

An Intro to Home Child Care

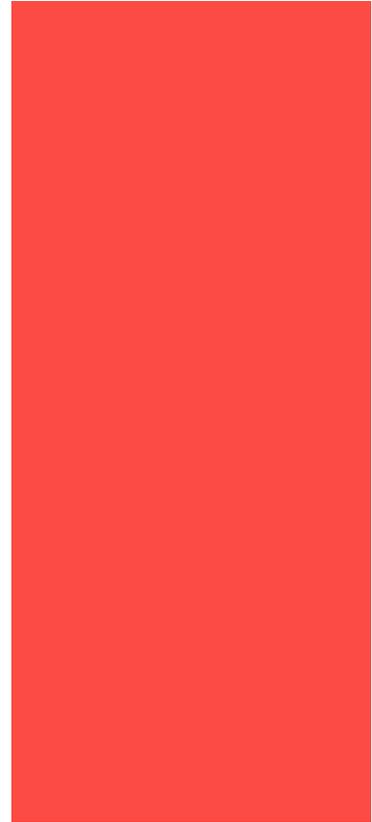


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THANK YOU

Thank you to the home child care experts and researchers who contributed to the development of the Canadian Child Care Federation's initial Family Child Care Training Manual, Canada's only existing, national family child care training resource which served as the reference for this resource.

The content for this E book was edited by Kim Tytler. Review of the resource was done by Robin McMillan and a group of home child care experts including Suzanne Schlechte and a team of Home Child Care Consultants from Andrew Fleck Children's Services. Thanks to CUPW Child Care Fund for funding the initial development of this resource.

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Welcome to our child care community

OUR COMMUNITY

The CCCF community is a place for early childhood educators (child care providers) and families to engage in discussion and reflection on topics in the field of early childhood education.

It's also a place to find trusted evidence-based information on the subject of early childhood education. This information is shared in articles, new items, [webinars](#), courses, book reviews, and live events.

It's our commitment that we'll provide a safe space

where members and readers can share and expand their knowledge. Our members are passionate, caring, and opinionated. When possible our community engages in events across the country, from coast to coast to coast.

If [our mission](#) is just as important to you as it is to us, we'd love to have you [join us online](#). Thank you for taking the time to enjoy this ebook. We enjoyed helping distribute it.

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01

Your Child Care Home

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In Unit 1, you will learn to:

Identify the variety of activities that need to be considered in planning space;

Identify strategies for adapting and organizing the home to meet child care and family needs; and

Review methods for storing child care equipment and materials.

Introduction

A quality child care environment is safe and comfortable, and allows the physical and developmental needs of children to be met. Good home child care environments come in all shapes and sizes, from apartments and townhouses, to large single family homes, but they all have one thing in common. They all serve as welcoming spaces for children and families.

Organizing an environment to meet everyone's needs is challenging. But with thought, planning, imagination and some hard work any home can provide a good child care environment.

Providing child care in your own home challenges you to organize and operate your child care in ways that are effective and enjoyable for the children, your family and yourself.

When planning your child care environment you will want to consider:

A. The children in your care and their families:

- The number, ages, and any special requirements of the children you are caring for (including your own) according to municipal and provincial regulations;
- The toys and play equipment needed and their display and storage;

The care equipment, for example, infant seats, high chairs, cots, and their storage.

B. The space, furnishings and equipment you have to work with:

- The amount of indoor and outdoor space you have;
- Appropriateness/adaptability of space to child care needs, for example, children's play (including active and quiet, individual and group, indoor and outdoor play), sleeping/napping, meals and snacks, personal care (toileting, washing up, diaper changes);
- The amount and adaptability of storage for toys, books, equipment, and supplies;
- The convenience and welcoming atmosphere of your entranceway, including outdoor space (for parking) and indoor space (for parents and children and their coats, shoes or boots, diaper bags and other personal belongings).

C. Your own needs and those of your family:

- The needs of your family members;
- Your own need for private space;
- Your own and your family's tolerance and adaptability.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start a new electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.

Think about your family. Think about your children, their personalities, and their needs. Is it hard for them to share their space and toys with the child care children or is this not an issue for them? If school-aged, do they enjoy joining in with the other children at the end of the school day, or do they prefer some quiet time on their own? How can you accommodate your child's needs and preferences? Does your partner/spouse have needs that you must consider? A spouse who works shifts, for example, may need a quiet, separate space to sleep during your working day.

Consider all these factors, as well as any others that are important to you, in organizing your child care environment. Finding a balance that meets the needs of the children and their parents; allows for some privacy and freedom for your family; and is practical for you, will take time, but you can meet the challenge!

1. Organizing Your Home for Child Care

The following areas are important components of your home child care:

A. The Entryway

Your entryway should be both welcoming and functional. Your child care entrance is the place where you greet the children and their families each morning and at the end of the day. You'll need ways to accommodate the shoes, boots, coats, hats, mitts, and other personal belongings. If you have younger children in care, you will likely have diaper bags as well as school bags for the older children.



Seasonal posters or children's artwork will create a friendly, cheerful entrance to your child care space.

Providing storage for each child will help to reduce the clutter that is bound to accumulate. Use wall hooks or a clothes tree for coats; individual cubbies or stackable plastic bins for personal belongings; boot trays for shoes and boots; and a washable mat (especially useful on wet or snowy mornings).

Parents want to feel part of their child's "home away from home" with information about their child's day. Provide a bulletin board on the wall to let parents know about happenings such as a special activity or outing, or the day's menu. Include pictures of the children participating in their daily routines. This is also a great place to post any reminders for extra clothes, diapers, or sunscreen.

Seasonal posters or children's artwork will create a friendly, cheerful entrance to your child care space.

B. Eating Space

You will need a table and chairs. Use infant or high chairs for infants and toddlers and a regular table and chairs with booster seats if required or a child-sized table and chairs for older children.

A washable floor surface and a nearby sink for clean-up are necessities. Your kitchen is the ideal spot for meals and snacks but other locations can be adapted for meal times. Additional supplies could include child-friendly dishes, cups, and utensils.

C. Toileting and Personal Care Space

A safe and accessible place to use the toilet and wash up, or for diaper changing is essential. You will need a toilet, a sink with easy access, and any required potty seats.

If there is space, the bathroom makes an ideal diaper changing area, with available handwashing and other cleaning facilities. Shelves securely mounted over the toilet can store diapers and diaper supplies, individual face cloths and towels, and extra clothing. Ensure that any cleaning products are kept out of the reach of the children.

Additional supplies needed: a non-slip stool so that the younger children can reach the sink, a soap dispenser, individual face cloths, individual cloth or paper towels, and cleaning supplies (stored securely).

You may consider installing a device on the water supply that regulates the water temperature, preventing it from getting too hot. Special 'fixed' toilet seats, with both a small and large seat, make bathrooms child- and adult-friendly and are easier to clean than potty chairs.

D. Sleeping Arrangements

A secure and relaxing place for sleeping will need to be available. Where children nap will depend on their ages and their personalities but all sleeping areas should be quiet, comfortable, and appropriately lit (e.g., shades on windows to avoid direct sunlight).

Infants sleep at different times throughout the day; their crib should be in a bedroom away from the noise of the other children playing but close enough for you to check frequently. An infant monitor that allows you to hear when the baby wakes is extremely helpful.

Older children may nap on mats, cots, or beds. Each child should have his or her own bedding for hygienic purposes. Individual bedding can be stored in boxes designed to be kept under beds.

CHECK WITH LICENSING REQUIREMENTS OF YOUR MUNICIPALITY AND PROVINCE REGARDING SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS FOR HOME-BASED CHILD CARE.



A safe and accessible place to use the toilet and wash up, or for diaper changing is essential. You will need a toilet, a sink with easy access, and any required potty seats.

E. Indoor and Outdoor Play Spaces

Play enables children to have fun, to learn, and to develop. Most of the children's day, while in your care, will consist of playing. Reading, block building, exercise and art activities, are a few of the essential components of a well-rounded child daycare. Organizing areas of your home, both indoors and out, to support these play activities is an important consideration when planning your environment.

The size of your home, and the size of your family, will help determine whether your basic play area will be in a separate play room or whether it will be incorporated into your family living space, such as a family or living room.

Whether you are using one room exclusively for the child care, or sharing family space, it is helpful to consider the types of play you are encouraging. Both the play and the play supplies are more organized when different play areas are clearly defined. Grouping toys and activities that are part of a certain type of play together ensures that they are used appropriately and safely. It also makes clean-up much easier!

If you are using one room for indoor play, it can be divided into areas with shelves, tables, furnishings, or infant gates. If you are incorporating your play area into your living room, you can organize for different types of play in different areas of the room. You could also pull the furniture away from the wall, using the space behind it for play and/or storage. Use laundry baskets and bins with lids for your piece toys so that they can be easily tidied up and stacked behind one or two chairs at the end of the day.

If you have a yard, it can also function as an ideal play space. Almost any activity that you can do indoors can also be done outdoors, and you and the children will all benefit from time spent outside. When designing your outdoor play space, consider all the different types of weather and the changing seasons. Always check for safety hazards. Start with some basic outdoor items and add more as you go along. Natural items found in nature are a great and inexpensive addition to the play space. These loose parts can be collected, stored, and used in children's play.

Loose parts in kid's play

2. Safety

You could then organize one area to be used by those over four years of age (and would contain small piece toys and art supplies) and another for infants and young toddlers who are still crawling on the floor (and putting almost everything in their mouth).

All cleaning products must be kept out of reach of the children.

Up-to-date recall information about toys and equipment.

3. Types of play

A. Creative Play encourages creativity and satisfies the need for self-expression as well as develops manual skills. Drawing, painting, modelling play-dough, and making collages are examples of creative play.

Creative play requires materials such as crayons, markers, pencils, stencils, scissors, hole punchers, glue, stickers, paper, paint, paint brushes, stamp pads and stampers, cotton balls, popsicle sticks, bits of fabric, lace and ribbon, doilies, etc.

Creative play offers great opportunities to learn about and practice recycling. Items such as old magazines, toilet and paper towel rolls, cardboard from packaging, boxes of all kinds, paper bags, and used wrapping paper add a lot of variety to the art supplies. And they're free!

Hands-on materials such as play dough, modelling clay, and goop are all important creative activities which can be used on their own or with accessories such as rollers, scissors, and cookie cutters.

If your children are older you may decide to give them free access to all the art materials. You might leave some materials out for free choice, reserving other materials for certain times or craft projects. Store art supplies in small bins, plastic tubs, boxes, and baskets. You'll need shelf or cupboard space to store and/or display supplies.

The kitchen table is a good place for arts and crafts, particularly if you have younger children who require some supervision. If you have the space, another table, one which is reserved for creative activities, could be enjoyed by the children at any time. Whatever area you choose, make sure that the table, chairs, and floor covering have a washable surface and are within easy reach of a sink and clean-up materials.



I've learned over the years that, if you are resourceful, it is possible to provide great creative and sensory experiences for your children without spending a fortune.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

Recycle and recreate!

Creative and sensory play materials can really take a bite out of your budget. I've learned over the years that, if you are resourceful, it is possible to provide great creative and sensory experiences for your children without spending a fortune. In addition to using lots of recyclables in our play, I asked parents for contributions. Most were more than happy to help and the opportunity to contribute made them feel more a part of what we were doing. I made a lot of my own materials, too, and usually involved the children in the process. You can find recipes for playdough, paint, goop, and all sorts of fun stuff. It's all online now, and easily accessible so you don't need to keep 50 resource books in your closet like I did when I started out!

Unit 01

B. Block Play is play with a variety of block types, such as Duplo, wooden blocks, foam, homemade boxes, etc.

Play with building blocks requires a variety of blocks including wooden unit blocks, interlocking blocks and Lego/Duplo style blocks as well as accessories such as play people, small cars and animals. This kind of play requires a good amount of space, preferably on a carpet because the play can be busy and noisy. Provide low shelves or bins to organize the blocks and accessories.

C. Manipulative Play requires children to move, turn, screw, or order objects to make them fit, such as puzzles and shape sorters.

Manipulative play involves such items as puzzles, peg boards, beads for stringing, shape sorters and matching games. Some activities can be completed while sitting at a table. Others, such as a floor puzzle, might require space on a rug.

D. Dramatic Play involves imagination and pretending such as playing dress-up, playing in the kitchen centre or just using language and movement to represent ideas.

Dramatic play requires imagination more than materials and space. Shoes, purses, scarves, costumes and other interesting dress-up items; cardboard boxes that can become everything from a store to a spaceship; an old computer or cellphone, child-sized housekeeping items (brooms, dusters, pots and pans) all encourage imaginative play. Dramatic play 'props' can be kept in boxes or laundry baskets, hung on hooks on the wall, on a coat rack, or in a dresser. Securely fastening a large mirror to the wall will allow the children to "admire" themselves.

