

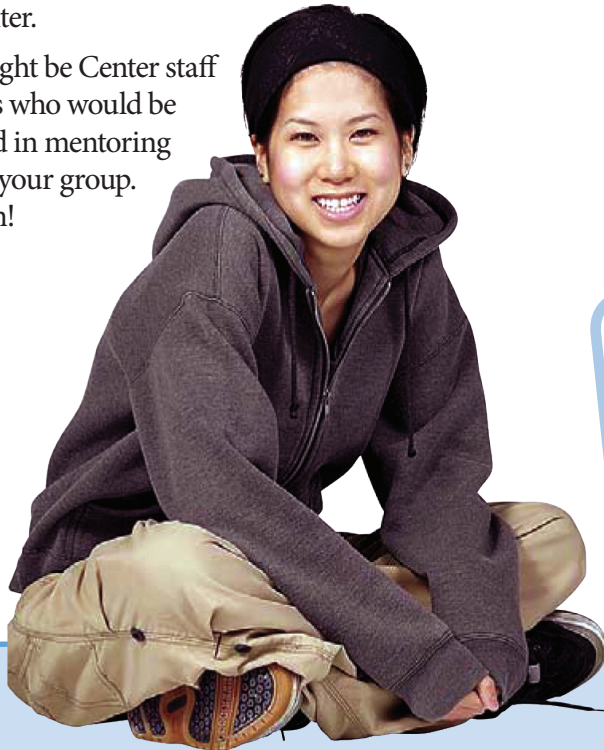
Lesson 4

Child Development

LESSON 4

Note: Staff may want to incorporate a field trip to the installation Child Development Center or a community child development center after the completion of this section. There, teens could see infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in action. If teens would like to observe at the Center to gain some insight on diaper changes, meals/snacks, activities, etc. they should contact their local CYS Center.

There might be Center staff members who would be interested in mentoring youth in your group. Ask them!



Activity:

To complete “Ages and Stages” Strips

Life Skill Addressed:

Caring
Teamwork

Materials Needed:

“Ages and Stages” Strips
Adhesive Tape
Flip Chart, Paper
Scissors
Pens or Pencils

Objective:

To help teens understand how children behave at various ages.

To share information on discipline methods, diapering, toileting, and respecting family differences.

What to Do . . .

Copy the “Ages and Stages” masters in the Appendix (pages 150-153) and cut them into strips with one characteristic per strip. Place the strips in a mixed pile, face up. Place four flip chart pages around the room with one age group written at the top of each page. Divide the slips among the participants. Ask one of the teens as a time to tape their slips with the child/ren characteristic to the correct age group. The goal is to get all the right characteristics taped in each age group. It helps if the number of characteristics is noted on the age group flip chart paper. Example: Infant (6 months to 1 year) – 18 strips.

What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that in addition to liking child/ren, babysitters need to know a lot of information. They need to know how to show love and acceptance, use positive words, help the child/ren feel useful and important, seek to understand things from the child/ren’s point of view, make each child/ren feel special, know how to handle nap and bedtime, snacks, emergencies – the list goes on and on! In this section, they will get an overview of child development “ages and stages.” Let them know that the “ages and stages” lists are not cast in stone! Children develop at different rates, at varying times and in a variety of ways. This information is simply a guideline.

Ages and Stages Strips for Infant (6 months to 1 year)

Helps hold bottle	Teeth appear
Looks for noise made nearby	Plays with toes
Reaches for toys	Jabbers constantly
Neck muscles are weak	Smiles
Discovers hands and plays with them	Recognizes familiar people
Makes sounds when wet, hungry, and lonely	Unfamiliar faces may cause crying
Pats mirror image	Needs constant attention
Puts everything into mouth	Crawls, stands, walks
Follows toys when held in front of eyes and moved	Responds to own name

LESSON 4

“Ages and Stages” Strips - See Appendix page 151 to make copies

Ages and Stages Strips for Toddler (1-2 years)

Refers to himself/herself by name	Drinks from cup
Walks	Plays alone
Repeats sounds made by others	Turns pages of book
Speaks several recognizable words	Carries toys while walking
Recognizes self in mirror	Can point to parts of body
Feeds self with spoon	Builds a tower of blocks
Waves bye-bye	

Ages and Stages Strips for Preschooler (3~5 years)

Unwraps items	Names objects
Walks on tiptoes	Runs
Speaks in sentences	Imitates tasks
Recites rhymes	Builds tower of 10 blocks
Helps adults	Dresses self
Needs rest periods	Tells stories
Catches a ball	Unbuttons
Hops and skips on one foot	Feeds self
Washes face and hands	Follows a two-step direction
Likes encouragement	Matches objects and colors
	Gets along with other children

LESSON 4

“Ages and Stages” Strips - See Appendix page 153 to make copies

Ages and Stages Strips for School age (6-10 years)

Thinks things are not “fair”	Wants to be like friends
Has many interests	Outgoing, eager to explore
May not want a babysitter	Needs definite plans for amusement
Has collections	Physical skills improving greatly
Enjoys crafts, games, activities	Friends are very important
Likes to assume responsibility	Does independent projects
May be jealous of time and attention given to younger child/ren	Likes to talk about interests

Activity:

Experiencing physical challenges

Life Skill Addressed:

Empathy
Accepting differences

Materials Needed:

Wide rubber bands
Shirt with buttons
Scissors
Markers
Lined paper

What to Do . . .

