the importance of responding to their baby, they provide the foundation for the baby to develop secure attachments with the members of the family. Sometimes depression or addiction issues make it difficult for parents to be responsive. In such cases, the staff members can link the parents to the appropriate services and resources, following up on the effectiveness of the referral. Second, the infant-toddler care staff members can help babies build secure attachment through their own relationship with the baby, even while supporting the parent-child relationship. Even if a child has only one or two secure attachments, it provides a model of positive relationships on which the child can always draw.
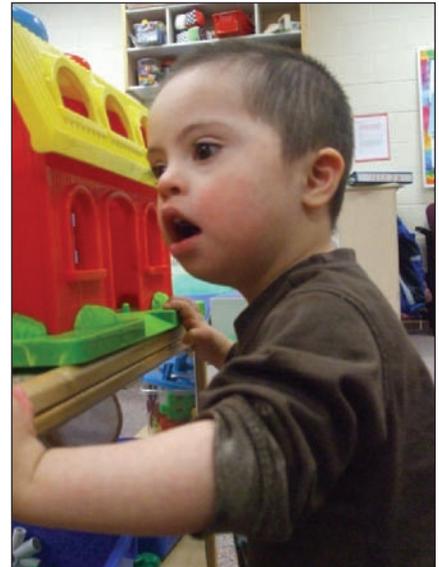
Thinking About It...
The Developmental Domains, 8 to 12 Months

Babies feel effective and competent when someone they trust supports them in their exploration. That support is a foundation that gives children confidence to explore their environments, work to communicate their needs, and take on challenges of toys and learning materials.

Babies at this age are interested in toys that respond to their actions. They learn the most when they are able to make things happen. Many of today's toys do not encourage trial and error skill practice. Instead, the lights and music occur no matter what the baby does.

Look at the toys, books, and other materials in your classroom. Choose three toys and list three things a baby could do with each one. The first example below serves as a guide.

Toy: Stacking Cups

      1. Stack them inside each other

      2. Build a tower

      3. Put things in them

      4. Line them up

      5. Match them to items of the same color

Toy: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Toy: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Toy: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The Developmental Domains, 8 to 12 Months

Infant-toddler program teachers and home visitors often share the delights of development with parents and family members. As the name implies, much of development for the mobile infant involves movement. This period can present so many firsts: crawling, standing, cruising, and walking. However, babies achieve these milestones at different times and in different ways. By the first birthday, one baby may be running and another may be scooting across the floor in a sitting position on her bottom!

Even taking into account individual differences, 8-month-old infants are very different from 18-month-old toddlers. So the overview of development in this module will divide the period into two periods, 8–12 months and 12–18 months to take a closer look at what to anticipate.

8 months to 12 months. This period is usually a sociable period filled with exploration of toys and movement. Mobile infants enjoy stacking, putting things together and taking them apart, and participating in social games such as peekaboo and "So big!" Language blossoms, and self-help skills flourish.

Muscle/Motor:	Learning/Cognitive:
• Pulls to stand	• Likes to take things apart and put them back together
• Cruises, stands alone	• Likes toys that do something in response to the baby's actions
• Walks with help, alone	• Begins very simple pretend play
• Finger feeds; uses spoon, cup	• Points to objects to hear name
• Sits in a chair	• Enjoys peekaboo
• Uses pincer grasp—thumb and pointer finger	
Social-emotional:	**Language/Communication:**
• Looks to trusted adult to determine safety of situation	• Babies smile and jabber to each other
• May be fearful in new situations, around strangers	• Lets likes and dislikes be known
• Shows sense of humor, laughing at silly faces, games	• Will use consistent sound for name
	• Uses single words
	• Uses gestures and facial expression
	• Is able to learn second language if both are used consistently

As an infant-toddler program teacher or home visitor, you will work with families to do the following:

- **Respond to their baby's sometimes conflicting desires for exploration and closeness.**
- **Use simple language, provide names of objects, and enjoy babbling conversations.**
- **Provide toys that respond to the baby's actions (balls, stacking cups, mirrors, busy boxes).**
- **Celebrate all the movement!**

Thinking About It... Developmental Domains, 12 to 18 Months

Babies are suddenly crawling, walking, pulling up, climbing, and exploring. It is definitely time to review your baby proofing! What procedures does your program use to check your classrooms, socialization spaces, and outdoor play areas? How do you share information with families on keeping their babies safe at home and on outings?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Developmental Domains, 12 to 18 Months

12 to 18 months. The combination of mobility and language is remarkable during this period. Babies still need cuddling and comfort, but they are determined explorers at this stage, and they will find many ways to use adults to help them understand the world.

