

**GUIDELINES FOR
INFANT/TODDLER CARE SERVICES**

**GUIDELINES
FOR CENTRE-BASED
INFANT/TODDLER CARE SERVICES**

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GUIDELINES FOR INFANT/TODDLER CARE SERVICES

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GUIDELINES FOR INFANT/TODDLER CARE SERVICES

PART A: INTRODUCTION

An infant and toddler care service shall offer a nurturing, caring and safe environment for the provision of quality child care for infants / toddlers between two and eighteen months of age. The infant care service shall strive to meet the infant's/toddler's physical, cognitive and psychosocial needs by embracing a philosophical model of a needs-based programme. The attachment relationships, the care-giver's sensitivity and response to the infant's/toddler's needs and cues, and the staff's specialised training form the foundation of an infant/toddler care programme.

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) regulates and licenses child care centres in Singapore through the Child Care Centres Act (Cap 37A) and the Child Care Centres Regulations (Cap 37A, Sec 19). Infant care centres or centres offering infant/toddler care services are similarly bound by the Act and the Regulations. The guidelines mentioned herein serve as an additional guide for centres offering infant/toddler care services.

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PART B: PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

A well-planned and stimulating environment becomes the venue for learning and developmental opportunities. A pleasant environment creates a sense of well-being and purpose for the care-givers, the infants/toddlers and their families.

Infants are also affected by the structural elements such as walls, ceilings and lighting. Ceilings, walls and lights need to be pleasantly co-ordinated. Very young infants spend much time lying on their backs watching their surroundings and exploring with their hands, legs and mouth. Bold colours, patterns and posters, and bare light bulbs can be a source of irritation to especially young infants as these may be overwhelming and over-stimulating.

The infant care environment should be:

- safe
- healthy
- pleasant
- comfortable
- convenient
- child-sized
- designed to be flexible
- encourage movement
- designed to facilitate choice

The following areas must be considered:

- 1. Specific Areas & Space Requirements**
- 2. Furniture, Fittings, Equipment & Facilities**

1. Specific Areas & Space Requirements

1.1 Specific Areas

These specific areas are important considerations when designing a setting for infants/toddlers:

- Rest and napping areas
- Toileting and washing up areas
- Feeding and food preparation areas
- Learning and skill development areas
- Peer play areas
- Storage areas

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1.2 Indoor Space

The group size, the developmental stages and the infants'/toddlers' needs shall determine the amount of space and spatial organisation. The environmental needs of non-mobile infants are different from those of mobile infants, as space becomes a crucial consideration for young infants developing gross motor skills such as crawling and walking. The use of appropriate barriers is necessary for the safety and protection of younger infants. This is also applicable to mixed-age grouping where rough & tumble play is often characteristic of older infants.

1.2.1 The space requirement specified in Table 1 shall apply

TABLE 1:

Age of Children	*Minimum Square Metres per Infant
2 months – 18 months	5

* The minimum space requirement does not include the space for service areas, entrance areas, hallways, passage ways and diaper change areas.

1.2.2 The following requirements shall be adhered to:

- The indoor activity areas for infants/toddlers must be separated from child care children.
- The areas for play, diapering, feeding and napping shall be set up to maximise contact between the caregiver and the infant. These areas shall allow the interaction to be unhurried and quiet.
- Mobile infants/toddlers need sufficient uninterrupted space for exploration and discovery.
- Areas (especially play areas) for non-mobile infants shall be separate from those for mobile infants.
- The napping area shall be physically separate from other activity areas. Partitions or other suitable barricades shall be used to separate the napping area from other areas.
- The premises shall be housed preferably on the ground floor of a building. If this is not so, every level of the premises shall be equipped with diapering, feeding and napping areas

1.3 Outdoor Space

The outdoor space shall have provisions for equipment for large-motor and sensorial play. A separate space is essential for infants to engage safely without interference from older children.