Set up three stations around the room. One station has markers and lined paper, another has a button-up shirt, and the third has scissors and paper. Give each teen a wide rubber band and instruct them to wrap three fingers together to limit their mobility. Have them rotate among the stations trying to do what is expected: write on the paper, put on and button the shirt, and cut the paper. When everyone has gone through all the stations or after 15 minutes, stop the activity and ask: “What did you do?” “What happened?” “How did you feel?” “Were you frustrated?” “What things were harder? Easier?” “What was the most important thing that happened?” “What did you learn?” “How can you use this information in the future?”

What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that as babysitters, it is important to know as much as they can about the child/ren they babysit. They may be asked to babysit for a child/ren with special needs. These needs can take many forms, from the obvious (like a child confined to a wheelchair) to the not-so-obvious (such as a child with a learning disability, asthma, or severe allergies). It is important that they know about any “unseen” special needs as well as the “seen.” The most important difference between children with and children without special needs is that children with special needs have to adapt to an environment designed primarily for people without them. Tell the teens that it is their responsibility as human beings to be sensitive to the individual needs of each and every child they babysit.

If they are asked to babysit a child with special needs, tell them to give the request serious thought. This is a situation for a mature, experienced babysitter, and they may decide not to do it at this time. That is OK. However, if they decide to babysit for the family, they need to get as much information as they can. Chances are that they will probably encounter another person with this disability at some time in their lives, and they will be ahead of the game if they take the time now to understand what it means!

Suggest that they volunteer to spend time prior to the babysitting date with the family to learn what they can.



LESSON 4

Activity:

Seven Principles of Discipline

Life Skill Addressed:

Empathy

Materials Needed:

A copy of “Seven Principles of Discipline” - cut into seven individual strips - see Appendix page 154

A box or a bag

Scissors

What to Do . . .

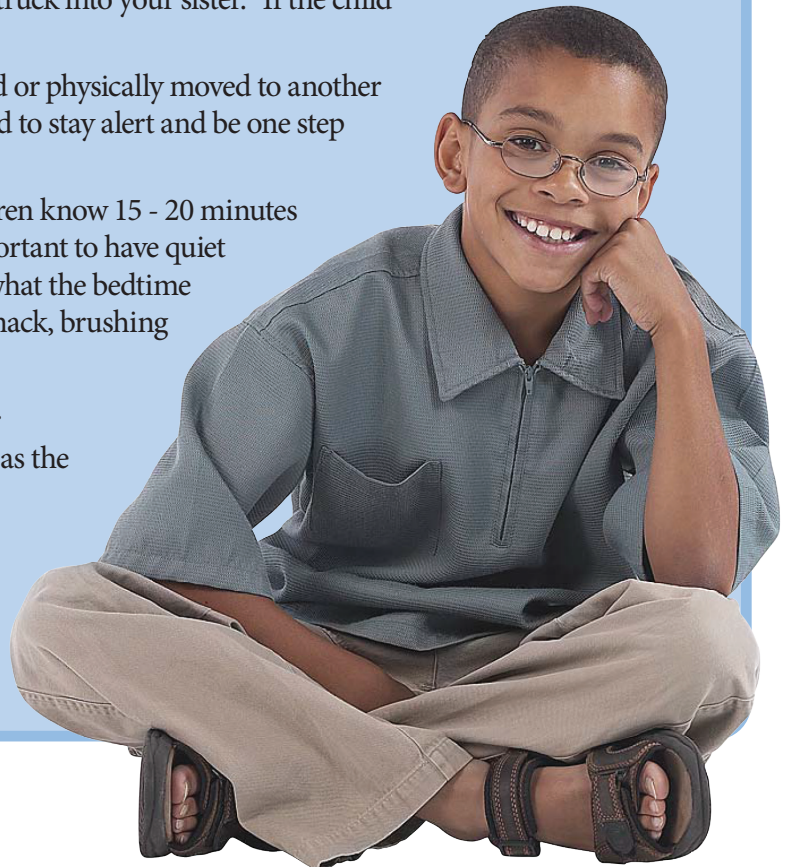
Clean the floor as best you can and place a sheet or blanket on it. Have the teens sit on the sheet or blanket and talk about what they see. Tell them this is the view that the child/ren see. Discuss what safety issues and challenges there are for the child/ren.

Make copies of the “Seven Principles of Discipline” and cut them horizontally into seven individual strips. Place them into a box or bag.

Pass the bag containing the “Seven Principles of Discipline” around the group. Have the participants take turns retrieving one principle and, if the teen is comfortable, reading it out loud.

