



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield County

Program Title: Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield Toddler Playgroup

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Kelly Fried

Title: Executive Director, Chesterfield Community Services Board

Signature: 

2025 VACo Achievement Award Entry:

Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield Toddler Playgroup

Abstract of the Program:

The infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield provides supports and services for infant and toddler from birth through two years of age who are not developing as expected or have a medical condition that can delay normal development, and their families. Early Intervention services are designed to meet the full range of developmental needs of each child, and the needs of their families related to their child's development. Services provided are designed to include a wide range of family-centered services, resources and supports. Services are provided within the everyday routines and activities in which families participate, and in places where the family would typically be so that their daily life is supported and not disrupted by services. The play group is a service that is offered to families with goals of increasing communication and social skills. The group is led by two therapists (a developmental therapist and speech therapist) as well as two support staff and meets on a biweekly basis for six sessions. There are two groups that run simultaneously (one in English and one in Spanish).

Problem or need of the Program:

Over the past year, the Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield has seen a significant increase in the number of children entering the program. Looking at more efficient and innovative ways to serve children and yet still give them the services they need became a necessity to assure quality services that are available to children and there are no wait lists for services. The group gives the opportunity to serve multiple families (up to 6 families) in a one-hour time slot. We can provide this service in a natural environment while working on the child's goals and we are able to bill insurance.

90% of brain growth occurs before the age of 5, making early childhood years the most critical for emotional and cognitive growth. Timely interventions can prevent future challenges and set children on a path to success. The Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield play group started as a need after Covid. Staff noticed a decrease in parents taking their children to social

settings and a possible decline in social skills. In addition, statewide indicator scores showed a drop in social skills during Covid that may have been attributable to lack of social opportunities. Furthermore, parents who have children with developmental delays may experience anxiety and uncertainty about taking their child out in public and without the support of this program can become very isolated further contributing to delays in social skills. This play group gives both parents and children the skills they need to increase social/communication skills in a natural environment which supports the coaching model.

Additionally, over the past year, the Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield has seen a significant increase in the number of children entering the program. Looking at more efficient ways to serve children and yet still give them the services they need became a necessity to assure quality services that are available to children and there are no wait lists for services. The group gives the opportunity to serve multiple families (up to 6 families) in a one-hour time slot. We provide this service in a natural environment while working on the child's goals and we are able to bill insurance.

How the program was carried out:

The Chesterfield Toddler Play Group was started in May of 2024 as a need after Covid for children receiving services through the Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield. Staff noticed a decrease in parents taking their children to social settings and a possible associated decline in social skills. The play group is a service on the child's IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) and is billed to the child's insurance. The group is made up of 6 children, their parents/caregivers, and is led by two therapists (a developmental specialist and speech therapist) as well as two support staff (service coordinators and/or other therapists) and siblings are welcome to attend. This group meets on a biweekly basis for a total of 6 sessions at the Children's Museum of Chesterfield. Currently there are two groups running simultaneously (English and Spanish). The group aims to increase socialization opportunities for the children and their families and improve communication skills. Each child also has individualized goals related to the group. During group we use the coaching model, and parents are encouraged to be active participants. We have a brief circle time, and then we move to various sections of the museum where the children have the opportunity to interact with their peers from the group as well as new friends who are visiting the museum. After playing in



the museum exhibitions, the group gathers for a snack and wrap up. We coach the parents to encourage their children to share, imitate actions and words, navigate transitions, and participate in activities with one another while enjoying the museum. Some of the children seem comfortable in the group after the first session, while others may need more time and support to adjust to this new learning experience. This IFSP service could be in addition to primary services in the natural environment or could be the only service for children who need generalization of recently acquired skills.

Cost of Program:

The Cost of the Program:

Staff Time	Staff time from the Infant and Toddler Connection of Chesterfield
Toys/food	50.00
Museum	donated
Income from insurance	339.24 (approximately depending on type of insurance)
Total	With insurance funds – ITC pulls in 289.24 per group

The Results/Success of the Program:

The infant and Toddler Connection successfully completed our goal of creating a play group that served clients of diverse backgrounds and those that speak both English and Spanish.

Highlights of our program include:

- Children met their outcome of improving socio-emotional/communication skills on the child's IFSP

- Children who began the group with limited social skills and unable to interact with peers finished the group with the ability to play and participate socially with the group. The below is feedback we received from a parent:

“When we first went (to play group), my child cried pretty much the whole time. But as we continued attending, the team’s intentionality and care helped my child progress tremendously. By the end, she was engaging, sharing, and even calling her peers by name.”

-Some children were able to meet their goals by only receiving the play group as a service (not needing additional private services) which is a cost saving measure for the program

-Parents often exchanged numbers to set up informal playgroups

- Many parents continued to take their children on outings to the Children’s Museum (prior to the group they did not feel comfortable doing this activity)

-To date we have served 55 children in the play group

The Infant and Toddler Connection Playgroup is an outstanding example of an initiative that promotes positive social/emotional as well as communication skills in children receiving services. As stated above we know that 90% of brain growth occurs before the age of 5, making early childhood years the most critical for emotional and cognitive growth. We have seen an increase in children entering the program with delays that may be attributed to lack of social opportunities. Timely interventions can prevent future challenges and set children on a path to success. This group was a dream of the therapists who saw a need in our community and came up with a positive solution. They researched and created curriculum for each of the playgroups to focus on social and communication skills.

This is a program that will continue to benefit children and families for years to come and will be based on the curriculum started from this group. In addition, families learn skills from this group as well as develop relationship with other families that will continue to use throughout their years ahead.

