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FAMILY DAY CARE HANDBOOK



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FAMILY DAY CARE: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

AN INFORMATIONAL HANDBOOK FOR THE FAMILY DAY CAREGIVER

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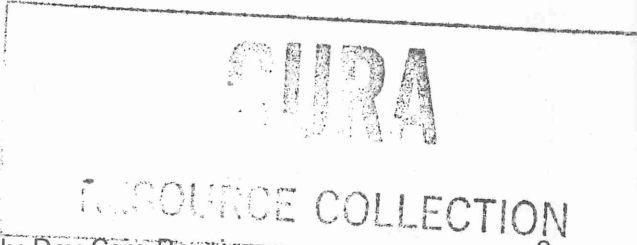


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QUALITY HOME CARE – A NATURAL OPTION

As the need for day care increases in this country, many families are choosing the licensed family day care home as the

form of care most attractive to them. More and more, people are becoming aware of the important role quality home care plays in meeting community needs.

For children, family day care means a natural, relaxed and often familiar home environment in which to grow and learn. For parents, it means the reasonable expectation that their children will receive warm and individual attention in an environment geared toward their developmental needs. And, for you, the caregiver, Family Day Care can mean an opportunity to combine a meaningful community service with career development and personal satisfaction.

As a licensed family day care provider, you and your family are offering many benefits to others seeking child care:

- *You are an accepting adult who can provide an environment planned for children's growth.*
- *You and your family have all agreed to protect and safeguard the child's health and well-being.*
- *Your home itself has been found to be a suitable*

- place to care for a small group of young children.*
- *You have access to professional training and resources, and can receive assistance and referral regularly.*
- *You have an opportunity to join and participate in your state or local Family Day Care Association.*

COMMUNICATIONS IS THE KEY

Positive communication between parents and caregiver is perhaps the single most important element of any successful family day care arrangement. As a caregiver, it is important that, from the very beginning, you assure the prospective parents that you intend to work in harmony with them in meeting the needs of the child. By building a partnership of care, you and the parents can go a long way in establishing the bond of mutual trust and respect on which a good cooperative relationship is built.



GETTING OFF TO THE RIGHT START —THE PRE-PLACEMENT INTERVIEW

The pre-placement interview should play a major role in the first phase of the family day care arrangement. Because personal contact between you and the prospective parents is a necessity, both before and during placement, it is wise to have the interested parents come to meet you (when possible), and bring the child along as well. In this way, everyone involved can get to know each other and you can discuss the many aspects of your mutual arrangement in a relaxed but businesslike atmosphere.

During the interview, it is important that both you and the parents answer each other's questions as completely and honestly as possible. Often, references of

the caregiver are discussed at this time, and in some instances, caregivers request that parents provide them with references for their review. In any case, this interview is your opportunity to establish a positive working relationship with the prospective parents based on mutual understanding and trust.

Here are just a few aspects of the day care arrangement that you might want to discuss with the parents during the pre-placement interview. It is by no means a complete list.

- *How many hours each day will the child be in your care?*
- *Who will be bringing him and picking him up regularly (mother, father, siblings, neighbor)?*
- *How many meals will be served (is breakfast included)?*
- *If the child is an infant, who is responsible for laundering of diapers, diaper service costs, etc?*
- *For toddlers and pre-schoolers, how will toilet training and naptime routines be handled? (Consistency between you and the parent is very important here.)*
- *What about insurance coverage for child care arrangements? Whose responsibility is it? What type of coverage? (Most state homeowners' policies won't cover family day care arrangements unless they include a Daytime Nursery Activity Binder.)*



MUTUAL ROLES IN CARING

Some issues, such as medical history and emergency arrangements, fees and other charges, consistency of child rearing practices, and others, warrant your special attention during the pre-placement interview. Mutual agreement between parents and caregivers in these areas from the very beginning can avoid possible confusion, misunderstanding and even conflict after the care begins.

