

CREATING PARENT-BABY SPACES

When families are displaced from their homes, many of the daily routines necessary for parenting young children are disrupted. Away from the comforts of home and in close quarters with family members and strangers, parents experience extra strain in caring for their young children and babies.

A parent-baby space, also sometimes called a "baby tent" or "mother-baby space" or included in a broader "child-friendly" space, is a dedicated area for parents to care for their babies and very young children. The use of these types of spaces is a recognized intervention to improve health and social outcomes following a disaster or displacement.

A quiet, positive area where parents can focus on their children's needs also acts as a hub for resources and support staff to provide parenting, nutrition and psycho-social support specific to the needs of this vulnerable population.

Here are some tips on how set up a parent-baby space in your shelter or facility:

- * A private room that is easily accessed without stairs or escalators is ideal
- * If required, an area can be created using screens, tarps or blankets for "walls". In a large space, a ceiling can improve cosiness and reduce noise.
- * Proximity to hand-washing and food preparation areas should be considered, along with washrooms
- * Space should be large enough to accommodate strollers or have nearby storage for strollers
- * Comfortable chairs and soft floor covering is ideal: soft fabrics reduce noise
- * Pillows of various sizes that can be used for breastfeeding as well as sitting on the floor may be helpful
- * Where possible, provide at least one comfortable chair in a private corner with a plug where mothers can breastfeed privately or use a breastpump or receive counseling
- * Have print resources available in the language(s) spoken by the parents using the space: have information on breastfeeding, safe sleep and psychological concerns as well as instructions for obtaining and preparing infant formula and baby/young child foods in your specific facility.
- * Posted schedule for in-person volunteer/staff support as well as any other prenatal or child-focused programming occurring

For more information, references or advice for your situation, contact us.