

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Infants, Toddlers and Their Families

Adopted April 1, 2009

Infants are born active learners.

Research shows that a child's first three years of life are a period of extraordinary growth and development. During this period of dramatic brain development, children acquire the ability to think, speak and reason. It is these early years, the infant and toddler period of development, that lay the foundation for a child's future school and life success. The State Board of Education acknowledges the essential role and interest of parents and other state agencies serving infants and toddlers. This position statement supports parents, state agencies, providers, schools and communities in meeting the needs of infants and toddlers.

The State Board of Education recognizes the importance of the early childhood community in preparing children for ultimate school success. Early life experiences for children are most significantly influenced by the adults in their lives and by the general environment to which they are exposed. Relationships and experiences with parents, caregivers and significant adults form a foundation upon which cognitive, language, emotional, social and moral development unfold. Nurturing and loving relationships have a tangible and long-term influence on a child's development. Access to high-quality personnel, programs, services and supports for infants, toddlers and their families is critical.

The State Board of Education believes that all infants and toddlers in Connecticut deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. To that end, the State Board recognizes that the following principles should guide the development of programs and services for infants, toddlers and their families.

Infrastructure Development

- Infants, toddlers and their families need comprehensive services that integrate care and learning, nutrition, physical and mental health and other services that may be required to sustain healthy development.
- Systems of training for parents and service providers of infants and toddlers must be developed and made accessible.
- Local, state and national resources should be coordinated in a manner that allows all families easy access to services, supports and programs for their children and themselves.
- Partnerships between early childhood providers and state agencies must ensure the early identification of and delivery of intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities.
- The good health of all infants and toddlers should be ensured by the delivery of ongoing medical, health and nutritional services.

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- Communities should invest in and ensure the availability and quality of infant-toddler care in their community.
- State agencies with infant-toddler interest should develop professional and service standards for providers of infant and toddler services.

Supporting Families and Positive Relationships

- Programs and services must recognize the critical role that families play in the lives of children. Programs must support parents as their child's first teachers.
- Families and significant adults in the lives of children must have the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies to nurture a child's development.
- Parents without a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) diploma should be referred to local GED and adult literacy programs.
- Providers should align their programs, services and supports to respect each family's culture and ethnicity.
- Families of infants and toddlers with special needs or developmental disabilities must be provided with information, resources and support in order to successfully advocate for their children.

High-Quality Programs and Services

- Infants and toddlers with disabilities should receive specialized, high-quality early intervention services and supports to meet their individual needs and ensure positive developmental outcomes.
- Infants and toddlers should be afforded high-quality early learning environments that ensure their health and safety.
- Environments serving infants and toddlers must provide optimal learning opportunities that encourage and support each child's growth and development.
- Programs that serve high-risk infants and toddlers must focus their efforts on providing targeted and comprehensive services and sensory stimulation that support learning.
- Training and technical assistance must be ongoing to ensure the availability of qualified, competent and capable providers.
- Trainings and technical assistance opportunities must be enhanced by incentives and career ladders.

Infants and toddlers are the most vulnerable members of our society. The State Board of Education believes that a community's commitment to infants and toddlers and their families is an investment in an essential, long-term structural asset that will result in lasting educational benefits for all.

In 2008, the following two documents were published which expand upon the principles outlined in this position statement. They are: *First Words, First Steps: The Importance of the Early Years*, a report by the Infant Toddler Working Group of the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet (October 2008), and *Connecticut's Guidelines for the Development of Infant and Toddler Early Learning: a Handbook for Caregiver's of Young Children*, developed by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (2008).