



ChildCareGroup

SELECTING AN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR YOUR INFANT (Birth through 18 Months)

When choosing an early care and education program, consider your child's needs at various stages of development. In selecting care for your baby, you will want an arrangement that will give your baby an opportunity to develop an attachment with a caregiver who is present all day long, every day.

Babies develop trust in people during their first year of life. A consistent and loving caregiver will give your baby this foundation. Your baby should be free to move around in the space where care is provided. This is how your baby learns about her world.

Look for the following when selecting an early care and education program for your baby:

- The caregiver is trained and experienced in caring for babies and is someone you can talk with about your baby.
- The caregiver and you share similar child raising beliefs.
- Your baby remains in care with the same caregiver for a significant length of time before being moved to another group.
- The caregiver responds quickly to your baby's cries and needs.
- Your baby is cuddled and talked to while being bottle-fed, and the feeding and napping schedules are based on your baby's needs.
- Group sizes are small enough so that each child receives individual attention.
- Toys and equipment are safe and interesting to babies. There are things to grasp, poke with fingers and mouth, and things to climb, push, pull and ride. In addition, there are crayons, play dough, sand and water for older babies to be "messy".
- Babies should go outside everyday.

Some developmental characteristics of infants:

- Depend on adults to care for them.
- Have many physical and emotional needs.
- Display individual temperaments (active, cuddly, cautious, curious).
- Develop attachments to parents, caregivers, and others in their lives.
- Like to observe other children.
- Learn about their world through movement and their senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling.
- Communicate with their bodies, their actions, and their sounds.
- Practice new physical skills: grasping, reaching, picking up, pushing, sitting up, crawling, and walking.
- Begin to develop some independence from adults as they become toddlers.
- Need lots of space to move around freely and selection of developmentally appropriate materials or toys to explore and manipulate.

Call ChildCareGroup's Resource and Referral service at 214.631.2273 or 1.800.441.7865 for more free tips on choosing child care, other parenting resources or assistance in finding child care. Or visit us at www.ChildCareGroup.org/rr.

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