

Welcome to Village's Infant/Toddler Program

The infant and toddler years are truly amazing. They are filled with magical discoveries, developmental achievements, strides in independence and...a multitude of challenges. The infant/toddler staff is dedicated to ensuring that not only your child's needs are met in a stimulating and developmentally appropriate environment, but also to help parents embrace and savor the wonderful adventures that their infant/toddler will lead them on. Thank you for letting us travel on this journey with you.

Continuity of Care/Primary Caregiving

Village Infant and Toddler Center offers Continuity of Care and Primary Caregiving to minimize transitions for the child. Research has shown, providing infants and toddlers with a consistent caregiver allows them to maintain a sense of security which then lets them explore more freely the world around them. This is why we are committed to having the children who enter our infant/toddler program be with the same caregiver for the first three years of their life. Once the children pass the age of two they then will travel with their caregiver to the preschool.

Developmental Assessments

At Village Infant/Toddler Center Developmental Assessments are administered to determine a child's developmental progress. On-going assessments are conducted throughout the year. The assessments are shared with parents at scheduled Parent/Teacher conferences. If at any time parents wish to meet with a teacher to discuss issues that may arise, they can contact the teacher and schedule a meeting. We do ask that parents schedule a conference with the child's teacher to discuss in depth, and not try to discuss them during drop-off and pick-up times.

Environment

Village Toddler Center is set up to meet the developmental needs of the children and to provide them the opportunity to make choices. They contain four learning zones:

Gross Motor: This area encourages children to use their large muscles through climbing, block play, music and movement.

Dramatic Play: This area encourages children to engage in role-playing activities with the use of props.

Quiet: This area allows children a space to retreat to for some quiet time and encourages children to develop language/literacy skills through

the use of books and soft toys and develop fine motor coordination with the use of manipulatives.

Messy:

This area encourages children to express themselves and be creative through art and to heighten their sensory awareness through a variety of sensory oriented activities.

Clothing and Supplies

1. The parent must supply disposable diapers.
2. All formula and food must be provided by the parents for infants twelve months or younger.
3. Label all items with your child's first name and first letter of the last name. This includes clothes, diaper bags, pacifiers, bottles, etc.
4. Do not bring valuable or sentimental items to the center.
5. Several changes of clothes must be provided when the children's clothes become soiled and/or the weather changes.

Parent Resources

Expectations

Village Infant/Toddler Center expects from parents to:

- Be your child's first teacher
- Communicate any relevant issues with child's teacher
- Be involved
- Respect classroom schedule and needs of *all* the children in the class
- Develop consistency between school and home
- Attend Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Adhere to Center policies
- Ask questions

Parents are an integral part of a child's education-the quality of a childcare facility is related in part to the degree of parental involvement.

Parents can expect their child's teacher to:

- Be knowledgeable about child development
- Be aware of the latest research in brain development
- Be open to parent feedback
- Treat each child as a uniquely important individual
- Follow through with special instructions
- Take all measures to ensure the safety of every child
- Create and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum

- ❑ Communicate with families
- ❑ Assess child's development-refer if necessary
- ❑ Provide opportunity to conference about child's development
- ❑ Create a positive environment for *all* children in the class

The teachers of Village Infant/Toddler Program are dedicated to creating and maintaining the highest quality of care that encourages your child to grow to his/her fullest potential in all areas of development. We look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Preparing Your Child for Group Care

In order to assist your child in transitioning to group care there are a few things you can do in advance:

- ❑ Expose your child to other family members, children, friendly adults or babysitters. This will help your child enjoy and look forward to interactions with other people.
- ❑ Let your child learn to sleep around conversation, music or other daily activities. During group care some infants will enjoy a restful sleep while others are playing, eating, or engaged in a developmental activity.
- ❑ We encourage any mother who breastfeeds; we provide a quiet place for mother to nurse and you can stop by to feed your baby during the day. However if your schedule does not allow you to come routinely to the Center, your child must be acclimated to a bottle. Mothers may express their breast-milk to be used while the baby is at school but again the baby needs to have been introduced to the bottle. **Introducing your baby to the bottle well in advance of child care minimizes the difficulties of transitioning to group care.**

Infant Brain Development

Things Every Child Needs in Order to Help the Brain Grow

1. **Interactions:** Interactions with people and objects are as necessary to the baby as protein, fat and vitamins; all are vital nutrients for the growing and developing brain.
2. **Touch:** Touch is critical to development! Touch literally sends signals to the brain telling it to grow and make connections. Without the nurturance of touch at an early age, infants can NEVER develop. For both the brain and the body, touch is a critical nutrient, as critical as vitamins.
3. **Stable Relationships:** Infants need a loving, trusting adult to act as the interpreter of life experiences, otherwise they have no meaning. Infancy can be compared to being in a foreign land where no one can understand you or speak your language. Thus, a stable relationship is a necessity for an infant's survival.

