

# Caring For Young Children

**Training Review Module 6 Clock Hours**

## Instructions For Completing This Training Module

1. After reviewing this material with your day home representative, please read and study the material carefully.
2. Complete the test for the material and return it to Cool Kids CCEN. There is no deadline to have this test back to us.
3. When we receive your completed test, we will evaluate it and then send you a certificate for 6 clock hours for completing this material.

## Objectives For This Training Module

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1. To provide daycare providers with an overview of a career in family day care and the advantages & disadvantages of being a provider.
2. To help providers organize their day home as a business with proper records and marketing tech-­‐‑ niques as well as advice on safety, setup and health matters.
3. To educate the provider on the importance of re-­‐‑ lationships with parents and how to establish that relationship with a good pre-­‐‑placement interview as well as how to continue a good relationship with problem solving skills.
4. To help caregivers look at how children grow and develop and her role in that process.
5. To provide daycare providers with resources available to help them cope with the isolation and stress that can be a part of family day caring.

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# Unit One: Family Day Care,

***Is It for You?***

**WANTED: Family Day Care Provider**

to look after me while my parents work. Must be a Warm, Loving, Kind person, who will care for me and help me grow up to be the best person that I can be.

If the above ad sounds appealing, family day care may be just the job for you. Or perhaps you already provide care to other peoples’ children in your home each day. If you do, you’ll know that the ad-­‐‑ vertisement could go on to read:

**No formal training required but must possess the skills of a:**

Nurse, Nutritionist, Communications Expert, Interior Designer, Diagnostician, Bookkeeper, Business Manager, Public Relations Expert, Advertising Direc- tor, Guidance Counselor, Negotiator, Mediator, Play- mate, Cook, Confidante, Confessor, Referee, Cheer- leader, Time Management Expert, Home Economist, Buyer, Teacher, Recreation Director, Substitute Parent, Friend.

#### I feel providing family day care is the best of both worlds.

***I’m home with my own children, and I can work on a full time basis.***

Rosemary Carrara, Caregiver

***A Career in Family Day Care***

A career in family day care offers some attractive advantages. You can combine earning a living with caring for your own children. You save money on many of the expenses you would have if you were working outside the home, like bus fares, office clothing and child care for your own children. And, as your own boss, you decide what has to be done, when, and how to do it.

Family day care also provides you with opportuni-­‐‑ ties for professional and personal growth and de-­‐‑ velopment: learning business management skills through setting rates, keeping records, advertising and interviewing potential clients; developing. time management and organizational skills while ar-­‐‑ ranging your day and home to accommodate a vari-­‐‑ ety of needs; and, strengthening your communica-­‐‑ tion skills with adults and children.

Providing family day care will furnish you with other advantages. It is likely that you will provide care to at least one child whose cultural background is different from your own. This presents a wonder-­‐‑ ful opportunity for you and your family to learn about other cultures and traditions.

Of course, there are problems inherent in working with children. Child care is a physically and emo-­‐‑ tionally demanding job. Family day care can be es-­‐‑ pecially challenging because you are working alone. There are no co-­‐‑workers to share a problem with or to take over on days when you just aren’t in the mood. There are no coffee breaks, no lunch hours, no cooking or cleaning staff. And as a self-­‐‑ employed person, you’ll have to provide your own benefits, from holiday pay to pension plans.

But the disadvantages must be weighed against the many joys of working with children. Children have a wonderful sense of curiosity, honesty and fun.

Children genuinely like us and are prepared to ig-­‐‑ nore the fact that we can’t sing in tune or that our

cookies are always just a little black on the bottom. Even on your worst day of care giving-­‐‑when every-­‐‑ thing that could go wrong, does-­‐‑a child will do or say something that will make you smile.

Most important, providing family day care gives you the sense of fulfillment that comes from help-­‐‑ ing children grow and develop and the satisfaction of knowing that you are providing an important service to your community. And how many jobs are there where you are guaranteed hugs every day?

To decide whether family day care is for you, con-­‐‑ sider whether you have the right qualities for the job, and how family day care will fit into your household: how will your family react . . . and what can you do to make their adjustment easier?

Let’s look at each of these points more closely

### What Does It Take to Be a Caregiver?

**Commitment:** You have to be committed to helping each child reach his/her full potential.

**Warmth:** You have to like people -­‐‑adults and chil-­‐‑ dren.

**Humor:** The ability to laugh at yourself and the world around you is invaluable.

**Patience:** To get through those days when nothing goes right.

**Energy:** Whether toting infants, chasing two-­‐‑year-­‐‑ olds or coping with the emotional ups and downs of school-­‐‑ages, you’ll need lots of energy.

Responsibility: The parents and children to whom you offer your services depend on you.

**Good Health:** Working with children means expo-­‐‑ sure to a variety of childhood illnesses. You have to start healthy and work at staying that way.

**Sensitivity:** Children and parents require tactful handling at times.

**Confidence:** Presenting yourself with confidence helps to put everyone at ease.

**Flexibility:** When working with children, things sel-­‐‑ dom go as planned.

**Discretion:** As a caregiver you will learn many things that must remain confidential.

**Creativity:** A creative person is someone who can think on her feet.

**Motivation:** It’s up to you to decide what has to be done, when and how -­‐‑and then do it.

**Selfishness:** You have to be selfish enough to take care of yourself.-­‐‑ get proper rest, nutrition, exercise and find ways and time to relax.

## Family Day Care and Your Family

Providing family day care affects not only you, but every member of your household. Your children have the opportunity to make new friends and de-­‐‑ velop social skills, but they may also experience pe-­‐‑ riods of jealousy and resentment at having to share their home, toys and parent with other children.

Your spouse or other adults in the household, even if they aren’t present during day care hours, will have to adjust to the loss of privacy and the added clutter that having extra children and adults in your home each day entails.

Recognizing how other family members can be af-­‐‑ fected by family day care before you begin, and making sure that they know what to expect, will make everyone’s adjustment to care much easier. While the decision to provide care is ultimately your own, you should discuss providing care with your family, both before you begin and throughout your time as a caregiver.

Let your family know how important their help and support is and listen to their concerns and ideas.

There may be problems which can be re-­‐‑ solved by fairly simple changes. For example, mak-­‐‑ ing an adolescent’s bedroom off-­‐‑limits to the day care children may help ensure the privacy they need. But even problems that have no real solution can be lessened by a sympathetic ear.

