



# Growing with CICC

## Play, Laugh, Learn

### Welcome!

*Growing with CICC* is the newsletter for Centennial Infant and Child Centre’s Early Intervention Program. This newsletter has been designed to help you support your child’s development in a number of ways. It includes ideas for play with homemade toys, tips for movement, information about infants, communication strategies, updates about what’s happening at CICC, and much more!

We hope this will be a way for all of us to share personal stories, news and resources. It will be available in a paper copy and on our website: [www.cicc.ca](http://www.cicc.ca). If you have any questions, please ask your CICC Early Childhood Interventionist.



Frances Mahoney,  
CICC, Early Childhood Interventionist

### Table of Contents

- CICC Spotlight..... 1-2
- Message from the ED..... 2
- Why Teach Sign?..... 3
- Kindergarten..... 4
- Foodbanks..... 4
- Utensil Use..... 5
- H2H & Foundation..... 6

### Who We Are & What We Do

**Our Mission Statement:**  
Centennial Infant and Child Centre strengthens families and their young children with special needs to develop confidence and skills for the best start in life.

Centennial Infant and Child Centre is committed to the development and education of young children with developmental challenges.

CICC focuses on the individual needs of each child and family through early intervention at home, in our integrated preschool program and through participation in community programs.

## CICC Spotlight

### Congratulations on your retirement, Frances!

Frances joined CICC’s Early Intervention Program 18 years ago, providing much needed infant development support to children and families in their homes. Frances left a positive and lasting impression on everyone she worked with, from families to coworkers to community partners. The families she worked with were always deeply grateful for her guidance and support as they tried to navigate life during times of uncertainty about their child’s development.

Frances’ dedication to supporting children and families shined through in all her work. She is known for being CICC’s homemade toy expert, always coming up with new and creative ways to repurpose household items for play and supporting development.

...continued on page 2

Frances was an integral part of the Early Intervention team; she was a valued member of the of EI newsletter committee and playgroup facilitator.

Frances retired in June 2022 after an impactful and meaningful career in the field of Early Intervention. Her absence does not go unnoticed in the community nor at CICC, but the legacy she has left will continue. CICC is excited for Frances and this new chapter in her life. We know she will continue doing great things. We thank Frances for the immeasurable impact she has made in the lives of so many. We miss you already, Fran!

## A Message from CICC's Executive Director

Happy 2023! It's been approximately three years since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020. We all experienced our own set of challenges as we navigated through a period of prolonged uncertainty. One thing that has remained constant is CICC's commitment to delivering quality programs for its children and families. In response to the pandemic, we pivoted to online services, outdoor service, and finally (and thankfully) a return to in-person service with enhanced safety measures.

The energy, passion, and confidence that CICC staff exude in their work has a ripple effect which knows no bounds. The impact of our services continues and is felt beyond the time that children leave our programs. As Executive Director of this esteemed organization, I am proud to be amongst such a dedicated group of professionals. I look forward to leading CICC's teams as they continue to provide outstanding developmental support to children and their families throughout Toronto.



*Shemina Ladak,  
CICC, Executive Director*

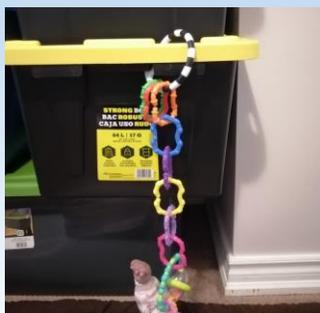
## Hot Tip!

By Mandeep Grewal-Barton  
Early Childhood Interventionist, CICC

Make your own activity gym with items you can find around the house. Check out some of these ideas that use household items and simple baby links:



*Hang links from box with a scarf.*



*Hang links from any secure household item.*



*Hang links from playpen.*

# Why Teach Sign?

By Christ Guest

M.Sc., Reg. CASLPO, Speech-Language Pathologist

## Why teach sign to children?

Signing is a way to teach **language** before children can coordinate their lips, tongues, and voices to produce **speech**. Often, children can control their hand motions and gestures much earlier than they are able to speak.