As you talk about discipline with the group, reinforce these items:

- Discipline is helping the child/ren learn self-control. It is not punishment which is physically, emotionally, or verbally hurting a child/ren. Tell them to try to use consequences and follow-through. Example “We’ll have to put away your truck if you continue to bump the truck into your sister.” If the child continues to bump, then put away the truck.
- Toddlers and preschoolers may need to be redirected or physically moved to another location to avoid problem situations. Babysitters need to stay alert and be one step ahead of the child/ren.
- Bedtime problems can often be avoided if the child/ren know 15 - 20 minutes ahead of time that bedtime is approaching. It is important to have quiet activities before bedtime. Ask the parent/guardian what the bedtime routine is for the child/ren. It might involve a light snack, brushing teeth, and/or reading a bedtime story.
- What works for one child may not work for another.
- Sometimes, it’s “OK” to ignore misbehavior as long as the child/ren are not in danger.
- Games and activities should be geared to the child/ren’s age level.
- Child/ren are easier to babysit when they have the appropriate amount of sleep/rest.



What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that discipline and punishment are not the same. Discipline is teaching correct behavior and it is a way to help the child/ren learn self-control. Punishment involves hurting a child/ren physically, emotionally, or verbally and is always negative; discipline is not. Tell them that as babysitters, it is never acceptable to punish the child/ren, even if adults in the family have given them permission. Always ask the parent/guardians ahead of time about their rules and policies. Often the best thing to do is keep the child/ren busy, so they don't have the opportunity to get into mischief. Tell the teens to set a good example; they are role models! They need to speak and act the way they want the child/ren they babysit for to speak and act.

Tell the teens that “appropriate touching” is a touch that creates positive emotional/social growth in the child/ren. Examples that affect the safety and well-being of the child/ren, include holding the child/ren's hand while crossing the street or cleaning a toddler's bottom while changing his/her diaper. Examples of appropriate touching include hugs, lap sitting, reassuring touches on the shoulders, and naptime back rubs (done over the clothing) for a stressed child. This touching can help a child feel safe, reassured, and protected. However, no physical contact should be against the wishes of the child. The only time this might be appropriate is during a temper tantrum, and the child needs to be moved to a safe place to prevent them from hurting themselves. Examples of inappropriate touching include slapping, hitting, tickling, pinching, and forced-greeting kisses (hello, good-bye) and fondling. This touching can make the child/ren feel afraid, confused, unsafe, and ashamed. They are never to be done.

Seven Principles of Discipline

1. Focus on the DOs instead of the DON'Ts. Encourage the child/ren to do what they are capable of doing.
2. Be sure you convey to the child/ren that they are lovable and capable. Children want positive attention, and it's your job to give it to them. Encourage them to celebrate their successes.
3. Be kind and positive, affectionate, and thoughtful. Be quiet spoken and pleasant. If you get angry, let them know what they did that was not right, but remain calm. Focus on the behavior, not the child/ren.
4. Offer children choices only when you are willing to abide by their decisions. Be realistic when offering choices. For example, don't offer them soda as an option for a drink when the parent/guardian indicated they could not have soda..
5. Change the environment instead of the child/ren's behavior. Sometimes you need to move the child/ren, go outside, move to a different room, or begin a new activity.
6. Work with children instead of against them. Consider the children's ages. Let them know what is expected. Ask what they like to do but be prepared with lots of your own ideas.
7. Give children safe limits they can understand. It is your responsibility to know the rules of the family for which you are babysitting. If you need extra help with a situation, call the parent/guardian or your own parent/guardian for suggestions. Don't be afraid to ask for help!

LESSON 4

Seven Principles of Discipline - See Appendix page 154 to make copies and cut into strips

Seven Principles of Discipline

1. Focus on the DOs instead of the DON'Ts. Tell children what they can do instead of what they can't do.
2. Be sure you convey to the children that they are lovable and capable. Children want attention, and it's your job to give them positive attention. Encourage them to celebrate their successes.
3. Be kind and positive, affectionate, and thoughtful. Be quiet spoken and pleasant. If you get angry, let them know what they did that was not right, but remain calm.
Focus on the behavior, not the child/ren.
4. Offer children choices only when you are willing to abide by their decisions. Be realistic when offering choices. For example, don't offer the soda as an option for a drink when the parent/guardian indicated they could not have soda.
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7. Give children safe limits they can understand. It is your responsibility to know the rules of the family for which you are babysitting. If you need extra help with a situation, call the parent/guardian or your own parent/guardian for suggestions. Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Activity:

Practicing effective discipline

Life Skill Addressed:

Social skills

Conflict resolution

Caring

Materials Needed:

Flip chart, Paper or Whiteboard

Markers, Scissors, Notecards, Pens or Pencils

Role-play scenarios listed below cut into strips or ask the group to write their own scenarios on notecards

Role~Play Scenarios

1. The child/ren you are babysitting, Brandy (age 7), and Toby (age 4), want some screen or device time that the parent/guardians told you they are not allowed to have.
2. You are babysitting at the Tsang home for the first time. You have just arrived, and the parent/guardian tells you that she needs to leave right away since she is late for her engagement. You need to get important information before she leaves.
3. You are babysitting Nylie (age 3), and her parent/guardians just left. She is crying inconsolably and is very upset. You can't seem to comfort her.
4. Racquel (age 6) and Tommy (age 8) are fighting over a toy that they both want.
5. Cody (age 7) refuses to go to bed.
6. Dominic (age 8) has been playing computer games for over one hour, and his mom asked you to limit him to one hour on the computer. Dominic says he is in the middle of a game.
7. Claire (age 5) is in her bed and has called you into her room several times because she is scared. She doesn't want to be left alone in her bedroom.
8. Tasha (age 6) does not want to eat dinner.
9. Michael (7 months) throws his food on the floor.
10. Olivia (age 4) wets her pants.
11. Sam (age 5) has just hit his brother Matt (age 6) with a block.