Your family also has to understand that providing child care is a full-­‐‑time job and gear their expecta-­‐‑ tions accordingly. While many of the tasks you will be performing each day -­‐‑for example, meal prepa-­‐‑ ration and tidying up-­‐‑will overlap with your role as a homemaker, most of the day will be spent caring for children. Just as your family must do their share of household tasks when you work outside the home, they should be willing to co-­‐‑operate when you are operating a family day care business in your own home.

Your children will, for the most part, enjoy and ben-­‐‑ efit from the companionship of the day care chil-­‐‑ dren, but they may also experience some difficul-­‐‑ ties. In addition to talking to your children about

their feelings, try some or all of the following ideas to help your children adjust:

1. Get them involved: Try to find ways that your children can enjoy helping you with your day care. An older child might enjoy reading stories to the little ones or cutting out patterns for crafts. Even the youngest child can help by passing out snacks, choosing a book for story time, etc.
2. Spend time with them: If you have pre-­‐‑school children, try to arrange some special time with them during the day. Possibly your child could go down to nap a little later or get up a little earlier for some private time with you. If your children are school-­‐‑aged, try to schedule the afternoon so that you have some time to talk with them alone when they get home from school. Even a few minutes is often enough time to catch up on the news of the day and let them know that you’re interested. Try to arrange some special times together in the evening or on the weekend, in much the way you might if you were working outside the home.
3. Don’t expect too much: Try not to always ask your child to fetch the diaper, answer the phone, or pick up the toys, etc.
4. Be clear about rules: Explain to your child that there are different rules during day care hours.
5. Don’t confuse leadership with bossiness in your child: When the home, the toys, and Mom are his or hers, it is easy for a child to feel that they should be the ‘boss’ of the day care children. For the sake of your child’s healthy development, and for the sake of the other children in your care, be as consistent, fair and impartial as possible.

Your spouse and other adult members of your household must also be prepared to make some ac-­‐‑ commodations.

Coming home after a day at work to someone else’s job with day care children, their parents and the ac-­‐‑ companying clutter, will require patience and un-­‐‑ derstanding. It will also require some discussion. Reach an agreement on how this time of day can best be arranged.

On some evenings, your spouse might pitch in, helping with dinner preparations or a general tidy-­‐‑ up, so that you can both have some time later to sit down and relax. Or your spouse could spend that time with your own children, going for a walk to the neighborhood park. After a particularly stress-­‐‑

ful day, an alternative might be a cup of coffee and the evening paper in a quieter part of the house, un-­‐‑ til the day care families have departed.

And just as it is important to spend time alone with your own children on weekends and in the evening, you and your spouse should also arrange some time together. During the busy working week, a quiet cup of coffee and a few minutes conversa-­‐‑ tion after dinner may be all that you can manage, but even that helps keep you in touch.

Remember too that assessing your family’s feelings towards family day care is an on-­‐‑going process. Ar-­‐‑ rangements that worked out very well in the begin-­‐‑ ning may have to be altered six months later. As your children move through various stages in their development, matters that weren’t a problem at all before may become critical issues. Your six-­‐‑year-­‐‑old who didn’t even know the meaning of the word privacy may suddenly object to other children (or even his mother) entering his room, or ‘touching’ his toys. So stay alert to changes, keep the lines of communication open, and be prepared to alter ar-­‐‑ rangements when necessary

## Still Interested... ?

If you are convinced that you have the personal qualities and the commitment necessary to provide family day care, and your family supports your de-­‐‑ cision, your next step should be to get as much in-­‐‑ formation as possible about providing care before you make a decision to begin. The time you invest in research beforehand will make your job that much more satisfying if you do decide to provide care, and will spare you and your potential client-­‐‑ families a great deal of disruption and difficulty should you decide that care giving is not right for you.

To get more information on providing family day care:

<£ **Talk to other caregivers** about what they like and don’t like about family day care, ask whether there is a demand for care in your area, etc. If pos-­‐‑ sible visit a caregiver’s home so that you can get a real feel for what goes on in a family day care day, and at the same time get some ideas for organizing your own home for child care. If you don’t know anyone else providing child care, contact a family day care agency, caregiver association, child care

registry/referral service or a family resource center in your community and ask them for contacts.

Friends or neighbors who use family day care may also provide you with names.

<£ **Contact the appropriate state or local office** re-­‐‑ sponsible for child care in your area to find out:

1. Is there a process for registration or licensing of caregivers?
2. How many and what ages of day care children are you allowed to care for in a private home?
3. What health and safety standards must be met?
4. Are there any other regulations that apply to in-­‐‑ dividuals who wish to offer child care in their home?
5. What resources and support services are avail-­‐‑ able to family day care providers in your commu-­‐‑ nity?
6. Are there referral agencies, child care registries, caregiver associations, or family day care agencies that provide you with information, resources and training? (Unit Two will explore these services fur-­‐‑ ther.)

<£ **Contact your state or local family or community services office** (listed in the blue pages of your tele-­‐‑ phone directory) to find out how your local govern-­‐‑ ment is involved in family day care. Some local of-­‐‑ fices , take an active role in child care, providing services such as Private Home Day Care/Family Day Care/Family Day Home programs and/or support services and training programs for caregivers. In other areas, state -­‐‑ involvement in child care may be limited to by-­‐‑laws regarding the provision of child care in your home. Some states limit the number of children you can care for and may have health and fire safety standards that must be complied with.

## Points to Consider

Once you have considered your personal suitability, your family’s feelings, and conducted your research into providing family day care, ask yourself the fol-­‐‑

lowing questions to help you make a decision about whether or not to become a family day care pro-­‐‑ vider:

<£ Are you personally suited to working with children?

<£ Are you prepared to accept and respect differ-­‐‑ ences in client-­‐‑family’s culture, lifestyle, and attitudes?

<£ Will you really like caring for children nine or ten hours a day, five days a week?

<£ Have you ensured that you will be in compli-­‐‑ ance with local and provincial laws?

<£ Have you looked into what resources and sup-­‐‑ port services are available to family day care providers in your community?

<£ Can you tolerate working all day with very little contact with other adults?

<£ Does your home have the physical space neces-­‐‑ sary to accommodate family day care?

