



One
in Christ™

Administrator Guide



FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



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Your Early Childhood Program

Whether your Christian preschool or early childhood center is operated by a single congregation or an association, you are part of an important mission for sharing the love of Jesus with young children and their families. As an administrator, you have a vital role in leading those caring for and educating young children. As you plan and lead, work to establish a close working relationship with the pastor(s) and the staff, one that builds on a common philosophy, vision, and direction. Having this understanding increases the chances of building a successful partnership that benefits those served through the early childhood program. By God's grace, when respect for one another exists, the administrator, staff, and pastor will share an effective, mutually edifying, and supportive relationship.

Successful communication and teamwork requires a high level of trust among all who lead and serve. Trust needs to be built carefully and securely, for without it, the relationship being built is weaker, will not last as long, and is of less value. Great care must be made to preserve this trust unbroken, for once damaged, it is difficult to repair. The sure foundation of that trust begins with the chief cornerstone common to our faith: Jesus Christ.

Your Witness as Administrator

As the administrator who oversees the day-to-day operation of the early childhood center, You have been given by God a tremendous obligation and responsibility. It is your role to lead a dynamic educational agency—where each day the most important content anyone can ever learn is taught and modeled through word, attitude, and action. Parents send their sons and daughters to Christian care centers and schools trusting that they will receive quality care and nurture in a safe, secure environment where

they will hear of the Savior, who lived, died, and now lives again to earn forgiveness for our sins; learn of the chance to begin all over again with the slate wiped clean; and live knowing of the happy home with Him in heaven for all who believe.

You can model what Jesus means to you for the staff, parents, and children by your actions as well as with your words. You can show that you care about each caregiver and teacher, child and parent, genuinely and individually, just as Jesus loves and cares for you. You can join the staff in developing a warm and friendly atmosphere in which relationships are rooted in God's Word. You can handle disappointments and frustrations in ways that show the power of God's Spirit in your life as you labor to energize others in building a program that is well respected and valued among those you serve and beyond. You can seek always to "explain everything in the kindest way."

Working Effectively with Your Team

Just as in a marriage, the relationships built between administrator and staff can be mutually beneficial and edifying. But human relationships cannot grow unless the people involved work through and overcome things that stress and challenge these relationships. In order for early childhood programs effectively to serve young children and their families as representatives of Christ and His Church, all involved must be in clear understanding and agreement regarding the purpose and mission of the early childhood agency. Early childhood centers rooted in the Word of God serve young children with the love of Jesus. They serve congregation members and those without a church home, helping people to know Jesus as their Savior from sin. Salvation is at the center of all that is done. Effective agencies of Christian education share the Gospel message every day, throughout the day.

The term *teamwork* reflects synergy, cohesion, humility, reliability, predictability, sincerity, and forgiveness. As you build a solid team, you publicly lift up the gifts of one another, even as you encourage one another and pray for one another both publicly and privately. As sinners, all people remain in constant need of God's grace, which is a helpful starting point in how we relate to one another. "Love covers a multitude of sins," 1 Peter 4:8 reminds us. Be honest about your own strengths and limitations; don't be afraid to admit your own weaknesses.

Differences can be opportunities for creative thinking, but the manner in which differences are resolved or dealt with affects the relationship of all involved. Reconciliation seeks to restore relationships and occurs through mutual confession and forgiveness. God's Word instructs us to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Jesus is our source of hope and healing (Romans 7:24–8:3).

All adult workers (including custodians, aides, and administrative assistants) can contribute vitally to the mission and goals of the early childhood program. Set the tone by engaging the staff in prayer, devotions, and Bible study.

Share concerns about the families in your program. Pray for congregation members and then send them a postcard that everyone on the staff has signed. Discuss a book that everyone on the staff has read. Go on retreats together. Share with one another ways that the early childhood program, along with other programs of the congregation, can help to carry out the mission.

