

Baby TALK’s curriculum development began in 1986 as a way to connect with families around their journey raising babies and toddlers. Over the last 35+ years, Baby TALK model developers have written additional sections and hundreds of pages, made updates, and added translations, all while staying true to the commitment to honor the expertise and knowledge that we know all families have about their children.

Our time with families, whether prospective or enrolled, starts with relationship-building first as opposed to focusing on forms, flyers, brochures, or even curriculum. We first learn from families about their interests, strengths, and desires which then allows us to offer appropriate resources, including curriculum, to strengthen and reflect on areas most relevant to the family. The curriculum itself holds very little to no value without the context of our relationships with families. When we come alongside families with curriculum that honors the expertise and knowledge caregivers have about their child and matches where they are, we create opportunities for them to deepen their relationships in ways that they find useful and meaningful, as well as for us to deepen our relationship and understanding of the family’s perspective.

The following tables:

1. Outline what Baby TALK’s Curriculum is designed to do and **not to do**
2. Provide highlights for each section to consider as you integrate the curriculum into your knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for engaging families

Baby TALK Curriculum is designed to:	<i>Baby TALK Curriculum is NOT designed to:</i>
Encourage and highlight family and child interaction in individual encounters and group encounters	<i>Provide activities for home visitors or family support workers to do directly with children</i>
Meet families’ interests through joint reflection on a variety of topics, domains, and developmental skills	<i>Tell families what to do with their child and/or how to do it</i>
Build caregiver confidence by being an observer and supporter as families engage in activities with their child in ways they choose	<i>Be modeled or demonstrated by the professional first, as if the family must do an activity like the professional would</i>
Fit any family’s culture and beliefs about their child and parenting by bringing the families perspective into the conversation	<i>Be a ‘one size fits all’ way to understand development, behaviors, or parenting</i>
Be flexible and build on the knowledge families have about their children	<i>Be used in a “prescriptive” manner or be used in pre-printed packets where all families receive the exact same activities – regardless of the child’s age, goals, or development</i>
Encourage and allow for creativity to modify and extend activities collaboratively with families	<i>Be used exactly as it is printed - without modifications to individualize or create opportunities for discussion</i>

Baby TALK Curriculum is designed to:	<i>Baby TALK Curriculum is NOT designed to:</i>
<p>Incorporate materials that families already have, to the greatest extent possible</p> <p>Open up conversations with open-ended questions and reflection on what a family has tried, wants to try, or wonders about</p>	<p><i>Create encounters centered around a “toy bag” or specific materials that must be supplied by the program</i></p> <p><i>Be used as “required” or “recommended” homework that families must complete to stay in good standing or to receive prizes or incentives</i></p>

Curriculum Sections

<i>For Professionals Only</i>	
Protocols	<p>This section contains age-based protocols from newborn through 36 months. Baby TALK encounters should always be free to “go where families are,” discussing matters of immediate importance and concern. These Protocols provide a structure for using our time in a way that enables us to incorporate those issues with relationship-building techniques, which move us ahead in our work with the family. We seek to incorporate each element of these protocols in each interaction, noting what we learn from families and children through the process. As you prepare for encounters, the protocols provide a structure, with age-based considerations, while allowing for the flexibility we need in order to come alongside and meet families where they are.</p>
Trauma-Informed	<p>As professionals who may encounter families experiencing traumatic life events it is important to be aware of how these life changing events may impact young children and families, and ways we can support the parent-child relationship in difficult times. This section is designed to give professionals a brief resource to reflect on what may be going on with families in traumatic situations and opportunities to reflect on ways to support the social-emotional health and resilience of their children.</p>
Adolescent Parenting	<p>This section assists professionals in considering the unique areas of concern for pregnant and parenting adolescents. Used in combination with all Baby TALK curricula, professionals will tailor their approach and think together with young parents about becoming a parent while experiencing their own adolescent development. Each topic includes</p>

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	reflection for the professional and both individual and group encounter ideas.
Health & Safety	<p>Rather than slipping into the practice of “telling” parents what they need to do to provide for optimal health and safety practices for their children, Baby TALK Professionals use a relational approach which honors the family’s expertise and focuses on family strengths. Engaging parents around health and safety provides us with an excellent opportunity to build relationships with families based on their strengths and commitment to their children.</p> <p>In this section, Baby TALK Professionals will find guidance around our work with families relating to: Nutrition, Oral Health, Mental Health, Physical Health, and Safety Practices.</p> <p>The information offered in this curriculum is consistent with Head Start/Early Head Start guidance on health and safety, viewed through the lens of the Baby TALK approach.</p>
Group Encounter	The Group Encounter Guide gives programs information about different types of group encounters as well as how to intentionally plan for desired outcomes as a result of facilitating the group with families. Intentional planning takes into consideration family values, interests, and any other factors important to families. Professionals are mindful of the Baby TALK Protocols and Strategies that will encourage family engagement. Lastly, data collection will help guide programs and give families an opportunity to provide feedback.
Home Visiting Ref Guide	Using the Baby TALK Approach and Protocols helps to lead professionals to use their time with families in a way that meets the family's agenda, not our own. No prescribed curriculum is perfect for any given visit. This guide is a resource for professionals to use to see what curriculum is available at different ages that may meet the individual priorities of families as their child reaches a particular age. It is not intended to be used as a checklist. Rather, it is a resource when planning and seeking age-appropriate curricula not sequenced by age.