<£ Does your family support your decision to pro-­‐‑ vide child care?

<£ Are your own children prepared to share their home, their toys and their mom with other children?

<£ Is your family willing to do their share of household tasks?

<£ Does your family appreciate that family day care is a full-­‐‑time job?

<£ Are you flexible enough to make changes in your family’s routines and your home’s decor if necessary?

<£ Do you have sufficient income to tide you over until you find client families?

<£ Are you prepared to take on the responsibility of being your own boss?

# Unit Two: Getting Started

***in Family Day Care***



In any business, starting out is often the hardest part, and family day care is no exception. The time you invest in research, preparation and planning is time well spent. Whether you are just beginning to provide child care, or whether you are an experi-­‐‑ enced caregiver who wants to take a more profes-­‐‑ sional approach to your family day care business, this Unit will furnish you with information you can use to organize your day care business, your home and your daily routines.

## Regulations and Support Services

In the preceding section, we discussed the impor-­‐‑ tance of contacting the department responsible for child care in your city or state to find out what regulations apply to family day care. This is espe-­‐‑ cially important because the regulations governing family day care vary greatly from state to state.

While the vast majority of family day care in the

U.S. is still being provided by private unregulated caregivers, government and state offices have estab-­‐‑ lished, or are in the process of establishing, legisla-­‐‑ tion or guidelines respecting family day care. Indi-­‐‑ vidual family day care homes can be licensed or registered.

In most states, you can care for up to a specified

number of children privately, with no regulated re-­‐‑ quirements some states, for example, you may care for up to five day care children in addition to your own with no requirement for licensing, registration, or participation through a sponsoring agency. As you can see, it is important to find out what your options are and what regulations apply in your own , city or state. lie same government department you contact for information on regulations can pro-­‐‑ vide you with assistance or direct you to programs that are available to assist you.

In what follows, we’ll look at the types of services that may be available to you.

*Note. The services listed below may not be available in your state or community.*

### Child Care Licensing/Registration Office

In some states any individual who wishes to pro-­‐‑ vide care to more than a specified number of chil-­‐‑ dren must go through a process of registration or licensing. The licensing or registration body is usu-­‐‑ ally a government office operated by the agency re-­‐‑ sponsible for child care in your state

The regulations and the process involved are differ-­‐‑ ent in each state Some states require a preliminary safety check of your home by an official and spot checks on a regular basis while you are providing care. In other states the caregiver is responsible for ensuring that her home meets the standards re-­‐‑ quired, and the process for registration is carried out through the mail.

Some states require participation in caregiver train-­‐‑ ing as a pre-­‐‑license condition and/or as a condition for license renewal.

In some states, the licensing or registration office maintains a list of caregivers which parents seeking care can access. In other cases, the caregiver is re-­‐‑ sponsible for advertising for clients privately.

In all cases, the licensing/registration office can give you information on the standards and require-­‐‑ ments you must meet, and will be able to provide

assistance or refer you to community programs that can help. Financial assistance may be available to caregivers through grants to purchase large equip-­‐‑ ment, make necessary home improvements, etc. In some cases, additional services such as training and newsletters are available.

### Private Home/Family Day Home

**/Family Day Care Agencies**

In some states there is no licensing or registration process for individual caregivers. Instead, there may be agencies-­‐‑responsible for assisting both users and caregivers involved in family day care. These agencies may be either licensed by or under con-­‐‑ tract to the government office responsible for child care in your state. They may be either non-­‐‑profit, community based organizations or privately-­‐‑owned and operated businesses. The agency is usually re-­‐‑ sponsible for recruiting and screening caregivers and for assisting parents who are seeking care.

When you first contact a child care agency, it will either send you information and an application form or have a representative visit you in your home. The agency will provide information on regulations, rates, the demand for child care in your area, and any other requirements they may have.

You will be asked for personal references, and gen-­‐‑ eral information, such as your previous experience with children, the number and ages of your own children, information about the other members of your household, your proximity to neighborhood schools, etc.

The agency will likely inquire as to why you have decided to provide care, how long you intend to provide it, and what kinds of activities you plan to offer the children each day. During that initial visit, or at a future date before care begins, the agency will also conduct a safety check of your home. The agency may also require that you participate in mandatory training.

Once the application and approval process is com-­‐‑ pleted (this may take several weeks), you will be placed on the agency’s approved list of homes. In many cases, agencies handle the financial arrange-­‐‑

Some agencies are able to provide additional ser-­‐‑ vices to caregivers. Such services might include al-­‐‑ ternate care during the caregiver’s illness or holi-­‐‑ days; training in first aid, health and safety; toy and equipment loans; arts and crafts supplies; work-­‐‑ shops; play groups; group outings; newsletters; etc.

### Child Care Registries/Resource and Referral Ser-­‐‑ vices

These programs are most often non-­‐‑profit, govern-­‐‑ ment funded services that provide information to parents seeking child care and to caregivers provid-­‐‑ ing care. Many such services maintain lists of caregivers and child care centers in the community which parents can access when looking for care.

There is sometimes a small fee charged to the par-­‐‑ ent and/or caregiver using the service. Printed in-­‐‑ formation as well as workshops are often available. In addition to providing start-­‐‑up information and referrals of parents who are looking for care, some agencies provide on-­‐‑going support services to caregivers such as first aid courses, newsletters, workshops, etc.

### Child Care Provider Associations

Provider/Caregiver associations are non-­‐‑profit or-­‐‑ ganizations run by care givers for caregivers and can be an invaluable resource to you. Many receive some government funding through annual grants and most have a small membership fee. Whether the system in your state involves licensing, registra-­‐‑ tion, agencies, or private, unregulated child care, caregiver associations can provide information, as-­‐‑ sistance and support.

All associations are involved in the development and delivery of support services, training, and in-­‐‑ formation for caregivers and most offer services such as: start-­‐‑up information, workshops, newslet-­‐‑ ters, liability insurance at group rates, play groups, reduced costs for craft materials, etc. Caregiver as-­‐‑ sociations can also put you in touch with other caregivers in your neighborhood who can be a source of start-­‐‑up information and on-­‐‑going sup-­‐‑ port.

## Your Earnings

ments for the child care. The rates for care are set

and reviewed on an annual basis and the agency is usually responsible for billing either the parents or the appropriate government bodies in the case of subsidized care and for making payments to the caregiver.