E. Language and Literacy Play are activities such as listening to stories, looking at picture books, telling stories, and engaging in conversations with others.



Block Play is play with a variety of block types, such as Duplo, wooden blocks, foam, homemade boxes, etc.

Language and literacy play materials include story books, children's magazines, a speaker for playing music, a flannel board with felt story characters and puppets for telling stories. Try to provide a cozy and comfortable place to sit, away from the hustle and bustle of noisier play (such as block building or dramatic play).

F. Active Play requires movement, such as running, jumping, rolling, and skipping.

Active play is necessary every day and is especially suited for the outdoors. Running, jumping, climbing, and playing games such as catch or soccer are enjoyable for children and also necessary for their growth and development. Store outdoor play equipment in your garage, shed, or in a cupboard close to your entrance. If you don't have a structure to store the larger items, you can use tarps, barbecue covers and reusable bags. As with indoor equipment, it's important to rotate the toys and keep them in good repair.

Recommendations for active play for preschoolers.

Your local thrift stores are great places to find items (toys, loose parts, storage units etc.) for your program. Just ensure they are cleaned well and in proper working order before they are used. All cleaning products must be kept out of reach of the children.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

How do you accommodate active indoor play now? What kinds of activities do you provide? Are there other activities you'd like to try? Develop a list of possible active indoor play ideas that you can pull out on rainy/cold/icy days.

4. Storage

Finding and organizing storage space for all of the toys, equipment and supplies that you will need for your home child care can be a challenge.

Your first storage area will be at or near the entranceway. Individual baskets, bins, milk crates or bags hanging on hooks are good places to store the children's slippers, extra clothes, and any other personal belongings. Labelling each child's storage container will help eliminate any confusion.

Supplies for personal care such as diapers, wet wipes, face cloths, towels and toothbrushes can be stored in shelves mounted to the wall over the toilet. Alternatively they could be stored in plastic bins with lids, under the washroom sink. Individual bedding can be stored in cardboard boxes designed specifically to fit under beds. This provides easy access for naptime.

A garage, outdoor shed or basement are good places to store outdoor and seasonal equipment. Metal shelving units which attach to the walls are ideal for large boxes with lids filled with items that are not in use. Label containers ("Balls," "Sand Toys," "Kites", and so on) and place on shelves for easy access when they're needed. Screw large hooks into the wooden joists of the walls for hanging outdoor riding toys. These shelves also provide good storage for indoor toys not in use. Rotating toys on a monthly basis stimulates the children's interest in them and convenient storage makes for easy access.

Particle board shelves secured along one wall in a basement or laundry room provide excellent storage for seasonal toys or toys and equipment not being used. If you have a separate room for these items then you won't have to worry about the children "re-discovering" them. If your shelves are part of the regular play room, children's curtains can add a bright touch to a storage area while covering up all of the items that you have stored on the shelves. Hot-glue a velcro strip to the top of the shelves and to the top of your curtains. When the glue has set, attach curtains to the top of shelves.

Books can be placed on shelves or stored in see-through plastic bins. Group books according to the seasons and celebrations of the year, as well as by topic. Store books in labelled bins for easy access. When books are not being used, they can be kept in these bins on storage shelves in the basement.

Art materials can also be kept in see-through plastic bins. You will need a variety of sizes for the many different kinds of crafts items. You may also choose to group seasonal and holiday supplies together, for example, holiday supplies together in one bin. Resource books which contain suggested activities for these times could be stored with the necessary supplies.

Looking around your house, you will probably find many ways to use existing space and available containers, such as cardboard boxes, for storage. Everything from laundry detergent boxes, to cereal boxes and empty glass jars, can be used to store some of the items that you will be using in your home child care. Old dressers can be used to store dress-up props, art paper and materials and used shelves can be purchased at garage sales or charity shops. Be on the lookout for creative options for storage in your home.

5. Conclusion

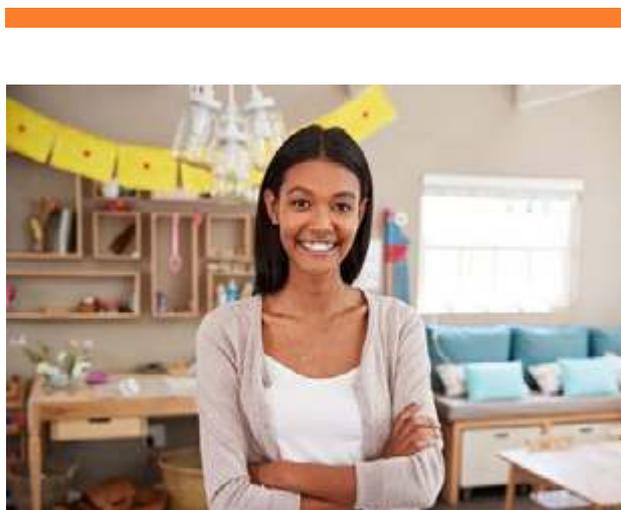
Creating a home child care environment is an ongoing process, continually evolving. As your needs and priorities change, as your family's need for space changes, and as the number and ages of the children in care change, so will the way you organize and run your home child care. Recognize that establishing a good arrangement takes time and revision. If a certain set-up doesn't work as well as you had hoped, simply review your plan and improve on it.

Other caregivers have experienced similar challenges as you have, and are usually glad to share their ideas. As well, online books and magazines and child care sites are also good sources of information. One of the many advantages of caregiving is that you can create an environment that works best for you. The following checklist will help you examine how effectively your environment is working now, and what areas you might want to change.

[Your Family/Home Child Care: an Environment Checklist](#)

6. Resources

[Early Childhood Education And Care](#)





A change is as good as a holiday.”

CHATTERBOX [a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]

Change is Good

In my 26 years as a family child care provider, I've arranged and rearranged my child care environment many times. Sometimes, the change was intended to solve a problem I was having or to help the daycare routines function more effectively. Other times, it was just to breathe new life into an existing space. I'll never forget what one of my daycare children's grandfathers, said to me, one day as he noted that I had rearranged my space, yet again. He told me, "A change is as good as a holiday." I came to realize just how true that was. Coming into a newly organized and rearranged space was just like coming back from a holiday. Whenever I felt the need for a pick-me-up, I would change things up, and suddenly everything was new again and I would feel re-energized and motivated. The next few days would always be more fun for all of us as the kids responded with more curiosity and interest. It was just like we had all come back from a wonderful holiday!

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Using the Evaluation Checklist as a starting point, identify and develop a list of the areas that need attention on one side of a sheet and options for change on the other. For example, is the entranceway always crowded and untidy? Are there items that can be moved out of the entrance? Could coats be hung on a clothes tree or hooks in the play area? Could you use an alternate entrance (e.g. side door). Do toys and toy pieces tend to end up all over the place? Can children access those toys and materials that you want them to help themselves to and is it easy for them to clear up afterwards? Would low shelves, clearly marked containers for blocks, people, cars, etc., help? Are there too many toys? Perhaps you should store some toys and bring out on a rotation basis every month or two. Is your space relatively well-organized but boring? Would children's artwork, bright posters or pictures liven up the space?

Determine priorities – obviously, safety issues should be dealt with immediately. For the rest, determine your priorities for change based on cost, time involved, and how much frustration the area is causing. Using a calendar as a reminder, set goals for when you would like to have made each of your changes and review your goals periodically to see how you are progressing.

02

The Child Care Day

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In Unit 2, you will learn to:

Recognize the range of essential, desirable, and developmentally appropriate activities required to meet the needs of the child care children and their families, the child care provider's family, and the child care provider;

Develop strategies that help balance the range of needs of all involved; and

Formulate the daily routines that meet the caregiver's individual circumstances.

Introduction

Child care days are busy days. There are the enjoyable busy times of the day when the children are happily occupied playing. There are also the more hectic times, getting everyone ready to go to the park, or out the door at pick-up time. Many events occur, in many different ways, when children are part of the scene.

There are several ways to approach your daycare day. One method would be to take each day as it comes, always hoping that chaos doesn't win over. Another would be to decide on a particular schedule and stick firmly to it, without adjustment. The third strategy, the most successful one, is to develop a flexible plan for your day ahead, considering the needs of each of the children as well as your own. Children's behaviour is never predictable. Neither are daily events. But organizing your day around the general routines and habits of your group will give you a head start on a successful day.



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The exact time we did each activity wasn't as important as following the activities in their familiar order.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

Building on routines

I considered our routines as the backbone of my family child care home. On days that I wasn't operating at 100%, it was often the routine that would pull us all through the day. The children knew what we did each day. They knew it, and were expecting it, and so they followed along with what came next. The exact time we did each activity wasn't as important as following the activities in their familiar order.

1. Meeting Children's Needs

One of the most important factors to consider are the developmental levels and ages of the children in your care. Children are commonly grouped by the following four developmental groups:

- 1) Infants (birth to 1 year)
- 2) Toddlers (1 year to 2.5 years)
- 3) Preschoolers (2.5 years to 5 years), and
- 4) School-aged (5 years to 12 years)

Each group has varying needs and timetables, and caring for a group of children, all at different ages and developmental levels, is a challenge. Meeting this challenge is an important part of your work as a caregiver. Learn as much as you can about child development, including developmental milestones. Note that each child develops at their own pace. Some children even skip some milestones. Consider your own knowledge of the personalities and needs of each of the children in your care to help you plan for the group as a whole.

A. Infants (birth to 1 year)

It's wonderful to have an infant as part of a child care group. They provide a lovely focus for nurturing both from you and the other children. But their care also takes a lot of time and energy.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning for infants:

- Infants require a lot of hands-on care including feeding, diapering, changing, holding, and cuddling. Parents will need to provide you with the sleep and feeding schedule for their child. Any food or drink provided by parents needs to be labelled with the child's name.
- Infants' needs are immediate! When an infant is hungry, they need to eat, now! You will get to know when to expect baby to be hungry and use that knowledge in planning your routine.
- Infants sleep when and as long as they need to. Their nap times may take precedence over outings or other activities. These, too will usually work their way into a pattern.
- Infants put everything into their mouths. Smaller toys and materials that don't pose a danger to older children can be harmful for infants and toddlers, so pay close attention.
- Infants need exercise too, so make time and safe places for them to stretch those little muscles. It's important to include the infants in the activities with the other children in the group.

Unit 02

B. Toddlers (1 year to 2.5 years)

Toddlers want to learn about and experience everything, even those things that they aren't quite ready for yet.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning for toddlers:

- Keeping daily routines simple and consistent will help toddlers feel comfortable and secure.
- Toddlers are explorers, so you have to safeguard their environment and their activities and ensure older children are also aware of potential safety hazards to younger children.
- Toddlers love to climb, run, jump, kick and throw balls (and whatever else might be handy). Plan for active play, indoors and out as part of each day to give toddlers a safe outlet for their energy.
- Organize the environment to accommodate the toddlers' inability to control his or her own body. Remove anything breakable or valuable as well as any potential dangers, such as sharp-edged coffee tables. Shelves should be anchored to the wall to prevent tipping over on top of a child.
- Toddlers are very interested in exploring their world and need lots of time to satisfy their curiosity. Allow flexibility in your daily schedule so that they aren't rushed from one activity to the next.
- Toddlers are gaining much knowledge and beginning to acquire many new skills, including self-help skills. Plan activities and provide materials that pro-

vide them safe opportunities to learn and encourage their budding skills.

- Language is developing fast during this phase. Modelling proper grammar and use of appropriate words is important. Their vocabulary is growing rapidly. Be sure to introduce new words by labelling what is around them.
- Between two and three years of age, children are usually ready to begin toilet training. Having toddlers visiting the potty throughout the day, you may feel as though your daily schedule revolves around washroom breaks, at least for a while.
- Children of this age like to play with others but have difficulty sharing. You'll have to stay within sight and sound during free play times so you are available to step in when required.

C. Preschoolers (2.5 years to 5 years)

Preschoolers learn about themselves and their world through play. It's important to provide an environment and toys and supplies that they will be able to choose from to support their imaginative play. A card table with a blanket over it becomes a house or a hide-out. Old clothes for dress-up as well as dolls, stuffed toys, play dishes, plastic dinosaurs and animals, and large blocks (could be made from paper-wrapped shoe boxes or milk cartons covered with mactac?) will all contribute to games that the children invent. Play is such an important part of a preschooler's life; it should make up a large part of the daily schedule.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning for preschoolers:

- Preschoolers like to choose and plan their own activities. They need enough time in the day to implement and enjoy their ideas.
- Preschoolers are curious about many things. Include times during the daily schedule for shared activities such as helping you prepare lunch, doing puzzles, or playing with play dough to provide relaxing opportunities for chatting about any of the children's questions or concerns.
- Children learn by doing. Provide opportunities for cooking together, gardening, art activities such as painting or paper mache, helping out with household chores, observing birds, or whatever else interests you and the children. Have writing utensils, child-friendly scissors and use 2-3 step directions for your led activities.
- Three-to-six-year olds are ready to develop skills that will help them adapt to school. Providing some activities during the day where preschoolers sit quietly to listen to a story, playing games involving number, letter, colour and shape recognition, or following a series of instructions (like an obstacle course) will help them prepare for school.
- Preschoolers have lots of energy. They need daily exercise and fresh air to provide an appropriate outlet for that energy and to help them develop their physical skills.

