

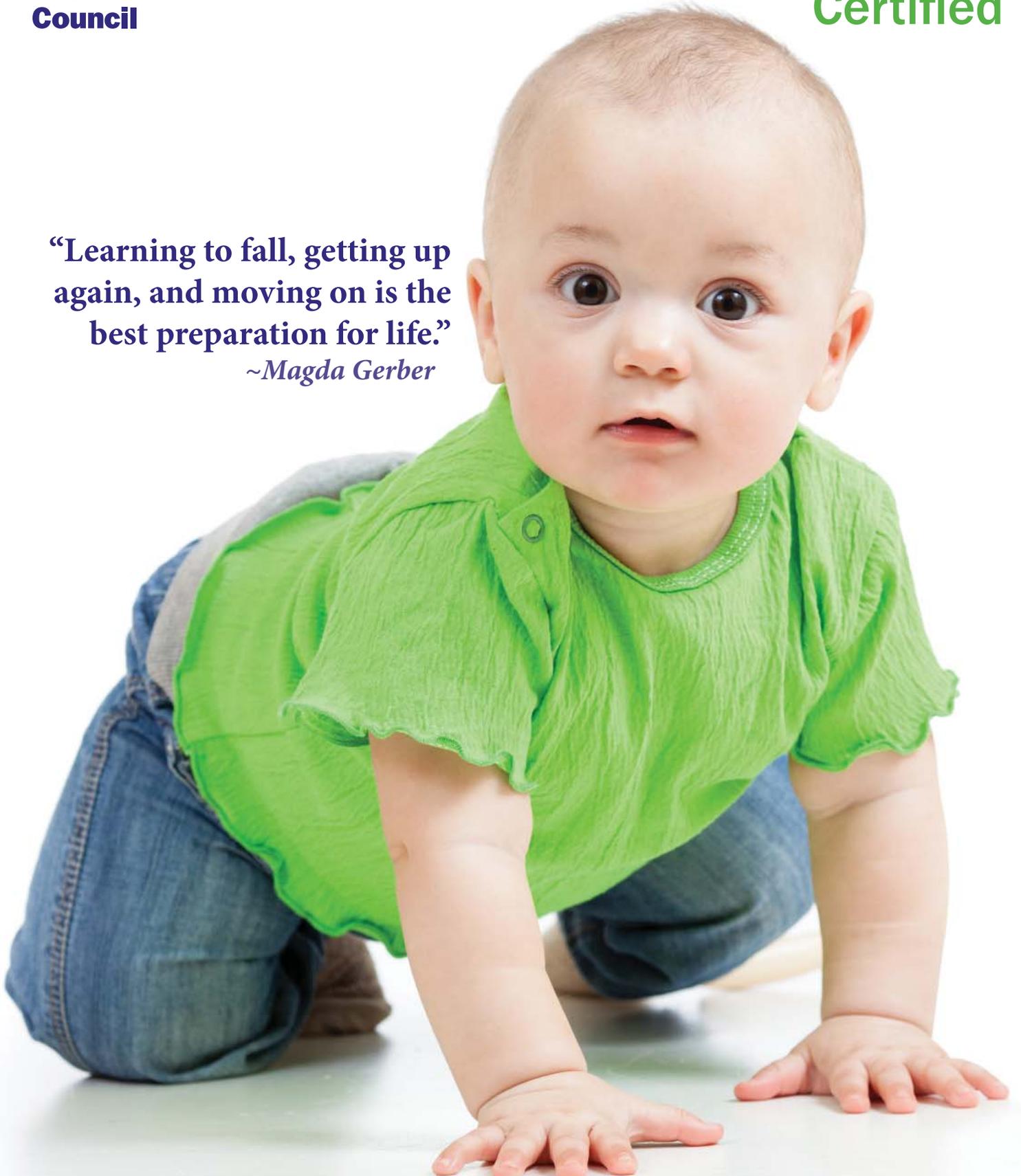


Capital District  
Child Care  
Council

Become  
**Freedom of Movement**  
Certified

**“Learning to fall, getting up  
again, and moving on is the  
best preparation for life.”**

*~Magda Gerber*



### About the Freedom of Movement Checklist:

There are many moving parts to providing infants with quality group child care. At the top of list is health and safety, which of course makes a great deal of sense. Infant care is very busy in many ways. There are many mouths to feed, diaper's to change and bodies to hold. Throughout the day there are times that infants have to be left "on their own" while their caregivers tend to other tasks. In trying to keep infants safe amongst their peers they end up being placed in different pieces of furniture designed to keep them in one place, such as a swing chair or bouncy seat. There are numerous pieces of infant equipment commonly referred to as containers that non-mobile and just mobile infants tend to spend a great deal of time in. Too much time spent in containers and not enough time being spent on the floor can result in scoliosis and torticollis. "It may also delay motor skills, shoulder/arm/hand muscle strength and decrease sensory experiences to hands and vision" (Canterino 2011). Rooted in Resources for Infant Educators (RIE) practices and the work of Dr. Emmi Pikler, this checklist is designed to work with child care providers in infant classrooms or family and group family child care homes to support them in optimizing the amount of time infants spend moving freely. Providing non-mobile infants with