

Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – My Family and My Community



Introduction

During the first 18 months of life, children are usually referred to as young infants (birth to 8 months) and mobile infants (8 to 18 months). Children between the ages of 18 and 36 months are usually called toddlers.

A child's world begins with self and immediate family members. In Focus Area #1, **About Me**, toddlers were involved in experiences that focused on who they are, what they can do and what they feel. Many of the experiences supported Benchmarks from these two Developmental Learning Strands:

1. To learn about themselves – Self-concept Development
2. To learn about their feelings – Emotional Development

As noted in the Focus Area #1 introduction, *The Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care* contains information about each developmental strand and how the strands intertwine with each other. It is suggested that you review the Framework as a foundation for using the **Adventures for Toddlers** curriculum with your children.

From self and immediate family members, the child's world expands to include other family members and people and places in the community, including the child care community. In Focus Area #2, many of the experiences will focus on Developmental Strand 3 – To learn about other people – Social Development.

In the child care setting toddlers become increasingly interested in their peers. Friendships between and among toddlers begin to emerge. However, the toddler years are ones of conflict among friends because toddlers are egocentric; focusing on their own needs and wants. Toddlers are not yet able to regulate their own emotions and they have limited skills in using language. So most interactions among toddlers need adult support. This means staying close to toddlers at all times so that you can be aware of behaviors that may require you to step in to prevent problems, to help children gain control of their emotions and behaviors, and/or to redirect children to other activities. You must also model appropriate play behaviors.

Pretend play is a part of the social development of toddlers. They begin to act out events and familiar routines. They begin to explore social roles, especially those of their family members and powerful figures such as doctors and firefighters. In the pretend area they pretend to cook on the small stove, they put their doll into the doll bed and pretend that it is sleeping. They dress up in male and female clothes and pretend to be mommy and daddy. They use a telephone and pretend to call Grandpa. Older toddlers will sometimes pretend without an object. For example, they will pretend to drive a car by turning their hands in space as though they were turning a steering wheel. Older toddlers also begin to engage in symbolic play in which they take on pretend roles and use objects in an unconventional way. An example of symbolic play is when a toddler uses a block as a telephone or a tennis ball as a scoop of ice cream.

In the text, *The Comprehensive Toddler Curriculum*, the authors suggest the following as appropriate social expectations for toddlers:

- Don't expect toddlers to adjust quickly when they are left in a new situation unless there are familiar adults.
- Children are unable to "share" until well into the third year. Toddlers can be helped to take turns, share resources such as crayons, or wait for a turn, but spontaneous

sharing behavior doesn't occur consistently until after the third birthday.

- Manners are difficult for younger children. Eating with a utensil instead of your hands, staying at the table until you are finished, and not dawdling are difficult expectations until children are older. That doesn't mean you don't have rules about these issues, it just means you have to be the one who enforces the rules.
- Expectations, such as touching softly, playing nicely, and keeping your hands to yourself are also difficult for toddlers. Stay close and help children learn these skills by modeling and supporting them.

The Comprehensive Toddler Curriculum by Kay Albrecht and Linda G. Miller, published by Gryphon House, Inc. (2000)

In this Focus Area and in the Focus Areas that follow, you will find experiences that may not directly relate to the topic. There will be many sensory experiences involving things children can see, touch and manipulate. You will also find experiences that are repeated from earlier Focus Areas. These sensory experiences and repeated experiences are included because toddlers learn through their senses and through repetition.

Through both planned and spontaneous experiences, caregivers can provide opportunities for toddlers to discover many things about themselves and their families and their community, including the child care community.

Note that many of the experiences in this Focus Area have an age designation of either Younger Toddler (YT) or Older Toddler (OT) and that these two age designations do not specify age in months. Weekly plan sheets that focus on one or more of the big ideas in a topic are included. One plan sheet for each week will be designated for Younger Toddlers and one for Older Toddlers.


There will be several weeks of plan sheets for each Focus Area. Some of the same experiences will be included for more than one week because toddlers need many opportunities to develop and reinforce skills and begin to understand concepts.