D. School Age Children (5 years to 12 years)

Once the children in your care begin to attend school, their daily schedule revolves around their school days and hours. You may have children



You may have children attending different schools at different times and will have to organize your schedule accordingly.

attending different schools at different times and will have to organize your schedule accordingly.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning for school age children:

- In the morning, help get children organized and send them off to school with a cheerful goodbye. When children come home from school at the end of the day they need a warm welcome and a place where they can feel comfortable and relaxed and most importantly, a substantial snack.
- If you are dealing with multiple schedules, make a list of all the comings and goings throughout the day. Post it on the fridge, and in harried moments, you can quickly refer to your written timetable.

Unit 02

- Organize your environment to accommodate the needs of the before and after school group. They'll need a convenient place to hang jackets, put their school bags, store personal belongings, and safely store ongoing projects out of the reach of smaller, curious hands.
- Organize a daily routine such as: in the door, quick greeting, jackets and belongings put away, toilet and wash hands, and sit down at kitchen table. Once everyone is seated, snack can be served and general activities can be discussed – homework, computer time, arts and crafts, outdoor time – whatever activities work best for your group.
- Have the younger children busy with an activity, so that you can give some personal time to each of the after-schoolers. They may want to share some news of the day so it's important to be available.
- School-agers like to initiate games of their own choosing. Allow time and a space where they can act out plays or dance to their music. Often, they enjoy “entertaining” the younger children.

Children in this age group are familiar with the structure of school and it's important to include some planned activities in the daily schedule when the children are with you all day, on school or summer holidays.

It is important to consider the ages of the children who are part of your home child care. Having an understanding of some of the development of certain ages and stages will help you build workable routines that will satisfy the children's needs.

2. Putting It All Together

A. Planning and Scheduling

Toddlers want to learn about and experience everything, even those things that they aren't quite ready for yet.

The ideal daily schedule is one that meets not just the needs of each child, but also your own family and yourself – a challenging goal at the best of times. Planning is crucial. Remember that many activities, from cooking to imaginative play to taking a walk in your neighbourhood, can meet a variety of developmental needs at the same time.

Children of different ages and stages don't always have to be involved in different activities; just find ways to make activities easier for the little ones and more challenging for the older children. Here are some suggestions:

Keep your plans simple. The best schedule is one that allows the most flexibility.

Plan your day as a whole. Schedule your usual activities so that they fit together well. For example, quiet, relaxing activities like story time, help children move from play time to nap time.

Allow sufficient time between activities for preparation and clean-up.

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Think, plan, and do ahead. If you are attending play group in the morning, prepare lunch before you go, so that it can be ready in a few minutes when you all return hungry and tired from your morning out. Have some easy-to-prepare foods ready to use on hectic days. Be sure to follow licensing and food safety regulations about food storage and safety. You can write out the details in your policies about how you prepare and store food.

Develop consistent routines so that children know what to expect. Children feel more comfortable knowing what comes next and are usually more agreeable about routines like nap time or clean-up time if they are part of the regular day. Using picture cues as well as song and light cues is helpful.

Being a family child care provider is a full-time job. Your days will be much less frustrating if you don't try to do other chores, or fulfill other's expectations during the child care day. Say "NO" when you have to, and, if necessary, remind others that you are a working parent.

Make lists. A daily 'to do' list can be a great help. List planned meals and snacks, special activities for the day, important information like reminders about a child's medication, or a different pick-up time that day.

Hang a calendar. Hang this in the bathroom or kitchen (two rooms you frequent often in your day) and list upcoming events, outings, appointments, the children's holidays and your own or other special activities. Post these reminders in plain view, perhaps on the fridge or back of the bathroom door.

Balance activities. Plan a mixture of quiet and active play; structured activities and free play, and individual activities and group play, indoor play and outdoor play.

Coordinate. Schedule activities that require more of your attention when you have the energy and the concentration to focus. For example, you might wait until an infant is napping before you set up an activity specifically for the older children.

B. Flexibility

The success of any schedule often depends on its flexibility. That construction crew working on your street can be just as educational and even more exciting than the activity you had planned. Take advantage of opportunities like this as they come up. Keep safety in mind, but don't miss being "in the moment" with your children.

If you notice a particular time of day when things always seem to get out of hand, look at changing your routines. For example, an earlier snack in the morning might help young ones who have low energy early in the day (they may not have finished breakfast at home).

Pay attention to the children's signals. The day should be child-centred and play-based. If they show signs of restlessness, it may be time to clean-up and change direction. Take the lead from the children and allow extra time for activities they are enjoying. Try not to intervene more than necessary to keep the daily routine.

Make activities that you enjoy part of your usual routines. You and the children can enjoy nature walks, cooking, baking, puzzles, sewing, music, gardening, or woodworking. Your enthusiasm for certain pastimes will capture the children's interest. They will appreciate the time you spend with them and might even develop a new hobby.

Combine learning with household chores. Young children love to do "grown up things". It makes them feel important. While doing the laundry, the children can help carry the laundry, sort it according to colour, load it into and out of the washer and dryer and learn to fold. Talk about colours, textures, sizes, wet or dry, and whatever topics come up. Children will often recognize who certain clothing articles belong to. They love to tell you who owns the plaid shirt or who owns the pink baby socks. They can even help put the clothes away in the appropriate bedrooms. You may need to let go of your standards of perfection, but it will be well worth it to let the children assist you. Tie in the chores with the needs of your program, such as washing the toys, clearing the table after meals, etc.

Take care of yourself. Build some personal time into each and every day. Schedule a coffee break in the morning and some quiet time each afternoon. Caring for yourself is crucial and the most often overlooked component of providing child care.

Review your routines periodically to make sure they are still working for you and the children.

3. Transitions

There are a number of transition times during each child care day as children arrive and leave, and as you move from one activity to another in the day. How you prepare for these times, when there is a change in activity or people, will help determine how smoothly the transition will go.

Here are some general tips for easing through the day care day:

- Plan for the transitions. Organize your environment and routines to accommodate for those times of the day.
- Give the children lots of time to finish what they are doing and then give a 5-minute notice that it will be time to tidy up and move on.
- Accept the fact that certain times of the day will be more hectic than others and handle them as well as you can. You may be able to minimize it, but you will not be able to eliminate it completely.
- Whenever possible, allow for blocks of time around transition times, especially nap time, and arrivals and departure times, where everyone can relax and take as much time as they want.



Give the children lots of time to finish what they are doing and then give a 5-minute notice that it will be time to tidy up and move on.

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- Consider posting a schedule with visual aids to help your young children follow along.
- Consider what the daily events of your child care program and how to work them into your daily schedule. After the necessary transitions are scheduled in, you will be able to see where you can best fit in other planned activities.

Here are some daily events that might occur in your child care program:

Arrivals

When the children and their families arrive in the morning, you will need to have the time to greet them, sign them in, and do a wellness check. Greet everyone warmly and exchange information with the parents about the child and the upcoming day. Encourage all the children to greet each other and each other's families when they arrive each day. Have some activities organized (e.g., puzzles, lotto games, books, or colouring) on a table near the entrance to keep earlier arrivals occupied as you greet each family.

Help school-agers get all their gear together for the bus or the walk to school. Spend some time talking about their day at school and what they might like to do when they return. Get everyone involved in the big send-off for the school day. Little ones love to be the look-out for the school bus and everyone should take a minute to say goodbye.

Group Time

Once all the children have arrived, and the school-agers have left for school, it's time to talk about your plans for the day. Have the children tidy up their activities, toilet and wash their hands. As you enjoy a morning snack together you can connect with the kids and talk about any ideas that you have for the day.

Use what you have learned in your observations of the children's play and child development. Talk about what they did yesterday and ask what ideas they have for today. Doing a group activity at this time establishes a pleasant atmosphere. Afterwards, the children could enjoy their chosen activity and you could observe how they are developing and adapting to your environment and the others in the group.

Watch what they are doing: what interests them, what do they know, what can they do? Make note of this information and use it to initiate conversation with the children and to plan future activities based on what you've learned.

Outdoor Time

Getting ready to go outdoors can be hectic. Infants, toddlers, and most preschoolers need assistance in getting dressed, putting on sunblock, and gathering 'essentials' for the trip outdoors. Be prepared for these times by organizing your entrance way so that each child can access his or her shoes/boots and outdoor clothing easily. Ask the children to retrieve their belongings and choose a place to sit on the floor. Encourage them to work on dressing

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themselves while you move from one child to another, helping when it's needed. As each child is ready, have a place where they can sit and wait by the door until everyone is ready to go. (It's always a good idea to get everyone to the bathroom before they get dressed to go out.) Bring along your first aid kit (including gloves and wipes), water for each child and the emergency numbers of the children.

Lunch Time

Organizing your before-lunch routine will contribute to a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Approximately half an hour before lunch, ask the children to tidy up, use the toilet, and wash their hands because lunch is being prepared.

Supervise the children at the table, hungry children will often happily eat up some veggies while they sit and wait for you to prepare the rest of the lunch. If you have young children in care, put them in high chairs closer to where you are working so that you can feed them while you are making lunch.

You may choose to have the table set and ready before you call the children to eat. Another option would be to have children help out with preparing lunch, setting the table, serving the lunch, pouring beverages (from a small container!), and helping you clear the table. Eating can be messy business and after lunch they will need to wash their hands and often faces, too. Eating is a great time to connect with the children, model behaviour and practice skills. Serve water with lunch and have it available throughout the day. If there is a child with an allergy, have it posted with their photo along with an emergency plan, if required.

For your menu preparation, follow the [Canada Food Guide](#).

Nap time

Children are often ready for their nap soon after lunch. Some quiet free play while you feed and settle the baby, a shared story from a favourite book, and then it's off to nap. If children nap in the play area, change the environment to help children shift from play-gear to rest-gear.

Putting out the cots, playing soft music or nature sounds, and dimming the lights should help create a sleepy mood. If some children no longer nap, give them some quiet activities to occupy them.

Waking Up

You know how it feels when you first wake up in the morning. You need quiet and the time to get moving at your own pace. It's no different for children waking up from their naps. Try to get each child up individually, with a hug and a smile, and let them sit quietly for a while. Gradually they can toilet and wash and will be ready to play. The key to establishing a good mood is a gentle wake-up.

After School

Sometimes you can hear the school-age children before they even open your door. To manage a busy arrival, have a well-established routine where the children come in: you greet them, then they hang up their coats, put their belongings in a bin or basket, use the washroom, and come to the table for a snack. This will save you from constant reminders

and a lot of confusion. If you need to meet the bus, ensure you have the other children prepared to leave with you so you aren't rushing. Bring a snack along and include a visit to the park prior to the pick up. You can also make arrangements with parents to pick up their children at the park.

Departures

That last hour of care can really be busy. Departure routines should start at least half an hour before the first child leaves. Have the children clean up their toys and activities while you make sure that everything that's going home is organized at the door.

Like your arrival routines, plan activities that will keep the children occupied (puzzles, books, games) and leave some time to be available for the parents at the door. If the weather is good, go outdoors with the children to enjoy some fresh air and activities (skipping, chalk-drawing on the patio, riding toys) until parents arrive.

Greet parents warmly at the end of the day. Share something nice, funny, sweet or brilliant that their child did today and spend a moment telling the child and the parents that you are looking forward to seeing them tomorrow. Ensure each parent signs their child out. When the last child has gone - RELAX!

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start an electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.



Greet parents warmly at the end of the day. Share something nice, funny, sweet or brilliant that their child did today.

1. Write out your typical daily schedule. If your schedule varies from day to day depending on the number of children in care, select your busiest day of the week to use. Include in your schedule:

- drop-off times
- pick-up time
- meal and snack times
- departure and arrival times for school-agers
- nap time
- outdoor play time
- free play time
- organized play time (e.g. story time, circle time)
- hitting developmental domains

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2. Once your schedule is drawn up, answer the following questions:

- How effectively is your time spent?
- Is most of your day spent interacting with the children?
- Or is more time spent on preparing for activities, meals and other events and cleaning up?
- Do you find some time to relax yourself each day?
- Do you feel rushed/pressured during particular times of the day?
- Are your daily routines working for you? Are there changes you want to make in your daily routines? What changes?
- How effectively do your daily routines meet children's physical needs?
- Are meals, snacks, nap time, toileting and/or diapering times, drop-off and pick-up and school departure and arrival times reasonably relaxed and well-organized?
- How effectively do your daily routines meet children's developmental needs?
- Is there enough time for free play, active play, individual and group activities, imaginative play, individual time with you, etc?
- Do the children seem rushed/stressed at particular times of the day?