What to Do . . .

After you have covered the content, divide the participants into small teams. Give each team one “Scenario” and five minutes to work out a role-play for each situation. Ask them to use their own experiences to make the role-plays as realistic as possible. Have teams present skits. Discuss each with the entire group. Discuss possible options. “What did you do?” “What happened?” “What were common themes among all the skits?” “What was most important?” “What did you learn?” “What can you use in other situations?”

What to Say . . .

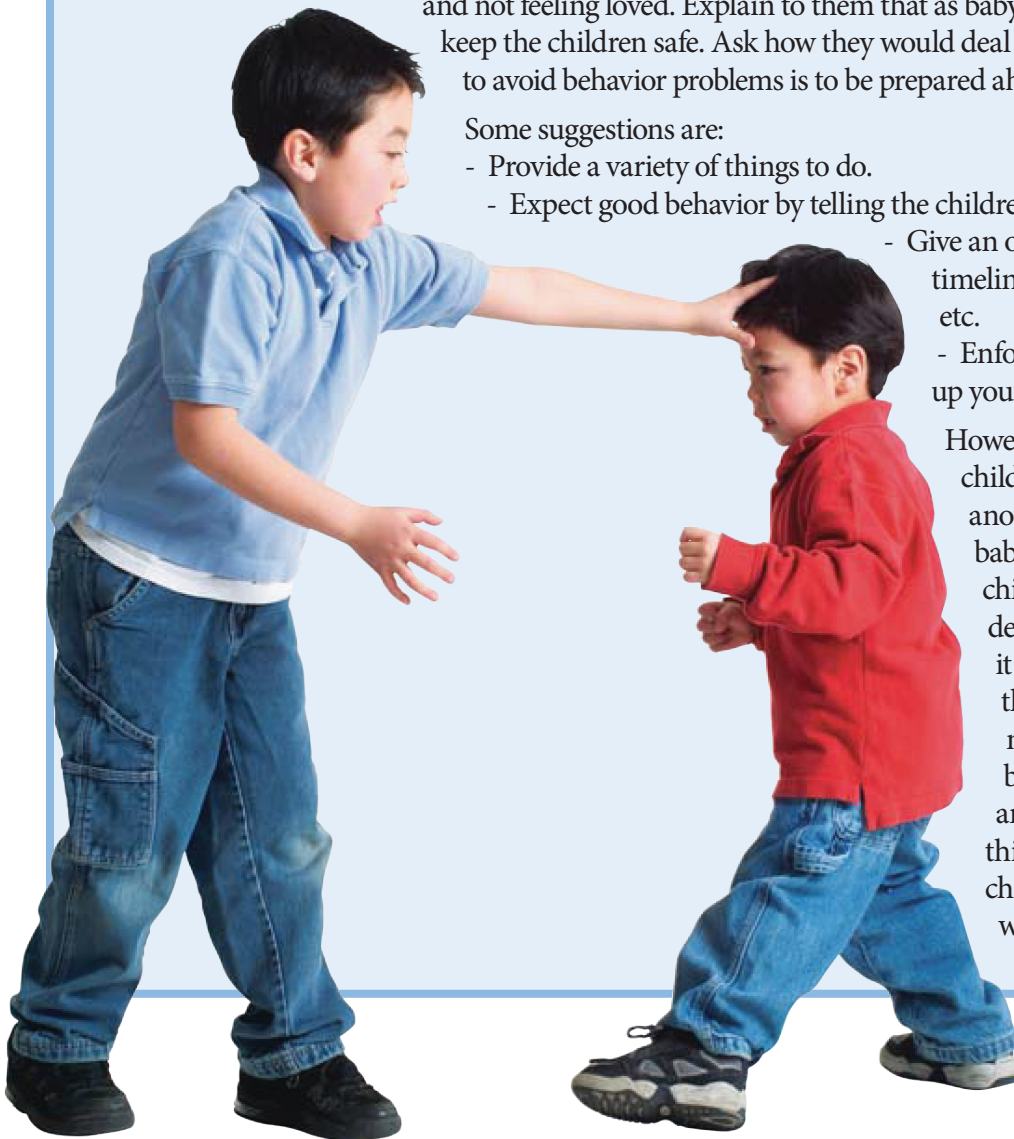
Tell the teens that children’s behavior is influenced by many things. Where they live, previous experiences, social, economic or health conditions, and parenting styles are all important in understanding who children are and why they behave the way they do. This session is about guidance and discipline. Youth will learn how to manage behavior.