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- The outdoor activity area shall be physically separate from space used by the children in the child care centre. If the play areas are shared spaces, different time schedules for the various age groups shall be observed.
- The outdoor activity area shall be suitably surfaced and well-drained.
- The outdoor activity area shall be equipped with a variety of age- and developmentally-appropriate toys and equipment (not applicable to HDB void deck premises).
- The outdoor activity area shall be enclosed by a barrier (fence, wall or building) at least 1.5 metres high.
- The outdoor activity area shall also have shaded areas.

2 Furniture, Fittings, Equipment & Facilities

The developmental needs of infants / toddlers have an important bearing on the types of furniture, fittings, equipment and facilities used in an infant/toddler care programme. Consideration shall be given to the type, height and size of these elements.

2.1 Play Equipment

- A broad range of equipment shall be available to allow for different types of play such as constructive, gross motor, heuristic, dramatic and social play. Play equipment shall be provided from some of these categories:
 - Art supplies
 - Books
 - Fine motor or manipulative toys
 - Gross motor or large muscle equipment
 - Musical instruments and equipment
- The size of objects and toys are an important consideration as younger infants tend to put things into their mouth. Toys and play equipment shall be age-appropriate, washable, non-breakable, safe and non-toxic.
- Sufficient strollers /rockers shall be provided.

2.2 Feeding Facilities:

- Child-sized chairs and tables shall be provided for older infants.
- High chairs shall have footrests and side and back supports with a facility for latching the food tray firmly.

2.3 Napping Facilities

- A crib/cot with mattress and mattress cover for each infant aged below 12 months; and mattress with mattress cover for each infant aged 13 months and above shall be provided during nap time.
- Cribs/cots shall be of sturdy construction with closely-spaced bars.
- Each crib/cot shall be occupied by only one infant.
- Each crib/cot shall have a firm mattress and it shall be covered with vinyl or similar moisture-resistant material.
- Each infant/toddler bedding shall be used for him/her only. Such bedding shall be replaced when wet or soiled.

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- Cribs/cots shall not limit the ability of staff to see the infant.
- Cribs/cots shall be arranged so as to provide a walkway and work space between the cribs/cots sufficient to permit staff to reach each infant without having to step over or reach over another infant. There shall be at least 0.5 sq. metres space between the cribs/cots.

2.4 Food Preparation Facilities

- Separate facilities shall be provided for food preparation.
- Food preparation utensils and equipment shall not be used for other purposes.
- Sufficient and suitable facilities shall be provided for the sterilisation of milk bottles.
- A refrigerator shall be provided for the storage of baby food, expressed milk, etc. A sink with running water, heating appliances and refrigerator shall be accessible to all staff.

2.5 Toileting & Diapering Facilities

- Sinks with running water shall be provided near the diaper change area at a ratio of one sink for every 10 infants /toddlers aged 18 months and below.
- Sufficient potty chairs shall be provided for the infants / toddlers.
- Toilets, potty chairs and sinks shall be in close proximity to indoor and outdoor activity areas.
- Diapering tables shall:
 - have padded surfaces and shall be covered with washable vinyl or plastic
 - have raised sides at least three inches high
 - be maintained in good repair and safe condition
 - be kept separate from the kitchen/food preparation areas

2.6 Storage Facilities

- The activity areas shall be equipped with low open shelves for toys and play materials.
- Storage space shall be available for :
 - mats
 - cleaning equipment and agents
 - feeding implements

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PART C: SAFETY, HEALTH, HYGIENE AND NUTRITION

Safety, health, hygiene and nutrition are the basic provisions in an infant/toddler care setting. In group settings and long day care situations, the safety features/measures, health and hygiene practices and provisions for nutrition are critical considerations. The primary goal is to protect and enhance the well-being of infants/toddlers in a safe and healthy environment where they can learn and explore uninhibitedly.

The centre shall provide for a safe and clean environment which is essential for the general health of the infants/toddlers. It shall strive to ensure the hygienic condition of the environment to minimise the risk of bacterial, viral and fungal diseases.

In addition to the requirements stipulated below, please refer to Parts IV, VIII and IX of the Child Care Centres Regulations.