- Are your daily routines working for the children? Are there changes you want to make? What changes?

3. Make a list of changes you would like to make in your daily schedule.

- Revisit the list in a couple of weeks to check your progress.
- Think about some activities that you do each day in your home, preparing meals and snacks, taking a walk to the park, tidying up the play area. How could children of different ages be involved in those activities? What could children at different stages of development be learning from those activities? Record your thoughts and observations in your reflective journal.
- What time of the day do you tend to find the most hectic?
- Identify the busiest times of your day and try to come up with strategies to make those times go more smoothly.
- Record your observations and strategies in your reflective journal.



It finally occurred to me that my perfect program, in theory, might not be the perfect program in practice.

CHATTERBOX [a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]

"I had worked in a day care centre for seven years before I started providing care in my home and thought that I had all the answers, right - wrong! I had my daily 'program' worked out before with my first child and could tell you what we were going to be doing at any moment of the day. Then reality set in and I actually started caring for more children. For the first three or four months, I was foolish enough to try to stick with my program, and honestly couldn't figure out why I was exhausted and the children did not seem to be nearly as thrilled as I thought they should be. It finally occurred to me that my perfect program, in theory, might not be the perfect program in practice. This lesson has taken a lot of learning, but after four years, I can say with some conviction that when you are guided by the needs and interests of the individual children you are caring for, and your own needs and responsibilities, staying flexible and maintaining your sense of humour, then you might, just might, develop a daily routine that works for all of you."

"I don't give up when I'm having "one of those days", I just give in. I make a cup of tea, sit down and just be with the children as they play. I postpone any complicated or strenuous activities until the next day, make sandwiches for lunch, and put on a classic children's movie. It's funny because I used to think of a day like this as a failure, but the kids love the odd low-key day."

"Music is a very important part of our child care day. The children love to sing and our home-made and store-bought musical instruments are always in use. But music is also incorporated into the day itself. We have all kinds of silly songs that we sing at tidy-up time, when preparing for nap, when we are getting dressed to go out, and when we are travelling in the car. I think it really helps the children move from one activity to another and makes it more fun. I also have a great collection of tapes of different types of music: soothing classical for nap-time, some great jazz that we dancercise to, and lots of children's tapes for sing-a-long. I read an article recently about a study that found that exposure to music actually helps children learn. It's great to know that something we love anyway is good for us too!"

"The smartest thing I ever did was to hire a teenager to come over for a couple of hours after school every day to help with the children and tidying up. At the end of a busy day, Nicky provides fun for the children and an extra pair of hands for me when I could really use them".

4. Conclusion

A schedule that meets the children's interests and abilities will reduce challenging or unwanted behaviours. Plan activities and make supplies, games and toys available that meet the interest and abilities of the children in your care. These options should be based on your observations and reflect back to your documentation (pictures, notes, etc.)

Your child care schedule is a tool that should be working for you. When your schedule is working effectively, your days will have an easier flow to them and your work day will be more pleasant for everyone. If you're finding that you are often feeling overwhelmed with your day, it is worth it to re-evaluate your schedule. Don't be afraid to change your schedule around to accommodate the ever changing needs of everyone affected by it, including yourself!



When your schedule is working effectively, your days will have an easier flow to them and your work day will be more pleasant for everyone.



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CHILD CARE RESOURCES

The [CCCF community](#) is a place for early childhood educators, child care providers and families to engage in discussion and reflection on topics in the field of early childhood education and care.

Our site covers [all manner of topics](#) that can help anyone in the field of early childhood education. From health and safety to articles on preparing the learning environment, there's something for everyone. Our book reviews feature titles the CCCF

recommends. Our webinars (both paid and free) are engaging, and feature subject matter experts in their fields. We cover Canadian topics as our member base is primarily Canadian, but our content is valid no matter where you're from. Children are children no matter where they're born.

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03

The Business of Family Child Care

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In Unit 3, The Business of Family Child Care, you will learn about:

- the importance of good business practice in operating a successful family child care program;
- the regulatory and legal requirements, including the reporting of income for tax purposes;
- the importance of utilizing written child care agreements and related forms with client families;
- the importance of maintaining appropriate child-related, administrative and financial records;
- the importance of maintaining adequate liability insurance;
- the calculations of income and expenses for the setting of fees and the preparation of income tax returns; and
- methods to determine child care needs in the community and filling vacancies.

Introduction

As a family child care provider you are a self-employed small business operator. Effectively managing the business aspects of care can produce many benefits, including:

Increasing your net earnings through better financial management and the maintenance of required records to enable you to claim all the tax deductions you are entitled to.

Improving your relationships with parents/clients through the clarification, understanding, and mutual agreement about the responsibilities of both parties.

Increasing efficiency and reducing stress by developing, organizing and maintaining appropriate forms, records, receipts and files.

Providing more time to focus on caring for the children and less time spent on administrative tasks.

Enhancing the image of family child care by complying with all regulatory requirements and demonstrating a professional attitude in the operation of your family child care business.

Measuring, recording and tracking growth so that you can see where you are successful and set goals for improvement in other areas.

Regulations Concerning Family Child Care

In Canada, child care is an area of provincial/territorial jurisdiction. Each province and territory sets their own legislation and regulations regarding child care in group or home child care settings. There are two models of regulated home child care in Canada. Some provinces and territories license or contract with agencies to provide regulated care. Others directly license individual child care homes. While all of the provinces and territories currently have some system of regulated home child care, they also permit the provision of home child care outside the regulated child care system for a specified maximum number of children per home. The number of children permitted varies depending on the jurisdiction.

You should explore the option of working within the regulated child care system (i.e. a family child care agency) in your jurisdiction. It can offer many advantages and supports for caregivers and for families, including:

Financial incentives – some jurisdictions offer operating, equipment and/or maintenance grants to licensed family child care homes; families who require financial assistance may be able to qualify for child care subsidies (most jurisdictions require that care be provided in a licensed/regulated child care facility in order to be eligible for subsidy).



As a family child care provider you are a self-employed small business operator. Effectively managing the business aspects of care can produce many benefits.

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Administrative assistance – many child care ministries/departments and/or family child care agencies provide contracts, forms (e.g. child's medical information, emergency contact, outing permission), and other administrative information and assistance to caregivers.

Resources, training and support – most jurisdictions have available through their regulated system a variety of resources that may include orientation sessions and start-up assistance, workshops and/or courses, toy and equipment loans, home visits, mediation and assistance with problem solving, and drop-ins or play groups for caregivers and children.

Link to families in need of child care – the regulated family child care agency will often serve to connect you with the families who are searching for child care which means you won't have to go searching to fill your spots.

In addition to provincial regulations, some municipalities and local governments also have in place bylaws governing home child care. In some communities a business license is required to provide home child care. In others, the numbers and ages of children permitted in a day care home are restricted. It is important that you stay up to date with current regulations that apply to family child care in your community and province/territory and ensure that you are in compliance with any applicable laws.

[You can find information and additional links regarding regulations for specific provinces and territories here.](#)

Income

Your earnings from family child care are affected by a number of factors: the demand for child care in your community, the 'going rates' for care, the number and ages of children you care for, and your own child care experience and training.

Demand for Child Care in Your Area

If you are new to care, explore the demand for family child care in your community.

Think about your neighbourhood or community. If it is sparsely populated, or populated primarily by older families you may experience some difficulty in finding clients. If, on the other hand, it is a heavily populated area with many young children and working mothers, a quality home child care program may be very much in demand. Check the volume of advertisements in local newspapers and online postings of parents looking for care and caregivers offering care. Talk to friends, neighbours and acquaintances in your community about their experiences in looking for care. Talk to other child care providers, church and school staff or volunteers, personnel of major employers in your area and local child care programs to discover whether the demand for child care is steady.

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Questions to ask:

- Do others feel there is a demand for child care in your community?
- What ages of children need care?
- Are there particular child care needs in terms of hours and days of care (e.g., for shift or part-time workers)?
- Do they feel a quality home child care service could succeed in attracting clients?

If the results of your inquiries are not encouraging, it doesn't mean that you have to give up the idea of starting a home child care service. If this is work you really want to do, and you are committed to providing a quality service to children and families, with active and effective marketing you will succeed in finding clients. But be aware of the demand for care in your area as a measurement of how long it might take to start your business.

As mentioned, if you are working with a regulated family child care agency, they will often fill your spots, which means you don't have to advertise or seek out families in need of child care.

The Services You Provide

Your earnings are generally based on the number and ages of children you care for, the hours and days you provide care, the expenses you incur and the fees you charge. Determining the number of and ages of children and the hours and days of care requires some decision-making on your part.

Consider your own preferences, the needs of your family, the type of program you want to offer, and the demand for care. Generally speaking, there is always a high demand for infant care. Part-time care, that may be two or three days a week or a partial day five days a week, and before and after-school care are also high on the demand list. Parents seeking care for shift or unusual hours also experience difficulty finding care. Full-day spaces for two to four year olds tend to be somewhat harder to fill as there is more competition for this age group with nursery schools, day care centres and kindergarten programs available as alternatives.

Setting Your Fees

Of course your earnings are affected by the rates you charge for care. If your rates are not determined by the system you work with, you have to set and periodically review and change your own fees. To determine your rates you should consider several factors, including your training, experience and the type of care you intend to offer. However, a significant factor in determining your own rates will be the rates charged by other family child care providers in your community.

Note that it is illegal for competitors to discuss rates. Rates should not be discussed at family child care association meetings. You should not call another child care provider to inquire about their rates or visit a child care centre to ask them about their rates. There is concern that any of these actions could lead to prices being set higher than they need to be. It is considered price-fixing and is against the law.

You can still find out what other providers are charging without violating this law. If there is a child care resource and referral or support program, family resource centre or home child agency in your community, contact them for information about average rates in your area. Look at online classified ads on sites such as Craigslist for posted child care rates. It is okay to post your rates publicly, but not okay to share your rates privately with your competitors. You can also ask parents what they are, or would be willing to pay, for child care services. Parents are not your competitors so it is acceptable to ask them.

Remember, your rates do not have to be the average. In fact, if you feel that your training, experience, and the quality of care you offer deserves rates well above average, that is your decision. Being aware of the average rate will, however, allow you to be aware of what potential clients may expect to pay for care.

If you are working with a licensed family child care agency, they will provide guidance and the rates for your area.

Policies That Affect Your Income

There are a number of questions that you should consider in terms of your child care policies that directly affect your earnings.

Questions to consider:

- Will you charge by enrollment? (that is, will parents pay for the space days when the child would normally be expected to attend, whether the child attends or not?)



Your earnings are affected by the rates you charge for care.

-
- Will you charge for:
 - Parents' holidays?
 - Parents' illness?
 - Child's illness?
 - Closure for your holidays?
 - Closure due to illness?
 - Statutory holidays?
 - Will you reduce your rate for an additional child from the same family?

Note: If you are participating with a child care agency or are a licensed operator, the system may have regulations regarding your policies. Check with the system before implementing or changing policies.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start an electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.

Consider the questions above regarding payment by enrolment, for holidays or illness, and for additional children from the same family. What do you consider fair? Why would you decide to charge or not charge in some circumstances?

3. Income Tax and Record Keeping

An important responsibility of operating a business is the maintenance of accurate and complete income and expense records for tax purposes. Maintaining such records also ensures that you will be able to make all the deductions from your child care income that you are entitled to as a self-employed person. You should maintain records and supporting documents (receipts, bills, invoices, etc.) for:

- Any income from your child care business;
- Attendance records for each of the children in your care;
- Any expenses related to your child care business.
- Deductible expenses which may be wholly or partially deductible for tax purposes and for which you should save receipts, bills, invoices, etc. include:
 - Accounting and legal expenses
 - Automobile expenses

- Bank charges
- Capital cost allowance (depreciation for larger items purchased in whole or in part for child care use like a refrigerator or play structure)
- Field trip costs
- Food
- Household supplies (i.e. cleaning and paper products)
- Household expenses (i.e. heat, light, gas, mortgage interest and taxes, rent)
- Insurance
- Play supplies
- Postage and stationary
- Repairs and maintenance of home and equipmentTelephone charges related to the child care business
- Training/professional development
- Wages paid to an assistant, for alternate care, or for child care for your own children while you attend training, shop for the child care business, etc.

Note: This list is not exhaustive. You may have other expenses which can be deducted for tax purposes. If unsure about whether an expense is deductible, maintain all receipts and contact the Canada Revenue Agency for clarification.

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Insurance

As a small business operator, you should ensure that you are adequately covered by liability insurance. This insurance should provide coverage in the event that a child, parent, or other person visiting your child care business is injured on your premises, or in the case of the children, while in your care, or the care of an assistant or alternate.