Brainstorm with the teens why they think children misbehave. Ask for a volunteer to list each item on a flip chart or whiteboard. Responses should include not feeling well, being tired or hungry, not knowing what they should do, feeling rejected, being upset, feeling discouraged about something, lacking the confidence to do something, and not feeling loved. Explain to them that as babysitters, it is their responsibility to keep the children safe. Ask how they would deal with misbehavior? The best strategy to avoid behavior problems is to be prepared ahead of time.

Some suggestions are:

- Provide a variety of things to do.
- Expect good behavior by telling the children what to do.
- Give an older children fair warning on timelines; “Five minutes until bedtime,” etc.
- Enforce the rules of the house. Making up your own could confuse the child/ren.

However, misbehavior happens. If a child is hurt because he was bitten by another child or knocked down, the babysitter needs to take care of the child that was hurt first. Then try to determine what happened and why it happened. Ask the teen to place themselves “in the shoes” of the misbehaving child. If they think the biting or pushing was intentional and requires discipline, they need to think about what will work for that child. Not all discipline techniques work in every situation.



Examples of Common Behavioral Issues

A Note about Biting:

Children with few words (pre-verbal) may bite out of frustration of not being able to communicate. This is why it's important to listen to the child or have them show you what they want or need before they resort to biting. Infants and toddlers do not bite to be mean or to hurt on purpose. They usually bite due to teething or a lack of self-control (a kiss may turn into biting when unable to communicate needs). If an older child (three years or older) bites, he/she does it for a reason such as anger, frustration, or trying to get attention. No matter who does the biting, tell the teens that as babysitters, it is their job to show disapproval by telling the child in a calm voice that biting hurts and is not to be done.

A Note about “Bad” Language:

Many pre-schoolers enjoy using “toilet” language or inappropriate words. It is part of their growing up; just ignore it. However, tell the teens that if the child/ren use foul language that they find disturbing, ask their parent/guardians or trusted adult for advice. If they think the child/ren are picking it up at home and don't feel comfortable talking with that parent/guardian about it, then they may decide to not babysit there in the future. If they think they are not hearing such language at home, then tell that parent/guardian, so he/she can decide what to do about it.

A Note about Temper Tantrums:

Temper tantrums are a momentary loss of control. Most children have them occasionally. The best thing they can do as babysitters is to remain calm and stay with the upset child.

Let him/her cry. Give him/her a reassuring hug. Don't bring it up with the child later, but do tell the parent/guardian when he/she returns home.



LESSON 4

Activity:

Safe Infant Handling

Life Skill Addressed:

Stress management

Caring

Objective:

To teach safe infant handling.

Materials Needed:

Small raw eggs or overripe small tomatoes

Empty and clean baby food or any small glass jars with lids (large enough for the eggs to fit into.)

What to Do . . .

To demonstrate the impact of shaking a baby, place a raw egg or small overripe tomato in a small jar. The jar represents the skull, while the egg/tomato represents the brain. Screw on the lid. Instruct each participant to give the jar one harsh shake and then pass it along. Count the number of shakes given before the egg breaks or the tomato smashes. This is a graphic way of showing why you never shake a baby. Ask the group, “What did you do?” “What happened?” “What was the most important thing that happened?” “What did you learn?” “How will you use this information in the future?”

What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that taking care of an infant is something babysitters can do after they have a lot of experience with older children and have spent a lot of time watching and learning from adults. Babies need extra care, such as always supporting their neck and head. Tell them that if they ever find themselves sitting for a crying baby, they need to ask themselves these questions: Does he/she need to be fed, burped, or changed? Is he/she too warm or cold? Does he/she seem to have a fever? Does he/she need to suck on something? Does he/she need to feel close to you? Does he/she seem cranky? Does he/she just need to cry? Tell them that crying is the only way babies can let them know something, but as babysitters, it is important to stay calm. If they find themselves getting stressed, put the baby someplace safe such as in the crib, and call the parent/guardian or trusted adult for help. Never shake a baby.

Shaken Baby Syndrome is the term used to describe babies or small children who suffer injury or death from severe shaking or jerking. Half the children who are victims of Shaken Baby Syndrome die from their injuries. Others experience learning disabilities, delays in development, speech problems, hearing or vision loss, etc. Shaken Baby Syndrome can be prevented.

Activity:

Safe Infant Handling

Life Skill Addressed:

Caring

Materials Needed:

Live baby or doll

Disposable and/or cloth diapers

Wipes or washcloth, warm water, and soap

Diaper pins and plastic pants if using cloth diapers

Tissue

Trash receptacle

Disposable gloves

Objective:

To teach safe diapering.

What to Do . . .

This would be an ideal time to have a live baby brought in for demonstrating how to change a diaper. Use a life-size doll for participants to practice changing a diaper.

What to Say . . .

Tell the teens that when they are babysitting for a baby or toddler, it is important for them to check the diaper regularly and to change it as needed. This will prevent diaper rash, unpleasant smells, possible stains on the furniture, etc.

Have the teens practice diapering on the doll.



LESSON 4



Diapering and Restroom Needs

Talk to the parent/guardian for tips on how they approach toileting.

Are they using cloth or disposable diapers? Are they toilet training? If using cloth diapers, what is the proper disposal technique of soiled diapers, folding technique for inserts, and how often are diapers being changed? If they are toilet training is there a schedule or reward system in place?