For Reflection with Families	
Developmental Perspectives	Each month, from newborn through 36 months, features the first-hand perspectives of the baby/child, the caregiver, and

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	<p>the professional at that particular age. In addition, age-appropriate reflections provide opportunities for developmentally appropriate discussion.</p> <p>As a foundational component of the Baby TALK Curriculum, Developmental Perspectives support professionals engaging in meaningful reflection with caregivers. With each of the sections provided, this includes considering:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How the baby/child may be experiencing their development and are seeing the world around them. 2. Caregiver reactions, emotions, and practices in relation to their child’s development 3. Age-appropriate topics 4. How your engagement may appropriately support children and families given the child’s stage of development. <i>Note: The Professional’s Perspective is Baby TALK coming alongside you as you work with families, using the Baby TALK curriculum and approach.</i>
Developmental Newsletters	<p>The Developmental Newsletters are written in letter form to families and are available in 11 different age groups. Each letter features developmental milestones for families to watch for, understand, and ultimately enjoy. To that end, newsletters feature suggestions for parenting techniques to meet the challenges of each stage as well as coping strategies for those challenges.</p>
Parenting Topics	<p>Year in and year out, caregivers struggle with the similar challenges in raising their children. Feeding, sleeping, discipline, toilet training, sibling rivalry . . . these and other issues are universal in the challenges they present to caregivers of young children.</p> <p>Baby TALK has developed these supportive pieces of curricula to explore and facilitate caregivers' thinking and discussion about these challenges along their parenting journey.</p>
Let’s Talk Kids	<p>Let’s Talk Kids is a syndicated weekly newspaper column written by Baby TALK Founder Claudia Quigg. These columns focus on some aspects of parenting with the goal of encouraging families through humor and “real talk.” This collection of Let’s Talk Kids columns includes a few of the “greatest hits.” You are invited to copy them with Claudia’s permission for use in Baby TALK programs.</p>

Activities	
<p>Birth-Three Activities</p>	<p>This section provides four activities per month from age 1 month through 36 months. The activities shared with a family should be used in alignment with their goals and interests. Professionals should also determine what activities are appropriate based on the individual child’s development, not simply their chronological age. Every activity can be adapted so that it fits the family’s interests and uses what they have in the home. As families try activities, this creates opportunities for professionals to observe interactions, encourage families through the use of supportive objective language and to listen to the meaning a family makes about their child’s development.</p> <p>Note for IL programs: The activities were written in alignment with the State of Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for children birth to age 3, and each activity references one or two standards supported by the interactive activity. The list of possible relevant standards is much more expansive than just those referenced. When planning for and documenting the use of these activities professionals should denote the variety of IELGs reflected on most during the interaction, not limited to the standards on the document.</p> <p>Note for programs outside of IL: The Illinois Early Learning Standards correlate to other state’s early childhood standards. In addition, the standards map to Office of Headstart ELOFs and to Teaching Strategies Gold. Contact Baby TALK for more information crosswalks</p>
<p>Homemade Toys</p>	<p>Busy hands often create opportunities for conversation! Personal and Group encounters may include a Homemade Toy, which may be implemented in a variety of environmental settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As programs continue to build a “trustworthy system of support,” we find increased opportunities to meet families where they are in our outreach efforts. WIC clinics, federally funded health clinics, prenatal clinics, pediatrician’s offices, county health departments are places families gather, and these environments provide a wonderful setting for parents and children to “play” and engage while they wait to receive services. • Childcare centers provide another kind of opportunity to implement the Homemade Toy curriculum. Families might be invited to participate in a mini “make-it-take-it” activity as they visit their child’s classroom.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This curriculum might also be included in home visits. <p>All of these settings create the opportunity to engage a family and elicit conversation.</p> <p>Goals of making homemade toys include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building relationships with families, while highlighting the possibility to make toys with common household objects Engaging and informally screening families in a “universal” setting Reflecting on child development information and age-appropriate activities for infants and toddlers
Preschool 3-6	<p>Preschool education is effective in strengthening the potential for positive growth and development of children and families. Children learn through the exploration of their environment and within social interactions, the most important being within their family.</p> <p>The Baby TALK preschool curriculum is designed to be used in Personal and Group encounters with caregivers of age 3 to age 6-year-old children. Based on the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, which align with other states’ standards, this curriculum addresses the developmental domains of the child and the child’s role in the family. Each piece of the curriculum features a developmental domain, as well as the social-emotional implications.</p>
Lapsits	<p>We know that the relationship between caregiver and child is enriched and nurtured through the shared enjoyment of play, and the goals for Lapsits are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote language between caregivers and toddlers. Set up a situation where interaction will take place. Provide caregivers with a place to share with one another. <p>The time is spent by caregivers and children using appropriate books, fingerplays, songs and activities which facilitate interactive play between caregivers and child.</p> <p>Lapsits are often held in the community as a form of universal outreach and in collaboration with a library or</p>