For example, it is important that the parents provide you with the child's complete medical history, preferably in written form, signed and dated by the child's doctor. Also, the parents who so desire should give you written permission to give their child medication (such as aspirin, or prescription medicine) if the need arises. Complete and up-to-date information about where the parents and/or another designated adult can be reached at all times in case of an emergency, including the name and address of the child's doctor



or clinic, should be provided by the parents and kept in an easily accessible emergency file once the child is in your care. Also, it's a good idea to jointly decide ahead of time the steps to be taken by parents and caregiver in case of a serious accident or illness.

Work out with the parents a plan of action to follow in the event that their child is ill. All parents must be notified if their child has a contagious

disease. However, a caregiver may accept a sick child for care if it can be given without unduly endangering the health of others, and if all parents of children in her care are informed that this is her practice. Provisions must be made for isolation, if necessary. Remember, in cases of emergency promptness is important. Never wait to see if things "will get better" before you act. Indecision or delay, even in a seemingly minor emergency, can result in complications later on.

Fees are an equally important aspect of any potential child care arrangement and should, therefore, be seriously discussed and agreed upon during the pre-placement interview. In addition to the amount and time that you will be paid, you might want to discuss such things as your fee range or scale, pay options available (weekly, daily or hourly rates), any overtime

or late pick-up charges you might have, and your fee for regular half-day or latch key care. Some caregivers like the flexibility of an option payment plan, including a flat weekly, daily and hourly rate. Such plans are usually scaled in favor of the longer-term weekly option. Also, it's a good idea to decide in advance what your rate will be for those families with two or more children in your care. Generally, caregivers charge a percentage of the regular weekly rate (20-30%) for the second child of the same family. Holidays, vacation days, and absent days (both yours and the child's), as they relate to fees, should also be discussed at this time.

Many caregivers like to draw up informal contracts with their clients, outlining the terms of the financial arrangements they have agreed upon. Here, as with all other aspects, flexibility is an important quality to maintain. For example, by allowing some parents the option of providing food or equipment items in lieu of money under special circumstances, many caregivers maintain the flexibility to offer their service to families of varying financial means.

Other caregivers like to develop an informal handout to give to parents during the pre-placement interview which states

their policies regarding fees, meals supplied, drop-off and pick-up times, persons authorized to pick up child, medical records, emergency numbers, and insurance coverage. At any rate, having written contracts or handouts and giving dated receipts in return for each payment will provide both parents and caregivers with something specific to refer to, should the need for clarification arise.

Communication, flexibility and mutual understanding between parents and caregivers while discussing these and other aspects of the care arrangement will go far to make the pre-placement interview effective and functional for all involved.

If, after the care begins, you have problems with a parent fulfilling any part of the agreement, whether it is financial, repeated tardiness or absence, inadequate clothing or feeding of the child, etc., you should raise it with the parent directly before it goes too far. Be open, but tactful and non-critical in your approach. Often, there is an understandable reason why these things occur, but you'll never know and be able to solve the problem unless you first discuss it with the parents.



OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You will want to enter each new child care arrangement equipped with all the information about the child that will help you plan enjoyable experiences for him, particularly during the initial adjustment period. It is helpful, therefore, to find out in advance as much as you can about the child's personality, habits, likes and dislikes. Is he basically friendly, outgoing, shy, active, quiet, etc.? How does he get along with other children? Does he have any particular fears? What foods does he like or dislike? Is he allergic to anything?

Does he have a favorite toy he takes to bed with him? What help does he need in dressing and undressing? What words does he use for going to the toilet? These and many other questions can be discussed during the pre-placement interview, thereby giving you hints on how to individualize your care to meet this child's unique needs.

Also, it's a good idea to decide with the parents on a name for the child to call you that is agreeable and comfortable for everyone involved.