Diapering steps for Disposable Diapers:

1. Gather all necessary items such as a clean diaper, wipes, clean clothes, and diaper rash ointment.
2. Wash hands and put on disposable gloves, if available.
3. Place a paper towel on the changing table or other flat surface and lay the baby on it. Stay with the baby at all times, keeping one hand on the baby to maintain his or her safety. If you are diapering a squirmy toddler, place the paper towel on the floor to keep the baby from rolling off a raised platform. If appropriate, give the baby a washable toy to occupy them while completing the diapering process. Make sure to disinfect the toy after diapering.
4. Remove the soiled diaper. If it has sticky tabs, unfasten them and stick them back on themselves so they won't stick to the baby.
5. If the baby has a messy diaper, wipe his/her bottom with the corner of the diaper. Then clean with a damp washcloth or wipes. Make sure to clean all creases and genitals. Wipe girls from front to back.
6. Gently lift the baby's hips off the changing surface by holding the baby by the ankles with one finger inserted between them.
7. Fold the soiled diaper in half under the baby, keeping the clean side up. Set it aside.
8. Wipe your hands with a pre-moistened towelette or damp paper towel.
9. Raise the baby's hips off the changing table, slide the clean diaper under the baby's bottom. Pull the diaper between the legs and tape into place. Make sure it is snug but not so tight it causes pinching. Try not to bunch it between the baby's legs as this could cause chafing. Redress the baby.
10. Wash the baby's hands.
11. Remove the baby from the changing table and put him or her in a safe place. Then put the soiled diaper in the correct container.
12. Clean and disinfect the changing table and any supplies and equipment you used.
13. Remove and dispose of your gloves. Wash your hands thoroughly.



Diapering Steps for Cloth Diapers:

1. Gather all necessary items such as a clean diaper, diaper cover (if used), wipes, clean clothes, and diaper rash ointment.
2. Make sure the cloth diaper is prepared. Is the insert folded and put into the pocket or is the insert properly folded as the parent has illustrated?
3. Wash hands and put on disposable gloves, if available.
4. Place a paper towel on the changing table or other flat surface and lay the baby on it. Stay with the baby at all times, keeping one hand on the baby to maintain his or her safety. If you are diapering a squirmy toddler, place the paper towel on the floor to keep the baby from rolling off a raised platform. If needed, give the child a washable toy to occupy them while the diaper is being changed. Make sure to disinfect the toy after diapering.
5. Remove the soiled diaper.
6. If the baby has a messy diaper, wipe his/her bottom with the corner of the diaper. Then clean with reusable cloths or standard baby wipes. Make sure to clean all creases and genitals. Wipe girls from front to back.
7. Gently lift the baby's hips off the changing surface by holding the baby by the ankles with one finger inserted between them.
8. Fold the soiled diaper in half under the baby keeping the clean side up. Set it aside.
9. Wipe your hands with a pre-moistened towelette or damp paper towel.
10. Raise the baby's hips off the changing table, slide the clean diaper under the baby's bottom. Pull the diaper between the legs and velcro or button into place using the diaper cover. Make sure it is snug but not so tight it causes pinching. Try not to bunch it between the baby's legs as this could cause chafing. Redress the child.
11. Wash the baby's hands.
12. Remove the baby from the changing table or help them up from the floor and put him or her in a safe place. Put the soiled diaper and wipes in the correct container. If the baby wears cloth diapers and the baby had a bowel movement, take care of the bowel movement as instructed by the parent before putting the diaper in the container.
13. Clean and disinfect the changing table and any supplies and equipment you used.
14. Remove and dispose of your gloves. Wash your hands thoroughly.

LESSON 4

Toileting Older Children

Young children who have recently been toilet trained still need help in using the toilet, undressing, wiping, washing hands, and dressing again. They might also want you to stay with them when they are using the toilet. Suggesting bathroom breaks is highly recommended. In between activities is a good time to suggest they try to use the restroom. Children often will put off going if they are engaged in a fun activity or favorite show/movie/video.

A Word about Diapering Little Boys:

Diapering little boys can be a bit more challenging than diapering little girls due to an automatic response when the diaper is removed. There are steps you can take to prevent getting urine on yourself or having to change the diaper again immediately.

1. Because of the size and location of his genitals, the urine tends to go up and away from the baby boy and can strike you in the face or chest.
2. Keeping the diaper up can shield you between the baby in case he urinates again. To do this, hold the diaper over the baby lightly while changing until the urine is released.
3. Next, follow the steps listed for proper diapering procedures based upon the diaper used (disposable or cloth).





Bathing infants and children:

The safety of the child/ren comes first; therefore, it is not a good idea for a babysitter to bathe an infant.

If a parent/guardian asks you to do so, explain to him/her that you don't think it is a safe thing for you to do.

You may, however, feel comfortable bathing older children. If you decide you are comfortable with bathing a child, then ask the parents/guardians if you can come over at another time when they are bathing the child, so you can see how they do things and where they keep the supplies. If you do bathe a child on your own, be sure the water is not too hot or too deep and never leave a child unattended in the tub!

