BABY BEHAVIOR IN CHILDCARE SETTINGS

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A feasibility study funded by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation
Overview

- Project Introduction
- Formative Work
- Study Design
- Material Creation
- Implementation and Results
Project Introduction

- Adapting Baby Behavior + TOTT for childcare
  - Enhance provider and parents understanding of developmentally normal toddler behaviors
  - Address barriers to following child nutrition guidelines

Explore feeding and behavior in child care environments
Identify opportunities for sharing Baby Behavior information with parents through child care providers
Focus Groups and Interviews

- 10 focus groups
  - Sacramento, San Diego, Contra Costa, Stockton, and Davis
  - All English, in-home providers

- 31 individual interviews
  - 24 in-home providers and 7 centers
  - 14 English and 17 Spanish
What does the childcare feeding environment look like?

Balance between home influences and childcare provider views
Mealtime chaos at home

“It’s a hurry. It’s less time that the parents have to come back from work late, and prepare dinner, and deal with the other stuff they have on hand, like sports for the kids… I understand that it is hard for parents. Especially, of course, if both [are] working.”

“It's some of, you know, my toddler age kids I notice too, I think a lot of parents feed their kids on the go. And they don't really, like, sit down at a table and eat.”
Bad habits are learned at home

“The parents will feed the child, you know, uh what are those chips called? The cheese chips? Cheetos? Or soda and candy. And then when they are coming to my care, [the child is] like, where’s the sugar?”

“I’ve had a lot [of parents] that even say that the only way they can get them to eat, as long as they are in front of the TV, then they are focused on that, and they don’t pay attention, like to wanting to get up and run around.”
“Well like, it’s part of maybe like a trust? That they have, that we’re feeding them right.”

“So then she came to me, she’s like, if you can get her to eat, I don’t care what she eats. As long as she eats.”

“And the mom’s like, I’m so glad that she eats for you. She actually did not eat, like baby food, with her at all, until she came to me.”
Providers recognize toddlers eat different at childcare than at home

“Like I have one little boy that I don’t know, 18 months, and he won’t eat vegetables at home but he eats them here for me.”

“Because sometimes at home they don't eat it, they don't even try it, but then when they see their friends eating it and M will say that is peer pressure. But sorry, but they are eating, it is good, you know.”
“Mondays”

“You don’t plan a lot for Monday. You’ve just got to get them re-civilized. And that’s just the nature of when parents don’t have their kids all day long, and they have SO much to do over the weekends.”

“When they come back from the weekend, on Mondays, it’s always hard. When they come back from a vacation, it takes me at least one week to get them back on the routine.”
Teamwork with parents

“We need to work [with parents]. Especially between parents, children, and provider. We like, you know, we need to work like a team.”

“If you don’t have that parental support at home, it’s not going to change.”
Is mealtime stressful for providers?
For some, food refusal is age-related and not a concern

“I want them to make their own decisions, even though they’re so tiny. They need to learn, to choose, you know… Maybe the way that the food looks, or the food, the way it tastes, the texture, you know that helps them to make a decision.”

“Its once they get older that they are fussier, I find that 9 to 24 months is a little bit easier for me in a way.”
Food refusal is stressful for most providers

“I think it’s stressful because the parent comes … ‘So how did they eat today? What did he eat?’ And it’s ‘no, he didn’t eat his chicken today.’ Tomorrow, next day, ‘So how did he eat today?’ ‘No, he didn’t eat his chicken today.’ You know? So, you have that parent in the back of your head, asking you every day, how their child is eating, because he’s not eating at home either.”
What do providers do about food refusal?
Other Methods

‘Tricks and Tips’

- “This is not a restaurant”
- Offer a variety
- Modeling, acting excited
- Discourage negative comments at the table
- Put good eaters next to selective eaters
- Vegetable first, fruit second
- Involve in food prep
- Family style meals
- 1 taste, 2 bite club

What if ‘tricks and tips’ don’t work?

- Adjust menu
- Have back up in fridge
- Offer more than one vegetable
- No alterations
Opportunities to share messages with parents?

- Videos
- Small posters
- Handouts
- Kid activities
- Specific provider training
- Blurbs that can be adapted for text, social media, or newsletters
“Whatever you say, it better be fast

“You’ve got to cut out little blurbs of it. Pick your battle, of what’s important… Like I sent home an article, just on that and put it with, when I’m closed, what’s going on, I just sent home that article.”