When providing family child care, you are using your home for business purposes, so your normal household's insurance policy may not cover children or others in the event of injury. Liability insurance for family child care normally comes in one of two forms. It is sometimes added on as a rider to your existing household policy. In other circumstances a separate liability policy for the child care business is used.

Ensure also that your policy provides coverage when the children are on outings with you, your alternates, or assistants. Your insurance broker or agent should be able to assist you in obtaining the necessary coverage and in recommending an amount of coverage appropriate to your needs.

If you are using a vehicle to transport children, ensure that your automobile insurance will cover the children in the event of an accident.

You should also consider acquiring disability insurance, in the event that you suffer an injury or a long-term illness. As a self-employed person, you are not entitled to employment insurance (EI) in the event that you are unable to work for health reasons.

If you are not living with a partner who provides you with medical and dental insurance coverage, you may also want to explore the availability of a group plan through a child care organization or contact your local Better Business Bureau to find out whether there is a small business association in your community or province. They are another potential avenue for a group medical and/or dental policy.

Ensure that all communications regarding insurance coverage with your agent(s) or broker is conducted in writing (i.e., email) to prevent misunderstandings.

Business Forms and Information

In this section we will discuss a number of business forms important for your family child care business. Some of these forms, like the written agreement and children's medical history and emergency contact and medication authorization forms are essential. Other forms, like the child care policy statement and consent forms for outings are tools that experienced caregivers find invaluable.

Child Care Policies

Your child care agency or licensing office may provide, or have regulations regarding your child care policies and those must be complied with.

Child Care Policy Statement

Think through and put in writing your child care policies regarding:

- Your child care philosophy
- Your child guidance views and practices
- Financial issues (e.g. will you charge by enrolment, for holidays, sick days, etc.)
- Children's illness; that is, how ill is too ill to come to care
- Under what, if any, circumstances will you administer medication to children in care (e.g. "only prescription medications in their original container will be administered with written instructions from the parent")?
- Who is responsible to find alternate care if the caregiver is not available (i.e., is it the parents or the caregiver)?
- Your views and practices around toilet training, parent participation, etc.
- Other issues of importance to you

Child Care Contract

This is your written agreement with the parents.

Unlike your child care policies, which simply state your policies and how you operate your family child care, the contract/written agreement is a mutually agreed upon legal document between the parents and caregiver regarding the services which you are providing and for which the parents are paying.

Your contract should include:

- The child, parents and caregiver's name and address
- The term/length of the agreement (e.g. one year)
- The hours and days for which care is being provided
- The rate and frequency of payment
- Any additional financial provisions (e.g. payment is/is not required for statutory holidays, child's absence, rates of overtime payment)



The contract/written agreement is a mutually agreed upon legal document between the parents and caregiver regarding the services which you are providing and for which the parents are paying.

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- Provisions for terminating the agreement
- Any other issues (e.g. responsibilities of parents and caregivers) that you wish to include in the agreement
- Signature and date areas for both the parents and caregiver

Medical History and Emergency Contact Forms

You should have a completed medical history and emergency contact form completed by parents before care begins. Information that should be recorded includes:

- The parents' name, home and work addresses and telephone numbers
- The name, home and work addresses, telephone numbers of at least one emergency contact if parents cannot be reached in an emergency
- *The child's:*
 - Name, address and date of birth
 - Record of immunization
 - Known allergies (including medication allergies)
 - Existing conditions
 - History regarding childhood ailments
 - Information regarding susceptibilities (i.e. prone to earaches, headaches)

Due to confidentiality this information must be kept safe and secure.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start an electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.

Make a list of administrative, consent, and information forms provided by the system you work with or are licensed by. If you are working independently, identify some possible sources of forms that you might access.

Medication Authorization Form

It is an important practice, before agreeing to administer any medication to a child in your care, to have parents complete and sign a form that includes the following information:

- The child's name
- The amount of the dosage
- The time of the dosage
- Special instructions for administering (e.g. before or after a meal)
- Possible side effects that you should be looking for
- The date that administration of the medication should begin and end

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Consent for Outings

Outing consent forms are often handled in one of two ways. Some caregivers have parents sign a specific consent form for each outing or activity. These forms would state:

- Child's name
- Parent's name and signature
- Date of the outing
- Location of the outing
- Method of transportation to and from the outing
- Any other information (e.g. admission fees, or special items that the child should bring on the day of the outing)

Some caregivers prefer to have parents sign a general consent form. Such a form may state that the parents give their consent to the caregiver to take the child on field trips or other outings, by automobile, bus or on foot. These consent forms also include information such as the child's name, the parent's name and signature, and the date on which the form is signed.

Quick Reference Card

For quick reference, maintain an updated index card for each child that includes the following information:

- Child's name
- Date of birth
- Address
- Home phone #
- Health insurance #
- Doctor's name
- Doctor's phone #
- Allergies
- Existing medical conditions
- Parent(s) name
- Parent(s) place of work
- Parent(s) phone # at work
- Emergency contact name
- Emergency contact phone #

Make a duplicate card for each child to take with you on any outings with the children (if you usually travel by car, keep the cards in the glove compartment).

Maintaining Administrative and Financial Records

An important part of taking care of your business is maintaining files and records. To keep the information you need in an organized way, you must develop a system for filing and storing records.

A. Children's File

Maintain a file for each child that includes:

- Child care agreement
- Medical information/history form
- Emergency contact form
- Child Information form and/or notes on child's habits, preferences, child care experience, family members, etc. from the pre-placement interview
- Updates on child's progress and notes from meetings/interviews with parent
- Completed medication authorization form
- Completed outing consent forms
- Completed accident/illness reports

B. Financial files

- Receipts, invoices, bills
- Expense journal (maintain a separate file for each category of expense, for example: food, play supplies, household expenses, automobile expenses)
- Attendance journal



An important part of taking care of your business is maintaining files and records.

- Income journal
- Bank statements and cancelled cheque
- Budget
- Statements of income and expenses from previous years

C. Business files

- Insurance records
- Licensing records/agency agreements
- Written agreement forms
- Medical information/history forms
- Emergency contact forms
- Medication authorization forms
- Outings consent forms
- Receipt forms

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D. Program files

- Newsletter/magazine/journal/online links to articles relating to child care
- Brochures, pamphlets, etc. related to child health, safety, nutrition
- Arts, crafts and activity ideas
- Menu plans and recipes
- Information on community resources, places to visit and events

E. Personal files

- Résumé
- First Aid certificate
- Diplomas, certificates, and other proofs of participation and/or completion of diploma programs, degrees, courses, seminars, conferences, workshops, etc.
- Letters of reference, letters of thanks from clients
- Association memberships
- Newsletters

Information on upcoming conferences, workshops, etc.

Noteworthy tip...

Label your file folders clearly. If some of your files contain a lot of smaller items (cash register tapes for play supplies, etc.) tape or staple the sides of the files closed so items don't slip out. Keep anything that has to be filed in a file basket or large envelope for weekly or monthly sorting and filing.

How long you should keep files will depend on the type of file and the circumstances. You should maintain a daycare child's files for as long as the child is in your care and for at least one year after care ends. Financial records should be maintained for at least six years after filing an income tax return. You will likely want to keep your program and personal files from year to year.

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

Word of Mouth

One of the most effective, and least costly, methods of finding clients is word-of-mouth. Parents looking for child care are more comfortable when someone has been personally recommended to them and often start their child care search by asking friends, neighbours, family members, and others for recommendations. Once people in your community become aware that you are providing quality child care, you will find that many of your new clients come from referrals. Whether you are an experienced or new caregiver looking for clients, the most important thing you can do is to talk to people in your community, including:

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- Family
- Friends, and parents of your children's friends
- Neighbours
- Your partner's co-workers
- Other providers in your area
- Neighbourhood schools
- Neighbourhood churches
- Major employers in your area (speak to the personnel department)
- Day care centres and nursery schools in your area (speak to the director)
- Online networks such as Facebook (join groups specific to child care)

Community Resources

Both for child care referrals, and for many other supports and resources available, you should consider registering and/or participating in:

- Child care resource and referral programs, registries and referral services
- Family/home child care agencies
- Family resource centres/programs
- Community centres, community information offices

- Caregiver associations

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start an electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.

What has been your most effective means of finding client families? Think about the children in your care now. How did you make contact with those families?

Advertising

If you are not getting sufficient response through your community contacts, as is often the case when you are just beginning to provide care, you'll want to try other methods. Start with the least costly yet most practical for you, then try other methods as required. Family child care is like most businesses: it takes time to get started and to find the right clients.

Post notices on bulletin boards in:

- local libraries
- community centres
- major employers
- apartment lobbies
- supermarkets
- laundromats

- family resource centre
- drop-ins, play groups

Online networking sites, for example, posts in Facebook child care groups, can also be used to promote your child care.

You may choose to distribute notices/flyers to homes in your area.

Designing Your Advertisement/Notice

Make your advertisements and notices brief, informative and appealing. Check other caregiver's advertisements to get ideas. Consider the following points when preparing your advertisements or flyers:

- Provide basic information including your location, phone number, and hours and days of operation. Some caregivers prefer not to put their name on advertisements and instead simply list a phone number or the name of their family child care business and the best time of day or evening to call for information.
- Avoid negative statements. For example, say "Will care for children two years and over", instead of "no infants".
- Even in a short advertisement, use words and

phrases that tell something about you and your child care (e.g., warm, caring, active, friendly, quality home child care, home-away-from-home).

- Use an illustration on notices and flyers to attract attention. For instance, have a child's drawing at the top of the flyer and put the information under the illustration. Photocopy the flyer and have the children help you colour the pictures.
- Provide tear-off sections at the bottom of notices that include your phone number.



Use an illustration on notices and flyers to attract attention. For instance, have a child's drawing at the top of the flyer and put the information under the illustration. Photocopy the flyer and have the children help you colour the pictures.



Getting myself organized about the business of child care has enabled me to spend a lot less time on it and more time focusing on the kids.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

"I really disliked the business side of care for a very long time. I used to just ignore it and hope it would go away. The result, of course, was that every time I had a new family in care I was digging around everywhere looking for a written agreement and usually ended up having to make one up from scratch. This meant that in my agreement with one parent I would get paid for statutory holidays and another agreement would leave it out altogether. Income tax season was a nightmare, I didn't get half the deductions I was entitled to. Even though we were getting a refund most years, we never were able to file until the last minute because I spent months trying to find all the receipts I needed (and not succeeding). In short, I spent probably at least twice as much time as was necessary on the part of care that I liked least. I finally made a New Year's resolution to clean up my business act. I went to a couple of workshops and had a friend help me develop a filing system that works. Do I love the business side of care now? Nope. Still dislike it in fact. But I spend much less time worrying about it now. Getting myself organized about the business of child care has enabled me to spend a lot less time on it and more time focusing on the kids."

"The best thing I did when I was thinking about providing care was going to meet a couple of other caregivers and spending some time with them. A friend referred me to one caregiver and I just called an ad from the newspaper to contact the other one. I couldn't believe both were willing to have me spend a day with them, watching them work and finding out what the job was really like. Both turned out to be a great source of support for me especially in my first year of care. I highly recommend meeting other caregivers to anyone thinking about doing this. I also think getting together regularly with other caregivers is a must for anyone who is providing care."

"I love my program files and keep them forever. When I started two new little ones last year, I dug out files from three years ago when my school-agers were toddlers and preschoolers. It was fabulous to come across all those ideas, recipes and activities - just like taking a refresher course! One of my school-agers joined us in a finger-play the other day (he was home for a professional development day from school). At the end, he sat back on his elbows and said, 'This takes me back to the olden-days when I was young.' And he's all of six now!"

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Conclusion

Good business practices can help your child care program stand out and succeed where others might fail. Strive to maintain accurate, up-to-date records and file them appropriately. Ask for help if you need it and look for resources that you can use. Be familiar with the licensing rules and regulations in your area and all of their updates. Occasionally, review past records to see how your current situation compares with the same time in previous years. Use this information to notice trends and set goals for your business in the future.

Resources [links to forms, specific prov/terr. gov't regulation sites etc.]

[Using Your Home For Child Care - Canada Revenue Agency](#)

Other helpful resources:

- Provincial Ministries responsible for child care
- Child Care Support Programs and Family/Home Child Care Agencies
- Family Resource Programs
- Caregiver and Child Care Associations and Organizations

04

Starting Off Right

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In Unit 4, Starting Off Right, you will learn about:

- Identify factors that help to establish good relationships between parents and caregivers;
- Recognize that parents have needs, wishes, feelings and concerns regarding their child care arrangement;
- Consider what parents and caregivers need to know before coming to a decision about beginning a child care arrangement;
- Identify strategies for initial contacts and pre-placement interviews with parents; and
- Think about strategies to ease the child's adjustment before and after care begins.