Encourage the staff. Share with them that they are teachers of the faith, that God has gifted them with a tremendous privilege. Remind the staff that they can handle disappointments and frustrations in ways that show the power of God's Spirit in their lives. They can demonstrate what Jesus' forgiveness means to them in their willingness to also forgive others. The challenges of the classroom are many, and they may seem overwhelming at times. We live and teach in a world damaged by sin and its contaminating effects in the lives of us and our students. But the good news is that no one who follows Jesus need ever feel

he or she is going at it alone. We serve a God "who daily bears us up; God is our salvation" (Psalm 68:19). In His Word, He promises to strengthen and encourage us for the challenges we face. He promises to give our work meaning, our efforts effective outcomes, and our lives joy.

Professional Growth

As a professional Christian early childhood educator, you want to continue growing and learning so that you can do the best job possible in serving the Lord and little children. As an administrator of an early childhood program, you will also want to encourage members of your staff in their own individual professional growth. Continuous professional growth is essential, and it can be acquired through the following:

- **Conferences and workshops.** Many districts and associations have regularly scheduled teachers conferences. Sometimes these are held jointly with all grade levels, but frequently, conferences are held specifically for early childhood educators to address their unique needs. Check with your district or association education executive about dates and locations. If local workshops are not available, discuss your needs with fellow teachers and get involved in organizing a training event in your area.
- **College classes.** Early childhood programs and graduate classes are available through the Concordia University System. These classes are particularly beneficial because they address the faith development of young children and are tailored to the Lutheran teacher. Some classes are offered online. Contact the university nearest you for more information.
- **Reading.** Regular Bible study is essential to strengthen your faith. It also gives you the insights necessary to share your faith with children. Professional journals and books stimulate you to be creative and innovative in your classroom as well as affirm what you are already doing. Your local college, library, educational bookstore, and the Internet provide articles and books from which to choose.

- **Professional organizations.** These professional organizations provide valuable reading material and classroom assistance for early childhood educators: Lutheran Education Association, 7400 Augusta Blvd., River Forest, IL 60305, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 1313 L Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005; naeyc.org.

Working Effectively with Families

Meeting the total needs of a child (spiritual, physical, emotional, educational) requires connecting with and serving the child's entire family. Consider having someone on the staff make home visits to establish a relationship with the family of each child you serve. As you establish a relationship with the parents, they will begin to feel that they are important and valued by you. Your role, after all, is to provide an extension of the home for the care and nurture of the young child.

Consider ways your center and congregation can meet the needs of the early childhood families, opening the door to the proclamation of the Gospel. Offer Christian parenting courses, with free childcare available. Subjects of interest could include dealing with sickness and death, divorce, and special needs. Perhaps your church could provide counseling, tutoring, academic enrichment (such as languages), health and social services, or special education services for students. Parents could be notified that church staff and/or a parish nurse are available to help families who are in need of pastoral care during difficult times or crises (e.g., illnesses, hospitalizations, the death of a family member, or marital problems). Consider providing Christ-centered programs for substance abusers. You also may wish to provide before- and after-school-care programs.

Encourage staff to invite families to church. Invite parents to Bible studies, especially "home" groups or small-group ministries. In the information packet that gets sent home to parents at the beginning

of the school year or when they first enroll, include a welcome-to-school letter from the pastor, inviting families to attend church if they do not have a church home. Briefly describe the church, and possibly even include a map of the facilities so the parents are comfortable finding their way to the sanctuary if it is unfamiliar to them. Information about the church's services and special events should go home with all the families served by the center. The center's office bulletin board can display notices of services and special events.

Consider what family programs or events the center or church can host for the families from the school. Here are some ideas: a Parents & Twos or Toddlin' to Jesus Sunday School class for toddlers and their parents, Vacation Bible School, a special person's day, a kite day, a picnic with the pastor, pancakes with the pastor, an Easter-egg hunt, a Mother's Day brunch, a trike-a-thon or walk-a-thon, a Valentine's Day father-daughter dance, an outdoor worship service, a barbecue or family breakfast where school and church staff cook for the families and mingle with them.