CHILD REARING CONSISTENCY

Particularly in matters of disciplinary techniques, consistency between you and the child's parents is of the utmost importance. All parents have developed a set of values, attitudes and related behavior patterns which serve to greatly influence their child rearing practices. Many elements, such as culture, background, environment, etc., contribute to the shaping of those factors which influence these practices. As a family day care provider, you have the added dimensions of child development training and licensing guidelines to draw on in making decisions around disciplining techniques for children in your care, within the bounds of external factors or restrictions placed on you. You should strive toward a realistic amount of consistency

between your disciplinary techniques and those of the parents.

During the pre-placement interview, encourage the parents to openly discuss their views on discipline and child-rearing and share with them your own views, without making value judgments one way or another. Try to mutually agree upon those techniques and activities that will and will not be used by you with the child. Remember that the parents are the most important people in the child's life. Even if you personally disagree with some of their child rearing methods, you should respect them enough to accommodate yourself as much as possible to their preferences.

COPING WITH SEPARATION

For most young children, being left in a strange place with strange people is an unsettling, if not frightening experience. Unless the child has been prepared for this new experience, the first few days or weeks in your day care home could be very hard on him. It is wise, therefore, to find out in advance whether this will be the child's first experience away from his home and mother.

Because separation anxiety is such an awesome developmental challenge for young and old alike, it is important that you and the child's parents work together to help the child successfully master the separation issues involved in his day care experience.

Honesty and a seriousness that is appropriate to the child's needs and situation are the keys to successful mastery. Urge the parents to deal with

the pending separation head on, by explaining to the child something of what he will be experiencing in your day care home, and by giving him whatever supports he needs in bridging this gap.

Encourage the parents to bring the child to your day care home in advance, to meet you and see the environment he will be in. Some children may require gradually lengthening periods of separation from their parents, from an initial brief hour or two at your home, to an eventual full day. The important thing to remember is not to gloss over the issue lightly. If you, the caregiver, have a relaxed, warm attitude and show the child that you are interested in him and that he is safe with you, you will help him learn to handle, and eventually conquer his fear of separation.



WHERE TO BEGIN – WHAT TO DO



Approach each child's arrival on an individual basis. Warm, individual greetings let the child know immediately that you are glad to see him and interested in him as a person. He will, in turn, respond with warmth, and you can both look forward to an enjoyable day.

With toddlers, pre-schoolers and older children, find out soon after arrival what they feel like doing that day. Take clues from how they act, what they say and do in planning any activities. It is always good to build the day around the children's individual and collective interests, letting them initiate and follow their clues as much as possible.

At the same time, it's always good to have some activity ideas in the back of your mind to draw on for suggestions in case the children need your help. The following are some examples of the types of

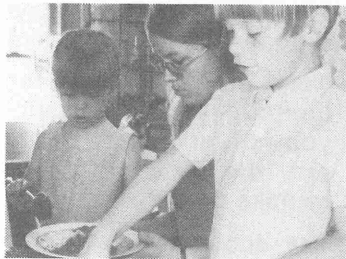
activities and materials that you should be prepared to offer the children:

- *Block building*
- *Painting and other art projects*
- *Dramatic play stimulants such as dress-up clothes, prop boxes*
- *A variety of books and stories*
- *Music, dance and other movement activities*
- *Problem-solving activities-puzzles and other manipulative toys*
- *Special fun projects like cooking, carpentry, etc.*

In addition to this variety of activities and materials, regular opportunities for vigorous outdoor play (weather permitting), and an interesting assortment of enjoyable and informative field trips are all developmentally valuable for young children. And, as with everything you do, a special effort should be made to insure that all the activities and materials you provide are designed to positively reflect the children's culture and life style. That all important emerging self-concept within every young child, and particularly non-white children, depends in large amount on the extent to which you can positively reinforce their cultural integrity.