Developers of Adventures for Toddlers suggest that caregivers use their knowledge of individual children to determine which experiences are appropriate for which children in their care. Feel free to adapt the weekly plan sheets or to develop new plan sheets to meet the needs of each child and of the group. Consider adding additional experiences from the many that are a part of this Focus Area.



Resources

- Children's books can be purchased online, from school supply catalogs or local book stores.
- Check with your local library for the availability of children's books.
- Contact the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education for the following materials or locate at www.arkansas.gov/childcare
 - ✓ Arkansas Framework for Infant and Toddler Care
 - ✓ Picture This: A Framework for Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers
 - ✓ Infant and Toddler Family Connection

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A Story a Month – Mother Goose Rhymes: Jack and Jill ✓ A Story a Month – <i>The Napping House</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) ✓ A Story a Month – <i>Are You My Mother?</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) ✓ A Story a Month – <i>The Three Bears</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) ✓ A Story a Month – <i>The Three Little Pigs</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) ✓ A Story a Month – <i>Runaway Bunny</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) ✓ A Story a Month – <i>Peter’s Chair</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) ✓ A Story a Month – <i>Ask Mr. Bear</i> (patterns for storytelling figures) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Infant /Toddler Photo Activity Library, A Pam Schiller Resource, published by Gryphon House (52 photos & activity cards focusing on the following topics: Me and My Body, Families, Things I Wear, Toys, Pets, Big Animals, Transportation, Construction.) Website: www.ghbooks.com Phone: 301-595-9500 or 800-638-0918 (toll free) • CDs which can be ordered online or from school supply catalogs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Songs for I Love You Rituals and Songs for I Love You Rituals 2 with songs by Dr. Becky Bailey and music by Mar Harmon ○ Sea Gulls Music for Rest and Relaxation by Hap Palmer ○ Baby Beluga by Raffi ○ Start Smart Songs for 1s, 2s & 3s – Brain-Building Activities by Pam Schiller, KIMBO Educational ○ Toddlers on Parade, KIMBO Educational ○ 50 Toddler Sing-Along Songs (2 CDs with 50 activities), Twin Sisters, www.twinsisters.com
 <p>Picture File</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect pictures that relate to this Focus Area – My Family and My Community. Examples of pictures to collect include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ houses, apartment buildings, mobile homes ○ people representing different ages; pictures that reflect diversity ○ families going places and doing things together such as shopping, eating in a café or restaurant, in church, at the beach, at a park, on a picnic, hiking, fishing, boating; pictures that reflect diversity ○ family celebrations such as birthdays and holidays ○ children playing together ○ medical personnel and related items such as stethoscopes and medicine bottles ○ police officers, police cars, police on horses and motorcycles ○ firefighters, fire trucks, hats, hoses <p>Include small (index card size) as well as larger pictures. Consider mounting the small pictures on index cards. Laminate or cover all of the pictures with clear, self-adhesive paper for durability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post some of the pictures on the wall at toddler’s eye level. Observe to see if toddlers look at the pictures and point to and/or name the objects or people in the pictures. Join them and expand on what they say. For example, say to Megan who has pointed to a house and said “house” say “Yes Megan, that’s a house. You live