The amount you earn from family day care will de-­‐‑ pend on several factors. Like any other business, it usually takes time to build a clientele in family day care. And the more selective you are in terms of the

ages of children you want to care for and the hours you want to work, the longer it may take you to find client-­‐‑families who meet your criteria.

For instance, if you have decided that you want to provide care for two-­‐‑ to four-­‐‑year-­‐‑olds, and that your day care hours will be 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., you may eliminate a large number of potential cli-­‐‑ ents who need care until 5:30 p.m., or whose chil-­‐‑ dren are slightly over or under your preferred age ranges. You may be in a position financially to wait until you find clients who fit your requirements. If not, you may have to compromise somewhat on your hours of operation and the ages of children you care for.

You may also experience fluctuations in your in-­‐‑ come after you are established as a caregiver. Cli-­‐‑ ent-­‐‑families’ needs for care may change due to job loss or change, the birth of another child, or mar-­‐‑ riage breakdown. A long-­‐‑term illness of a client-­‐‑ parent, a day care child, your own illness or that of a member of your household may also effect your earnings.

There are several steps that can be taken to ensure that your income remains as stable as possible.

These include:

<£ Charge clients by enrollment. This means charging a flat weekly or monthly rate which you are paid whether the child attends on any particular day or not, as long as you were avail-­‐‑ able to provide care;

<£ Put aside a portion of your income each week (even five per cent of your earnings provides a nest egg) to cover those periods when your income is lower;

<£ Consider acquiring personal disability insur-­‐‑ ance. This form of insurance could provide in-­‐‑ come should you be unable to work because of illness or injury. An insurance broker will be able to provide you with information on rates and types of policies available. You may also be entitled to benefits from Social Security in case of long-­‐‑term disability or illness if you have been making contributions to Social Security;

<£ Ensure that your day care agreement with par-­‐‑ ents requires them to give you sufficient notice care is going to be terminated. Three to four weeks is usually sufficient time to find new clients;

<£ Even if you are not looking for new clients, maintain your contacts with Child Care Regis-­‐‑ tries, Family Daycare Agencies, Caregiver Asso-­‐‑ ciations, etc. and any other organizations which might be able to refer clients to you should you suddenly have vacancies;

These steps will help you maintain a reasonably stable income. It is worth noting that some caregivers have worked for years and have not ex-­‐‑ perienced any instability in their earnings. How-­‐‑ ever, if in order to meet your minimum income needs, you require a full complement of full-­‐‑time children at all times, you should be aware that many caregivers, especially in their first year of business, are unable to meet their earning goals.

If you are planning to work with an agency ask them:

<£ Whether you will be paid on an enrollment or attendance basis;

<£ Whether you will be permitted to also care for children privately if the agency is unable to provide clients;

<£ What insurance coverage the agency offers;

<£ How much notice you will receive if there is to be a change in care arrangements.

## Decisions You Will Have to Make

There are a number of decisions and preparations you will have to make before you begin providing family day care. These include:

### How Many Children Will You Care For? What Ages?

Several factors should be considered when deciding the number and ages of children you would like to care for.

1. Any restrictions imposed by state or local laws.
2. The number and ages of your own children. If you have a new baby of your own, it may not be the best time to try to care for another infant. On the other hand, your sociable pre-­‐‑schoolers may enjoy the companionship of children his age.
3. The type of program you want to offer will effect the age group you can best work with. For example, if you are planning to participate with toddlers and pre-­‐‑schoolers in a lot of community activities, you

may have scheduling difficulties if kindergarten-­‐‑ aged children require early lunches to catch school buses, etc.

1. Consider the amount of space you have. If you live in a small apartment, it might be best to limit the number of children you provide care for.
2. Think about what ages you most enjoy working with. You may prefer to care for infants, or perhaps you enjoy the challenge of caring for school-­‐‑aged children, the active pace of life with toddlers, or the inquisitive, lively minds of pre-­‐‑schoolers. Many caregivers like a little of everything and enjoy working with a variety of ages and stages.

### What Hours and Days of the Week Will You Work?

<£ Will you accept children on a part-­‐‑time basis? on the weekend? overnight? with parents who work shifts?

<£ If you are caring for school-­‐‑aged children, are you willing to provide full-­‐‑day care during holidays, professional development/activity days, the summer months, etc.?

<£ Are You Willing to Care for Children with Spe-­‐‑ cial Needs (for example, Children with Physical Disabilities)?

<£ If you are interested in caring for children with special needs, is your home physically suitable? Will you have access to appropriate training and support if it is required? Will you need any special equipment or materials?

<£ Do You Have Adequate Liability Insurance Coverage?

Whether it is required in your province or not every caregiver should have liability insurance to protect herself and her family from possible financial hard-­‐‑ ship. Accidents do happen, and if a child is injured while in your care, or a day care parent injured while on your property, you could be held liable.

The most common form of liability coverage is a rider on your homeowner’s or tenant’s insurance policy to include coverage of the children in your care. An alternative is to obtain a separate day care policy. This can be more expensive but may provide more comprehensive coverage. (If there is a Family Day Care Association in your area, they may offer a group liability policy.) To secure liability insurance coverage you should:

**1.** Contact your insurance company in writing and inform them that you are providing child care in your home. Ask what additional coverage is neces-­‐‑ sary and what charges will apply. If your agent tells you that the daycare children are included in your current policy at no additional charge, request -­‐‑ in-­‐‑ sist if necessary -­‐‑ that this information be put in writing.

2. Find out what is covered. For example, are the children covered when on field trips; on their way to and from school; when an alternate caregiver is providing care in your or her home?

**3.** Does your automobile insurance cover the day care children in your car?

*Remember, all your dealings with your insurance com-­‐‑ pany should be in writing. Save copies of all your corre-­‐‑ spondence to and from your insurance company.*

### Will You Use a Written Provider/Parent Agreement?

Before you begin to advertise, you should decide whether you are going to use a written agreement with your parent-­‐‑clients. A written agreement sim-­‐‑ ply sets out on paper the terms under which care is to be provided. Written agreements will be dis-­‐‑ cussed further in Unit Three: “Parents and Provid-­‐‑ ers -­‐‑Partners in Child Care.”

