

## CULTURALLY SENSITIVE INFANT CARE

Culture is made up of the values, beliefs and practices that are shared by a group. Children absorb information about culture from the important adults in their lives. We each grew up in our own family culture. Culture provides children with a sense of belonging and identity which lasts throughout adulthood.

In LINC infant programs, where there is often no common language and families come from many diverse cultures, it is essential to provide a responsive and warm relationship with both infants and their parents. Familiar, stable and consistent care is necessary for the infant to feel secure and develop trust. Providing safe and nurturing care in LINC infant programs also supports the newcomer parent at a time of transition, vulnerability and adjustment.

Many parents may have never left their child in the care of others. The usual support of extended family remains in their home country, and they may have no one to help them raise a child here. Parents are often unsure of how we will care for their infants, and what is expected of them as a parent in Canada.

We have an opportunity to not only provide safe care for infants but to support the whole family with sensitivity and understanding. The more we learn about parenting practices, the more we will understand and the more supportive we can be. The best way to provide support as well learn from parent's experiences is to ask for their perspectives on parenting practices. We need to observe and ask questions. In LINC infant programs we may find that some parents carry their babies in slings on their backs, or we may notice that some mothers feed their babies on their laps with their fingers. Asking parents how they put their baby down for a nap or soothe them when they're upset demonstrates curiosity, respect and a desire to understand and support.

Research and practice have shown that for infants to prosper in childcare, their experiences should reflect a sensitivity by the caregiver to the home culture. Culturally sensitive care positively influences the development of self esteem, social competence, language and intellectual growth.

Cultural sensitivity is an attitude. We choose our attitudes, and can make changes in them. Not all cultural differences will be successfully resolved – sometimes they must be managed and accepted. The important thing is to approach parents with an open mind and a respectful attitude.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Cultural Sensitivity When Caring for  
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Resources on Best Practices for  
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Child & Family Canada  
Assessing Quality in Child Care Settings

Canadian Child Care Federation  
Why is High Quality Child Care Essential

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# Infant Care in LINC Childminding Programs

## ARE YOU PLANNING TO OPEN AN INFANT CARE PROGRAM?

The early years have been identified as the time when the greatest amount of development in a person's life span takes place. Even in infancy, children are active participants in their own development together with the adults who care for them.

Certain experiences can enhance or diminish inborn potential. That is why the early years are a period of considerable opportunity for the growth of children but are at the same time when children are most vulnerable to harm. As a result, infant safety & health present the highest risks in childminding programs.

## ARE YOU AWARE OF THE RISK FACTORS?

Infant care is a high risk undertaking because of the vulnerability of the infants. It is essential to pay close attention to the risk factors when opening an infant program.

A safe and healthy child care environment is one which will provide for a child's development while minimizing a child's exposure to illness & injury. An effective environment works well for teachers & families as well as for children. The child should feel comfortable & empowered in a safe & healthy environment and adults should be able to effectively do the important work of caring for children.

Research tells us that these risk factors need to be considered & addressed appropriately when caring for infants:

- | Staff ratios
- | Immunizations for children & staff
- | Injury
- | Infection control practices
- | Disinfecting control practices
- | Abuse in non verbal infants
- | Transmission of disease
- | Lack of trained staff
- | Lack of adequate supervision
- | Lack of appropriate & safe evacuation procedures
- | Use of toxic substances

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# QUALITY INDICATORS IN INFANT PROGRAMMING