“And its usually just quick questions when they drop off if they have a question or when they pick up if they have a question we have the answer for them, there is the knowledge going from me to them in quick moments.”
Conclusions from the focus groups

- Toddlers refuse food at home and at childcare
  - But, toddlers often eat differently (and behave differently) in childcare than at home
  - Use of routines and ‘tricks and tips’ to improve variety of foods
- Providers want to work with parents to achieve child nutrition recommendations
- Providers are willing to give nutrition education to parents and share ideas and opportunities
Intervention concept

‘Hands-off’ educational intervention

- Education tools for providers
- Flexibility in how materials are used
- Variety of topics related to toddler feeding and behavior
- Topics informed from focus groups
Study design

- Recruit providers and parents
- Provide materials
- Evaluate
Material structure

- Weeks 1-6: Adapted Baby Behavior messages into 6 modules
  - Each week consisted of educational materials for the provider and separate materials to share with parents
  - Materials were tested for clarity and acceptance

- Weeks 7-10: Activities for providers to do with children and share with parents
Core components: Weeks 1-6

Videos
- Intended to be the primary message delivery method
- Videos ranged from 3 to 6 minutes in length
- Provider and parent videos

Handouts
- Supplement, reinforce video messages
- Provider and parent handouts
- Single- or double-sided

Poster
- For provider to display in childcare
- Could use as talking point to spark conversation
Components: additional resources

Social media campaign (weeks 1-6)
- 4-5 Text messages and 1 Facebook post
- Focused on practical applications

Activities (weeks 7-10)
- Color wheel
- My morning routine maze
- “Look how I’ve grown” coloring book
Evaluations

- Online surveys
  - Baseline
  - After week 6
  - After week 10

- Short video evaluations
Questions?
Each week in a glance…

- **Week 1: Baby Behavior Basics**
  - Covers cues, crying, and sleep in infants
  - Provides context for the next 5 weeks
  - “Remember when your infant…”

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**Baby Behavior Basics**

- **Newborn babies…**
  - Give wash-added clothing when they are most active and leave and when they are slow-moving or dozed.
  - Drink half the amount per kg. Drink begins their brain’s growth and development, and it also makes them more ready to wake up.
  - Cy-pros other babies because they haven’t learned all of the others yet.

- **Older babies and toddlers…**
  - Still eat small, but more in a certain way than what they need.
  - Sleep for longer stretches at a time, but still need to wake up at night.
  - Are crying little babies, but still need to calm down and sleep. Remembering the same waking symptoms, like colic, vomiting, or starting, or feels the baby’s cries.

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*UC Davis Baby Behavior in Child Care Study* Team

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Jenifer Rehling
Maeve Thakural
Rebecca Grother
Carly Beller
Each week in a glance…

- **Week 2: 6 Big Changes for Toddlers**
  - Developmental changes that are often misinterpreted and impact feeding and parent stress
  - Big 6 Changes:
    - Growth slows down
    - Practice new skills like standing and walking
    - Practice using their fingers
    - Needs help to learn
    - Remembering more everyday
    - Using scripts to understand and predict daily activities
Each week in a glance…

- Week 3: Food Refusal
  - Explains toddlers’ variable appetite and food preferences
  - Attributes food refusal to normal toddler development

Six Reasons Your Child Might Refuse Food

It’s normal for your toddler’s appetite and food preferences to change day to day or even meal to meal. It is a phase most toddlers go through. Here are 6 reasons why your healthy toddler might refuse to eat meals that you offer.

Her growth has slowed down.
Her appetite might change dramatically to day because she is not growing as fast as she did when she was younger. She won’t need as many calories as when she was younger. Try not to worry when she won’t eat very much of one meal. Instead, pay attention to how much she eats over a few days.

He must learn to use his fingers.
He needs practice using his fingers, so he will not eat feeding himself. While it might take a little longer, and a bit more patience, letting him feed himself is a great way to get your toddler to eat more AND get important practice. Try giving him foods that he can eat with his fingers.

She needs to learn how to stand & walk.
Sometimes, your toddler will want to practice pulling up, standing, and walking more than she wants to eat. Practicing these new skills is important. Try to make blocks of time for practice between meals and snacks and sit and talk with her while she eats.

His memory is getting better & better.
As your toddler gets older, he will get better at remembering foods he likes, foods he doesn’t like, and where (especially) he likes it. He may have a few food preferences and new ones will develop. Keep foods your child likes in the fridge and use new foods only when he is hungry.