Muscle/Motor:	Learning/Cognitive:
• Stacks and lines up blocks • Dresses and undresses self with help • Walks independently • Carries objects in each hand • Climb steps	• Uses movement (climbing, balancing, walking) to explore • Engages in pretend play with dishes, keys, tools • Looks at books and names objects • Uses tools when playing with water, sand, dough
Social-emotional:	**Language/Communication:**
• Shows clear attachments and preferences to familiar adults • Uses cuddly blanket or toy for self-comforting • Babies imitate each other • Experiments with poking, touching, and biting other babies	• Uses language or language sounds to maintain an interaction • Learns words rapidly • Combines words • Follows simple directions such as "Come here or "Find teddy"

As an infant-toddler program teacher or home visitor, you will work with families to do the following:

- **Review the safety of their home for their little explorer.**

- **Provide the names of objects, body parts, actions.**

- **Learn simple finger plays and songs as well as tell stories about what the children have done recently (or other stories you make up).**

- **Understand that even babies who are busy exploring want you to stay nearby while you let them play undisturbed.**

- **Allow time to explore sticks, dirt, leaves—and other babies.**

- **Read! Read! Read! Simply cuddling and looking at pictures together may instill a love of books.**

Thinking About It...
Exploration and Movement:
The Big Ideas in the Mobile Infant's Development

As mobile infants move and explore, adults have new roles in supporting them and new kinds of decisions to make. When do we intervene to keep them safe and when do we allow them to explore? Babies use their mouths to explore. We want them to explore nature, but eating dirt and bugs is not safe. What do you do to provide safe *and* genuine experiences for movement and exploration?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exploration and Movement: The Big Ideas in the Mobile Infant's Development

Outdoor time in the play yard holds endless fascination for the mobile infant. Margaritte stoops for minutes, watching a small beetle crawl across the path. As it disappears into the grasses, she uses her skills of rising and walking to follow it.

Movement and exploration are the big ideas in development for the mobile infant. Although security and regulation, the motivational themes for young infants, are still important for mobile infants, moving and learning occupies their time.

As mobile infants begin to move with their own intentions, they have the time and ability to study the activity of beetles, for example. As Margaritte stands and points to the beetle, her teacher provides the information she's seeking, "It's a bug. A beetle. It's crawling in the grass now. Do you still see the beetle?" Her increasing control over where she goes also opens many new language opportunities for Margaritte and her teacher and parents.

As mobile infants experiment with how they fit into or climb over different spaces with their bodies, they are also very interested in how objects fit into containers, with filling and dumping, and with opening and closing. They enjoy hiding and finding things, even hiding themselves in games of peekaboo. They become interested in the parts of a whole and are intrigued by how stacking cups become single pieces and how they can be put back together. In addition to moving away from adults, mobile infants also follow them. They hold onto their legs and watch what they do. Later in their play, they copy the actions of talking on the phone, cooking a meal, or caring for a baby.

Being responsive with mobile infants is different from being responsive with young infants. Holding an infant close, often the right thing to do with a young infant, can be contrary to the mobile infant's need to explore. Adults (staff members and parents) need to provide many safe places for mobile infants to creep, crawl, climb, cruise, walk, and run—and lots of interesting materials for them to carry and explore.

Thinking About It...
Beginning Friendships

The idea that such young children might develop friendships is surprising to some people. Some people think babies aren't even aware of their peers. Some cultures raise groups of children together whereas others limit their children's contacts to family members. Talk with the families you serve to learn how they feel about letting babies work through their relationships—even when those efforts sometimes lead to tears. Mobile infants do not have the language or other communication skills for smooth negotiation, but they can do very well given some time and space to work things out on their own—with an adult nearby.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Beginning Friendships

Mobile infants are usually very interested in other children. They may seem to treat other babies like objects. Sometimes tasting them, poking them, or crawling over them to see what happens. However, the interest is generally truly social, and the first skills of friendships are developing even in the first year of life.

Mobile infants will typically do the following:

- Smile at each other
- Hug each other
- Babble to each other
- Fall on each other
- Hand toys to each other—and take them back
- Bite or hit each other
- Move toward each other
- Play near each other
- Comfort each other

As infant-toddler program home visitors and teachers, you will work with families to help them do the following:

- See the importance of friendships even in the lives of babies less than the age of 1 year.
- Understand that the behavior they see between babies is at least partly exploration.
- Observe interactions between babies without stepping in, unless one of the babies becomes distressed.

References

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bowlby, J. (1982). Attachment. New York: Basic Books.

Bretherton, I. (1985). Attachment theory: Retrospect and Prospect. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 50(1/2), 3–35

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1986). Discovery of an insecure-disorganized/disoriented attachment pattern: Procedures, findings and implications for the classification of behavior. In T. B. Brazelton & M. Yogman (Eds.), Affective development in infancy, 95–124. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Montagner,H., Restoin, A. &   Rodriguez, D. (1986). Les systèmes de communication et d'interaction du jeune enfant avec ses pairs. *Ethnology and Psychology.*

Related Head Start Program Performance Standards

1304.20(f)—Individualization of the program

1304.21(a)(1)(i) (ii) (iii) (iv)—Child development and education approach for all children

1304.21 (a)(2)(i) (ii)—Parents

1304.21(a)(3)(i)(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)—Support social and emotional development

1304.21(a)(3)(ii)—Planning for routines and transitions

1304.21(a)(4)(i) (ii) (iii) (iv)—Each child's cognitive and language skills

1304.21(a)(5)(i) (ii) (iii) (6)—Physical development

1304.21(b)(1)(i) (ii) (iii)—Child development and education approach for infants and toddlers

1304.21(b)(2)(i) (ii)—Social and emotional development of infants and toddlers

1304.21(b)(3)(i) (ii)—Physical development of infants and toddlers

1304.24(a)(1)(i) (ii) (iii) (iv)—Grantee and delegate agencies must work collaboratively with parents

1304.40 (e)(1) (2)(3)—Parent involvement in child development and education

1306.23(a) (b)—Training