Introduction

Your beliefs, philosophy, experiences, and personal values are reflected in the way that you organize your family child care and undertake your daily activities, from guiding children's behaviour to playing with them. Likewise, the parents of the children in your care bring their own set of values, philosophy, experiences and expectations into the child care situation. The ideal parent and family child care provider relationship in home child care is a partnership between the parent and the family child care provider and the focus of that partnership is the care of the child. In order for this relationship to be successful, you will need to understand one another's point of view.

Before you enter into a child care arrangement, you must learn from the parent about their child, their needs and concerns, and the kind of care that they are looking for. You also need to tell parents about yourself, your home and family, and the kind of care that you provide. You will need to agree on the business part of your arrangement, such as fees and hours of care.

Open communication in the beginning stages of a child care arrangement is an important part of a good child care relationship. So, what are some of the strategies that you can use to ensure this positive connection? Consider the usual steps that precede a new child coming into your care: the initial contact, the interview, and meeting the child. Develop routines that you follow at each of these stages to promote a good rapport with the child and the parents.

How you manage a family's first few days of care is equally important. Giving the children and their parents the encouragement and attention that they need sets the stage for a happy, long-term relationship.



Start as you mean to go on.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

"My grandmother had an expression that she always used "Start as you mean to go on," and I remind myself of that expression every time I am filling a child care space. The longer I've been involved in caregiving, the more I've realized the value of putting time, effort and thought into making sure the child care match has a good chance of succeeding before it begins, and then taking the steps necessary to make sure it succeeds."

1. The Initial Contact

The child care parents may have heard about your family child care from a neighbour, responded to your advertisement, or been referred to you by an agency or child care referral program. In their first contact with you, often by phone, basic information should be exchanged to determine whether or not a child care arrangement might be possible. While some parents who are seeking care may be very experienced and confident, many parents may need some help in knowing what questions to ask and what information to share with you. Your ability to respond in a friendly, helpful and well-informed way can help parents feel comfortable. Think about the basic information that must be exchanged before an actual care arrangement could be considered. Be prepared to respond to a parent's inquiries and ask questions that are relevant to you.

Before you can both decide if an interview is appropriate, the parents need to know:

- The location of your home.
- If you have space available for their child considering the hours and days they require care.
- Your fees. Some providers who have higher fees but provide substantially more, do not share fees over the phone. Instead, they share their fees at the interview, when they have time to show the justification for the higher fees.

- The number and ages of other children in your home, including your own.

- The proximity of your home to schools and/or the availability of bussing to schools.

You need to know:

The name and age of the child and any special needs/requirements (allergies, special dietary requirements) for each child.

The days and hours for which care is needed.

The desired starting date.

- The parent's name and phone numbers.

This initial communication will establish whether the child/parents' needs match with the child care that you offer. If so, it's time to move on to a more formal information exchange - the interview. You should arrange an interview time suitable to you and the parents. You might wish to offer the parents the option of checking some of your references before the interview.

If it doesn't appear that your needs are well-suited, provide parents with the contact information for a child care registry or resource and referral program, or other caregivers in your neighbourhood if possible.



Be prepared to respond to a parent's inquiries and ask questions that are relevant to you.

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Noteworthy tip...

Keep a “child care” notebook near the phone. Written information about yourself and your child care, directions to your home, and a list of nearby schools can help you respond easily to any questions that a prospective parent might ask. Your notebook could also contain a written list of the questions that you usually ask a parent who calls you. It’s an easy way to remember to ask for all of the important details. Record the names and telephone numbers of the parents who call you in this book as well as other essential information, for easy referral.

If other family members will be answering the phone in your absence, teach them how to respond and take messages for you. Make sure they know that getting messages to you is important so that you can return calls in a timely manner.



By concentrating on making the parents feel more comfortable, I stopped worrying about myself.

CHATTERBOX [a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]

"I always got so nervous about interviewing new families until a friend (who was looking for a caregiver at the time) said to me "What have you got to be nervous about, you've done this several times. It's the parents who are nervous." Well, that really made me think. In five years as a caregiver I have done more than a dozen interviews with parents, and many of the parents I've met had very little, or no, experience interviewing caregivers. By concentrating on making the parents feel more comfortable, I stopped worrying about myself. I feel much more confident now when I meet with families."

2. The Interview

When caregivers and parents first meet there is bound to be a bit of nervousness. You're both wondering if you'll like each other, come to an understanding together, and move on to a solid child care relationship. Remember that you both have the same goal in mind and that is the right child care situation for this child. Both you and the parents are deciding whether this child and family are a good match for your family child care.

Plan the interview beforehand to ensure that all the necessary details will be covered in an organized way. Some caregivers find it easier to have a first interview with parents without the child to allow for open discussion without interruption. If the child is present, spend some time chatting informally with parents and child first, then offer the child some quiet activity nearby while you and the parents chat.

You may decide to have an informal interview, where you and the parents talk about the child's and family's needs and your family child care. Then, you can provide the parents with written information, policies and/or a child care agreement to look over at home, and review together at a later meeting. On the other hand, you may prefer to use written information on your family child care, your policies and/or written agreements during the interview.

Whichever method you choose, cover the basics to ensure that you and the parents fully understand what you expect of each other and that you have enough information to decide whether a child care arrangement might be made. Now is the time to find out if your views fit with those of the parents so you can both determine whether you will be able to work as a team in the best interest of the child.



Remember to provide a writing pad and pen for yourself and the parents to note any information or questions.

Remember to provide a writing pad and pen for yourself and the parents to note any information or questions.

There are four essential areas to be covered in the interview:

- 1) Discussing the needs of the child and family
- 2) Sharing information about yourself and your child care
- 3) Discussing business arrangements
- 4) Showing the child care areas of your home

Unit 04

1) Discussing Child Care Requirements

Children's parents are the people who have the best understanding of their children. They will want to share information about their child and his or her unique characteristics. They will also want to let you know about their expectations around the care that their child receives.

• Basic information that you will require includes:

- Child's full name, age, address
- Parents' name(s), address(es), home and business phone numbers
- Medical history and health information

Other helpful information that you should invite the parents to share about the child's usual routine, interests and preferences can be covered with questions like:

- What other family members or persons live with the child? Are there any family pets?
- What kinds of activities does the child enjoy? Favourite games, books, foods, toys?
- Are they used to playing/being with other children?
- What is their general disposition?
- What is their general health status? Prone to colds, ear infections?
- What are child's eating, sleeping/napping and toileting habits?

- Has the child attended child care before?
- If so, was this a positive experience?
- Are they working on any particular developmental task at this time (e.g. learning to drink from a cup or learning to use the toilet)

For a school-aged child:

- What arrangements can be made regarding transportation to and from school?
- What extracurricular or community activities does the child participate in?
- How will the child get to and from these activities?
- How much supervision is required? Can they walk from the bus stop to here on their own?
- Have there been any major changes in the child's or family's life recently?
- Does the child have any special needs or conditions which would affect their care? If the child does have special needs or conditions, are there other services/individuals involved with the child (e.g. therapists, physicians) who you should be aware of and who might serve as a resource to you in meeting the child's needs.

Unit 04

Encourage the parents to share what they are looking for in the child care setting.

- What are the normal days and hours for which care is required?
- Is care required occasionally/frequently outside normal hours?
- If the child has been in other care situations, was it a positive situation? Did they have any concerns?

What kinds of things do the parents enjoy doing with their child?

- Is a family-like atmosphere important to the parents?
- Are activities, like arts and crafts, school readiness, field trips important to them?
- What kinds of child guidance approaches do they use?
- What are their views on television viewing? Toilet training? (Depending on age of child)

What kinds of things are really important to them for their child?

Some families may have preferences or concerns related to their culture or beliefs. If parents are of a culture and/or beliefs different from your own, show your interest and willingness to learn more.

Ask parents to share specific preferences or concerns they have. Ask about possible sources of information that would help you learn more. Talk about

how you and the parents might work together to ensure a child care situation where the child feels a sense of acceptance and belonging.

Some families may have special needs or concerns as a result of personal circumstances, for example, a recent divorce or separation. Are there custody and access arrangements? What are those arrangements? Reassure parents that all information that they share with you will be kept confidential and will help you to better meet their child's needs.

Be realistic in your own ability to meet the needs of every child. It can be easy to stretch yourself too thin trying to accommodate the needs of many children and many families. Be honest with parents you interview about what you are willing and able to do, and what you will not be able to do. When parents have requests you know you can't accommodate, explain why you do things the way you do. It is better to start a relationship with new clients based on realistic expectations and honesty, rather than on promises that can't be kept.

2) Sharing Information

The type of child care you provide is an extension of the person you are. Your interests, experiences, beliefs, and child rearing philosophy all contribute to your home day care. Parents will want to find out who you are and what you believe in. It is important that they get to know and feel comfortable with the person who will be caring for their child.

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Share information about yourself, such as:

- Your experience, including your parenting and child care experience
- Your reasons for providing home child care and your feelings about providing care (especially what you like most about being a child care provider)
- Any training or education you have had concerning children/child care (workshops, courses, certificate, diploma or degree programs, first aid training, etc.)
- Your child care philosophy and your approach to child rearing (What do you think children need most from care? What are the qualities you think are most important to encourage in children? What do you hope children will gain from your care?)
- Information regarding any assistants, co-providers, alternates, or other people that the children have regular contact with.



Share information about yourself, such as your experience, including your parenting and child care experience.



I think it's really important that you be very honest with parents at the interview stage.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

"I think it's really important that you be very honest with parents at the interview stage. I know we all want to make a good impression, and I do share my enthusiasm for my work. But I want parents to know that my house doesn't always look perfect at the end of a child care day. They also need to know that with three children of my own in baseball, Brownies, soccer and hockey, I cannot work overtime - period! So if a somewhat untidy home is going to drive them crazy, or if they work late two nights a week and can't make other child care arrangements for those nights, it just isn't going to work."

Unit 04

Share information about your daycare, such as:

- How many children you care for, and their ages
- Your usual routines and schedule including snack times, story or art activity times, outdoor play, nap/quiet time, outings, etc.
- The kinds of meals and snacks you serve, or if parents are providing meals and snacks, any policies/requirements you have regarding meals and snacks
- Your health policies and practices, including immunization requirements, policies regarding the child's illnesses, health practices you use to safeguard children's health and well-being
- References from current or previous care families (or others who can attest to your character and suitability to care for children if you are new to care)

3) Business Arrangements

A clear understanding and mutual agreement about the business arrangements, and your own and the parent's responsibilities will greatly benefit your relationship and allow you to focus on the child and their needs in that relationship. Whether you provide written documentation at the first interview, or at some other time before the care actually begins, it is very important to provide written information about business arrangements and responsibilities and/or a written agreement to parents so that both parties are clear about their obligations.

Business arrangements and responsibilities include:

- Fees, including basic fee, method and frequency of

payment, overtime fees (if applicable) and requirements (e.g., notice of overtime), payment requirements when a child is absent from care, payment requirements when the caregiver or an alternate is not available, payment requirements for statutory holidays.

- Hours and days of the week when care will be provided
- Items that parents will provide (e.g. diapers, food, equipment such as car seat, changes of clothing, etc.)
- Items/equipment that caregiver will provide (e.g. meals and snacks, toys, materials and equipment)
- Provisions for alternate care when caregiver is not available (e.g. Are you responsible for finding alternate care? Are the parents? Is alternate care available through the agency or system that you work with?)
- Your policies regarding the child's illness (How sick is too sick to come to care? What do you do in the event that a child becomes ill while in your care?, etc.)

4) The First Visit

Parents will want to see where the children will play as well as some of the toys, books, and equipment that they will use each day. Remember, child care parents are not looking for a beautiful home or a day care centre. What most parents are looking for is a comfortable, clean and child-friendly environment that says "children are welcome here", and a place where they also feel warmly welcomed.

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While doing your tour, talk about what activities happen where, and some of the activities and games that you find the children enjoy. Show families the areas where the children play, eat, sleep, and use the toilet. If the children play outdoors in the front or back yard, show the parents these areas as well. This is a good time to discuss any special support needs the child has. If the equipment or environment needs to be adapted, or special equipment needs to be acquired to meet the needs of the child, what are those requirements, and who will be responsible for the equipment and/or adaptations?

3. Making the Decision

You and the parents will have exchanged a great deal of information in the course of the interview. You may prefer to both take some time to consider before a decision is made about making the child care arrangements. You should encourage parents to visit and interview other family child care providers and/or centres before they make a final decision. While accepting a new child into care is an important decision for you, it is a critically important decision for parents, and they should take their time in making sure that their choice is one that they are very comfortable with.