She is easily distracted.
Your toddler can tune out the sights and sounds around him. If he is distracted by the TV or other activity nearby, he may not be able to focus on eating. Sitting with him, limiting noisy distractions, and having a mealtime routine can help your toddler stay focused.

He thinks you don’t like the food.
You toddler learns a lot about the world by looking at your face and hearing your voice. If you smile and seem relaxed, he will be more likely to try a food than if you frown or look upset. Seeing you enjoy a new food can help him be more interested in trying it too.

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Helping Parents When Toddlers Won’t Eat

Parents may think their toddlers are “Picky Eaters” when they don’t want to eat, but there are many reasons toddlers may refuse food. You can help parents understand their toddlers by sharing these ideas:

1. Slower growth means appetite will vary
   At each stage, toddlers begin to grow more slowly than they did before. Slower growth means they don’t have to keep eating as much and more often. It is normal for toddlers’ appetites to change from day to day. It might take toddlers some days to accept a variety of foods.

2. Toddlers like to “get to know” their food
   Toddlers learn by using all of their senses. They want to inspect, touch, and smell foods before they put them in their mouths. Giving your toddler time to let toddlers explore foods, it will make it easier to get them to accept new foods in the future.

3. Toddlers can remember foods they like
   Toddlers are better and better at remembering foods they like, and things in their lives. Toddlers remember foods that they like and they want to keep eating foods all the time. It can make meals more enjoyable if the toddler can have more favorite foods.

4. Toddlers MUST use their fingers
   Toddlers start to use their fingers to pick things up and to food themselves. Sometimes toddlers will refuse to eat unless they can pick up the food themselves. It is a great idea to let healthy foods and healthy snacks easily be picked up by toddlers.

5. Toddlers are easily distracted
   Toddlers are easily distracted by things going on around them. They are very young and playing nearby. It can make meal time even more fun. Toddlers can focus on their food better when parents and other children sit and talk with them about what they are eating.

6. He wants to learn and play
   Toddlers are having all the time. They learn by exploring and learning at once and learning to listen. Toddlers are more likely to eat when they are at play and talk with them about what they are eating.

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Each week in a glance...

- **Week 4: The Power of Routines**
  - Toddlers use scripts to predict what is happening next
  - Parents can use them to streamline daily activities
  - Emphasizes the parent is in charge of the script

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**Using the Power of Routines**

**What is a routine?**
- A routine is an activity that is done with steps in the same order every time.
  - A routine is NOT a schedule. It is a series of steps which is important, not the time of day.
- To make our lives easier, we have routines for things we do every day. We get ready in the morning or preparing for bed. Sometimes, we have routines without even realizing it.

**Toddlers memorize routines in their lives.**
- You need to have a child experience something: He will remember it.
- Toddlers use routines to remember what they have experienced and how they have done it.
- Toddlers use routines to remember what they have experienced and how they have done it.
- Children need routines to remember what they have experienced and how they have done it.

**You are in charge of the scripts you make.**
- You can influence the script your toddler creates by introducing routines for him to follow.
- Routines are very helpful to toddlers, including getting ready for an activity, eating, reading, playing, driving, etc.
- Routines help toddlers to remember what they have experienced and how they have done it.

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**Aclarando las rutinas:**

**¿Qué es una rutina?**
- Una rutina es una serie de pasos que va seguido para realizar una actividad.
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**¿Por qué son importantes las rutinas para los niños?**
- Las rutinas son importantes para los niños porque permiten un ambiente más tranquilo y feliz, lo que facilita el aprendizaje y la socialización. Las rutinas fomentan la independencia y la responsabilidad, y ayudan a los niños a entender el mundo que les rodea.

**Cómo puedo ayudar a mis hijos a tener rutinas?**
- Puedo establecer rutinas para cada actividad diaria para que mis hijos sepan lo que van a hacer y cuándo.
- Puedo explicarles las actividades de la rutina y cómo se van a realizar.
- Puedo hacer que mis hijos participen en la creación de las rutinas, lo que les dará más sentido y compromiso.

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**Los Niñositos Crean Guiones**

**Los Niñositos:**
- Están aprendiendo todo sobre el mundo que los rodea.
- Observan las personas y aprenden a imitar sus actividades.
- Creen “guiones” en sus mentes sobre lo que los demás hacen.
- Usan guiones para planificar lo que va a suceder en el futuro.

