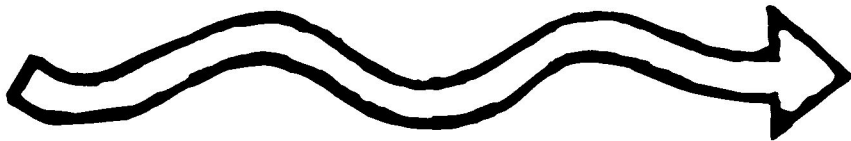


# HANDOUT

1-4-1

## SIX DIMENSIONS OF HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN: HARD-SOFT

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gym floor  
Hard

carpet

beanbag chair  
Soft

This dimension can be illustrated by the difference between a home environment with cozy rugs and soft couches and a hospital environment with bare floors and clean, gleaming fixtures. A soft, homelike environment is attractive to children on a sensual and tactile level. It welcomes children and helps them feel comfortable and secure. A soft environment is difficult to keep clean and orderly, however, especially when it must accommodate a large group of children. A SACC program should strive to balance the health and safety demands of group living with children's need for comfort, pleasure, and security.

To evaluate the environment in your program, look for the following components of a soft environment:<sup>1</sup>

Malleable materials such as clay and play dough

Laps; adults holding children

Single-sling swings

Grass that children can be on

A large rug or carpeting indoors

Very messy activities such as finger paints, clay, or papier maché

Cozy furniture such as couches and floor pillows

Dirt to dig in; a vegetable or flower garden

Animals that can be held

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1. Jim Greenman, *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments That Work* (Redmond, Wash.: Exchange Press, 1988), p. 74.