4. **Safe and Healthy Environment:** Children learn wherever they are and a safe and secure environment is essential to their development. Because of the infant's vulnerability, adults must attend to each infant at all times to ensure continued safety. Taking care of a child's physical needs communicates positive feelings about his/her value and this influences the child's developing identity and feelings of self-worth.
5. **Self Esteem:** The root of all emotional feeling is in the brain stem. If you create a personal relationship with each infant, you will know the kind of cuddling, stroking, talking and playing that brings comfort and good feelings to each one. This supports their development and they will begin to build a sense of self-confidence.
6. **Quality Care:** Only people who want to interact with babies should care for them! Quality care is invaluable.
7. **Communication:** A child's ability to communicate begins at birth. The plasticity of the brain is what makes it possible to learn language in the first place. All the circuits are in place; they just need to be connected. The more words an infant hears, the more connections are made. Children need to interact with people to learn a language and it is critical to engage them in conversation.
8. **Play:** Play is essential to a child's development and play is linked to mental development. It is the experience, NOT the toy, which aids growth in the brain.
9. **Music:** Children have an affinity for music from birth. They need to be involved in music, not just listen to it. Music can encourage memory, imagination and language.
10. **Reading:** Reading to children has a tremendous impact on their lives. The more you do it, the more connections will be made in the brain.

Toddler Development

As infants enter the toddler years, they start to perceive themselves as separate from other people. They become more independent and able to do things for themselves. They are rapidly developing expressive language and becoming better able to relay their likes and dislikes to others. "*Me do it*" is a common response, even if the child is not fully able to do it. The gap between what the child wants to do and is capable of doing sometimes leads to the tantrums that are so common during these years.

At Village Infant/Toddler Center and Preschool children at this age (1-3) are learning to:

- Drink from a lidless cup
- Sleep on a cot

- Build expressive vocabulary of 200+ words
- Self-feed with a spoon
- Develop fine motor skills
- Manipulate and gain an understanding of books
- Explore the environment in a positive way
- Engage in sensory activities
- Become independent in toileting
- Refine gross motor skills-balance/coordination
- Express independence/autonomy
- Enter beginning stages of cooperative play
- Practice socialization skills
- Gain an understanding of basic scientific/mathematic concepts- cause/effect, opposites, colors, shapes
- Label emotions and partake in conflict resolution

Children will get messy! In order to maximize children's potential in developing the above-mentioned skills, they need to engage in hands-on activities that utilize their senses.

All of the developmental changes that occur during the toddler years- increased language, budding independence, and beginning awareness of peers-must be considered when developing a program. Sometimes even the most carefully planned days need to be adjusted to meet an individual child's reactions and needs. Toddlers find consistent routines to be comforting and change in established routines to be unsettling. Morning good-bye routines are especially important for toddlers. Our teachers want to work closely with every parent to minimize toddler frustrations and optimize learning.

A Note to Parents on Children's Biting

In even the best child care program, periodic outbreaks of biting occur among infants and toddler, and sometimes even among preschoolers. This is an unavoidable consequence of young children in group care. When it happens, it can be frustrating and very stressful for children, parents and teachers. But, however unfortunate, it is a natural phenomenon, not something to blame on children, or teachers, and there are no quick and easy solutions to it.

Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, "cause and effect" experimenting, or intense desire to have a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to extinguish because it does achieve the results: the desired toy, excitement, attention.

HERE IS WHAT WE DO TO TRY TO STOP BITING BEHAVIOR

1. When a child is bitten, we avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting, including negative attention. The biter is immediately removed from the situation, with no show of emotion and caring attention is focused on the victim. The biter is not allowed to return to play for a moment and is talked to on a level that he/she can understand, and then redirected to another activity.
2. We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for patterns. We look to see if there was crowding, over stimulation, too few toys, too much waiting or any other reason for frustration. In addition, we ask ourselves if the biting child is getting enough attention, care and appropriate positive reinforcement for not biting or does the biting child need help becoming engaged in play.
3. We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.
4. We try to adapt the environment so as to minimize crowding and reduce frustrations. We offer cold teething rings for an acceptable alternative to bite, plus the cold can reduce pain that accompanies teething.
5. We work with the parents to understand the situation and to reinforce the concept at home of “We do not bite our friends” and “Biting hurts”

DEALING WITH BITING IS A PROGRAM AND PARENT RESPONSIBILITY

The program accepts responsibility for protecting the children. It is our job to provide a safe setting where no child needs to hurt another to achieve his or her needs. The name of a child that is biting is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more difficult. While biting is a horrifying stage some children go through, it is, however, a “common phenomenon” that has virtually no lasting developmental significance.

A child who bites is not on a path toward being a discipline problem, a bad person, or a cannibal. There are a number of possible explanations why some children bite. None of them due to a “bad home”, “bad parents”, or “bad teachers”. Most of the time it is hard to guess what is going on in the child’s head. Parents are responsible for working with staff on a strategy for change at the Center, reinforcing this strategy at home and for reducing any stress the child may be experiencing.

PUNISHMENT DOES NOT WORK TO CHANGE THE CHILD

Neither delayed punishment at home, which a young child will understand, nor punishment at the Center, which may make the situation worse, helps. What can help are immediate, logical consequences: being deprived of what he or she sought, removal from the situation and denial of positive outcomes to the biting, such as adult attention.

BALANCING PROGRAM COMMITMENTS TO ALL THE CHILDREN

Some children become “struck” for a while in a biting syndrome and this can be frustrating for the parents of the victims that we are unable to “fix” the child quickly of the biting child and to that of other families. We strive to make the program work for all

children. When biting occurs, we are all challenged to maintain a broader perspective and to pull together as we journey through the infant/toddler years.