

# EARLY HEAD START TIP SHEET

No. 44

Moving Cribs for Usable EHS Space, September 2010

## Can Early Head Start programs move empty cribs to create more usable floor/play space?

### Response:

Early Head Start programs should try to design and utilize settings that provide a separate space for infants and toddlers to sleep. But, knowing that it is not always possible to have designated space for cribs, programs can move *unoccupied* cribs on a temporary basis. For example, to maximize usable play space, programs may consider moving aside unoccupied cribs on a temporary basis if additional space is needed for a special activity. Programs considering moving cribs should include in their plans and policies ways they ensure meeting both individual and group needs in an efficient manner while implementing this practice.

Although the idea of moving cribs is great in theory, it can be difficult to implement in an effective, ongoing, and programmatic way. Programs should be aware of how the 'extra' space created by moving cribs will be utilized and how, when appropriately accommodating individual sleep schedules, returning cribs may impact children currently using that space.

### *Providing an individualized approach that minimized disturbances to others within the group*

Best practice indicates that classrooms should have sufficient space, equipment, and storage to support a developmentally appropriate curriculum and an individualized approach to caring routines, such as napping. Classrooms should be configured<sup>1</sup> to:

- **Support individualized care** that accommodates to the specific needs of each infant and toddler. Having cribs readily available for use allows programs to provide "on-demand" rest times based upon each child's unique sleeping patterns.
- **Ensure the full range of program activities can be efficiently accomplished.** Having a separate, designated and consistent space for cribs provides a predictable transition routine for sleepy children while alert children can continue engaging in their own activities and routines.
- **Allow for easy circulation and flow to each area and/or between each activity while minimizing disturbances to other children engaged.** Having cribs located away from the active areas of the room but within view of the teachers allows for undisturbed rest-times while maintaining undisturbed play areas where children can freely explore.

### *Ensuring adequate, usable space for indoor programming*

Programs must ensure that at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child is available for play and exploration times. This space does not include the area occupied by cribs since, as stated in HSPS 1304.53 (a)(3), "the center space ... must be organized into functional areas that can be recognized by the children and that allow for individual activities [and routines such as sleeping] and social interactions."

It is important to recognize that this standard suggests a minimum square footage requirement. Programs are encouraged to utilize larger spaces that take into account the amount of space required to accommodate cribs and to fully support adequate programming that promotes each child's development in all domains.

<sup>1</sup> Head Start Design Guide: A Guide for Building a Head Start Facility, Section 7.7.4, 2005.

### *Using space-conserving cribs*

The only type of space-conserving crib an Early Head Start (EHS) program may consider using is the mini crib. **Mini cribs** are about a foot smaller in length and depth than standard-sized cribs; and **may be used if:**

- They meet all health and safety guidelines; and
  - Infants and toddlers are appropriately sized to fit comfortably inside.
- Programs should also make considerations for alternate sleep accommodations for growing children that match their developmental needs and family preferences, such as larger cribs or cots.

Although the space-saving design of stackable and portable cribs may be appealing, they do not meet the requirements and the intentions of the Head Start Program Performance Standards. For example, **stackable cribs**, designed like bunk-beds, **do not meet the space requirements** in 1304.22(e)(7):

- **To prevent the spread of contagious illness, each crib must be separated at least 3 feet** from all sides including next to, above, and below. This distance helps to reduce the risk of contagions emitted from children's breathes, coughs, sneezes, and/or bodily fluids. Consider the impact of secretion and germs emitted from children using upper crib levels onto the children and/or their sleeping spaces and linen on the lower levels.

Also, this space requirement must be maintained as children develop and grow. A stackable crib does not provide at least 3 feet of space from the top of a child's head to the crib above when the child stands in the crib. Although children shouldn't be spending long periods of time awake in their cribs, it is likely that a child may need some time moving around while settling to or stirring from sleep.

- **To ensure quick accessibility to each child in case of emergencies, each crib must be separated at least 3 feet and positioned appropriately.** The intent of this requirement is to ensure that each crib is positioned so that adults can promptly have easy access to children, as well as the ability to easily view each child. In efforts to maintain the three (3) feet of separation beneath and above crib levels, the height of the upper crib mattress may cause difficulties with adult accessibility. Consider the staff person's need for balance and stability (preferably provided from the floor rather than a stool) to safely reach for children. Staff people must also be able to effectively access each child so that medical procedures can be administered if necessary.

### *Ensuring sufficient crib and mattress options*

In order to meet the needs and facilitate the participation of children [1304.53(b)(1)], programs need to consider crib and mattress options that are sufficient for regular, ongoing, routine use. Cribs and mattresses are to facilitate comfort, safety, and stability that allow for proper rest times to promote healthy growth and development. Programs should be aware that the design purpose for some portable cribs is to provide sleeping arrangements for a short term basis. Although fine for a few nights' sleep, they may not provide quality sleeping arrangement for ongoing use.