environments that allow them to be in positions they can get in and out of on their own is an integral piece in aiding them with optimal developmental outcomes. Freedom of movement allows infants to feel confident with themselves while gaining interest in the world around them. This is a check list to help assess care environments and practices for children between the ages of birth and two years.

### Using the Freedom of Movement Checklist:

This checklist is designed as a reflective tool not limited to but including, infant caregivers of all modalities, coaches and trainers, child care administrators, home visitors and parents. Each section of the checklist can be used as an informal assessment of how programming supports the individualized support of freedom of movement for infants throughout the day.

Answer each question based on the care practices and environment. If something is unobservable turn the statement into a question to get accurate answers.

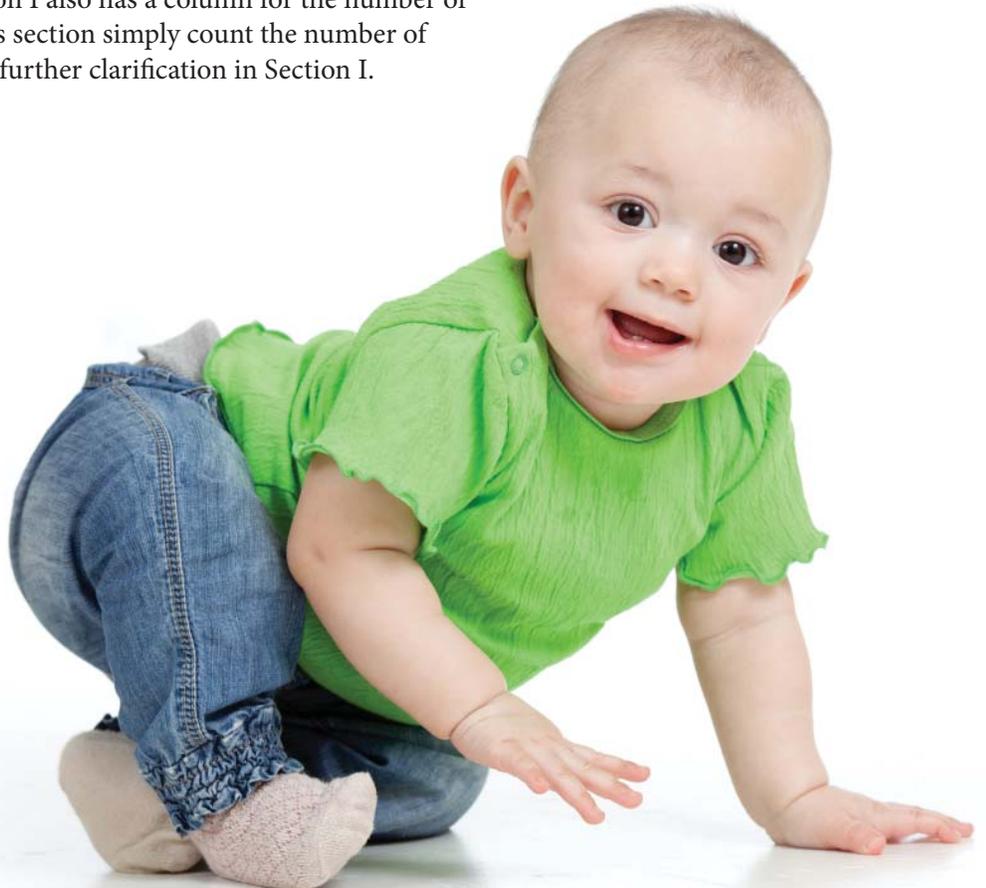
At the end of each section you can count the yeses as a point to determine a score for pre and post intervention data. The questions will read as double negatives, it is helpful to read them as true and false questions. For example, if you answer a question as, "No, that's not true" the question would be answered a no. If you answer the question as, "Yes, that is true" the question would be answered a yes. Section I also has a column for the number of the item each section has. When scoring this section simply count the number of the item and not the yeses and nos. There is further clarification in Section I.