Discussion:

How would you handle the situation if a parent/guardian asks you to do something that you have been taught is unsafe?

Bedtime for infants and children:

Infants are always put to bed on their backs. Do not give them a bottle in their crib and be sure there are no items in the crib such as toys. Pull the side of the crib up and lock it in place.

It is important to find out from parent/guardians ahead of time what the bedtime routine is. Does it include washing-up, brushing teeth, story-telling, reading a book, prayers, a special blanket or stuffed animal, music, nightlight, door open? Some younger children may have a difficult time falling asleep even after you have tried all the routine items. Try staying with them, rubbing their backs, and talking softly. They just may be feeling a bit uneasy. If they are older, they may not be tired. Let them look at books quietly in their beds.

Tell them that as a babysitter it is their responsibility to check on the child/ren every 15 minutes.

Family Differences

Families are all different, and each needs and deserves respect. It is important as a babysitter that you respect the culture, religion, and the way the parent/guardians want you to care for their child/ren. Their beliefs might be different from yours and you may have to talk about what you are comfortable with and what you can do as a babysitter.

Tell the teens to learn about the families they babysit for by talking with the parent/guardians. They can talk about what the family values, has difficulty with, or what you should know. This may be as simple as what kinds of foods are not allowed or even what a child/ren might be taught to say before eating. It might be more complicated, like saying prayers that you might not know or might be uncomfortable saying with a child. Ask about restrictions or limitations for television watching, computer use, and playing video games. Find out if a parent/guardian feels uncomfortable about the use of certain words.



Ask the Parent/Guardians:

- Are there any food restrictions for religious or cultural reasons?
- What is the meal time routine?
- Are there any limits to TV/screen/device time including movies, shows, video games, phone apps, etc.?
- Are there certain clothing practices I should know about?
- Are there any restrictions or religious practices that you would like me to know about?

Tip - Make sure that your cellphone has a lock/password protection so the child/ren can't get on your phone without your knowledge.

Tell the teens to learn about the culture of the family and to share their own background. Tell them they can talk about where their family originally came from or what religion they believe in. They can share how their families feel about tidiness, clothing styles, and appearance. As the relationship grows, the parent/guardians may share what is or is not important for them and their child/ren.

Tell the teens that some families might be very different from theirs. As babysitters, they will want to know how to respond if the child/ren swears, then tells them, “My parent/guardians let me use those words.” The teen might have to set their own limits if they are uncomfortable. Tell them they will have to watch their own language and be careful what words they use. All of these considerations are important when sharing the care of children.

Tell the teen to keep in mind that some military families may be different from theirs. Some may have a deployed family member; some not. Some may move frequently; some not. Some may have a lot of memorabilia from the various places they have lived. Tell them as babysitters it’s important for them to show interest in these things, to ask questions and to talk about experiences. In this way they will build a solid relationship with the family.



LESSON 4

Activity:

Brainstorm issues

Life Skill Addressed:

Empathy

Concern for others

Managing feelings

Materials needed:

Flip chart paper

Markers

Toy

Objective:

To discuss special issues when babysitting for child/ren with deployed parent/guardians.

In preparation for this section, ask your Active Duty National Guard/Army Reserve Child & Youth Services Coordinators assigned to your location for their input.

What to Do . . .

Ask for a volunteer from the group who is willing to write the items as the group calls them out. Tell them that you will be talking about the special issues to be aware of when they babysit for children with a deployed parent/guardian and that each person will get the chance to speak when a toy is passed to him/her. Explain that you will hand a toy to one person who will list an item. Then that person will pass the toy to his/her right, and that teen states another item. This process repeats until everyone has had the toy at least once. Tell them it's "OK" if they cannot think of anything. They can simply pass the toy along. Maybe something will come to them the next time around! When everyone is done, ask if anyone has any final thoughts. Of course, any of this discussion could apply to them as well if they have a deployed family member, in which case the discussion could operate on two levels - personal and "professional" (in the role of babysitter).

What to Say . . .

Start the discussion.

The following page lists challenges about deployment that may come up; if they don't, fit them into your discussion.



Deployment

Here is information to keep in mind if you babysit for child/ren whose parent/guardian is deployed, or a parent/guardian who works or lives away.

How Does Deployment Impact the Family?

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs explains that the deployment of a service member can be extremely challenging for a family.

“Even when we are not at war, military families often deal with stresses such as frequent moves or the absence of a parent/guardian. Deployment to war creates additional issues for a family to handle. Families face a number of challenges before, during, and after deployment. This emotional cycle of deployment begins when news of deployment is released to the family. It starts with a short period of strong emotions, such as fear and anger. As departure grows closer, a period of detachment and withdrawal may occur. This can happen to prepare for the person being physically gone.

During the deployment, family members have a range of feelings and experiences, including:

- Concern, worry or panic
- Loneliness, sadness
- Added family duties and responsibilities
- Learning new skills, making new friends
- Fear for their service member’s safety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Financial difficulties
- Dealing with problems on their own
- Understanding what their loved ones have been through
- Concern over being needed and loved

Children’s reactions to a parent/guardian’s deployment vary with each child. Reactions depend on age, maturity and any other behavioral or mental health problems the child/ren might have. The mental health of the at-home parent/guardian often affects the child/ren’s distress level. This is especially true for young children.”