Develop a resource library of Christian books, music, magazines, and videos for families. Parents may appreciate resources about child development and Christian parenting.

As you introduce parents to your early childhood program or center, look for ways to partner with them for the benefit of the child they have placed into your care. Show your concern for each aspect of their child's development, spiritual as well as physical, intellectual, social, and emotional. Take time to explain to parents about their child's growth and progress. You may find the following information especially helpful to you and your staff as you talk with parents about their child.

Integrating the Faith

Young children need extra love, affection, hugging, listening, and understanding. Parents, caregivers, and grandparents need people with whom they can share their feelings and concerns—people to whom they can turn for help. You may be the support

person God has placed in their lives.

In the program you administer, make all day, every day an experience in Christian living. Work to create a climate that reflects the love of Jesus. Planned activities can help young children learn and experience the Christian faith.

The overall goal of the Christian preschool is that young children will know Jesus as their Savior and what He has done for them through His death and resurrection. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they will respond to God's love through worship, caring for others, social relationships, and service.

God has given you and your staff, in many cases, the exciting opportunity of bringing the Gospel to a young child for the first time. Consider yourself a missionary. Leading young children to Jesus as their Savior is in many aspects different than leading adults to Jesus. As you share the faith, keep in mind the developmental characteristics of young children. For instance, you may be talking about sin and the things the children have done wrong, but they may say that they never do anything wrong. They will not relate to the sins they did yesterday or last week. The best time to talk with them about sin is at the time a misbehavior occurs. You may talk about helping others, and they may talk only of themselves. Preschoolers are still in the egocentric stage of putting their own needs above others'. It is difficult for them to think beyond themselves and the here and now to help others.

God created human beings to be social. He planned for us to live together in families. He gave parents and children responsibilities for social situations. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another" (John 13:34). As a result of sin, people have difficulty living together in a harmonious way. Being egocentric, preschoolers especially find it hard to live with others in a sharing, cooperative manner. They see themselves as the center of their world and are not willing to give up what is important to them. They are unable to see another person's point of view. As the Holy Spirit works through God's Word, God's people—including the very young—desire to love and serve one another. Social living helps children understand and care about the people in their world.

Jesus forgives us when we fail to show love

and concern for others. Then, because of His love and forgiveness, we follow His example of showing love to those around us. We teach about God and His love in the behavior we model and in the social environment we establish in our relationships with the children. Consider the faith-development milestones as listed in the Checklist for Infant and Toddler Development on the following pages.

The Care and Nurture of the Infant/Toddler

As very young children learn to trust the significant adults in their lives, caregivers and teachers included, their sense of developed trust leads them also to later trust in a loving God. Very young children pick up and imitate the actions of adults. By God's grace, caregivers and teachers in your infant/toddler program can become, in Martin Luther's words, "little Christs," the walking, talking Gospel for infants and toddlers. Little ones grow and develop in their faith in Jesus as their loving Savior through the faith-modeling of trusted adults. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, adults nurture that faith as they teach and care for the very young children entrusted in their care. Thus, most teaching in the infant classroom involves the caregiver taking the initiative to show care in the way she talks and interacts with the babies. An increasing amount of child-generated interaction happens as the child moves into the toddler stage of development.

Infant/Toddler Development

Parents dream about the child they will have, and they form expectations for their child. Before we were even conceived, God had a plan for each of us as part of His family and as part of the worldwide community. God is our perfect Designer. He chooses and plans our growth and development. Most of the time, God's plan is one that we may not have thought of or chosen for ourselves.

- All children are created by God.
- Each child's self-image is one of worth because he or she is God's blessed child.
- Our caring actions are a response to God's love and His command that we are to love one another.
- Infants and young children need to develop positive social relationships with peers and grown-ups.
- Attitudes and life values are formed at an early age.
- Children learn through exploration and discovery.
- While children are in "educare," their developmental needs are met in a stimulating learning environment.

Some Basic Guidelines

In a quality, Christian infant/toddler care program, you'll want to follow guidelines such as the following to emphasize love, respect, and care-giving with the children.