### TO APPLY:

#### Verification Specialists send

a copy of the completed checklist to:  
Child Care Council/FOM  
91 Broadway  
Menands, NY 12204

Certificates are valid for two years. At the end of two years, the program must successfully complete the Freedom of Movement checklist again with a Verification Specialist.



**Freedom of Movement Checklist:**

Providing non-mobile infants with environments that allow them to be in positions they can get in and out of on their own is an integral piece in aiding them with optimal developmental outcomes. Freedom of movement allows them to feel confident with themselves while gaining interest in the world around them. This is a checklist to help assess care environments for children between the ages of birth and one year. Scores of a 0 in section I and scores within 0-2 between sections II and III are considered excellent and after one-on-one assistance and observation from a New York State Infant and Toddler Specialist will be considered to be a Freedom of Movement Certified Child Care Program.

Child Care Program Name:

Child Care Program Address:

City: State: Zip:

Caregiver(s):

Classroom name:

CCR&R name:

CCR&R Address:

Partnering Infant & Toddler Specialist:

Sum of Pre Checklist: Date: Completed by:

Sum of Post Checklist: Date: Completed by:

Observation guidelines:

-30 minute observations

-observer notes/resommended questions in *blue italics*



## Section I: Environmental Equipment

According to findings from recent research, life experiences have significant impact on development. “A typically developing child also needs frequent opportunities for movement and interactions with people and objects. Fixed pieces of equipment such as playpens, high chairs and bouncy seats should be used sparingly, as they provide little opportunity for varied and active experiences” (Cranley Gallagher, p14). The more time an infant spends in a container, the potential for less quality interactions with his or her environment, self and others increases. Infants develop from their heads to their feet and from the center of the core to their fingertips. There are twenty-three parts of the body an infant needs experiences moving and controlling (Pikler, xxii). Providing an infant with the ability to reach, look, shift positions and move can aid him or her in developing motor skills naturally and fully. Infants need to be in control of their bodies and the positions they are in. When we put infants in furniture they cannot get in and out of on their own we take away their control. This section is designed to consider how much time an infant is able to spend truly in control of his or her body. Ideally, an infant will never spend time in equipment he or she cannot get in and out of independently.

## Section I: Rationale and Points to Consider\*

**Item 1: Bouncy seats** place the infant in a fixed, sitting position. Infants do not have control over being able to fully move and reposition their bodies. When spending time in this type of equipment, infants will miss out on moving their heads, trunks, arms, fingers and legs, they also lose the opportunity to coordinate these body parts. Peripheral vision may also be blocked and trunks are often weighted down in down in the middle. Overuse may also lead to head flattening, motor and vision delays (Canterino, 2011).

**Item 2: Ring standers** place infants in an upright position while restricting movement. As infants bodies are able to withstand their weight they begin to stand, placing them in positions their bodies are not yet able to support can actually hinder development. “Overuse may delay motor skills, shoulder/arm/hand muscle strength, and decrease sensory experiences to hands and vision” (Canterino, 2011).

**Item 3: Swing chairs** place the infant in a fixed, sitting position while being rocked. All of the learning and successes of manipulating one’s body are significantly diminished in a swing chair. Beyond movement infants can become overly pacified through this external regulation and may not reach the heights of alertness needed during their alert states. Overuse may also lead to head flattening, motor and vision delays (Canterino, 2011).

**Item 4: Walkers** place infants in an upright position while providing unnatural movement and are well known for being dangerous. There are great numbers of accidents where children have fallen down stairs, been burned, poisoned, and drowned through use of this device. Beyond the imminent danger, there are no clearly documented benefits to their use. The muscles used in a walker differ from those used in walking and can lead to tiptoe walking. This can tighten heel and leg muscles, and hence, not strengthen muscles needed for sitting, crawling, and walking; and can then lead to delays in these milestones. Their use may also slow cognitive and other areas of motor development (Mayo Clinic).

**Item 5: Carriers** are devices worn by adults to keep infants close that also restrict movement. Though attachment is very important, it is necessary to consider the amount of time an infant spends in a carrier and the reason why the carrier is used. **When observing, make sure an awake child is not worn for more than 15 minutes at a time.**

**Item 6: Seats** are any piece of equipment that places an infant in a sitting position before he or she can sit on his or her own. Seats can be detrimental and restrict trunk, arm, and leg movement. Seats can lead to incorrect postural alignment, rounding the back and making the head lean forward while also placing the chest behind the pelvis. This is uncomfortable and may not follow the proper developmental order of the body and can also lead to fly-away hands (Canterino, 2011 and Deardorff). Having an infant’s body in such positions does not enhance motor development.