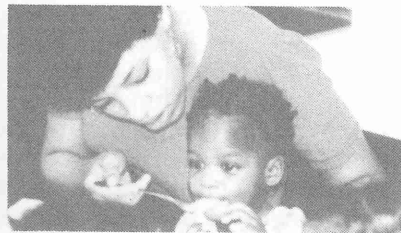
THE FAMILY DAY CARE ROUTINE

The routine in each family day care home is different. Even within the same home, no two days will ever be exactly alike, for as the children grow and learn, their interests and needs are constantly changing. Your best bet is to establish a daily routine that is consistent, yet flexible. If you get in the habit of arranging your days so that things like snack time, lunch, outdoors or indoor vigorous play time, quiet time and/or nap time come more or less at the same time each day, the



children will be less apt to get irritable, easily fatigued, or hard to get along with. However, don't get locked into an inflexible daily schedule, particularly if the children get bored easily. Children need variety as well as consistency so always be alert to their responses.

Try to remember that many things can effect a young child's moods and behavior. A skinned knee, a frightening nightmare, or similar unpleasant occurrences can have a great effect on a young child's disposition. The more the parent and caregiver can exchange knowledge of any such unsettling experiences and their effect on the child, as well as the positive ones, the more the child will stand to gain in the long run.



MEALTIME PLUS

Always provide well-balanced meals and nutritious snacks. Most children enjoy food that is good for them, and attractively prepared and served. Many caregivers enjoy sharing mealtime with their little charges, because it provides

a natural opportunity for pleasant, family-style conversation and is a learning experience as well. And, as with the activities, an attempt to offer a variety of foods, including those that are culturally familiar to the children, will provide enjoyment and enhance ethnic identity as well.

THE DIFFERENCE THAT COUNTS

Regardless of the age group you care for, the success of your program depends largely on your ability to involve yourself completely with your children, talking and playing with them and responding to their changing needs and interests. Even very young infants will benefit from your words as well as your cuddling and caresses, and they need all the physical and verbal stimulation you can give them. Your job requires your full attention and energies throughout most of the day. Trying to fit the children in between the household chores or your favorite TV programs will only result in frustration for you and less than adequate care for the children. On the other hand, many pleasant and

developmentally meaningful experiences can result from the children sharing in otherwise unexciting tasks, like sorting laundry (color recognition), grocery shopping, etc.

Never forget that you're a human being with human limitations. Set realistic goals, avoid over-extending yourself, and never be afraid to admit, either to yourself, the child or the parent when you've made a mistake or had an "off" day.

The successful caregiver is one who can structure each day to meet the children's variety of needs in a safe, trusting, and enjoyable setting.



WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE

Occasionally, problems are going to arise that will require your judgment in reaching the appropriate solutions. You will need to know what options are

open to you in dealing with a particular problem, what resources you can call on for professional help, and when and how to make appropriate referrals.

Sometimes, caregivers are confronted with a distraught child struggling to cope with a stressful situation at home — abuse or neglect, a pending divorce, an alcoholic or drug dependent parent, etc. It is never easy to strike the right balance between providing the supports the child needs from you, while preserving the sanctity of the parent-child relationship, but it often becomes necessary. Meeting this and other challenges head on, knowing the right things to say at the right time (to both child and parent) is part of the element of "professionalism" that distinguishes the successful caregiver. In this spirit, changing day care placement, by mutual agreement of parent and caregiver, when all other options fail, should be seen as perhaps a final step.

RECORD-KEEPING AND TAX INFORMATION

As a licensed caregiver, you will be required to keep certain records on all the children in your care. Your local social service worker for day care will be able to give you up-to-date information on the required records, as well as furnish you with many of the forms you will be using. Examples of some of the forms used for recordkeeping and tax purposes are included in the appendices of this handbook. The following is a list of some of the records you will be expected to have. These and any other necessary forms are provided at the time of licensing.