## What Will You Charge for Providing Care?

To decide how much to charge you should con-­‐‑ sider:

1. The going rates in your area. Ask other caregivers in your area what their rates are (call other caregivers who are advertising if you don’t know anyone else providing care yet). If there is a Caregiver Association, Child Care Registry, or other caregiver support program in your community, they should be able to tell you about the average rates in your area;
2. Your training and experience in child care will be a factor in deciding how much you can charge;
3. The type of service you are providing will effect how much parents are willing to pay. If you are providing a fairly structured program of activities and outings for the day care children, parents are often willing to pay higher rates;
4. The number and ages of children you are caring for will be a consideration. A caregiver providing

care for one or two infants or toddlers usually charges a higher rate than the caregiver with five children in care.

1. When setting your rates, keep in mind that your expenses for food, toys, equipment, etc., are paid from the same fee as your income, so charge an amount that will allow you sufficient income after expenses. Once you have established your rates, set a time each year when you will review and increase rates and let the parents know that this is your policy. Like every other working per-­‐‑ son, you are entitled to increases in your income each year to keep up with the cost of living. You will find it easier to discuss rate increases with parents if they know how often and when in-­‐‑ creases can be expected.

Before advertising, decide what rates you will charge in any of the following circumstances which may apply to the times and ages you in-­‐‑ tend to provide care for:

Full Day rate (8 to 10 hrs. of care) for: Infant

Toddler

Pre-schoolerschool-aged

Kindergarten rate (6 to 7 1/2 hrs. of care) Half day rate (4 to 5 1/2 hrs. of care) Hourly rate

Overtime rate Overnight rate Special Needs rate

Long Day rate (10 1/2 to 12 hours of care)

You should also decide whether you will charge for absences due to illness, holidays, statutory holi-­‐‑ days, etc.

Many caregivers charge for all absences, unless the caregiver is not available to provide care.

## Income Tax How Will You Maintain Records for Tax Purposes?

viding child care in your home, you are required to file an income tax return reporting that income.

Your parent-­‐‑clients also require a receipt from you as proof of their child care expenses in order to claim the Child Care Deduction to which they are entitled on their tax returns.

When you provide child care in your home you are in fact operating a small business. As with any small business, you are entitled to deduct any ex-­‐‑ penses related to that business. In the case of family day care, this would include the cost of food, equip-­‐‑ ment, toys, books, etc. that you provide for the day care children. It also includes expenses incurred in the operation of your home (i.e., the business por-­‐‑ tion of your electricity, heating, water costs, of your rent or interest and property taxes if you own your home). Even the costs of training courses or work-­‐‑ shops you attend, or the cost of an accountant to prepare your income tax return, are deductible.

In order to take full advantage of the deductions to which you are entitled, you will have to maintain a record of all the income and expenses of your child care business, together with receipts.

There are three things you will have to keep records of for income tax purposes. The first is your child care income; the second, a record of the day care children’s actual attendance; and third, a record and proof of your expenses.

### Recording Your Income:

You might use one of the following methods to keep a record of your family day care income:

1. Purchase a receipt book with carbon copies. Write out a receipt for parents when they make pay-­‐‑ ments for child care. Give the parent the original of the receipt and keep the carbon copy for your own records.
2. Get a calendar with large blank squares for each day. Mark children’s attendance each day and the amount of payment for child care on the day it is received.
3. Purchase a journal or note book and record in-­‐‑ come as you receive it. Your notebook could be set up in this way:

If you receive payment on a regular basis for pro-­‐‑

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DATE** | **CLIENT** | **CHILD** | **# OF DAYS** | **AMOUNT FOR PERIOD ATTENDED** |
| 15/1 | M. Brown | Carly | 8 | $80.00 2/1-15/1 |
| 15/1 | D. Jones | Chris | 10 | $180.00 2/1-15/1 |

### Recording Children’s Attendance:

Children’s attendance can be recorded in the same place you record income. For example, if you use the receipt book method, simply record the number of days that the child actually attended care beside the amount received on your copy of the receipt. If you use a calendar to record income, list each child’s initials in the square provided for each day and use a check mark for attendance or an “X” for absence. If you use a journal simply include a col-­‐‑ umn to record the number of days the child at-­‐‑ tended.

### Recording Your Expenses:

Keeping a record and proof of your expenses will be more challenging. What is especially important is that you save all receipts, bills, invoices, etc. for any expenses you are going to claim. This means that any money you spend that is entirely or partly a child care expense, from a heating bill for your home to the ice cream you buy as a treat, should be proven with a receipt.

To ensure that you have the necessary records you should:

1. Maintain a file or large envelope for each cat-­‐‑ egory of expense. For example, keep a separate file for play supplies, food, household utilities, etc.
2. File each receipt, bill, invoice, etc. as you receive it, or maintain a holding file to store all your re-­‐‑ ceipts and sort into the appropriate files on a weekly or monthly basis.
3. Attach a sheet to each file and write in the date and amount for each receipt as you file it. Or, main-­‐‑ tain your written expense record in a separate note-­‐‑ book or ledger with columns for each category of expense, the date and amount of payment. Either method allows you to total your expenses on an on-­‐‑ going, weekly, or monthly basis.

*Make a note on the back of receipts about what was pur-­‐‑ chased. For example, if you purchase toys or diapers note*

*that on the back of the receipt.*

*Keep a receipt book with you to use in situations where the seller is not issuing receipts (e.g., garage sales, bazaars, etc.). Fill in the appropriate information and have the seller sign.*

The types of expenses that may be fully or partially deductible for tax purposes include:

***Accounting and Legal fees:*** related to your day care business;

***Advertising:*** from newspaper advertisements to fly-­‐‑ ers or business cards that you have printed;

***Automobile expenses:*** the business portion of your automobile costs including gas, insurance, oil, maintenance, repairs and depreciation;

***Bank charges:*** provided you maintain a separate bank account for your day care earnings and ex-­‐‑ penses;

***Capital cost allowance (depreciation):*** on higher cost items such as furnishings, appliances and children’s equipment;

***Field trip costs:*** for museum entrance fees, play group charges, etc.;

***Food costs:*** for snacks and meals for the day care children;

***Home supply costs:*** for items such as blankets, first aid supplies, towels, toothbrushes, cleaning and pa-­‐‑ per products;

***Household expenses:*** the business portion of costs of heat, water, electricity, insurance, as well as interest and taxes on your home or rent;

***Insurance charges:*** for any additional insurance costs related to your day care business;

***Play supplies:*** for children’s books, crayons, craft supplies, toys;

***Postage and stationery:*** for stamps, envelopes, ac-­‐‑ count ledgers, receipt books, etc.;

***Repairs:*** for any damage to your home or its con-­‐‑ tents caused by a day care child;

***Telephone charges:*** for a telephone installed specifi-­‐‑ cally for your day care business or long distance charges related to your day care business on your family phone line;

***Training:*** for courses or workshops that you attend related to your day care business;

***Wages:*** paid to an assistant, cleaning person, etc.

Remember to maintain ill receipts, bills, invoices, etc., for any expenses you intend to claim for income tax purposes.