**Item 7: Jumpers** are similar to walkers in “that they facilitate a motor pattern that is opposite of normal movement development” (Canterino 2011). Jumpers may also put an infant’s body weight on his or her legs before the muscle and skeletal systems are ready to support him or her while putting an infant in a position he or she cannot get in or out of without an adult.

**Item 8: High chairs** when used during non-feeding times are another seat that restricts movement. Lap feeding is a preferred method of feeding an infant who cannot sit alone yet, but this checklist is not designed for meals. If an infant is placed in a high chair for an activity such as painting or participating in a circle time the chair has become a container and is restricting an infant’s control over his or her body. If an infant must be in a high chair to have an experience, consider the developmental appropriateness of the activity. Is there a way an infant can have that or a similar experience while moving freely and being in charge of his or her body?

**Observe to be sure that high chairs are only used for feeding.**

*\* If a doctor or therapist recommends use of any equipment their recommendations should be followed. This checklist is not designed to interfere with medical practices.*

### Section I: Environmental Equipment

Write the number of pieces of equipment you have for each item

|   | Pre                                   |                          | Post                     |                                     |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|   | YES<br>How many?                      | NONE                     | YES<br>How many?         | NONE                                |
| <i>Item 1: Bouncy seats example</i>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Item 1: Bouncy seats  | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 2: Ring standers   | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 3: Swing chairs  | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 4: Walkers   | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 5: Carriers  | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 6: Seats   | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 7: Jumpers   | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Item 8: High chairs   | <input type="checkbox"/>              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| <b>Environmental Equipment Score:</b><br>Add the number of items for each piece of equipment for the total score. |                                       |                          |                          |                                     |

*Observe in classroom for 30 minutes. Make sure room is container free. If containers are present for children with a valid doctor's note, be sure that only the infant with the note is using the container. ASK: I see you have a [swing chair, seat, other container], can you tell me when and how you use it?*



## Section II: Environmental Features

This section takes into account a safe, clean and developmentally appropriate environment for non-mobile and just mobile infants. If an infant is in a space that is container free where should he or she go and what can he or she do?

These indicators go deeper than infants being occupied and being passive participants in the world around them. Infants deserve to be engaged with their surroundings.

### Section II: Rationale and Points to Consider

**Item 1: Outdoor play** not only builds connections to the natural world, but can provide less structured and more varied experiences and thus aiding in freedom of movement. Infants gain improved awareness, reasoning, observation and numerous cognitive and motor skill development from active outdoor play and exploration. “All infants, from birth to six years old, should participate daily in two to three occasions of active outdoor play, weather permitting” (Early Head Start, p15). It is recognized that not all programs have areas appropriate for infants to participate in active outdoor play, refer to the Early Head Start Technical Assistance Paper Number 14 for further assistance.

**Items 2, 3 & 4: A safe space** on the floor should be dedicated to infants where they can spend their time being in natural positions exploring the world around them. This space

should be clean and contain items that are easily sanitized. The space should be well defined. Consider using furniture and shelving as natural barriers or the use of play yards and gates to keep the area protected from children engaging in active play. The space should be large enough for a caregiver and at least two infants to be in together for interaction. Infants should have ample time to explore on own if content. The space should provide enough room for movement and developmentally appropriate materials for infants to explore. Take caution, the intent is not to segregate infants from each other or the rest of the group. Infants should spend time around their peers. Make sure the environment is fully infant safe and friendly and allow them to explore appropriately. The safe place can be used during busy times of day and when infants are alert and ready to explore independently.

**Item 5: Adult seating** can help providers have accurate visual supervision, get up and down quickly, support their backs and feed infants more easily. It is important that caregivers are able to easily maneuver around their care space. Seating can be removeable.

| Section II: Environmental Features   |            |       |             |
|--|------------|-------|-------------|
| Place a check mark next to each statement that is true for your care environment   |            |       |             |
|  | Pre<br>YES | Notes | Post<br>YES |
| Item 1: No outdoor space for babies to move freely.<br><i>Do you have an infant playground or outdoor space? Can I see it?</i>   |            |       |             |
| Item 2: No protected areas in care space where non-mobile babies can move and position themselves on their own.  |            |       |             |
| Item 3: Safe space for infants has them isolated from the group for the majority of the day.<br><i>When observing make sure infants are not alone or go unchecked for more than 5 minutes.</i> |            |       |             |
| Item 4: Safe space for infants is too small to fit more than one infant and a caregiver at a time.   |            |       |             |
| Item 5: No seating for adults to feed babies in natural positions.   |            |       |             |
| <b>Environmental Features Score:</b><br>Add the total number of checkmarks for the score.  |            |       |             |

### Section III: Schedules and Routines

This area takes a deeper look at caregiving practices that can aid caregivers in providing developmentally appropriate programming that can support natural freedom of movement.