## What signs should I start with?

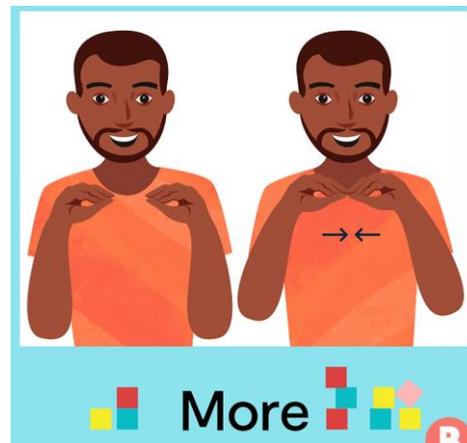
We usually start with “more” and “all done”. It is useful and motivating for a child to be able to ask for more of something they like or to ask for something to be finished. In addition to this you can introduce a word or two for things they really like (e.g. milk, apple, music, etc.).

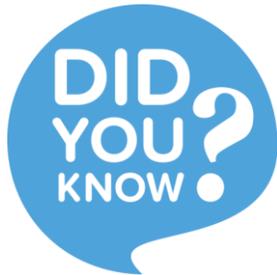
## What is the best way to introduce signs?

Introduce a few signs at a time. You will need to learn the signs before you teach your child so learning just a few at a time will keep it manageable for both of you. When you introduce a sign:

- Talk/sign about things that are relevant to your child. Use the signs at appropriate times. For example: you will say/sign “more” when your child has finished food or an activity and seems to want more of it.
- Be at your child’s level (face-to-face).
- Sign and say the word at the same time.
- After you say/sign the word pause for about 5 seconds to see if your child will try to imitate your sign. If they don’t, you can repeat the sign and react as if they had signed it themselves. If your child will tolerate it, you can also gently use hand-over-hand guidance to help them make the sign and then react as if they did it themselves.

You can look signs up online or borrow a sign dictionary from the library to find out how to do the signs.





### Kindergarten Registration is here!

Registration for Toronto District School Board (TDSB) began February 1, 2023. Registration for Toronto Catholic District School Board begins January 2023. If your child is turning 4 years old in 2023, they are eligible to attend Junior Kindergarten. You must register your child at your home school, which is determined by your postal code. Even if you are considering alternative programs for your child, it is still important to register as soon as possible. If you need assistance, please ask your Early Childhood Interventionist. You can register online or in-person. Below is the link for more information: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/EarlyYears/KindergartenMonth>



## Foodbanks

By Kim Saltsman

CICC, Early Childhood Interventionist



In Toronto, thousands of families are experiencing food insecurity. There are approximately 200,000 individuals who access foodbanks monthly. This number has *doubled* since prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Why is this the case? Sara Watson, *Director of Community Engagements at the North York Harvest Food Bank* tells us this is in part due to the major increase in inflation, an increase in people who are willing to ask for help, and more foodbank programs operating around the city.

**How to access a foodbank:** For people who are experiencing food insecurity, it can be difficult to take that first step in accessing a foodbank. North York Harvest Food Bank and other foodbanks across the city try to make this process as easy and comfortable as possible. Below are the steps:

1. Locate your local foodbank through [feedontario.ca](http://feedontario.ca), **or** call North York Harvest Food Bank at 416-635-7771 extension 46, **or** email at [gloria@northyorkharvest.com](mailto:gloria@northyorkharvest.com). NYHFB will either set you up with an appointment at your local foodbank or connect you with The Daily Bread Food Bank.
2. The food bank you are eligible for will ask for proof of address over the phone.
3. Families are eligible to access approximately 3 days worth of food for their household every other week.
4. Appointments are necessary.

**How To Help:** For people that have the time and or resources to help, below are some ways to contribute:

- Individuals or families can volunteer to help. Call your local foodbank to inquire.
- Bring actual food donations to grocery stores, firehalls, or the NYHFB main site at 116 Industry Road.
- Make a financial contribution online.
- NYHFB is also working on long-term solutions on top of emergency relief. They encourage any individual to reach out to members of parliament about the ongoing issue of food insecurity or join them in their own advocacy work

<https://northyorkharvest.com/programs/research-and-advocacy/>

## Introducing Utensils to My Baby

By Lori McCrindle B.Sc., O.T. Reg. (Ont.)  
CICC, Occupational Therapist

Learning to use a spoon or a fork is a fun next step for your baby's mealtime. Using utensils develops eye-hand coordination, independence and introduces your child to using tools. Remember, mealtime should always be in a highchair with a tray.