To file your income tax return, you must use the (not the short form) and report your earnings in the Business Income section of the return. You do not send your receipts with your income tax return. You must, however, attach a day care, as well as the ex-­‐‑ penses incurred. For more information about record keeping and income tax, consult the Internal Rev-­‐‑ enue Service.

Once you have-­‐‑made these basic business decisions, the next step is preparing your home for family day care. In the following sections we will discuss safety proofing your home and organizing the space you will need to care for young children.

## Preparing Your Home for Family Day Care

Two important issues have to be considered when preparing your home for family day care. The first is ensuring that your home is a safe environment for children. The second is the actual set-­‐‑up of your home: where will children play, sleep and eat.

The time and energy you devote to getting your home ready for family day care will be well in-­‐‑ vested. A safe, well-­‐‑organized home will be an in-­‐‑ viting place for the children to spend their day and for you to work in.

### Safety in Your Home

Many accidents occur in family homes and most of these accidents are preventable. Safety-­‐‑proof your home before you begin providing care; do a safety check regularly after starting; and a safety scan ev-­‐‑ ery morning before the children arrive for care.



Home Safety Checklist

Post an emergency phone number list beside every phone in your home, including numbers for:

* + Fire Department • Poison • Control Center • Hospital
  + Doctor/pediatrician • Police Department • Day care parents
  + Neighbor Day Care Agency (if applicable)
  + 911 EMERGENCY SERVICE (if applicable)

Install smoke detectors on every floor of your home and test regularly.

Ensure that fireplaces, wood burning stoves, and space heaters are properly screened.

Cover electrical outlets with safety plugs.

Keep flashlights and batteries on hand in case of an emergency.

Put stereos, televisions, etc. against walls to prevent children from reaching the wiring.

Avoid overloading power circuits (plugging too many items into the same outlet).

Store all cleaning products, insecticides, cosmetics, perfumes, medications, etc. out of children’s reach.

Turn pot handles toward the center of the stove and use back burners as much as possible.

Keep scissors, knives, etc. out of children’s reach.

Hot water temperature should not exceed 120 degrees.

Keep freezers locked.

Put away any glass or breakable ornaments.

Keep cigarettes, matches and lighters out of children’s reach.

Store safety pins, beads and any small toys out of small children’s reach. Keep stairways uncluttered and well lit.

Remove any peeling paint or splinters from furnishings and woodwork.

Ensure that paint used on children’s furnishings is lead-free.

Ensure toys are in good repair; no sharp edges, loose parts, or parts small enough for children to swallow.

Use decorative decals on glass doors so children don’t bump into or attempt to walk through them.

Install latches high on any doors that children shouldn’t use.

Never use plastic bags underneath sheets to waterproof beds. Use garbage cans and diaper pails with secure lids.

Install safety straps on changing tables and high chairs.

Ensure that pets are inoculated against rabies and distemper.

Get rid of poisonous plants or put them out of reach.

Balconies pose particular dangers for children. Never allow a child to play unattended on a balcony and make sure balcony doors are fastened securely at all times.

If guns are kept in your home, keep them in locked cabinets and lock ammunition away in a separate location.

## Coping in an Emergency

Even with the most scrupulous safety proofing and constant vigilance, accidents can and do occur and you should be prepared to cope. The following ideas should help:

### HAVE A FIRST AID KIT WELL STOCKED WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

First Aid Manual

(The Red Cross has excellent first aid manual available)

Band aids (assorted sizes) Tensor bandage Disinfectant soap Adhesive Tape

Cotton Swabs Calamine Lotion Sun Screen

1 inch Rolled Gauze Scissors Tweezers Thermometer

Gauze Pads (assorted sizes) Triangular bandages and safety pins Ice Pack

Baking Soda (to make a paste with water for bee stings)

Tongue Depressors (good for finger splints)

### Take a First Aid Course



If you have taken the above steps you should feel more confident about your ability to cope in an emergency situation. If an emergency occurs you should:

1. Assess the situation calmly while reassuring the injured child as well as any other children present.
2. If necessary take a few seconds and some deep breaths to relax.
3. Decide what has to be done and what is needed to do it (first aid kit, emergency medical assistance, etc.)
4. Take the necessary action.

If you are providing care to any child with a known medical condition-epilepsy, asthma, diabetes, etc.- you should discuss with the parent and the child’s physician what procedures to follow in the event of an incident related to that condition.

## Medical/Emergency Information You Should Have

The most important step in being better prepared to

handle emergency situations is to take a basic first aid and an Infant CPR course. Courses are available through your local hospital or American Red Cross.

### Teach Older Children to Cope in an Emergency

Older children may be able to help in an emergency if the situation warrants it. They may be able to get you the first aid kit, a blanket, or pillow. Take the time to teach the older children in your care how to call emergency numbers. Remember, it may be you who becomes ill or is injured and the children may *have* to help.

Any time you agree to care for a child you should have the child’s parent provide you with the fol-­‐‑ lowing:

1. Information on the child’s medical history;
2. Phone numbers where parents can be reached as well as an emergency contact if parents are not available;
3. A signed consent form giving you authority to secure emergency medical care for their child if necessary.

## Medical/Emergency Information (Sample)

Family Last Name:

Child’s Name: Birth Date:

Mother’s Name: Father’s Name: Home Address:

Work Phone #: Work Phone #: Home Phone #:

Emergency Contact: Relationship: Phone # of Emergency Contact: Child’s Physician Name: Phone#: Health Insurance #:

### Emergency Medical Treatment

In the event of an emergency when I am not available, I authorize the administration of any medical procedures deemed necessary by my doctor, or, if unavailable, by any other physician selected by my child’s caregiver.