#### Section III: Points to Consider and Rationale

**Item 1:** Individualized schedules for infants are important for numerous reasons. In regard to the use for this checklist we are looking to make sure every infant's needs are honored. While individual infant's needs are being met schedules may open up to have fewer infants awake at one time. This can lead to less chaotic times and allow more easily implemented practices that support freedom of movement.

**Item 2:** If all infants are expected to participate in an activity at the same time their interests and motivations may not be met. Again, if infants are placed in areas and kept there their true freedom of movement is not being supported.

**Item 3:** If the stroller is used to transport children from one point to another, such as the classroom to the playground, it is considered an appropriate use of the apparatus. If the stroller is used for certain enriching experiences on occasion, such as a walk to a pond to feed ducks this can be appropriate if infants are alert and engaged.

A stroller ride or buggy walk can be a safe way to provide infants with time outside. Having infants experience their outdoor world and fresh air is very important. Infants should be outside daily at least two to three times a day (Early Head Start). According to the New York State Child Day Care Regulations 418-1.7 Program Requirements: "(g) Daily supervised outdoor play is required for all children in care, except during inclement or extreme weather or unless otherwise ordered by a health care provider. Parents may request, and

providers may permit, children to remain indoors so long as required staff/child ratios are maintained." If a program has no other way of providing infants with outdoor experiences other than in strollers then getting the fresh air is of the upmost importance and the ride may have to suffice. Caregivers should plan to make this time enriching and an experience and not simply time in a container outside. If caregivers find that many infants are falling asleep while on the walk, consider the timing of, the length of and stimulation levels of the stroller ride. If infants can be outside in a safe environment or playground and are walked instead or in addition to this time contemplate the levels of engagement of the children. Do take time to consider how strollers are containers and do significantly restrict the freedom of movement and can put infants in positions they cannot get in and out of on their own. Regular inside or outside stroller rides are considered container time and should be avoided.

If an infant is worn during routine times of day when he or she can be contently playing alone, such as if a caregiver is leading circle time for older children and uses an infant carrier to wear a baby to include him or her in that circle time, this would be considered time in a container. If the infant is not content and needs to be with his or her caregiver at this time a baby carrier can be considered.

**Item 4:** Essential to Freedom of Movement is making sure infants can always get in and out of any position they are in. If an infant is placed in a sitting position, but she cannot get into or out of sitting on her own, then she is stuck and her movement is restricted. When infants are being placed in their safe floor space and it is not meant to be a specialized tummy time, being placed on their backs will provide them with the least restrictive positioning.

### Section III: Schedules and Routines

Place a check mark next to each statement that is true for your care environment

|   | Pre<br>YES | Notes | Post<br>YES | Notes |
|---|------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Item 1: All infants under the age of eighteen months are not provided with individualized sleeping and eating schedules.<br><i>Can you tell me about the infant's schedule?</i>     |            |       |             |       |
| Item 2: All babies are expected to participate in activities at the same time (art projects, circle and story times, etc.).<br><i>Can you tell me about large group activities?</i> |            |       |             |       |
| Item 3: Babies are walked in stroller or worn as part of daily routine.<br><i>Do you take infants on stroller rides? Where? How often?</i>  |            |       |             |       |
| Item 4: Infants are placed on the floor in positions they cannot get in or out of on their own. i.e. they are placed in a sitting position before they can sit up on their own.     |            |       |             |       |
| <b>Schedules and Routines Score:</b><br>Add the total number of checkmarks for the score.   |            |       |             |       |

The Capital District Child Care Coordinating Council is a non-profit organization serving parents, employers and child care providers in Albany, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties in New York State. It is a resource and referral agency, providing resources to the community by improving the availability and quality of child care, and a referral service counseling parents seeking child care.

Region IV New York State Infant Toddler Resource Network  
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or email [sgould@cdcccc.org](mailto:sgould@cdcccc.org)



[www.cdcccc.org](http://www.cdcccc.org)



Capital District  
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West Education and the Program for Infant and Toddler Care