Image from: [thetot.com](http://thetot.com)

Here are a few tips and tricks to get started:

1. To start, **eat together and model** how you scoop, stab your food, and bring the spoon or fork to your mouth.
2. Next, **offer your baby an extra spoon** during mealtimes. Give your baby the opportunity to try bringing the spoon to their mouth between bites you are feeding them. It might be challenging at first, so you can help your baby hand-over-hand.
3. Practice with **foods that will stick to the spoon**. You could try purees, yogurt, guacamole, hummus, etc. Steer away from foods like rice, soup, or soft pieces to scoop up with a spoon. When the time comes to introduce a fork, practice fork feeding with thick and easy to stab foods like pancake, soft fruit, steamed vegetable, etc.
4. **Preload the spoon** or fork for your baby. Scoop or stab the food for your baby and let them bring it to their mouth. At first, focus on teaching your child how to bring the spoon from the bowl to their mouth and back to the bowl. Once they've mastered this, you can work on scooping.
5. Look for **short utensils that have easy-to-grab handle**. If you're searching for a new spoon, the 'Num Num Pre-spoon' or the "ChooMee Starter Spoon" are great examples of learning utensils.
6. Try using a **suction bowl** or a silicone placemat that sticks to the tray of your child's highchair to avoid accidental spills and encourage success.



Image from: [whattoexpect.com](http://whattoexpect.com)



Image from: [bambuhome.com](http://bambuhome.com)

**Teaching your baby how to feed themselves with a spoon or fork is a messy adventure! Be sure to pack your patience and enjoy this new stage of development.**

## Hospital-to-Home Update:

### Evidence of Significant Impact

H2H is more than a year in and still going strong! In collaboration with Sunnybrook Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit ("NICU"), the Neonatal Follow-Up ("NNFU") Clinic, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education ("OISE") at the University of Toronto, H2H has proven to have extensive impact on its participants.

#### After one year, did H2H achieve its intended outcomes? Yes!

The research team at OISE/UofT have rigorously evaluated H2H service data and found:

- statistically significant results indicating improved caregiver emotional wellbeing and ability to manage stress related to the care of their infant.
- caregivers felt very well-supported by the guidance they were given in many different areas including feeding, positioning, playing, physical activities, and bonding.
- caregivers were completely satisfied with information that they received about additional community supports.
- caregivers showed an increased sense of confidence to advocate for their baby's needs.



[Without H2H] I would have been overwhelmed, not only because I was a new parent with no support but because I had to care for a 26-week-old preterm baby.  
– H2H participant

The long-term goal of this program is to secure financial sustainability and resources to expand H2H to other hospitals so that more families can benefit from this innovative model of "earlier" intervention.

To learn more about H2H, please see pp. 6-7 of our [Fall 2021 Newsletter](#), visit our [website](#), or ask your Early Childhood Interventionist. For further information, please contact Lorraine Chiarotto, Manager, ICD Community Programs at [lchiarotto@cicc.on.ca](mailto:lchiarotto@cicc.on.ca).



## CICC Foundation

Help us spread the word and change more lives! Centennial Infant and Child Centre would not be able to deliver such wonderful programs without the participation of our community and the generosity of our donors. Every dollar raised will help more children and families benefit from CICC's high-quality programs this year. They need life-changing support now more than ever. You can become a valued supporter by donating through our website at [www.cicc.ca](http://www.cicc.ca).

Click on this link: [email list](#), or visit <https://rb.gy/qw6cwg> to sign-up for any latest announcements!



Centennial  
Infant and  
Child Centre  
Foundation



We are also happy to announce that in the Spring of 2023, we will be running the Bee My Friend Campaign again. Be sure to check our website for updates!