- Involve infants and toddlers in activities that concern them. For example, involve children in looking for toys, dressing, diapering, feeding, and using language to communicate (e.g., "Here's your Binky"; "Let's hold your cup").
- Respond to infants' and toddlers' interests. Encourage their self-help. Don't work around them or discourage them just to get the job done faster.

- Invest in quality time. Be with the infants and toddlers on the floor, in the grass, or in the rocker. Walk around the room, giving them your total presence.
- Connect infants and toddlers with Jesus' love. Show them God's creation. Exclaim over His goodness to them. Sing "God Is So Good" (*Little Ones Sing Praise* [CPH, 1989], p. 57) as you rock a child to sleep. Fold your hands over a child's and say a short prayer.
- Respect each infant and toddler as an individual, as God's child. Avoid talking down to children and belittling them. Instead, make statements such as these: "I'm going to check your diaper now." "Let's look for some dry clothes." "I know you're hungry. Your bottle is almost warm."
- Model the behavior you want to teach. Use words to describe what is happening. For example, "We'll put the puzzle pieces away." "Thank you for helping!" "Now we'll march to the music."
- Build security by teaching trust. Hug. Smile. Speak gently. Show welcoming actions. Rock and cuddle infants and toddlers. Read short "Jesus" stories. Say Christ-centered statements often (e.g., "I hear a siren; let's pray to Jesus to protect the people being cared for"; "Sam, you forgave Jason just like Jesus forgave us"; "Geoff, you remind me of Jesus when you show love to Abigail"). Be sure to keep promises (e.g., "We're going inside very soon"). Predictability and communication, as well as loving touch, teach trust.
- Don't rush infants and toddlers! It doesn't matter how quickly very young children achieve certain developmental milestones. It does matter how full of love and care their experiences are and how those rich and full experiences help them grow and develop.
- Refer to the developmental checklist for infants and toddlers on the next pages. Remember that while you may not be a special education professional, you can report your observations and compare that information to a general developmental standard. The general screening checklist will help you look at the whole child. Areas you will assess include faith/spiritual development, cognitive (thinking) development, social/emotional development, large- and small-motor development, expressive language development, and self-help development.
- Be aware of the child's vision and hearing at every age. Some skills depend on the child's ability to hear and to see. Remember that this checklist will only help you recognize areas that warrant and deserve a second look by a professional who can give a complete developmental test.

Note: Developmental checklists should be used only by trained professional educators and are to be used only as a resource, not as a test. Use the checklists also as a reference tool when you have a conference with parents.

What happens when you, as the director or teacher of infants and toddlers, think that one of God's young creatures isn't developing in the "normal" way? How can you approach the parents and communicate with them in positive ways?

- Remember that all children develop at different rates. Avoid comparing children in your care. Use your knowledge of early childhood development and your past experiences with children. Trust your instincts.

Checklist for Infant and Toddler Development

Immobile Infant— Birth through 5 Months

Faith/Spiritual Development

- Is born in sin and receives Baptism to be brought into God's family; has been baptized
- Begins and continues to build foundation of trust through adults' response to his or her needs
- Has adults taking him or her to worship
- Has adults telling him or her "Jesus loves you"
- Has adults folding hands around his or hers and saying simple prayers

Social/Emotional Development

- Relaxes and stops crying when picked up
- Smiles and makes sounds when touched and talked to
- Makes eye contact
- Laughs when tickled, bounced, or engaged in vocal play
- Cries when left alone or put in a strange position
- Extends arms to familiar people
- Smiles when seeing reflection in mirror

Large (Gross) Motor Development

- Lifts head and chest when lying on stomach
- Moves head to either side when placed on stomach
- Holds head steady in upright position
- Moves arms and legs easily
- Follows your movements by turning head from side to side
- Straightens legs and takes weight on feet when held upright
- Rolls from stomach to back
- Reaches for feet and brings them to mouth when lying on back