The following areas shall be considered:

- 1. Safety Features and Measures**
- 2. Hygiene Practices**
- 3. Health Practices**
- 4. Provision for Nutrition**

1. Safety Features and Measures

1.1 The requirements for safety features and measures shall include the following:

Building's/Centre's Premises – Cleanliness, Maintenance and Repairs

- Staff shall conduct daily safety checks of all areas (including outdoor area) regularly to ensure that the environment does not pose a potential threat, harm or danger to the infants/toddlers.
- The floor surfaces and area layout shall be safe for crawling, standing and walking.
- All furniture, fittings and fixtures shall be safely and appropriately constructed for the age group and shall be in good working condition at all times.
- All equipment, materials and toys shall be appropriate for each age group. The centre shall be vigilant of toys with small, removable parts, materials/equipment that are broken/damaged and items painted with/containing toxic substances.

1.2 Fire Precautionary Measures

- Please refer to Part IX, Section 38 of the Child Care Centres Regulations.
- The centre shall also work out a comprehensive evacuation plan to take care of the infants/toddlers during an emergency. In addition, the centre shall have in place a detailed set of evacuation procedures for mobile and non-mobile infants.

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- Other than ensuring sufficient staff during an emergency, the centre may also consider locating the infant area adjacent to the fire escape exit.

1.3 Supervision of Infants/Toddlers

- Infants/toddlers shall be supervised at all times (includes supervision by sight or ear) and shall not be left unattended while diapering, bathing, toileting or napping.
- Sleeping infants shall be placed on their backs rather than on their fronts to ensure that their breathing is not interfered. Any other soft materials that may potentially block the airways such as pillows, blankets, comforters, and bean bag chairs shall be removed.

2. **Hygiene Practices**

2.1 The staff shall observe the following practices:

- Feeding equipment and all surfaces used for food preparation (e.g. utensils and bottles) shall be sterilised after each use.
- Liquid soap shall be used and hands washed under running water
 - before and after diapering
 - before and after preparation of meals and feeding an infant
 - when in contact with bodily fluids such as mucus, urine, saliva or faecal matter
- Disposable paper towels shall be used for drying hands.
- The diapering area shall be disinfected with each diaper change.
- Soiled diapers shall be placed in plastic bags and disposed of in a covered bin, preferably with a step pedal to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Toys used by the infants/toddlers shall be washed daily.

3 **Health Practices**

- Please refer to Part IV of the Child Care Centres Regulations for additional requirements.
- Daily health checks for each infant shall be conducted.

4. **Provision for Nutrition**

4.1 The centre shall ensure the following:

- The centre shall provide food that conforms to the dietary requirements stipulated by the Health Promotion Board.
- The centre shall have an individual feeding plan for each infant/toddler that includes instructions from parents/registered medical practitioners, feeding schedule, milk formulas/breast milk/thawing expressed breast milk, schedule for introducing solid/new food and cups/utensils.

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PART D: STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

The following areas shall be considered:

1. **Staff-Child Ratios**
2. **Levels of Programme Staff and Qualifications**

1 **Staff-Child Ratios**

- 1.1 The staff-child ratio for infants/toddlers between two months and eighteen months is specified in Table 1. A smaller group size is preferred for the purposes of maintaining quality care and positive staff-child interaction.

TABLE 1

Age of Infant	Maximum Staff-Child Ratio
2 months – 18 months	1:5

- 1.2 Infants/toddlers shall be supervised and under direct visual observation at all times by the staff responsible for them. Infants/toddlers shall not be left unattended under any circumstances.
- 1.3 The staff-child ratio shall be met at all times including arrival, departure and nap times.

2. **Levels of Programme Staff & Qualifications**

- 2.1 Specialised training is requisite for staff working with infants/toddlers. The knowledge and understanding of infant/toddler growth patterns and developmental needs are critical in providing appropriate care and experiences. Infants/toddlers are largely dependent on adults for their needs. Their physical, cognitive, and psychosocial well-being are determined by the secure and trusting attachments they form with their care-givers.
- 2.2 Provisions shall be made for infant care assistants who have child care experience which does not include working with infants/toddlers, to undergo a two-week orientation period working with a group of infants/toddlers under the constant guidance of an infant educator.

