Introduction

This semester, I was employed at Prairie Lakes Church in their childcare program. I worked 2 three-hour shifts for six hours a week. My position was a paid caregiver. I received one course credit for my work. I was stationed in the infant room, working mainly with 7–8-month-olds.

Mission Statement

“We are a church for those who’ve given up on church. We believe God loves every one of us. That’s why we’re a No Matter church—no matter who you are, where you’ve been, what you’ve done or what’s been done to you, God loves you, and you can always look for God at Prairie Lakes Church. This is a journey you can take even if you don’t have everything figured out.”

About the Organization

Prairie Lakes Church is a religious institution that emphasizes an authentic approach to church. Along with church services, PLC also offers small groups, Bible study groups, and ministries. There are two women’s ministry programs during the weekdays where childcare is provided. The Grove Women’s Bible Study occurs on Tuesday mornings and MOPS/MOMSNext occurs on Thursday mornings.

Responsibilities

My position consisted of supervision and care for infants and toddlers. My duties included preparing bottles and snacks, changing diapers, facilitating nap time, and engaging in play time. At the mother’s discretion, I would administer feedings and nap time. Because of the nature of the programs, Tuesdays had fewer children than Thursdays. As a result, we were able to have better ratios in the classroom (e.g., one caregiver to one infant vs. one caregiver to four infants). This was the case for me, where I would have one infant in my care on Tuesdays. I was able to devote all of my attention to him and attend to his needs fully.

What is a secure attachment?

Secure attachment provides a sense of safety and security. Some of the infants at the center were unfamiliar with new people and had a hard time being away from their mother. To help with separation anxiety, some of the practices we used included taking the infant on a stroller walk, distracting him or her with new toys, or putting on music for the infant to listen to.

Separation anxiety refers to the negative affect from the loss of an attachment figure. Separation from a loved one can be distressing for infants but is a normal phase in development.

What is a secure attachment?

Secure attachment provides a sense of safety and security, regulates emotions and soothes distress, and offers a base for exploration. A baby being placed on their tummy is a beneficial period when infants acquire the strength needed to go from lying to crawling to walking. The older babies were already preparing for the walking stage by standing up with assistance, whereas the younger babies enjoyed tummy time to work on neck strength. The best part of this experience was being able to work with the infants and use my knowledge of child development to give them the best care. For the few hours I would spend with them, I still got to be a part of their growth and developmental experiences.

What does this look like in a childcare setting?

Object permanence refers to the understanding that objects continue to exist when out of sight. When the baby would reach for my brightly colored lanyard, I could move it to my back and the baby would forget about it. Self-awareness refers to a state when oneself becomes the focus of attention. I was able to see that when a mirror was placed in front of a baby, he did not seem to recognize himself. A baby placed on their tummy is a beneficial period when infants acquire the strength needed to go from lying to crawling to walking. The older babies were already preparing for the walking stage by standing up with assistance, whereas the younger babies enjoyed tummy time to work on neck strength. The best part of this experience was being able to work with the infants and use my knowledge of child development to give them the best care. For the few hours I would spend with them, I still got to be a part of their growth and developmental experiences.

Application for My Future

Gain experience working with children
Network with parents in the community
Work with like-minded peers
Incorporate knowledge of child development into a future career

Advice for Future Students

This position is open to all majors who want to get experience working with children in a church classroom setting. You will get experience with childcare, team teaching, and curriculum development. I would recommend having taken classes in development or education, or having experience working with kids. This position offers its workers the opportunity to work with a variety of age groups and participate in educational development.

References