### **Questions to Consider for Planning and Programming:**

- Are there local and state requirements requiring cribs to be stationary? (Remember, when comparing local, state, and HSPPS requirements, the most stringent requirement takes precedence.)
- How does the program ensure that the arrangement of cribs and its plan to move them about address and meet all of the health and safety concerns, such as space requirements, crib and mattress health and safety standards, adult accessibility, and provision for restful sleep time?

- How often will staff be moving cribs? Consider that caregivers will be using their time and attention in accomplishing this task, rather than spending time interacting with or caring for the children and families.
- How does the program ensure that they are allowing for individualized sleeping schedules for each child? How does the program ensure a safe, cozy, comfortable, and peaceful napping environment for each child?
- If the program opts to move cribs, how does it ensure that the process is smooth, calm, and safe for all of the children? How does it ensure that the process does not interrupt children's exploration or daily routines?
- Where will the empty cribs be moved? Consider how children will be kept safe (e.g. moved or held) while cribs are transported.
- How will staff ensure that each crib is used for one child only and that they will not be mixed up when they are moved?
- How will staff ensure that the appropriate space separates the remaining occupied cribs? Empty cribs cannot be placed within three (3) feet of those occupied by sleeping babies.
- What policies, procedures, and equipment are available and in place to implement in the event of an emergency? How will staff ensure that the evacuation cribs, if applicable, are always easily accessible and ready for use?
- How will staff ensure that cribs are always easily accessible throughout the day to accommodate each child's individual sleeping patterns?
- How does the program ensure that the crib location is consistent as possible, providing each child with a predictable, naptime routine?
- How does the program ensure cribs are located where adults can easily view the sleeping children? Are sleeping children's cribs away from noisy, disruptive activity?
- What are the local and state requirements regarding the types of cribs programs may use? (Remember, when comparing local, state, and HSPPS requirements, the most stringent requirement takes precedence.)
- How does the program ensure the sleeping equipment and materials are sufficient for regular, ongoing, routine use and will continue to meet all safety requirements as children grow and develop?
- How does the program ensure that sanitation is being properly implemented with regard to cribs and other sleeping materials?

### **Performance Standards, Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations:**

- 1304.21(a)(2)(i) Parents must be invited to become integrally involved in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to the child development and education.
- 1304.22(e)(7) Grantee and delegate agencies operating programs for infants and toddlers must space cribs and cots at least three feet apart to avoid spreading contagious illness and to allow for easy access to each child.
- 1304.40(e)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide opportunities to include parents in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development and education.
- 1304.53 (a)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide a physical environment and facilities conducive to learning and reflective of the different stages of development of each child.
- 1304.53 (a)(2) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide appropriate space for the conduct of all program activities.

- 1304.53 (a)(3) The center space provided by grantee and delegate agencies must be organized into functional areas that can be recognized by the children and that allow for individual activities and social interactions.
- 1304.53 (a)(5) Centers must have at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child available for the care and use of children (i.e. exclusive of bathrooms, halls, kitchen, staff rooms, and storage places) and at least 75 square feet of usable outdoor play space per child.
- 1304.53(b)(1) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide and arrange sufficient equipment, toys, materials, and furniture to meet the needs and facilitate the participation of children and adults.
- 1304.53(b)(3) To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), all sleeping arrangements for infants must use firm mattresses and avoid soft bedding materials such as comforters, pillows, fluffy blankets or stuffed toys.

### **Resources:**

**Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.** American Academy of Pediatrics. 2002.

Gonzalez-Mena, Janet. **“Sleeping and Naptime.”** Infant/toddler Caregiving: A Guide to Routine, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Sacramento: California Department of Education. 2002.

Early Head Start National Resource Center. **Early Head Start Tip Sheets.** *The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.* DHHS/ACF/OHS.

- **16: What Are the Guidelines for Dividing a Large Space into Separate Infant/Toddler Classrooms?** November 2003.
- **17: How Do EHS Programs Divide an Infant/Toddler Classroom into Separate Learning Areas?** November 2003.
- **20: How do Infant and Toddler Sleeping Arrangements Meet the Head Start Performance Standards and Incorporate Best Practice?** November 2003.

**Head Start Design Guide: A Guide for Building a Head Start Facility, Section 7.7.4.** DHHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 2005.

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/resources/ECLKC\\_Bookstore/PDFs/Head%20Start%20%20Design%20Guide%20--%20Second%20Edition.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/Head%20Start%20%20Design%20Guide%20--%20Second%20Edition.pdf) (accessed August 26, 2010).

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*This Tip Sheet is not a regulatory document. Its intent is to provide a basis for dialogue, clarification, and problem solving among Office of Head Start, Regional Offices, TA consultants, and grantees. If you need further clarification on Head Start Policies and regulations, please contact your Regional Program Specialist.*