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2.3 The operator shall employ programme staff with the necessary qualifications as determined by the Director of Social Welfare.

2.4 The levels of programme staff and corresponding qualifications as stated in Table 2 shall apply:

TABLE 2:

Programme Staff	Qualifications	Responsibilities
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum five GCE O' level credits including EL1 or MT, • Diploma in Pre-school education – Leadership or its equivalent recognised by MCYS • Preferably holds a Certificate in Infant Care and Development or its equivalent recognised by MCYS • A valid First Aid Certificate • Minimum two years' experience in a pre-school setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall plan and direct the infant care programme • Shall be responsible for the staff working with the infant and toddlers
* Infant Care Educarer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in Infant/Toddler Care and Development or the Fundamentals Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education (with certification in Infant /Toddler Care) or its equivalent recognised by MCYS • A valid First Aid Certificate • Above 21 years of age • Minimum two years experience in a pre-school setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be primarily responsible for planning and carrying out the day-to-day developmental and care-giving tasks for a group of infants/toddlers • Shall attend to the health and safety of the infants/toddlers present. • Shall supervise Infant Care Assistants.
* Infant Care Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-registered nurse (SRN) • Preferably with Certificate in Infant/Toddler Care and Development or the Fundamentals Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education (with certification in Infant /Toddler Care) or its equivalent recognised by MCYS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ** Shall be primarily responsible for planning and carrying out the day-to-day developmental and care-giving tasks for a group of infants/toddlers • Shall attend to the health and safety of the infants/toddlers present. • Shall supervise Infant Care Assistants.
Infant Care Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate in Family Day Care or the Fundamentals Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education or its equivalent recognised by MCYS • A valid First Aid Certificate • Is above 18 years of age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall only work under the direct supervision of the Infant Educarer or Infant Care nurse

* Centres may employ either an Infant Care Nurse or an Infant Educarer. The centre is required to ensure that at least one Infant Educarer or Infant Care Nurse is present in the premises at all times during the centre's operation hours.

** Centres who employ an Infant Care Nurse instead of an Infant Educarer would need to ensure that the Infant Care Nurse undertakes roles and responsibilities similar to that of an Infant Educarer.

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PART E: INFANT/TODDLER CARE PROGRAMME

An infant/toddler care programme primarily focuses on routine care tasks, rituals and play. The care-giving aspect underlying these routine tasks, rituals and play constitutes an important part of an infant/toddler curriculum. The interaction and relationships between the infant/toddler and the care-giver during the routine care tasks and rituals foster the infant's/toddler's learning and development.

The approach to responsive planning shall be based on:

- knowledge of the infants'/toddlers' developmental stages, characteristics and needs
- strengths, interests and needs of individual infants/toddlers and their families
- observation, assessment and evaluation of individual infant's/toddler's development
- the goals of the infant/toddler care programme
- the practical considerations of care in group settings
- the stability and consistency of care

The following areas must be considered:

- 1. Schedules**
- 2. Care-giving**
- 3. Routines and Rituals**
- 4. Play**
- 5. Discipline**
- 6. Centre-Family Partnership**

1. Schedules

- 1.1 The centre shall have a daily schedule organised around each infant's/toddler's routines.
- 1.2 The daily schedule shall have the flexibility to be reviewed and adjusted to accommodate the infants'/toddlers' changing needs and at the same time provide some stability and order to the day.

