

Podcast 4, Caring Connections, Let's Talk About Environments Information Sheet

This Month's Topic: Positive Messages in the Environment

Description: The way your indoor physical environment is set up sends powerful messages to the infants and toddlers in your care. What messages does your physical environment convey to young children? Are they positive messages of security and trust, comfort, belonging, and freedom to move and explore? This podcast focuses on the concept of environmental messages, how the physical environment affects and impacts relationships between children and adults, and offers strategies and suggestions for creating and sustaining environments that convey positive messages.

Resources Referred to in this Podcast:

Book:

J. Ronald Lally & Jay Stewart, *Infant/Toddler Caregiving: A Guide to Setting Up Environments*, (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 1990), 2.

e-newsletters:

Early Head Start National Resource Center, "Learning at Home and Homelike Environments," *News You Can Use*, February 2011:
http://www.ehsnrc.org/Publications/nycu_archive/nycu_environment2.htm

For more information on environments that say "yes":

Early Head Start National Resource Center, "Environment as Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers," *News You Can Use*, July 2010:
http://www.ehsnrc.org/Publications/nycu_archive/nycu_environment1.htm

Websites and Other Resources:

Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC): <http://www.ehsnrc.org>

Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center (ECLKC): <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov>

The following event is referred to in this podcast:

Early Head Start National Resource Center ZERO TO THREE National Orientation, June 8, 2010 (DVD)

Head Start Program Performance Standards Relevant to the Content in this Podcast:

1304.21(b)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies' program of services for infants and toddlers must encourage:

- (ii) – Trust and emotional security so that each child can explore the environment according to his or her developmental level; and
- (iii) – Opportunities for each child to explore a variety of sensory and motor experiences with support and stimulation from teachers and family members

1304.21(b)(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must support the social and emotional development of infants and toddlers by promoting an environment that:

- (i) – Encourages the development of self-awareness, autonomy, and self-expression
- (ii) – Supports the emerging communication skills of infants and toddlers ...

1304.53(a) Head Start physical environment and facilities

- (1) Grantees and delegate agencies must provide a physical environment ... conducive to learning and reflective of the different stages of development of each child.
- (2) Grantees and delegate agencies must provide appropriate space for the conduct of all program activities
- (3) The center space ... must be organized into functional areas that can be recognized by the children and that allow for individual activities and social interactions
- (4) The indoor and outdoor space in EHS or HS centers in use by mobile infants and toddlers must be separated from general walkways and from areas in use by preschoolers

1304.53(b) Head Start equipment, toys, materials, and furniture

- (1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide and arrange sufficient equipment, toys, materials, and furniture to meet the needs and facilitate the participation of children and adults. Equipment, toys, and materials ... must be:
 - (i) supportive of the specific educational objectives of the local program
 - (ii) supportive of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the children
 - (iii) age-appropriate, safe, and supportive of the abilities and developmental level of each child served, with adaptations, if necessary, for children with disabilities
 - (iv) accessible, attractive, and inviting to children
 - (v) designed to provide a variety of learning experiences and to encourage each child to experiment and explore
 - (vi) safe, durable, and kept in good condition

If you do not have a copy of the Head Start Program Performance Standards and would like to view them electronically, you can use the following link to the ECLKC:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Head%20Start%20Requirements>