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	<p>other entity. Families appreciate the freedom to bring siblings and friends along.</p> <p>Childcare centers provide another opportunity to engage families in a facilitated group encounter centered around a Lapsit topic, book-sharing, activity.</p>
Family Fun Times	<p>Family Fun Times provide an opportunity for preschool children and their families to enjoy fun and learning together about a parenting topic. The topic is related to give-away books that families can choose from to take home from the event. Family Fun Times typically run from 60-90 minutes in length and can be divided into three components, if desired:</p> <p>Caregiver Conversations/ECE or other childcare: during this component, professionals facilitate interactions between caregivers around a Parenting Topics theme. Caregivers have the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other about the topic. Professionals may use the Parenting Topic prompts to extend conversations and explore solutions to parenting challenges expressed by participants. At this time children are either in an Early Care and Education classroom or another form of childcare environment.</p> <p>Family Activities: Families engage with their children through planned activities around a theme, open-ended play, exploration of books, singing songs & acting out finger plays, or participating in cooperative and collaborative play with peers.</p> <p>Snack Time: The group has an opportunity at this time to enjoy a snack activity with other participants.</p>
Come Sign With Me	<p>Before they have learned to say what they want from their parent and caregivers, babies and toddlers face a great deal of frustration. Many of the temper tantrums we see in these young children are a result of their frustration at not being able to make their needs known.</p> <p>Before they can say what they want, babies have the capacity for using gestures to indicate their needs. For thousands of years, parents have been "reading" these gestures as they tune in to their babies.</p> <p>American Sign Language and variations of it have been</p>

Activities	
	<p>used with older babies and toddlers for many years also. These simple hand gestures are easy to learn and give children tools for communicating with their parents.</p> <p>"Come Sign with Me" is a six-week series to provide caregivers and children with some simple signs in a small group setting. The focus is on fun and interaction with no pressure to learn to sign. Families are encouraged to incorporate signs into their daily life with their children and often express delight in learning to communicate with their children at home.</p> <p>In addition, all professionals are encouraged to use pieces of this section to engage families individually, as appropriate. Simple signs provide opportunities for interested caregivers to build proactively on communication with their children and/or for families to build on communication alternatives to alleviate or reduce frustrations that either the child and/or caregiver may be experiencing.</p>
Prenatal	<p>The Prenatal curriculum provides background information for weekly topical discussions related to each stage of pregnancy. This curriculum features activities, information, journaling, and more to engage prenatal families in the development of their baby.</p>
Newborn Encounter	<p>The birth of a child provides professionals with a remarkable opportunity to support families at a time when they may feel anxious, alone and vulnerable. The newborn period may be the beginning of a professional's relationship with the family as they adjust to the addition of a new baby. Establishing a relationship with the family as they allow you to enter their system of support will begin or enhance the Baby TALK Trustworthy System of Support. Developmental expert Erik Erikson said that during infancy babies are learning about trust and mistrust.</p> <p>Baby TALK believes that during this same period, caregivers are learning whether they can trust their system of care. To this end, Newborn Encounters and the associated Newborn Encounter Protocol are a critical resource for families of newborns to feel supported and trusting of the community's system of care. We can establish trust in which caregivers may come to transfer to our own programs, other helping agencies, medical providers, schools, etc.</p>

Activities	
	<p>During each Baby TALK newborn encounter, the professional connects with the family over their shared interest in the baby while promoting these four goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To “join” families from the beginning as they begin their parenting journey• To discover babies together with families through NBO-informed (Neonatal Behavior Observation) facilitation of infant capabilities and to acknowledge parental competencies• To learn about the types of support families have and maybe interested in exploring• To share information about relevant resources, referral possibilities, supportive services and programs