Date: Parent’s Name:

Parent’s Signature: Caregiver’s Name:

#### Child’s Health Record:

General State Of Health:

Immunization Record:

Blood Type: Known Allergies: Other Relevant Information/ Known Existing Conditions, Etc.

***Has your child had:*** Chicken Pox Mumps

German Measles

Whooping Cough

Measles

Other

***Is your child subject to:*** Ear aches Stomach upsets

Sore throats

Colds

Head aches

Other

## Home Set-Up

Many of the decisions about how you will organize your home will depend on the amount of space you have. A home large enough to allow a room or two to be used exclusively for the children’s activities will make planning easier. But even a small home or apartment can, with careful organization and planning, accommodate children’s needs.

You’ll have to plan how and where you will accom-­‐‑ modate the following activities:

<£ Sleep/Rest: Children need an area for sleep that is free from disturbances (i.e., telephone, doorbell), can be darkened for rest, and provides sufficient space for comfort. You may choose to use family bedrooms for nap time, especially if you are caring for children who have difficulty settling down when other children are in the room. If you are us-­‐‑ ing an area for sleep that is also used as play space, establish a pre-­‐‑nap routine that changes the room somewhat. Tidying up toys, setting up cots or mats, dimming lights, drawing curtains and putting on soothing music, helps give the room a different and quieter atmosphere.

<£ An infant, who may require naps in the morning and afternoon, should sleep in a room close enough to be heard if there are any difficulties, but away from the bustle and activities of older children.

<£ Eating: The easiest place to serve children’s meals may be the kitchen. If using an adult-­‐‑sized table, provide booster seats for children who have outgrown high chairs. You may prefer to use a child-­‐‑sized table and chairs, either in the kitchen or the play area. Wherever you serve meals and snacks, make sure the floor covering is easy to wipe up or cover the area under the table with heavy plastic.

<£ Playing: There are different types of play to con-­‐‑ sider when planning space. Think about how you will arrange:

<£ Floor space for play with blocks, cars, etc. Any empty floor space will do. Provide low shelving or baskets nearby for toy storage.

<£ Table top space for puzzles, peg boards, color-­‐‑ ing, etc. A child-­‐‑sized table will work best with nearby shelving for storage of materials.

<£ Imaginative play space for dress-­‐‑up, playing

house etc. A play house, puppet theater or toy fridge and stove will encourage imaginative play. A clothes tree or hooks on the wall can be used for dress-­‐‑up clothes and props. If space is limited, put dress-­‐‑up clothes and props in a laundry basket to bring out each day and use large cardboard boxes to ‘create’ housekeeping furniture.

<£ Active play space for climbing, jumping, run-­‐‑ ning, and burning off steam. If you have space for a small indoor climber/slide it will get a lot of use from toddlers and pre-­‐‑schoolers and can double as a puppet theater/post office/store for imaginative play. Use the basement for riding toys, a mattress for jumping on, or just room for running around. If space is limited you can provide gym mats (play pen mats work well) for somersaults and rolling and a well sanded 2 x 4 for a balance beam. Store the mats and 2 x 4 under a couch when not in use.

<£ Quiet time space where a child can retreat from the hustle and bustle for a while. Provide a com-­‐‑ fortable chair or some large cushions with books close at hand to create a quiet comer.

<£ Messy place space for painting, play dough, wa-­‐‑ ter play, etc. A low table works best, in the kitchen or any area close to a sink for clean-­‐‑up. Make sure the floor surface is easy to clean.

## Establishing Routines in Family Day Care

In the same way that you should safety proof and organize your home for family day care before you begin, it is also important that you do some plan-­‐‑ ning around other aspects of caring for young chil-­‐‑ dren. How will you establish routines that will meet children’s needs? How will you provide for their nutritional needs? With a group of young chil-­‐‑ dren, the risk of spreading germs and infections in-­‐‑ creases; how will you ensure good sanitary and health practices in your day care home?

### Your Daily Schedule

Any daily routine that you establish should be flex-­‐‑ ible, but children do respond well to routine. They like to know when things are going to happen and will feel more secure and comfortable if their days have a fairly predictable pattern and order. The fol-­‐‑ lowing are some guidelines for planning your day:

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

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

<£ Try to schedule free play, or activities requiring a minimum of supervision for times when you will be occupied (e.g., feeding baby).

<£ Drop-­‐‑off and pick-­‐‑up times are the most hectic periods of the day. Have quiet activities (e.g., books, puzzles) available for children at these times.

<£ To keep little ones sitting down and quiet during story or circle time, combine it with snack time.

<£ Always be prepared to change your plans in case of the unexpected. A construction crew working on your street can be as interesting and exciting to chil-­‐‑ dren as a craft or story.

<£ If you notice a particular time of day when ev-­‐‑ erything seems to get out of hand, look at changing your routine. For instance, if children tend to be cranky by lunch time, consider an earlier lunch and nap-­‐‑time.

<£ Allow time for group as well as individual ac-­‐‑ tivities and for quiet and active play.

<£ Plan a quiet, wind-­‐‑down activity before nap-­‐‑ time.

<£ Experiment with different activities at different times until you find what works best in your home.

<£ Schedule some time for yourself (even if it’s only ten minutes) in the morning, and a longer period (at least half an hour) in the afternoon.

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**Your Day Care Day Might Look Like This**

7:00 - 9:00

9:00 - 9:30

9:30 - 10:00

10:00 - 11:00

11:00 - 11:45

11:45 - 12:00

12:00 - 12:30

12:30 - 1:00

1:00 - 3:00

3:00 - 3:30

3:30 - 4:00

4:00 - 4:30

4:30 - 6:00

Arrival time-quiet individual activities such as books, puzzles, coloring and toys. When older chidren have left for school, younger ones help prepare snack or activity for later in morning.

Tidy-up, then snack and story time. Art activity/play dough.

Outdoor play (or active indoor play if bad weather). Free play or helping with lunch preparation.

Tidy-up for lunch. Lunch time.

Story time or other wind-down activity.

Nap-time -quiet time for older children with books, story tapes, etc. Your time to relax for a while before you start preparations for the afternoon.