1. *Admission and Arrangement Form.* This form states the child's name, nickname, religion and birthdate, and other important data. It also includes the name, address and phone numbers of the child's parents, doctor, and the nearest person to call in case of an emergency. It is extremely important that all of the information on this form is constantly kept and up-to-date.
2. *Attendance Record.* A daily attendance record should be kept on each child in your care.
3. *Physical Examination Form.* This is the standard

medical form, filled out by the child's physician, that states that the child has been examined and is in good health.

4. *Placement and Removal Form.* Many counties are requiring placement-removal forms. These forms are used to record each time a child is placed or removed from your home, and this information is sent to the County Welfare Department.

Because you are operating a business in your home, you will be required to report your taxable income, on the appropriate tax form, to the Internal Revenue Service. All reasonable and necessary expenditures incurred in meeting the standards for family day care licensing may be deducted. For example, you purchase of a crib, playpen or high chair for use by a day care baby is considered a deductible expense, as are food, a percentage of your rent or house payments, utilities, phone, depreciation on your home and furniture, and equipment. The more complete and accurate your recordkeeping system is, the easier it will be for you at tax time. If you need help in determining your taxable income, ask for assistance from your district Internal Revenue office.

DAILY ATTENDANCE RECORD

MONTH(S) _____

NAME OF CHILD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

A
Dep.
HOURS ATTENDED

DAILY ATTENDANCE RECORD

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

DAILY DAY CARE COSTS

Children's Names	Age	Time of arrival	Time of departure	Rate for Day

Food Used

Breakfast			Snack			Lunch			Snack		
Item	Am't.	Cost	Item	Amt.	Cost	Item	Amt.	Cost	Item	Amt.	Cost
Total			Total			Total			Total		

WEEKLY DAY CARE EXPENSE

Space Used –	Living Room	Dining Room	Kitchen	Bathroom
# of children				
Length of time				
Lights on/off				

Space Used –	Bedroom	Basement	Backyard	Other
# of children				
Length of time				
Lights on/off				

Other Costs

Trips – gas for transportation/mileage
Purchases

DAILY DAY CARE COSTS

Educational Equipment Used

Amount Used

Other

Amount Used

Blocks			
Crayons			
Paper			
Scissors			
Paste			
Game			
Books			
Large Toys			
Balls			
Music			
Outdoors			

Other Supplies Used

Amount Used

Paper Towels	
Toilet Paper	
Disposable Diapers	
Napkins	
Paper Plates, Cups, etc.	
China Plates, Cups, Silverware	
Cloth Towels, Napkins	

WEEKLY DAY CARE EXPENSE

Food:

- Bread
- Cereal
- Meat
- Cheese
- Soup
- Juice
- Milk
- Cookies
- Eggs
- Butter
- Mayonnaise
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Other

Cost

	Cost
\$	_____

Total: \$	_____

Household:

- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towels
- Soap
- Dish Detergent
- Disposable Diapers
- Paper Napkins
- Paper dishes
- China dishes
- Cloth towels, napkins
- Other

Cost

	Cost
\$	_____

Total: \$	_____

WEEKLY DAY CARE EXPENSE

Depreciation:

- House
- Renovations
- Major equipment
 - Washing machine
 - Refrigerator
 - Stove
- Furnace
- Other
- Other

	Cost
\$	_____

Total: \$	_____

Play Materials or Equipment:

List items purchased:

	Cost
\$	_____

Total: \$	_____

Utilities:

- Water
- Electricity
- Gas
- Rent/mortgage
- Telephone
- Other

	Cost
\$	_____

Total: \$	_____

Other Costs:

- Travel
- Laundry & Cleaning
- Repairs
- Other

	Cost
\$	_____

Total: \$	_____

NOTES

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

POLICE		
FIRE		
HOSPITAL		
RESCUE SQUAD		
DR.		
DR.		
DR.		
DR.		
DR.		
DR.		
DR.		
DR.		
Welfare Dep't.		
Family Day Care Ass'n.		

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OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT
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