	<p>in a house with your grandmother.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put some of the small pictures in a container and place it in the library area so that it is accessible to children. Observe a child as he takes the pictures out of the box. Should the child bring a picture to you, involve him in discussing what he sees in the picture. “That’s a girl and a boy playing ball together.” • Keep some of the pictures in a basket or tote bag within easy reach. Use the pictures with an individual child or a small group of children. Invite them to name objects and to talk about what is happening in the pictures. Allow children to look at the pictures on their own. Model and talk with them about the proper way to handle the pictures. • Determine if funds are available to purchase The Infant /Toddler Photo Activity Library, a Pam Schiller resource published by Gryphon House. See Resources for ordering information. <p>Note: Refer to Curriculum Tips and Techniques – Picture File, for additional information about how to organize a picture file.</p>
 <p><u>Toddler Environment</u></p>	<p>The toddler environment should always provide equipment and materials for language experiences, manipulative exploration, gross motor and block play, sensory exploration, pretend play and outdoor exploration. The following additions to the environment are intended for the entire topic: My Family and My Community. Each Weekly Plan Sheet will specify which materials to add for that week.</p> <p><u>Library Area</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add the following books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Places We Call Home ○ Friend, Friend, Who Do You See? ○ We Are Friends ○ Our Family’s Favorite Cereal Book ○ Keeping Me Safe ○ Keeping Me Healthy • Add container of pictures that have been laminated or covered with clear self-adhesive paper. (See Picture File, page 3 for examples of types of pictures to collect.) <p><u>Manipulative Exploration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting on and taking off lids • Pegboards (wood or plastic) with large, blunt-ended pegs • Felt houses with felt board <p><u>Gross Motor & Blocks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add cardboard brick blocks. • Post pictures of different types of structures such as houses, apartment buildings and mobile homes • Make family homes blocks as follows: 1. Stuff small boxes with newspaper and tape them shut. 2. Glue magazine pictures of houses, apartment buildings and mobile homes onto the boxes. 3. Cover the boxes with clear self-adhesive paper for durability. 4. Place blocks where they are accessible to children for building. • Add small people figures (wood, rubber, or vinyl) and small vehicles • Make signs from poster board for small vehicles. For example, make a sign for a police car, a fire truck and an ambulance. Attach signs to vehicles with tape. • Add an emergency vehicle made from a cardboard box that is large enough to hold

a doll. Write the word EMERGENCY on the front and sides of the vehicle. Draw wheels and headlights on the box. Attach strong yarn to the front of the box for pulling. Add a small pillow, doll and blanket.

Note: Store people figures and vehicles in clear plastic tubs that are labeled with both pictures and words.

Sensory Exploration

- Add **Textured Houses** book
- Add matching pajama tops and bottoms and laundry basket
- Add matching pajama tops and bottoms made from fabric scraps

Pretend Play

- Add tote bag with pajamas or nightgown, stuffed toys and children's books.
- Add Medical Prop Box with a white shirt for uniform, play or real stethoscope, bandages, empty band-aid box, dolls and doll blankets.
- Have dress-up clothes for both males and females with large buttons and snaps. Demonstrate buttoning and snapping. Encourage children to button and snap, assisting as needed.
- Have unbreakable full-length mirror that is securely fastened to wall.
- Add unbreakable hand mirrors.
- Add toy telephones (at least 2).

Outdoor Exploration

- Draw 5 foot long chalk line on the sidewalk for children to walk on.
- Make signs from poster board for wheel toys. For example, make a sign for a police car, a fire truck, and an ambulance or emergency vehicle.

Safety Note: It is the responsibility of the child care program and each employee to ensure the safety of toddlers in the program. This includes the materials and equipment provided for children's use. Should you have safety questions, the developers of this curriculum suggest that you consult with your Child Care Licensing Specialist for technical assistance.

Curriculum books such as *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & 2s, 2nd Edition*, contain safety information. See **Curriculum Tips and Techniques, References and Resources**, for additional resources.



Family Experiences

Send home a note to families stating that for the next few weeks the children will be involved in the Focus Area: **My Family and My Community**. They will participate in experiences that focus on who they are, what they can do, and the feelings they can express. How families can be involved in this Focus Area will depend on the situation of each child and his or her family.

Consider some of the following ways to involve the families:

- Ask families to send the front panel of their child's favorite cereal, explaining that the panel will be used to make a book for the children.
- Invite families to send a photo of the front of their home, one with their child in it, if possible.
- Invite families to send photos of family events such as visiting relatives, going to a park or to the zoo, attending a family reunion, going on vacation, fishing, or boating. Ask them to indicate on the back of each photo the name and relationship of each person in the photo and the event.
- Include the titles and authors of some of the child's books that relate to the Focus Area: **My Family and My Community**. Suggest that they look for these books in

	<p>the local library, check them out and read them with their toddler.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send home the booklet, <i>Picture This: A Framework for Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers</i>. Suggest that families read the booklet, especially pages 6 & 7.• Plan a time for children's family members to come and play. Consider a Family Play Night where families can have an opportunity to be involved in some of the children's activities and where families can get to know each other. Take photos of the event and display them in the classroom or in a photo album.
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