2. Care-giving

- 2.1 In an infant/toddler care programme, interaction, physical contact and being held are essential to the well-being of infants/toddlers.
- 2.2 Throughout the day, each infant/toddler shall receive much physical contact and individual attention in such ways :

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- Being held
 - Gently rocked
 - Talked / listened to
 - Sung to
 - Taken on short walks within the centre's vicinity
- 2.3 The centre shall ensure that the stability and consistency of care are maximised through:
- allocating a primary caregiver to a particular group of infants/toddlers
 - grouping infants/toddlers so that they do not have to change rooms or groups
 - organising staff rosters and shifts to ensure that the same caregivers are available for arrivals and departures.
 - organising staff routines and responsibilities to ensure stability and consistency of care.
3. **Routines and Rituals**
- 3.1 Routines such as the following provide venues for learning:
- Nappy-changing
 - Toileting, feeding
 - Nap Time
 - Dressing, washing and bathing
 - Arrivals and departures
- 3.2 Routines shall take into consideration cultural and religious differences, family background and social mores.
- 3.3 Families shall be consulted regularly on their infants'/toddlers' needs and routines.
- 3.4 Each infant shall :
- be allowed to form and follow his/her own patterns of feeding, toileting, napping
 - be allowed to nap without any distraction or disturbance from other activities
 - be removed from the sleeping area when awake
 - be given daily opportunities to move freely in a safe, clean, open, warm and uncluttered area.
- 3.5 Staff shall encourage the development of self-help skills (dressing, toileting, washing and eating) as and when the infants/toddlers show signs of readiness.
- 3.6 The centre shall record each infant's/toddler's rituals to help establish security and stability.

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4. **Play**

4.1 Care-givers play an important role by creating a conducive and appropriate environment to support the infants'/toddlers' play. The environment must provide opportunities for uninterrupted time, ample space and appropriate materials for free play and shall include the following types of play:

- Sensorimotor play
- Object play
- Heuristic play with objects
- Physically active play
- Constructive play
- Social play
- Symbolic play
- Language play
- Creative play

5. **Discipline**

Please refer to Part IV, Section 17 of the Child Care Centres Regulations for detailed requirements.

6. **Centre-Family Partnership**

6.1 Partnership between the centre and family is essential for the infant's/toddler's sense of stability and continuity of care.

6.2 Centres shall plan ways in which they can involve and increase participation of families in their programme. Spending time with the families and involving them in the planning process will foster continuity of care and provide stability and security for the developing infants/toddlers.

6.3 Centres shall have regular exchange of information/communication with families on their infants'/toddlers' development and routines.

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PART F: ADMINISTRATION AND RECORDS

The following areas must be considered:

- 1. General Administration**
- 2. Health and Safety Records**

1. General Administration

- 1.1 Please refer to Part V, Sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Child Care Centres Regulations for detailed requirements.
 - Records shall be compiled during personal interviews with parents/guardians and updated regularly. Such records shall enable both parents and educators to ensure continuity of care for the development of infants/toddlers.
- 1.2 General information on the infants/toddlers shall include:
 - habits/needs and likes/dislikes
 - daily routines
 - food allergies
 - bowel functions
 - sleeping and eating behaviours
 - comfort devices
- 1.3 The above information shall assist in the development of an individual needs and services plan for each infant/toddler and shall include:
 - feeding plan
 - toilet training plan, if applicable
 - additional services required by the infant/toddler apart from those provided by the centre
- 1.4 The centre shall maintain a daily observation record on each infant/toddler such as those on the infant's/toddler's feeds, naps and bowel movements.
- 1.5 A profile of infant/toddler development shall be maintained.
- 1.6 A log book to record unusual events e.g. accidents/incidents, deviations, etc shall be maintained.

2. Health and Safety Records

- 2.1 The centre shall maintain a set of health and safety policies and procedures which shall include:
 - exclusion of infants due to illness
 - management of accidents / injuries
 - emergency plan and procedures

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- sterilisation of milk bottles and preparation of formulas
- arrangement for feeds/meals
- arrangement for baths
- arrangement for naps
- diaper changing routines
- sanitation routines
- family's involvement in health concerns and education in all aspects of child development i.e. physical, social, etc.
- written menu for each age group (4 – 6months, 7 – 9 months, 10 – 12 months)
- three-monthly record of the height and weight of each child

2.2 The centre shall maintain a daily signing in and out of infants/toddlers at the start and end of the programme. This shall include the times of entry and departure from the centre.