Small (Fine) Motor Development

- Easily takes a bottle or breast and sucks well

- Responds to different light intensities
- Startles or cries at sudden, loud noises
- Looks at you; watches your face
- Focuses on object held about 12 inches away
- Looks at hands
- Reaches for dangling objects or noisemakers
- Holds object in hand; gradually reaches for and grabs objects
- Moves any grasped object toward mouth

Expressive Language Development

- Makes gurgling or cooing sounds
- Smiles in response to another's smile or talk
- Laughs
- Cries in varying pitch and volume, according to need
- Quiets easily when comforted
- Vocalizes when hearing human voices
- Turns head to locate sounds
- Vocalizes sound patterns
- Uses objects to make noise

Self-Help Development

- Opens and closes mouth when stimulated with food
- Sucks pureed food from spoon; gums pureed food
- Anticipates feeding activity by moving head and limbs and making sounds

Immobile Infant— 6 through 9 Months

Faith/Spiritual Development

- Responds to "Jesus" songs
- Looks at pictures of Jesus as an adult; names Him
- Needs assurance of adult's love and Jesus' love when left in strange place ("Jesus loves you, and I love you")
- Looks at picture books about Jesus
- Points to Jesus when He is talked about

Social/Emotional Development

- Cries or fusses at the sight of a stranger
- Cries or fusses when a favorite toy is taken away
- Touches image in mirror

- Uses hands to explore face of person holding him or her

Large (Gross) Motor Development

- Sits in high chair or three-sided child-size chair without slumping
- Sits alone for a short time; pulls self to sitting position
- Rolls from back to stomach, stomach to back
- Plays with feet when lying on back

Small (Fine) Motor Development

- Picks up a toy placed within reach
- Picks up small objects with scooping or sweeping motions
- Manipulates objects with hands and fingers

Expressive Language Development

- Makes many different sounds; babbles and squeals
- Laughs out loud
- Begins to show likes and dislikes
- Listens to music and singing
- Responds to own name

Self-Help Development

- Begins chewing movement
- Holds own bottle to drink
- Drinks from cup with help
- Picks up spoons

Mobile Infant— 9 through 16 Months

Faith/Spiritual Development

- Needs faith-community environment to feel part of church family
- Builds trust through consistent care from adults
- Recognizes Jesus' name
- Folds hands when prayers are prayed
- Pats Jesus' picture when He is named
- Pats things as adult names them as things God has made
- Responds with a hug when told "Jesus loves you"
- Looks for familiar people in church
- Responds verbally and physically to praise songs
- Imitates folding hands and prayer words
- Points to Jesus when He is talked about

Cognitive (Thinking) Development

- Finds toy that is completely covered
- Examines object by looking, turning over, feeling, and manipulating it
- Imitates facial movements inexactly
- Tries to imitate new sounds or actions
- Manipulates objects to produce effect
- Anticipates events from clues in environment
- Finds object hidden under one of three containers on first try
- Imitates actions when interacting with a toy (kissing a doll, rolling a ball)
- Stacks and unstacks blocks
- Recognizes people beyond family circle

Social/Emotional Development

- Fusses, cries, or searches when separated from significant adult in strange environment
- Plays pat-a-cake and peekaboo games with some appropriate gestures
- Repeats actions or vocalizations when laughed at
- Offers objects to adults but will not let go
- Responds physically or vocally to other children
- Imitates ball play
- Expresses affection to other family members

Large (Gross) Motor Development

- Raises one foot and attempts to step while standing
- Crawls forward on hands and knees
- Pulls to stand with some help
- Sits without help while playing with toys
- Lets go of support and stands by self
- Walks by self
- Creeps up stairs
- Throws ball with some force
- Controls stopping, starting, and turning when walking
- Squats and resumes standing

Small (Fine) Motor Development

- Purposely releases object
- Holds object between thumb and index finger
- Makes mark on piece of paper
- Removes pegs from pegboard
- Places one object on top of another
- Accurately places object in its receptacle
- Uses both hands to perform the same action
- Stabilizes object with one hand and manipulates it with the other
- Holds crayon to scribble on paper