You should be considering the information parents have provided and your own impressions of the parents. Does it appear that you will be able to meet the needs of the child? Will the child fit in well with your existing group? Did you feel a connection with the parents? Do you see the potential for a good relationship? Do you anticipate any difficulties in respecting and supporting the parents' preferences and needs on an ongoing basis? Family Child Care Providers are 'giving' people by nature, and the

enthusiasm of the moment will often cause you to want to help out. It's important to recognize your own needs and the needs of your family child care and family before making a final decision.

If you are unable to accommodate a family for any reason, provide them with contact information for child care referral services or other family child care providers in your community. Doing so shows your concern for the family and a degree of professionalism. Even if no formal child care referral or registry exists, referrals to other providers helps establish an informal referral system within your own community. You may suggest another family child care provider today and receive a referral from him/her at another time. Personal referral is one of the best ways to link up with families seeking care.

If it appears that the match is a promising one, arrange for the parents to visit again, with the child, and make your final arrangements during that visit.

4. Meeting the Child – the first get-together

Whether you meet the child at the first interview with parents, or at another time, that first get-together should be a welcoming and friendly one. Meeting outside of regular child care hours will give you an opportunity to relax and give your full attention to the child's first visit. This visit will also give you a chance to observe the child's behaviour and the child-parent interaction. Use your observations and the information provided by the parents to develop a basic impression of the child's personality to help you prepare for their transition into care.

On the first get-together with the child, you should:

Spend time in the room where the children usually play to acquaint the child with their new day care surroundings.

Infants and toddlers often prefer to stay near mom or dad and check you out from the safety of their arms. Speak to them but don't rush to hold them unless both the baby and the parents seem comfortable.

Have some age-appropriate toys or activities available. If the child doesn't feel like talking he can busy himself with something fun while you talk with the parents.

Take the parents and child on a small tour of your home, showing them where they'll play, where they'll eat, where they'll use the washroom and where they'll put their outdoor clothes and shoes when they arrive.

Ask older children about themselves and what they like to do.

Tell children about the other children in care and some of the activities that they like to do.

Put the child's name on a sticky tag and label their coat hook, basket, etc. with their help.

Purchase some books that talk about children going to child care or play groups. Send one or two home with the child and parents and ask for its return on the first day of child care.

Invite the child to bring a favourite comfort toy with them on the first day of care. Encourage follow-up visits before care begins.



Whether you meet the child at the first interview with parents, or at another time, that first get-together should be a welcoming and friendly one.

5. Gradual Entry

If possible, encourage parents to follow a plan of visits to help ease their child into a new day care situation. This is particularly important for those first timers (parents and children) who need a little more encouragement and support. You need to be adaptable to the child and parents' needs. Some children will need a more gradual approach while others will not need that. It's a good time to discuss with parents routines and determine if additional routines need to be added for their child's needs.

- On the first day, the child and parent come for a visit together. A visit during child care hours will help the child become familiar with the environment, the routine, and the other day care children, with the security of having mom or dad there. A school-aged child and parent could join the other children for an afternoon snack.

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- On the next day, the child comes to stay for a short visit (one or two hours) without parents. Ask the parent to say good-bye to the child with the reassurance that they will be back soon. Explain to parents that sneaking away will cause extra insecurity for the child, and will make future drop-offs even more difficult.
- On the subsequent day, the child comes for a half-day and lunch without parent. Encourage the other children in your child care group to help the new child learn all about their child care home. Children love to share their knowledge of all the toys and games, the family pet, the routines, and especially all about the rules!
- On the final gradual entry day, the child comes for a full day with shortened hours. Prepare for this day by organizing meals and activities beforehand so that you can be attentive to the new child and foster their connection to the other children. Include some of the new child's favourite books, toys, foods or activities in the day.
- Take some pictures of the child having fun! Sharing these with parents will help them feel more secure, too. When parents are feeling confident about dropping their child off, it also creates more security for the child. These pictures can also help the parent-child bond, as they can be used as starting points for discussions with the child about their day.

6. The First Days of Care

Children need time to learn about their new environment and the people in it, to understand the routines, and to develop a sense of security. You play a very important role in easing the child's transition into care.

It's natural for the parents and the caregiver to experience an initial adjustment period as well as the child. This settling-in stage usually lasts about two to four weeks. You may find yourself dealing with children who are teary and reluctant at times and parents who are anxious and concerned while you yourself are adapting to the new addition to your child care group. Accept the fact that it will take a while to get to know your new child and his/her family and for them to get to know and trust you. Maintain a positive attitude and support the child and parent(s) with your acceptance and patience.

Some parts of your normal routine and practice become especially important when a child is beginning care, including:

- A welcoming environment which includes a special place for each child to put his belongings.
- A parent bulletin board near the entrance with information about the menu and activities of the day.
- Planning your schedule so that you are free to give your attention to the parents at drop-off and pick-up times. (And allowing some extra time for the new parents).
- Asking parents about their day and telling them a bit about yours. Before the parents arrive, think of at least one good thing to tell them about their child and his/her day. Share this good news with the parent at pick up time.

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Some things you can do to make the first days easier are:

- Take some time during afternoon naps to give the new parents a reassuring call, text or email including pictures. If they can't be disturbed at work, note down a positive thing that happened and share the note at pick up time.
- Keep a more relaxed schedule to help new children adjust. Don't plan any major outings or changes in daily schedule for those first few weeks.
- Encourage the other children to be special buddies with the new child to create a warm welcome.
- Go slow and easy and be watchful of the child's responses and feelings.
- Enlist the parent's help in speaking to their child about you and your child care home in a positive way.
- Always encourage kind words and actions among the children and encourage everyone's participation in welcoming the newest group member.

The age of the child starting care will impact on their adjustment and the strategies you can use to help as each age group has its own requirements and you should be aware of them.

7. Infants

Infants will require extra holding and cuddling. Other children and busy surroundings may be something new for a baby. For those times when you aren't holding the baby, a safe place such as a playpen or a bounce seat with you in sight, will help with a gradual introduction to his or her new environment

away from curious faces and hands. Note that these options are not to be used as a replacement for supervision.

Ask parents to bring some favourite toys so that the baby can see, touch and smell something familiar. Note that the toys should not be used at sleep time; this is considered a choking hazard by various provincial safety standards.

Try to follow the baby's usual habits and routines as closely as possible for the first few weeks until they feel comfortable.

Provide parents with a verbal or written update on baby's feeding, sleeping, bowel movements and mood.

8. Toddlers

If possible, plan for a gradual introduction to care with one or two visits with mom, followed by shorter than usual days to start with.

Small children usually relate well to other children. Ask an older child in your group to act as playmate and helper for a while.

Because toddlers love order in their lives, follow a regular routine. However, there should be enough flexibility to meet the child's individual needs, such as fatigue or hunger, that fall outside usually scheduled times.

A special quiet-time toy or blanket from home offers extra comfort and security for your toddler.

Invite children to participate in activities but don't force the issue.

9. Preschoolers

The toddler suggestions apply equally well to the preschool group as well. Talk to preschoolers about the usual activities and routines so that they will know what to expect.

Ensure there are opportunities during which the preschooler has choices. They love to feel in control and make their own decisions.

During the first few days, talk about what is happening next, and give five minutes notice of an upcoming change. Showcase your program plan. Parents and the child will enjoy seeing how the day will go. You can use pictures and songs as part of your routine to help with the child's transition to your program.

Each evening, tell mom and dad about some activity or event of that day so that they can talk to their child about it at home.

10. School-age Children

School age children will be more comfortable if you provide them with an understanding of your routines and expectations.

Show them the areas of your home that they will use (where to hang their jackets and school bags for example). Ask each child about favourite foods and activities and include them in your plans.

Make a special point of having extra time to spend talking with them before and after school for the first few weeks.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start an electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.

What are some of the special things you do to make a new child feel welcome?

Develop your own Personal Portfolio that you can share with parents. Organize a folder, binder or digital file or slideshow with personal information and achievements. You might include:

- a brief description of your child care philosophy, your résumé including relevant experience (parenting counts too!);
- information on training you have participated in and certificates or diplomas from child care courses or workshops,
- contact information for references and/or letters of reference from present or previous child care families, information on criminal record check;
- photos of you and your children involved in outings and typical activities in the home.



Ensure there are opportunities during which the preschooler has choices. They love to feel in control and make their own decisions.

Conclusion

Starting off right can go far in establishing a good relationship with the parents of the children in your care; the better the relationship you have with them, the easier it will be to communicate with them about their children. Some relationships will be quick and easy to establish, while others may take a while. Like all relationships, it is important to work at them. The children and your business will benefit by the effort you put into strengthening these relationships. Communication is key, and is a skill that you can improve with practice and experience.

05

Partnering with Families

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In Unit 5: Partnering with Families, you will:

- Consider the benefits of positive parent-provider partnerships;
- Recognize the importance of communication in building and maintaining partnerships;
- Develop strategies and techniques to encourage parent-provider communications;
- Identify strategies for encouraging parental involvement; and
- Review problem-solving techniques.

Unit 05

Introduction

A good partnership is positive and respectful, where people work together towards a common goal. Being partners does not mean that the relationship will always enjoy smooth sailing. It means that individuals will treat each other as they would wish to be treated themselves, and always with the best interest of the children in mind.

The parent-provider relationship can sometimes be a complicated one. Ideally, you will interact with each other in an atmosphere of respect. You will discuss and encourage - as partners - the healthy development of the children. The safety, well-being and overall progress of the children is your common goal. These partners, however, are also your clients. Just as you would hope that parents respect your work and the role you play in their child's life, they too, must be respected as clients who have legitimate expectations about the care their children receive. No matter how attached their children are to you, parents will need you to be sensitive to, and respect their primary role, in their children's lives.

The Starting Off Right module of this training program focuses on the early days of your relationship with parents, from the interview to the first few weeks of care. The time and attention you devote to establishing a good relationship from the beginning will provide a good foundation for a positive partnership.

A good beginning is only the start. Your relationship with parents is like any other important relationship in your life: it takes time, thought, and attention to

become and remain strong.

A positive and mutually supportive relationship with the parents will enrich your life and theirs, and, most importantly, it will enrich the lives of the children you care for.



I understand that providing child care is hard work, but so is parenting and working outside the home.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

"I worked as a caregiver in my home for nearly seven years and then decided to return to work outside the home. After less than a year, I made the decision to go back to caregiving, this time permanently - it's what I want to do. I think what changed most in my year as a parent working outside the home, was my understanding of what parents experience in the child care arrangement. I provided good care to children, and even had good relationships with the parents, but would I ever like to call every one of them now and say I am so sorry for not being more understanding of the pressures and stresses of their everyday lives. I have much stronger and better relationships with my child care parents now. Partly, at least, because I understand that providing child care is hard work, but so is parenting and working outside the home."

1. Partnerships in Practice

Everyone benefits in the child care arrangement from a positive partnership between child care provider and parent.

The child benefits...

Just as children tend to do better at school when their parents are involved in their education through parent councils, volunteering in the classroom, attending parent-teacher interviews, and baking cookies for the class party, parental involvement in the goings-on of your child care home will be a positive experience for the children. The children will know that their parents are interested in what they do every day with you. They will observe how their parents and their child care provider talk to each other about them and planned activities and events. The children will feel cared for and important, to their parents and to you.

The parents benefit...

Parents will feel confident and respected in their role as the child's primary caregiver.

Parents will also have the opportunity to learn more about child development and care as you share resources, information and your experience and expertise. Through your actions and rapport with the children and parents, you have the opportunity to demonstrate what quality family child care is and may find that parents become your strongest advocates.

The child care provider benefits...

You will have opportunities to tap into additional resources, information and expertise as parents



Parents will feel confident and respected in their role as the child's primary caregiver.

share their knowledge and experience. You'll gain confidence, pride and greater satisfaction with your work through stronger partnerships with parents.

2. The Building Blocks of Successful Partnerships

You spend a great deal of time encouraging cooperative and positive relationships among the children in your care, teaching them how to share, how to listen to the words of others, how to use their own words, how to appreciate the differences in others and how to avoid hurting the feelings of others. The phrase: "How would it make you feel if someone said or did that to you?" may be one you have used in guiding the children in your care. Those same skills, attitudes, behaviours and qualities are important in building your partnership with parents.

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- Trust

Trust starts with the sharing of information, views, goals and ideas in a way that feels safe and comfortable for both parties. Trust grows over time, when you know that your mutual responsibilities will be met, that your views will be considered, and that information you share will be kept confidential.

In the child care relationship, parents need to feel:

Confident that their opinions, views, and child-rearing practices and philosophies, will be sought out, listened to, understood and valued;

That their child(ren)'s needs will be met in a warm and caring manner while in your care;

That you will be available to provide care during the agreed upon hours and days;

That the information that they share with you about their child and family will be used only to help you provide the best care possible to their child, and will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

You need to feel:

That parents will respect you and your work;

That parents will fulfill their responsibilities in the child care arrangements and comply with your child care policies;

That parents will work co-operatively with you in meeting the needs of their children; and that parents will show consideration for your own family and the other children and families you work with.