**¡Tú estás a cargo de los guiones que tu niño hace!**
Each week in a glance…

- **Week 5: Toddlers’ Tears and Tantrums**
  - Toddlers still use cues to communicate
  - Some crying can be prevented from escalating
  - Two types of tantrums
Each week in a glance…

- **Week 6: 3 Steps for Better Sleep**
- Importance of a bedtime routine
- Suggestions for starting (or revising) a bedtime routine

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### 3 Pasos para Ayudar que Tu Niño Duerma Más

La mayoría de los niños deben aprender a dormir por la noche y evitar al igual que los adultos, las horas de acostarse y desayunen mucho tiempo tarde. Trate de hacer lo siguiente:

1. **Mantén calmado la hora de dormir**
   - Los pasos adecuados, hablando, jugando, aprendiendo y el tiempo en la pantalla puede mantenerse los niños. Para tal razón, piénsalo un enfoque acertado a actividad que se relacione con el sueño que se deba aliviar de no dormir.

2. **Usa una rutina**
   - Tú puedes usar las rutinas de acostarse para ayudar a tus niños a ir a la cama y permanecer dormido. Recuerda que las rutinas son pasos dados en el orden exacto con el que la rutina se sigue para que los niños se sientan más contentos.

3. **Cuide sus emociones**
   - La rutina puede estar formada por actividades de juego, leer un libro, lavar la casa, etc. Algunos niños pueden necesitar un tiempo de transición más largo.

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### Talking to Parents about Bedtime Routines

One of the biggest challenges about having a new parent is adjusting to having a baby sleep. As babies develop into toddlers, sleep requirements and habits change. As some parents find themselves needing to help their toddler fall asleep more easily or wake up less often, it may be necessary to have a bedtime routine. Parents can make a bedtime routine that works for them and their family.

#### #1. Keep bed time calm

- **Before bedtime**, set a calm tone by turning off electronics and activities that may cause sleep problems. This includes quieting the environment and ensuring that the child is calm.

#### #2. Use routines

Parents can introduce a routine starting with a simple activity, such as reading a book before bedtime. This can be a calming activity that helps the child transition to sleep. Routines can include activities such as:

- **Bedtime**
  - Reading a bedtime story
  - Singing a lullaby
  - Names and stories can include a visual of the things they enjoy doing.

- **Waking or sleeping**
  - Soft music
  - Relaxation exercises

#### #3. Remove stimulation

- Sometimes children need help to feel safe and secure. It may be necessary to create a routine that works for your child.

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### Bedtime Routines

**A bedtime routine will help your toddler:**

- **Feel safe and happy**
- **Learn when it is time to sleep**
- **Calm down and get ready for sleep**
- **Wake less during the night**
- **Be in a better mood the next day**

Remember, a routine is different than a schedule. Start your routine when you see signs that your toddler is tired.
Questions?
Implementation

HLC recruited providers (n=19)

Providers recruited parents (n=58)

**Intervention start:**

Weeks 1-6 modules delivered before start of each week

Midpoint survey

Weeks 7-10 activities delivered

Baseline survey

Weekly video survey

Endpoint survey
Watched Videos and Read Handouts

- Provider:
  - All 6 Videos: 94%
  - All 6 Handouts: 83%

- Parent:
  - All 6 Videos: 78%
  - All 6 Handouts: 63%
Content Knowledge
median proportion correct

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I don’t have enough time to share education with parents

I think the materials are helping parents make better toddler feeding decisions

I am confident in my ability to talk to parents about toddler behavior

Materials make it easier to talk about feeding and behavior

Provider: Material Value

Agree

Disagree
Parent: Material Value

- Videos: 76% Very useful, 32% Somewhat useful, 2% Not useful
- Handouts: 66% Very useful, 44% Somewhat useful, 12% Not useful
- Posters: 44% Very useful, 54% Somewhat useful, 12% Not useful
- Social Media: 32% Very useful, 47% Somewhat useful, 31% Not useful
- Speaking with Provider: 80% Very useful, 28% Somewhat useful, 2% Not useful
- Activities: 72% Very useful, 30% Somewhat useful, 8% Not useful
Why this intervention worked

- Videos were only 3-6 minutes
- Weekly modules were topic-based
  - Topics informed from focus groups!
- Multiple ways to share messages
  - Providers had the flexibility in sharing messages
For More Information

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