



Sustaining Training and Technical Assistance Relationships With Infant and Toddler Care Teachers to Create Lasting Change

As Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies consider how to use their resources to improve the quality of infant and toddler care through training and technical assistance, it is helpful to identify the characteristics that are most likely to make that assistance effective. One key characteristic is training and technical assistance that fosters relationship building between assistance providers and infant and toddler care teachers.

What Are Relationship-Based Care Practices in an Infant and Toddler Child Care Program?

Relationship-based care practices are central components of high-quality child care programs that strengthen caregiver-child relationships. This is important for all infants and toddlers, though relationship-based care programs can intentionally support families with diverse cultures, home languages, and family constellations. There are two underlying practices of relationship-based care, the first of which is primary caregiving—the practice of assigning one teacher to provide daily personal care to designated infants and toddlers. This includes the teacher developing a communicative relationship with the child’s family. The second practice is continuity of care—the practice of an infant and toddler care teacher remaining with the same small group of infants and toddlers until they turn 36 months of age (Sosinsky et al., 2016). According to Sosinsky et al. (2016), it is imperative to create policies and procedures that support relationship-based care practices.

Training and technical assistance can familiarize infant and toddler care teachers with the practices and benefits of relationship-based care. By receiving layers of professional development (e.g., training, education, onsite coaching, and consultation), infant and toddler caregivers get nuanced support for developing skills to implement relationship-based care practices, such as engaging in effective caregiver-child interactions and communication, developing observational skills, and understanding children’s developmental needs and abilities at different ages (Ackerman, 2008; Norris & Horm, 2015; Sosinsky et al., 2016). Similarly, professional development for center directors can support their ability to implement, promote, and support these practices in their programs (Sosinsky et al., 2016).

Why Is It Important to Sustain Training and Technical Assistance Relationships in Infant and Toddler Child Care Programs?

Relationship-based care practices also support relationships between training and technical assistance consultants and the infant and toddler caregivers with whom they work. The success of consultation is closely related to the stability and quality of the consultant-caregiver relationship (National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative, 2010). In the context of this relationship, caregivers experience a sense of being valued, respected, and understood. In turn, caregivers are better equipped to provide empathy, respect, and understanding toward the children in their care (Johnston & Brinamen, 2006; National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative, 2010).



It is important for technical assistance providers and consultants to consider the following principles of relationship-based care practices as they develop and sustain relationships with infant and toddler caregivers:

- ◆ The need to respect all individuals;
- ◆ The importance of being sensitive to the context of the caregiver in the program;
- ◆ The value of being committed to each individual’s evolving growth and change;
- ◆ The importance of shared goals;
- ◆ The need for open communication; and
- ◆ The importance of being committed to reflective practices (Bertacchi, 1996; National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative, 2010).

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