- Respect

Learning to accept and respect each other's positions, views, lifestyles and practices, does not necessarily mean sharing those views or engaging in those practices. It means understanding and celebrating that it is our differences that make the world a rich and wonderful place. Others often mirror our own behaviour and attitudes. When you demonstrate respect to and for others, and have respect for yourself, you are modeling the type of behaviour you have the right to expect from others.

We live in a world rich with diversity. The families using your child care services may be of cultures, language, and lifestyles different from your own. These differences should be explored. Ask questions. Show your interest and willingness to learn. Give parents a clear and positive message that you want every child and parent to feel validated and comfortable sharing important parts of their family lives. Learning more about their culture, lifestyle, and language, and incorporating some of your new information into your daily practice and program is an important way to convey that positive message.

- Empathy

Being able to put yourself in another's place, to 'walk a mile in their shoes,' is fundamental in developing partnerships with others. Stepping back from a situation and viewing it from the other person's eyes, often gives a very different perspective of an issue. It is one of the reasons why "I" messages are so important in communicating with others. It helps people see the issue or problem from your perspective.

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Parents' feelings about their child's child care provider can often be an ambiguous one. They want their children to receive good care and have a good relationship with their child care provider, but it can be difficult sometimes to see another person playing such an important part in, and sharing so much of, their children's lives. Take an empathetic and sensitive approach to help ensure a positive partnership. Parents' feelings about their child's child care provider can often be an ambiguous one. They want their children to receive good care and have a good relationship with their child care provider, but it can be difficult sometimes to see another person playing such an important part in, and sharing so much of, their children's lives. Take an empathetic and sensitive approach to help ensure a positive partnership.

- Communication

Establishing open communication from the beginning will go a long way in building a solid partnership. Some family child care providers, like some parents, are outgoing and chatty, others are shy and reserved. Various combinations of provider-parent personalities will impact in different ways on the ease, quality and frequency of the communication. Your personality and demeanor may remain relatively unchanged when dealing with each of your child care parents, but the connection you make with each of them will be different, as they are different. Finding ways to communicate that are comfortable for both you and the parents is what matters. People take their cues from each other. Always be courteous, respectful and attentive. This is your territory, so even if you're shy, be the first to smile, offer an observation or ask a question.

Make it your practice to:

Meet parents and children at the door with a smile and a pleasant greeting every day. Let them know

you are happy to see them. Encourage parents to share information about the child. Did they sleep well? How was their appetite this morning?

Offer a positive observation about the child every day at pick-up time (even if it's been a difficult day). Share an amusing story, a new accomplishment, or a general, positive, observation about how the child is growing and developing. Share information about the child's day. Did they nap well? Was their appetite good? Any special activities, events or outings?

Put up a bulletin board near your entrance where you post daily or weekly menus; a calendar of events, activities, birthdays (even pay day); children's art work; reminders and notices.

If you are caring for infants, provide a daily journal for parents with a note about the baby's eating, sleeping, toileting, and general disposition that day.

Keep a notebook by the entrance (or provide a sheet on the bulletin board) where you or parents can jot down any important information and dates (e.g., upcoming doctor's appointments, vacation dates, grandma's visit).

Provide positive feedback and reinforcement to the parents. We all need to hear we're doing a good job, and parents appreciate your recognition that they too have needs.

Send an occasional text or email, share photos (if appropriate) and information about the child's day.

If either you, or the parent(s), has an issue of importance to discuss, arrange a mutually convenient time by phone or in person (without the children present) to discuss the matter. Discourage serious conversations on the doorstep, unless it is of immediate concern.

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Call parents on the phone occasionally to talk about their child's progress. Check with parents to see if they would prefer calls during work hours (perhaps at the children's naptime) or outside work hours. A brief call to touch base is especially important if there has been a period of time when drop-off and/or pick-up times have been particularly hectic.

Share information with parents on child development and care. If you come across an article, book, workshop handout, or online resource which you found interesting, especially one that relates to their child's stage of development, lend it or share it with parents.

Plan to meet with parents at least once or twice a year, without the children present, to talk about their child's progress and the child care arrangements.

Keep parents informed of any challenges you are experiencing with their child, and discuss how you are addressing them. Be positive and direct but not dramatic. Your confidence and calm approach will be reassuring to parents. They may be more inclined to relay their parenting challenges and their attempts to address them. Matter-of-fact, non-judgmental sharing will create a very natural opportunity for you to work together in addressing the challenges which every child will present at one time or other. The child will benefit from the consistency of the messages he/she is receiving at your home and in the family home. A shared approach to toilet train-

ing, for example, will help increase the chances of success.

Make it clear to parents that not only are you not their rival for their child's affections, you will actively encourage and support their parental relationship, by talking with the children about their families and by reinforcing the importance of parents, siblings, grandparents and extended family members.

Beware, some of your parent-clients may be all too eager to share personal matters with you - some pertaining to their children, and some not. When you are seen as nurturing and kind and an available sympathetic ear, you may find yourself in the uncomfortable position of wondering "how much is too much?" Close bonds shouldn't be discouraged, and everyone benefits, especially the children. However, you must determine whether your level of involvement with a parent creates a burden on you, blurs your objectivity, or creates expectations in the parent that you are their personal counsellor in addition to their child's caregiver.

Be prepared to make referrals to agencies, programs and services in the community that may help meet the needs of a parent who is struggling with personal issues, family matters, or money troubles, etc. Educate yourself on the available resources in your community which help support families and share this information in confidence with the parent, in a caring and sensitive manner. Remember it is not your role to diagnose or come up with solutions to



Educate yourself on the available resources in your community which help support families and share this information in confidence with the parent, in a caring and sensitive manner.

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situations beyond your knowledge. You can serve as a great resource as an observer who then can suggest additional resources they could connect to.

Parent Involvement

The greatest benefits to everyone, and the strongest child care partnerships, are ones where parents are involved in meaningful ways in their child's care. This doesn't just mean inviting parents to an annual picnic or having them contribute supplies for crafts (although there is nothing wrong with them doing that too!)

Meaningful involvement is:

Asking for and incorporating parents' ideas and suggestions into your daily activities and practice. Ask for parents' suggestions about activities, books, music, games and outings the children might enjoy. Invite parents to share recipes and menus they prepare and enjoy in their homes, and incorporate those foods into your meal and menu planning. For activities you and the children are interested in, ask for parents' ideas. Invite them to lend pictures, books, music, or other materials that reflect their culture and/or language or interests. Ask parents to teach you words, simple phrases, and children's songs they use at home.

Including parents when you are reviewing or developing policies and procedures for your child care program. Your child care policies and procedures are about you and the way you operate your home child care. But your home child care service must meet the needs of children and families in order to succeed. When you are developing or reviewing your policies and procedures, allow parents a voice. Ask their opinions: Do they see the policy as fair? Do they have any concerns about the policy? Consider parents' views carefully in making your decisions.

REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Take out your notebook or start an electronic file to complete the reflective activity. Note these reflective activities will not be submitted or assessed but are instead used for your personal learning and growth.

Think about the individual parents you are working with now. What is their present level of involvement in their child's care? Is there room for improvement? What are some ways that you could help encourage their further involvement?



Misato was just thrilled the day her mom spent the morning with us, sharing some Japanese traditions and language, and helping us prepare Japanese food for our lunch.

CHATTERBOX *[a voiced anecdote from an experienced FCC provider]*

“Misato was just thrilled the day her mom spent the morning with us, sharing some Japanese traditions and language, and helping us prepare Japanese food for our lunch. Misato (who was only three at the time) even showed us all how to use chopsticks and gave a gift of chopsticks to each of us. Every time the children see rice on the lunch table they insist that we put the cutlery away and take the chop sticks out, and make our bows to each other. Poor Misato is still trying to help me become more adept with the chopsticks.”

Offering tangible ways that parents can participate in their child’s care. Make parents feel comfortable taking advantage of your ‘open door’ policy if they can. (Especially when a family is new to your care, parents will need reassurance that they can visit during the day care day.) Invite parents to join you for a picnic lunch, a special celebration, or an outing. Some parents may be able to contribute baked goods for a special celebration. Others might contribute scrap paper from work and other ‘treasures’ for art and craft activities. Invite parents to share a special skill or talent with the children one day or come and tell them about their job or hobby.

Involving parents in a meaningful way shouldn’t involve making constant demands on their time and resources. Nor can you expect all parents to engage in the same way, or to the same degree. Each parent, like each provider, is an individual with their own interests, skills, abilities and demands on their time. Some parents will have greater flexibility in their work schedules, and the resources available to them, than others. Your challenge is to find ways to encourage and support parents to be involved in their child’s care in ways that accommodate their needs, interests and availability.

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3. When Problems Arise

The world is imperfect, and while that makes it an interesting place to live in, it also means that there are bumps in the road now and then. When a bump, or a problem, does occur, the important thing is to resolve the problem - and always assume that by working together it can be resolved in a positive, constructive way. Working together through issues that arise with respect and understanding can lead to a stronger partnership in the long run.

4. Discussing Concerns with Parents

When you have a concern about a child, or about the parents:

Don't let it brew for long. Give the parent(s) a chance, or two, but then address the problem.

Arrange an appropriate time to talk, when you are not feeling annoyed or angry and when the children are not present.

Be honest, but be careful not to use words or a tone which will make parents feel defensive. Imagine yourself in their shoes, hearing your words. What would your reaction be?

When you address a problem, try using a light touch the first time around, and avoid sarcasm.

For example, to address a late pick up say, "Just a reminder that pick-up time is at 5:30 pm - call me ahead of time if you have a special request to extend the time - see you tomorrow!"

If you feel the situation warrants a more serious discussion, use "I" messages in stating your position. For example, "I'm feeling a little annoyed that you have been 20 minutes late for pick up two days this

week. I want to be flexible for you when you need it on special occasions, but I need to hear from you when you are going to be late. I'm afraid that if I say nothing to you, you will assume it's okay to continue the practice, and I'll end up feeling taken advantage of. Is there a problem that I'm not aware of? I'd like to hear what you think about this."

Once you have stated the problem, listen to parents' responses. It may be that there is an explanation and a valid one. (Construction on a major throughfare could be making everyone late this week.) If there is a valid explanation, look for solutions with parents. If there isn't, simply remind parents what your expectations are for the future.

Don't let the discussion get side-tracked. This is not the time for you to raise other issues. Nor is it the time to allow parents to raise other issues (unless they are directly related issues). If parents get side-tracked, simply say that you would be happy to discuss any other issues after you have resolved this one.

End the discussion on a friendly, positive note. For example, tell parents that you are pleased that you have been able to talk to them about this concern and to come to a resolution together. Add that you hope that they will feel comfortable discussing any concerns they have with you.

Obviously, discussions around lateness, payment and many other issues, will be helped if you are able to remind parents about the child care agreement or policies you provided them with (one reason why it is so important to put things in writing). The clearer these things are at the beginning, the easier it will be to address and/or revisit them.

5. Reacting to and Discussing Parent Concerns

When a parent approaches you with a concern they have about their child:

Take a deep breath and remain calm.

Don't respond defensively or immediately. If this is not a good time for a discussion, tell parents you very much want to talk to them about the issue and arrange a convenient time as soon as possible for a private discussion.

Let parents talk, and try to hear what their real concern is.

Ask them how they think their concerns can be resolved.

Try to respond fairly, without emotion. If you have been at fault, admit it and apologize. If there has been a misunderstanding, try to clarify your position or view.

Discuss how the issue/problem can be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties.

End the discussion on a friendly, positive note. For example, tell parents that you are pleased that they were able to talk to you about the issue/problem and that you realize how difficult it must have been for them to do so.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Develop your own Parent Involvement Policy. Write down how you feel about parent involvement and why you feel it is important. Indicate a variety of ways that you do/will encourage parent involvement.



Your means of encouraging parental involvement should be flexible enough to accommodate parents with a variety of schedules, personalities and interests.

Talk to the parents of the children currently in your care about what they feel should be included in your Parent Policy and incorporate their suggestions. Ask a fellow caregiver (or two) to review your policy and offer their advice.

Remember, your means of encouraging parental involvement should be flexible enough to accommodate parents with a variety of schedules, personalities and interests.

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Conclusion

As you learned in Unit 4: Starting off Right, and further in this Unit, good relationships lead to good communication and engagement with families. Parents are a great source of information and insight on their children, and this should be acknowledged, respected and utilized in planning for the best possible care for the child. The relationship will take effort, but the rewards are invaluable for the child, you, and your business. Essentially, you cannot provide quality child care without planning for, and working on, creating and maintaining relationships with the parents of the children in your care.

Resources

Canadian Child Care Federation Resource Sheet: Building Partnerships with Families