



Culturally Sensitive Care

Use this resource to help communicate the importance of culturally sensitive care. It will help promote essential program practices to ensure quality in family child care and center-based programs that serve infants and toddlers.

Rationale

High-quality relationship-based care is central to children's early brain development, emotional regulation, and learning (Center on the Developing Child, 2012). One of the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) six essential program practices for promoting these goals is the use of **culturally sensitive care** (PITC, n.d.).

Caregivers take an important step toward practicing culturally sensitive care when they partner with families to learn about the care practices and rituals of children's home cultures, and then use this information to inform interactions and care routines (Derman-Sparks, 2013). Care that connects with infants' and toddlers' home experiences helps them develop a sense of who they are and value their home cultures (Virmani & Mangione, 2013). Thus, supporting consistent care at home and in child care settings supports healthy development for infants and toddlers and sets the stage for integrated learning (Derman-Sparks, 2013; National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000).

Why Is Culturally Sensitive Care Important for Infants and Toddlers?

- ◆ Honoring diversity strengthens relationships with families and children, which enhances quality of care and education (Virmani & Mangione, 2013).
- ◆ When a responsive caregiver builds relationships with an infant the infant's ability to trust and seek support is enhanced (Howes & Spieker, 2008).
- ◆ Culture is the fundamental building block of identity (Lally, 1995).
- ◆ Developing relationships with families and seeing them as partners in care is essential for providing a culturally responsive, high-quality infant and toddler care experience (Raikes & Edwards, 2009).
- ◆ Primary caregiving offers the opportunity to build relationships with families. Strong relationships make it easier for families to share beliefs, rituals, and routines that are valued in their home cultures (Gilford, Lally, Butterfield, Mangione, & Signer, 1993). For more information, see the rationale paper for Primary Care at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/six-essential-program-practices-program-infanttoddler-care-primary-care>.



How Does Culturally Sensitive Care Promote Positive Child Outcomes?

- ◆ Culturally responsive care respects each infant's way of communicating and supports language development (Center on the Developing Child, n.d.; NICHD ECCRN, 2005).
- ◆ Children who understand their own cultures develop a sense of belonging, personal history, and security in knowing who they are and where their family comes from. These qualities increase their capacity to develop a respectful understanding of other cultural perspectives (Lally, 1995).
- ◆ We learn to communicate and understand our world through the culture in which we live (Ray, 2015).
- ◆ Culturally responsive policies and services support infant and toddler learning and development (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000).

Planning to Implement Culturally Sensitive Care in Diverse Child Care Settings

Goal: High-quality infant and toddler programs provide culturally sensitive care to children and their families.

- ◆ Implement written guidance to support culturally sensitive care throughout the program. This guidance includes staff and family handbooks that share the importance of, as well as practices for, cultural sensitivity.
- ◆ Create job descriptions for infant and toddler teachers that include expectations for culturally sensitive practices. These expectations include examining one's own values and beliefs, forming relationships with families, learning about their home cultures and caregiving routines, and weaving home care experiences into daily practice.
- ◆ Attend, create, or advocate for professional development about culturally sensitive care teaching practices. Support ongoing conversations with families and teachers about culture and infant and toddler development.
- ◆ Use an intentional review process to continually strengthen the system of culturally sensitive care practices across the center or family child care program.



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State Capacity Building Center, A Service of the Office of Child Care

9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2401

Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

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