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Navy Child Development Programs Teach "Baby Signs"

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Eleven Navy Child Development Programs began piloting a "Baby Signs" program in January to teach infants how to express their needs and desires using simplified sign language.

"Baby Signs is the world's leading sign language program for hearing babies," said Larrié Rodriguez, Child and Youth Programs training and communications manager, Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC). "Signing builds relationships between teachers and families, promotes effective communication with and among children and addresses challenging behaviors."

According to Rodriguez, this temporary bridge to speech has already shown a significant positive influence in the Navy child care system.

"The signing has helped increase positive behavior in our classrooms," said Rodriguez. "Studies have proven that infants taught sign language can communicate earlier their needs and wants with parents and caregivers."

Fourteen Navy child care professionals are now certified master trainers in Baby Signs. These certified instructors teach the process and hand signs to fellow caregivers in Navy Child Development Centers and Homes.

"The first month (January), I introduced the signs for 'more,' 'eat' and 'drink,'" said Gloria Kivipelto, training/curriculum specialist, Naval Station Mayport, Florida, and certified Baby Signs master trainer. "The caregivers are now involved in choosing the signs that we are teaching the children. We are continuing to introduce three new signs each month."

The pilot sites include Naval Base San Diego, California; Naval Support Activity Washington - Anacostia Annex, Washington, D.C.; Naval Station Mayport; Naval Base Guam, Santa Rita; Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Naval Station Great Lakes, Illinois; Combined Forces Activity Sasebo, Japan; Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas; Naval Hospital

Portsmouth, Virginia; Naval Support Activity South Potomac - Dahlgren, Virginia; and Naval Base Kitsap - Bremerton, Washington.

"CNIC's Fleet and Family Readiness (F&FR) division is continually striving to enhance the child care services and programs we offer our military community," said Vice Admiral Bob Conway, Commander, Navy Installations Command.

F&FR division supports service members and families with 227 facilities and 3,000 Child Development Homes worldwide, and accredited commercial partnership spaces throughout the continental United States.

For more information about Baby Signs or Navy Child and Youth Programs, contact Larrié Rodriguez at (901) 874-6692.

larric.rodriguez@navy.mil. or visit <https://qol.persnet.navy.mil/CYPWeb/>.