Expressive Language Development

- Responds to own name
- Imitates simple consonant-vowel combinations
- Says “Mama” and “Dada”
- Performs an act with only a verbal cue (“Wave bye-bye”)
- Stops activity on hearing command “No!”
- Imitates sounds such as tongue click, cough, kiss, and animal noises
- Imitates words
- Points to familiar people or objects when hearing them named
- Talks in nonsense syllables and speechlike voice patterns
- Shakes head side to side to mean “no”
- Points to object named or wanted
- Begins to use words
- Follows simple command

Self-Help Development

- Stops drooling
- Holds, bites, and chews cracker
- Finger-feeds small amounts of food

- Eats mashed table foods
- Picks up and drinks from cup with some spilling
- Spoon-feeds with many spills
- Pulls off hat, socks, or mittens on request
- Cooperates in dressing and diapering by moving limbs

Toddler—16 through 24 Months

Faith/Spiritual Development

- Grows in trust as adults respond to needs
- Repeats names of people in prayers
- Repeats simple prayers
- Responds to “Jesus” songs with movement and own words
- Gets restless during worship; needs to keep coming to worship to build on the foundation of faith begun at Baptism (can be taken out for a short walk; should be allowed to point out people, objects, and activities in church or given quiet books)

Cognitive (Thinking) Development

- Uses tools to acquire objects beyond reach
- Turns container over to remove object inside
- Improves imitations with practice
- Identifies self in mirror
- Points to or names one body part
- Imitates immediately and exactly body motions, sounds, and words
- Attempts to operate mechanical devices
- Matches pairs of objects from group of different objects
- Recognizes several animal pictures
- Begins to pretend and to use props in play
- Matches objects of same color
- Puts simple puzzle together
- Recognizes pictures with missing parts

Social/Emotional Development

- Checks adult’s presence when playing
- Becomes frustrated easily
- Shows various emotions (anger, surprise, fear, sympathy, joy, anxiety, guilt)
- Plays near other children occasionally
- Uses gestures to make needs and wants known
- Wants to control actions of self and of others

- Sometimes clings to adult; other times pushes adult away
- Cries when favorite activity is stopped
- Picks up and puts away toys when asked
- Imitates domestic activities

Large (Gross) Motor Development

- Walks without help
- Runs or walks very fast
- Walks upstairs with one hand held
- Creeps backward down flight of stairs
- Seats self in child-size chair
- Climbs in or out of adult-size chair
- Balances on one foot with help
- Throws ball overhand
- Pulls and pushes toys and boxes
- Walks downstairs with one hand held
- Jumps in place
- Goes up and down stairs alone holding onto rail
- Stands on balance beam
- Kicks ball with right or left foot
- Jumps from a step with both feet together

Small (Fine) Motor Development

- Picks up small objects (e.g., raisin, Cheerio)
- Builds tower with three blocks
- Scribbles spontaneously
- Purposely and accurately puts objects in proper place
- Chooses round form from differently shaped objects; places correctly in form board
- Guides objects to hit target
- Performs activities with hands moving in opposite directions
- Places three different shapes correctly in form board
- Takes apart and puts together simple objects
- Imitates vertical and circular scribbles
- Manipulates objects using only fingers

Expressive Language Development

- Shows and names body parts
- Shows, points to, or retrieves toys on request
- Names objects and people
- Communicates needs with single words
- Names pictures
- Performs requested actions
- Combines two words

- Increases vocabulary weekly
- Imitates familiar words while listening to story or nursery rhyme
- Uses action words to describe activity in picture

Self-Help Development

- Places hat on head
- Zips and unzips large zippers
- Tries to put on own shoes
- Removes clothing without help
- Sucks from straw
- Washes and dries hands with help; sits on potty chair; may be toilet-regulated by adult
- Feeds self with spoon