It is also essential to consider how families and service members may need to adjust when the service member returns home from deployment. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs explains that experiences during deployment have helped make the family and service members more responsible. Even if the service member has been called up before, families may find that new challenges arise with each reunion. Reunions can be happy and stressful. There is usually a “honeymoon” phase shortly after demobilization, but it will probably be temporary. The child/ren have grown, and the service member has been through traumatic experiences. The family members have faced new situations in the service member’s absence and readjustment following deployment takes time.

Visit www.military.com and <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp> for additional resources.

LESSON 4

Deployment

As a babysitter, it is important to be aware of the family situation. Who is deployed? Where? For how long? Ask the parent/guardian if there are any issues you need to be aware of. It is crucial that the family and any caregiver, including babysitters such as yourself, keep each other informed. Children are always better off when everyone who interacts with them knows what's going on.

It is best if the babysitter not initiate a conversation about deployment with the child. It is one thing for you to show empathy to a child who is sad about a parent/guardian being deployed; however, you are not equipped to provide counseling services.

Here is some information to keep in mind if you babysit for children whose parent/guardian is deployed, or a parent/guardian who works or lives away.

- NEVER post or discuss anything about the parent/guardian being deployed or living/working away from home on any social media outlet.
- Ask the parent/guardian in the home how they would like for you to respond in the event the child/ren brings up the deployment or absence of the other parent/guardian.
- It is appropriate to show excitement with the child/ren about a parent/guardian coming home from deployment. However, if a troublesome issue arises, attempt to redirect the child/ren to a different activity. Make sure the child/ren talks to the parent/guardian when they arrive home so that the parent/guardian can validate the child/ren's concerns or answer the child/ren's questions. It is the adult's responsibility to discuss it further and get help for the child/ren if needed. Never share any traumatic experiences you may have encountered with the child/ren you are babysitting.
- Be sensitive to the issues and pressures the family is facing. Maybe the family is going to move to be closer to family or friends. Maybe the child/ren will be going to live with someone else. Maybe their economic situation will be changing. If this is the case, and they will be losing income, it is a perfect opportunity for you to do some volunteering and provide the care for free!
- The child/ren may never have thought of themselves as military before, especially if they are National Guard or Reserve dependents. Now their parent/guardian is in the deployment cycle, and things are different. The adjustment to this may take time.
- Do not ask about painful subjects. The child/ren probably see and hear more than they need to in the media.



- Be on the lookout for any changes in the child/ren. Were they happy and carefree last time you babysat and this time they are quiet and withdrawn? Did they enjoy playing with you last time and this time want to be by themselves? These are signs that something could be bothering them. Try to engage them; be creative! Be sure to inform the parent/guardian when he/she returns home.
- If the child/ren have nightmares or cannot sleep, encourage them to talk about what's troubling them or to draw a picture of it. Comfort them as best you can. Stay with them. If they don't fall asleep, that's ok. The important thing is to keep them feeling safe and secure. Tell the parent/guardian when he/she returns home.
- If the deployed parent/guardian is coming home soon, the reunion will be on everyone's mind. Once the reunion date is known, the child/ren may be nervous, yet excited. This is normal; expect a certain amount of uncertainty or tenseness.
- If the child/ren initiates or the parent/guardian asks the babysitter to assist with an effort that can be shared with the deployed parent/guardian, consider using activities such as the ones included below. Be sure to check to see if these ideas are acceptable to the custodial parent/guardian before you use them.
- Talk about the deployed parent/guardian. Have the child/ren talk about the top 1-5 things they love about their parent/guardian. Ask them to share examples of times they spent together in the past.
- Start a scrapbook or memory book with whatever the child/ren wants to put in it.
- Have the child/ren draw pictures, write stories, make collages, etc. Ask the parent/guardian at home to send them to the deployed parent/guardian. If the custodial parent/guardian is ok with it, videotape or record the child/ren singing or dancing that can be shared with the deployed parent/guardian at a later time.
- Download and print coloring pages from the internet and keep some in your Magic Bag for times like these. Plain paper, crayons or washable markers also allow an opportunity for the child/ren to draw out his/her feelings.
- Create a visual countdown tool as the date of the reunion comes closer. Paperchains, a calendar to mark off dates, a jar of kisses (a Hersey's chocolate Kiss for each day until the parent/guardian is due to return. Additional kisses can be added in the event the return date changes) and other creative ways can help child/ren understand time.
- Make "Welcome Home" signs once the reunion date is known. You could also work to create a homecoming box where the child/ren includes something they really want the deployed parent/guardian to know about when they get home.
- Get or create two of the same books and give one to the child/ren and have one sent to the deployed parent/guardian so they can read the books together.
- Borrow the book "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn, a story about Chester, who is temporarily separated from his parent/guardian, from your MWR Library, Army Community Service, or Child & Youth Services Lending Library.
- Google "Children's Books for Deployment" to find other titles your local library may have available for check-out.

