

**Handout: Mary Foltz**

**PI-7 : Group Socializations that Work: The Building  
Blocks of Success**

Presenters: Mary Foltz and Louis Torelli

Monday, July 28, 2014: 9:00 – 12:00



Looking More Closely...

**Enhance Parent-Child Relationships:**

- 1) Parents demonstrate more warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness in interactions with their children.
- 2) Parents spend more time with their children in activities that stimulate their children's development, such as reading to their children.
- 3) Parents provide home environments and experiences that are more supportive of their children's development.

**Strengthen Families as Primary Nurturers of their Children:**

- 1) Increased knowledge of child development and awareness of their child's developmental progress
- 2) Enhanced parental self-concept and emotional well-being, experience less parenting stress
- 3) Parents make progress toward education, literacy, and employment goals

**What Does this Look Like During Group Socializations?**

**Providing Child Development Services During *Socializations* in Early Head Start**

- **Highlights from IM-HS-00-22** - (Currently under review by the Office of Head Start)

(\*With italicized suggestions from *EHS Program Strategies: Socializations for Infants and Toddlers in the EHS Home-Based Program Option\**)

***Purpose of Socializations***

- Designed differently than socializations for preschoolers
- **Purpose is to support child development by strengthening the parent-child relationship**
- Content of the group experience reflects this emphasis
- Content also incorporates goals of the program and the participating families such as:
  1. helping parents better understand child development,
  2. encouraging parents to share their parenting challenges and joys with one another,
  3. providing activities for parents and children to enjoy together,
  4. offering structured and unstructured learning opportunities,
  5. modeling successful strategies for engaging children and supporting their development

*\*Have a shared vision for the purpose of socializations. This will help generate a sense of meaning and purpose about the experiences adults and children will have during socializations. \**

### *Linking Socialization Experiences to the Home Visit*

- Socialization experiences support the goals established during the home visits and are meaningful to the participants
- Family Partnership Agreement must include specific roles of parents in socializations and home visits. **(1304.40 (a) (2))**

### *Curriculum Planning for Socialization Experiences*

- The federal regulations in **1304.21 (b)** which define the child development and education approach for infants and toddlers apply to EHS services delivered through the socializations.
- Designed to facilitate development of emotional security through trusting relationships with a limited number of consistent and familiar people.
- Provide EHS staff a unique opportunity to focus on the parent-child relationship and interaction in the context of the group setting.
- All activities should be appropriate for the ages and developmental level of the children present – and take into consideration adult needs and learning styles.
- Programs might consider separate accommodations for older siblings of the children enrolled in EHS so that the parent is fully available to focus on the infant or toddler.
- Parents and infants are together during socialization experiences.
- As infants become more mobile and independent, there may be times when children and parents separate for short periods.

### Parent Education

- Occurs in many forms
  1. informal conversations
  2. facilitated discussions on a particular topic **related** to the socialization experience
  3. by observing other parents and staff interact with children
- **Formal or more structured parenting education – focus exclusively on the adult – should occur during times other than socialization experiences, since socializations are designed for parent-child interaction.**

### Meals

- Should be small-group experiences and build on the goals of the socialization.
- Large group family meals and activities occur at times other than socializations.
- **All socialization experiences are planned to address child development issues, parenting, and the parent-child relationship.**
- Provide appropriate snacks and meals to each child. **(1304.23 (b)(2))**
- Ensure that there is appropriate infant formula and baby foods available for infants.

- Socializations are an excellent opportunity to address nutrition and healthful eating habits and promote child development through activities such as menu planning, discussion and the preparing and sharing of snacks or meals.

#### *Staffing for Socializations*

- The home visitor's relationship with the family is the primary avenue through which EHS services are delivered in the Home Based Option.
- Home visitors play a central role in socializations.
- EHS staff that plan and implement socializations should have expertise in infant and toddler development as well as facilitating groups of parents and children together.
- EHS grantees might consider a designated staff position, working collaboratively with HV, for planning and implementing socializations.

*\* Keep your focus on facilitating adult-child interactions. As you plan, ask yourselves "Will this item, experience or particular approach enhance or detract from the adult-child interaction?" \**

#### *Group Size of Socializations*

- Determine the number of participants attending a socialization in order to support the goal of **facilitating child development by strengthening the parent-child relationship.**
- To meet this goal – group sizes should be limited.
- Large groups do not provide the intimacy or intensity of interactions that facilitates trust, predictability, and responsive caregiving.
- Smaller groups allow children, families, and staff greater opportunities for **individual attention and meaningful interaction.**

#### *Environments for Socializations*

- Select the setting so that it is a high quality environment for infant and toddler exploration and interaction with family members.
- Identify a designated space – to provide a stable and predictable setting.
- Take into consideration appropriate health and safety requirements.
- Ensure that children with disabilities can fully participate.
- Meet the needs of both children and adults. For example, adults should have comfortable places to sit that facilitate interaction with their children.
- Young infants need soft places to sit or lie down.
- Nursing mothers should have comfortable accommodations for breastfeeding.
- Mobile infants need safe places to crawl and surfaces to pull up on.
- Toddlers require adequate space to run and climb.

*\* Select materials thoughtfully. Use found objects, hand-made materials, and natural materials. Pay attention to the amount of “stuff” - not too much – not too little. Incorporate natural lighting. Maintain a calm and relaxed atmosphere. \**



**Create an atmosphere of emotional safety and trust:  
Staff actions, attitudes and program policies that support a welcoming environment**

- Offer unconditional positive regard and respect for each person, under all circumstances
- Accept each adult’s unique way of interacting with and caring for their child
- Be responsive when parents express concerns or offer suggestions. Utilize input whenever possible.
- Give clear written and verbal guidelines to families about center policies and practices. (Maintain a policy prohibiting the use of any kind of corporal punishment as well as harsh, derogatory, or inappropriate language in the center.)
- Keep confidential what parents share with you.
- Provide written materials in languages of the families you serve.
- Provide places for privacy.
- Support families without judging when they are having a difficult time with their child.
- Be flexible – meet people where they are.

**Help families connect with their children in meaningful ways**

- Share with families ways you see them nurturing and supporting their child.
- Share with families the enormous impact their relationship with their child has on their child’s development.
- Assist families in articulating observations about their child on increasingly deeper levels.

- Share information about how children develop in ways that are understandable and meaningful, and specific to their own child.
- Ask families to share with you what they know and understand about their child.
- Speak for the child when helpful, to encourage feelings of empathy.
- Encourage families' feelings of pride and confidence in themselves.
- Allow time and space for families to talk and listen to each other.
- Don't "take over" or dictate the families' experiences during socializations.

*These suggestions are from Southern Oregon Early Head Start, and were published in Early Head Start Program Strategies: Socializations for Infants and Toddlers in the Early Head Start Home-Based Program Option, EHSNRC@Zero to Three, 2001*

**Additional Resources –**

Parent-Child Relationships: The Cornerstone to School Readiness in the Home-based Option <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/multimedia/docs/home-based-option-viewers-guide.pdf>

Parents Interacting with Infants Model, Center of the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning [http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training\\_piwi.html](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_piwi.html)



*Compiled by M. Foltz, Revised 2014*