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# Network News

*e-Newsletter of the VA Infant & Toddler Specialist Network*

VIRGINIA  
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST  
NETWORK  
"Achieving Excellence in Early Care"

March-April-May 2018

Issue #25



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**Strategies to Promote Responsive Feeding for Infants and Toddlers**

Responsive feeding behaviors play an important role in establishing healthy food preferences and behaviors for the infants and toddlers in your care. In the long term, responsive feeding promotes healthy growth, which means it helps reduce the likelihood for children to be under or over nourished. Here are strategies to promote responsive feeding for infants and toddlers:

***Actively engage in:***

- Conversations and eye-to-eye contact with children during feeding times
- Responding to cues related to hunger as well as being full
- Feeding infants directly, or assisting older children to feed themselves
- Modeling behaviors where parents, caregivers, and family members make healthy food-based choices
- Offering food that is healthy, tasty, and developmentally appropriate. To overcome food refusal, experiment with different food combinations, tastes, and textures.
- Various methods of encouragement

***Feeding should be:***

- Slow and patient, while encouraging and motivating the child to eat
- Never include force-feeding children

***Optimal feeding environments include:***

- Having the child seated in a relaxed and comfortable manner
- Ensuring the child is face-to-face with other adults or peers
- Minimizing distractions during meals
- Establishing routines that follow a predictable schedule so that the child eats preferably at the same time and place

But what happens when a child is sick, recovering from an illness, or even refuses to eat? Well, have no fear! Below are strategies to help you be responsive during special circumstances.

***When the child is sick:***

- Feed the child slowly and patiently
- Give mashed or soft food, especially if the child has difficulty swallowing
- Give the child his or her favorite foods
- Give small, frequent meals
- Increase fluid intake

***When the child is recovering from illness:***

- Plan with the families on how to be responsive to the child's increased hunger by giving additional meals or snacks each day for two weeks, and offering more food per meal

***When the child refuses to eat:***

- Give an alternative food. Experiment with different food combinations, tastes, textures and methods of encouragement
- Make food more presentable to the child, e.g. in the shape of a character or a smiley face
- Talk and/or sing to the child
- Ensure that the child does not eat alone

***When the child has a reduced appetite:***

- Feed the child slowly and patiently
- Feed the child his or her favorite food
- Provide more feeding opportunities
- Prepare smaller portion sizes

References:

Harbron, J., Booley, S., Najaar, B., & Day, C. (2013). Responsive feeding: establishing healthy eating behaviour early on in life. *Paediatric Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for South Africa*, 26(3), 141-149.

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## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT ON:



[Environments.com](http://Environments.com) provides videos which focus on how to incorporate family style dining into a child-centered curriculum, guiding principles when starting family style dining in your program, and appropriate dishes, utensils, and serving items for family style dining.

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## Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities:



**Coming to Richmond June 2<sup>nd</sup>!**

Hilton Garden Inn  
Richmond Innsbrook  
4050 Cox Road  
Glen Allen, VA 23060

This exciting professional development institute will focus on infant and toddler mental health and the important role child care providers play during these critical years to foster social emotional development and mental wellness.

**Register Today! Space is limited!**

June 2, 2018  
8:30 am - 4:30 pm



## Did you know...

...that infants and toddlers thrive in high quality early care environments that ensure good nutrition experiences at each stage of development?

Perhaps more than any other time in a child's life, [beverages can play a key role in good infant and toddler nutrition.](#)

Dietary studies find that by age 2, one in three children consume an unhealthy, sugary drink on a given day, even though the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends ZERO sugar sweetened drinks for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Taste preferences are established in early childhood. Early care programs can play an essential role teaching healthy beverage habits to children and educating parents too.

Do you know *healthy beverage* recommendations for babies and toddlers? Early care providers can learn more about beverage best practices at [www.revyourbev.com](http://www.revyourbev.com), under the "resources" tab, and find materials to share with parents and staff.

For more information about Rev Your Bev ECE, contact Emily Keenum at [emily@vecf.org](mailto:emily@vecf.org) or call 804.358.8323.



## Working on Wonderful (WOW)

Congratulations to the following programs that have recently completed Level 1 services with the VA ITSNI!

Altavista Area YMCA Family Center	Piedmont-Southside
Annandale UMC Development Center	Northern
Avonlea's Angels/Timberlake UMC	Piedmont-Southside
Capital Kids	Northern
Children of America, Deacon Rd	North Central
Children's House - Mt. Vernon UMC	Piedmont-Southside
Children's Nest	Piedmont-Roanoke
Countryside Children's Academy	Northern
Discovery Learning Center	North Central
Forever Young Montessori School	Eastern
Green Gables Day Care	Eastern
Grow & Learn Child Care	Northern
Herdon Children's Center	Northern
Imagine That Learning Center	Peninsula
JEB Little Creek	Eastern
Kids R Kids South Riding	Northern
Kindercare Learning Center - Cedar Fork	Central
Kingdom Kidz	Peninsula
Kirsten Lukas	Northern
Little Steps Academy	Eastern
Maliha Saddat	Central
Minnieland Academy at Bristow	North Central
Minnieland Academy at Rippon	North Central
Naima Dar	Northern
Noemy Bonilla	Northern
Patricia's Child Care Center	Piedmont-Southside
Piedmont Child Care Center	North Central
Prestige Preschool Academy	North Central
Sarah Bowles	Piedmont-Roanoke
Tamia Colbert	Piedmont-Southside
Thanh-Tam T. Nguyen	Northern
TLC Child Care	Peninsula
Tuckaway Barony	Central
Tuckaway Harbor	Central
Willow Creek Academy, Gainesville	North Central

# *Working on Wonderful* WOW

We are striving to achieve excellence in  
early care for infants and toddlers!

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