



Observation, Documentation, and Reflection

Observation, documentation, and reflection are important skills for high-quality infant and toddler care. Developing these skills can help teachers with the following activities:

- ◆ **Sharing observations with families.** For example, you might share how a toddler moved a toy shopping cart back and forth until she figured out how to squeeze it behind a table, and you might highlight how the child was learning about space and size. Sharing this information can also strengthen your relationship with families as you focus on celebrating children's growth and discoveries. Your communication may even inspire families to share more of their own observations with you.
- ◆ **Getting to know infants and toddlers better.** Through ongoing observation, you learn about children's strengths, needs, knowledge, interests, and skills, and you uncover any barriers there may be to learning. You might, for example, notice that when you sit quietly with a toddler after drop-off time and stroke his back, it helps him slowly adjust to the classroom and transition into exploration.
- ◆ **Appreciating the unique learning style of each infant and toddler.** For example, through observations, you may notice and appreciate how an infant is learning by banging objects together, and you may have back-and-forth interactions focused on this activity.
- ◆ **Encouraging children's competence and success.** Observations can help you notice how and when to intervene in ways that help children be successful. Instead of jumping in and fixing a "problem" for an infant or a toddler, provide just enough help, like loosening the lid on a jar but not taking it off. This encourages children to explore and learn more on their own.
- ◆ **Collecting information about infants and toddlers.** You can use observations to plan for learning experiences and interactions. Taking time to observe allows you to explore what infants or toddler are focusing on, what their intentions might be, and what strategies they are using to learn.
- ◆ **Conducting screenings and assessments.** Information from screenings and assessments can help you understand how infants and toddlers are progressing developmentally and help articulate concerns you may have about individual children.
- ◆ **Making informed decisions about organizing the environment.** For example, as you observe an infant's increasing interest in and ability to pull up to a standing position, you might make sure there are enough opportunities in the environment to support this exploration.