Hearing Development—Each Age

- Shows awareness of home and school noises (e.g., phone, doorbell, children crying, dog barking)
- Uses a voice that is not too loud or too soft
- Plays with toys that make noise (rattles, bells, musical toys)
- Imitates sounds
- Uses some word endings (“s” or “ing”) after two years old
- Follows verbal directions
- Speaks so most people can understand (after two years old)
- Comes to you from another room when called (after two years old)

Vision Development—Each Age

- Makes eye contact (looks at your eyes)
- Follows a moving object with eyes
- Walks or crawls without frequently bumping into objects
- Looks at people and things without covering one eye
- Holds object at a normal distance (after six months)
- Walks or crawls smoothly across shadows or areas that appear different (e.g., moving from carpeting to tile)
- Looks at people and things without squinting (after nine months)
- Has eyes that are clear, not red or watery

Infant/Toddler Environment

The infants and toddlers in your childcare center will be spending a great deal of time in the environment you design for them. How you set up the environment will have a big impact on the effectiveness of the program and the care you give the children. The environment for infants will be different than that of toddlers because the developmental stages and needs of the two age levels are different.

Three elements affect both infants and toddlers. They are safety, space, and comfort. Environments for infants and toddlers need to adhere to state regulations. A safe, clean environment is not only required for licensing, but it also ensures that the children entrusted to your care are free from injury and infectious diseases.

Very young children need a lot of space to sleep, eat, play, and accommodate their active lifestyle. Cribs, sleeping mats, highchairs, rocking chairs, and toys take up much space. Infants need space to learn to crawl, creep, and walk. Toddlers need space to walk, play, hide, and sleep.

A warm, cheerful, and comfortable environment invites infants, toddlers, and their parents into your classroom. It says to them, “You are welcome here. This is your home away from home. You will be cared for and loved in this place. God is here watching over you. You will be happy here.”

Your caring, personable staff and your program environment are what parents will evaluate to determine the quality of your program. Remember that initial impressions will help the parents decide whether they will leave their children in your care. Plan environments that include the following.

For Infants

Quiet-Time Area

- Sleep area with cribs
- Adult-size rocking chairs
- CD or MP3 player for soft music
- Small area with a picture of Jesus and a cross

Feeding Area

- Highchairs and adult-size rocking chair
- Food-preparation and storage counter and cabinets
- Refrigerator
- Microwave or stove for heating food

Changing Area

- Changing table
- Sink for washing hands

Social/Play Area

- Floor area for blankets or quilts
- Mirror mounted near floor
- Floor toys
- Boxes, ramps, bounce mattresses, and other equipment to crawl in or out of
- Surface variety: wood, carpet, tile

Personal Space

- Storage for each child’s clothes, food, and formula
- Toys and “blankies”
- Sheets and blankets

General

- Comforting colors
- Simple pictures—especially ones of Jesus

Parent Area

- Sign-in sheets
- Library and bulletin board
- Daily records kept on each child

For Toddlers

Quiet-Time Area

- Cribs and/or mats for sleeping
- Adult-size rocking chairs
- CD or MP3 player for soft music

Feeding Area

- Highchairs and/or low table and chairs
- Food-preparation and storage counter and cabinets
- Refrigerator
- Microwave or stove for heating food

Changing Area

- Changing table
- Sink for washing hands

Personal Space

- Cubbies for clothes, sheets, blankets

Parent Area

- Sign-in sheets
- Library and bulletin board
- Daily records kept on each child

Art Center

- Low easel
- Table
- Art supplies
- Smocks

Block Center

- Shelves
- Large and small blocks
- Toy vehicles and people
- Rubber or plastic animals

Worship Center

- Small table or box for altar
- Cross
- Picture of Jesus
- Toddler Bible
- Quiet book
- Pillows and other soft materials
- Stuffed animals
- Books—picture and board
- Blankets

Drama/Home Center

- Dolls
- Play stove and chairs
- Small table and chairs
- Pots and pans, plastic dishes (all real)

Discovery Center

- Small table or box
- Classroom pet and plants
- Sensory materials (things to touch)
- Toys
 - Riding
 - Manipulative
 - Puzzles