



Helping Children Use Language

| ITERS-R Indicator | Why is this important? |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff generally respond (75% of the time) in a timely and positive manner to children's attempts to communicate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crying is answered quickly. ○ Children's verbal requests are attended to. ○ Staff respond with interest to children's communication during play. ○ No negative responses to children and no ignoring children attempting to communicate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely, positive response by staff to meet the needs expressed by children encourages children to use language because they see it brings results. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff add words to the actions they take in responding to children throughout the day during routines and play. • Staff add words and ideas to what children say. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a short span of a few years, children learn to transform crying into differentiated sounds and gestures and then into recognizable words that express exact meanings. No child can successfully accomplish this transformation without the help of adult language models. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are skillful (75% of the time) at interpreting children's attempts to communicate and frequently follow through appropriately. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff need to be able to interpret correctly what children are trying to communicate either verbally or non-verbally in order to meet the children's needs appropriately. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have many turn-taking conversations with children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Back-and-forth baby conversation. ○ Repeat what toddler says and then wait for response. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging infants and toddlers in conversation gives them the experience of taking turns to vocalize and to listen to someone else's vocalization. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff ask children simple questions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions help focus children's attention on a particular topic and increase the possibility that they will listen to the answer, even if they cannot yet answer the questions themselves. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff usually maintain good balance between listening and talking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give child time to process information and answer. ○ Talk more for babies and give toddlers more time to talk themselves. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating with young infants requires staff to do most of the talking, because babies still have a limited range of vocal responses (crying and cooing). Older infants and toddlers who can say some words need considerable time to think of what to say in a conversation. Therefore, it is very important for staff to maintain eye contact and listen attentively for some sounds to see if an answer is forthcoming, before answering the questions themselves. |



SOURCE: *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)*