Wake up, wash up and snack time.

Group activity like play dough, painting, etc.

Snack and Talk Time with school-aged, free play for younger children. Outdoor or indoor free play until pick-up time.

### Evening

Think about tomorrow: What will you serve for lunch and snack? Do you have all the necessary in-­‐‑ gredients? Are you prepared for any special crafts, outings, activities that you have planned for tomor-­‐‑ row? Do your own children have clothing and school gear ready?

## Healthy Habits in Your Home

An important part of your role as a caregiver will be to provide a healthy environment and healthful routines for the children you care for. A healthy lifestyle involves more than a balanced diet, exer-­‐‑ cise, fresh air and proper rest. To prevent the devel-­‐‑ opment and spread of germs and infections, it is also necessary to establish good sanitary practices in your family day care home and to teach children at the earliest possible age to practice good personal hygiene. By helping children to develop good hab-­‐‑ its early, you’ll be giving them a head start on a life-­‐‑ time of good health.

Healthy children are energetic, interested in the world around them and eager to try new things. Even when normal childhood illnesses do strike, the healthy child will recover more quickly and with less likelihood of side effects. So your efforts to provide a healthy environment will pay off in dividends for everyone-­‐‑you, your family, the child’s parents, the community, and most impor-­‐‑ tantly, the child. Keep the following health basics in mind when providing child care:

<£ **Immunization:** Make sure every child in your care, and all the members of your own household, have received all necessary immunizations.

<£ **Personal Hygiene:** Children will develop good personal habits by following the example of the adults and the older children around them and by reinforcement and reminders of the basics:

* + Wash your hands before and after food preparation.
  + Wash your hands and face before and after eating.
  + Wipe yourself, flush the toilet and wash your hands after using the toilet.
  + Brush your teeth after eating.
  + Wash your hands after handling pets, messy play, etc.
  + Each child should have her own face-­‐‑cloth, towel, tooth brush, comb or brush, linens and blankets.

Remember, hand washing is one of our most effec- tive tools in preventing the spread of illness; set a good example yourself and remind children as of- ten as is necessary about this important healthy habit.

<£ **Exercise:** Exercise is an important part of each day’s routine, especially for children. Provide op-­‐‑ portunities for active play and exercise each day, outdoors when possible, but indoors if the weather is bad.

<£ **Fresh Air:** Fresh air is extremely important to children’s healthy development. Being out of doors promotes active play, increases children’s appetites, and even helps them sleep better. When the weather is good, spend as much time as possible out of doors. Even when the weather is wet or cold, try to get out for at least a half hour in the morning and afternoon.

<£ **Rest:** It is important to ensure children have proper rest. Infants will likely nap both mornings and afternoons, while toddlers and pre-­‐‑schooler usually nap after lunch. Even five-­‐‑ and six-­‐‑year-­‐‑ olds may still need a quiet rest period in the after-­‐‑ noon.

<£ **How Ill Is Too Ill to Come to Care:** Decide about your rules regarding illness and make parents aware of them before there is an illness. Unless you are willing to provide care to children when they are ill, a child is likely too ill to come to care if they have:

* + a temperature of 101\* F or 38.5\* C or over;
  + vomited that morning or the night before;
  + diarrhea (green or yellow watery stool);
  + a rash that has not been diagnosed as not being contagious;
  + Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) or any other eye condition where the eye is itchy, red, swollen and oozing pus;
  + Impetigo, Ringworm or Pinworm;
  + any contagious disease (chicken pox, roseolla);
  + a severe cold with fever, runny nose, sneez-­‐‑ ing or bad cough.

<£ **Food Storage and Preparation:** Contaminated foods are a major cause of infection and illness in the home so take extra care in the storage and preparation of food including wash your hands and clean counter space before and after food preparation.

If you have infants in your care, make sure their bottles and nipples are properly washed and steril-­‐‑ ized.

<£ **The kitchen garbage** is a breeding ground for germs. Empty the garbage every day and disinfect the container with , and water at least once a week. Any foods stored in the fridge, freezer or cupboards should be tightly sealed. Never thaw food at room temperature. Thaw foods inside the refrigerator.

Leftovers should be covered immediately after the meal and stored in the refrigerator or freezer.

## Good Nutrition

Planning menus that meet children’s nutritional needs is not difficult. The real challenge lies in get-­‐‑ ting children to eat those tasty, nutritious, well-­‐‑bal-­‐‑ anced, meals and snacks. The children in your care may all have different appetites and food prefer-­‐‑ ences. They will be greatly influenced by the way they eat in their own home. The way food is pre-­‐‑ pared, the types of foods eaten, even the time chil-­‐‑ dren are accustomed to eating, may be quite differ-­‐‑ ent from the habits in your home. In addition, children’s appetites often fluctuate as they go through rapid then slower growth periods.

Given all these circumstances, it is worthwhile to think about and plan the foods you will serve. Keep the following basics in mind:

<£ Talk to parents during the pre placement inter-­‐‑ view about the child’s food habits. You might ask the following questions:

* + What are the child’s food likes and dislikes?
  + What kinds of foods does the family usually eat?
  + Is the child accustomed to midmorning and afternoon snacks or are they accustomed to eating whenever hungry?
  + Does the child have any food allergies?
  + Does he/she have a small or large appetite?
  + Will the child be eating breakfast before com-­‐‑ ing to care?

<£ Plan simple meals and snacks. Generally chil-­‐‑ dren prefer foods that are separate, rather than cas-­‐‑ serole-­‐‑type meals.

<£ Keep serving sizes small. Children can be intimi-­‐‑ dated by a large plate filled with food. Provide small servings and offer seconds.

<£ Make foods look appealing. It’s worth the extra minute or two that it takes to shred some carrot curls on top of the salad or to cut the sandwiches into long finger-­‐‑like shapes instead of squares if it means they’ll get eaten.

<£ Make meal time pleasant. Show by your own example what kind of behavior you expect. Encour-­‐‑ age children to help each other, take turns, be co-­‐‑ operative and use phrases like “Please” and “Thank you.” Eat with the children if possible.

<£ Get children involved in helping you plan and prepare meals and snacks. Children love to help out in the kitchen and in addition to providing an op-­‐‑ portunity for them to develop new skills, it is an ideal way to encourage their interest in food and nutrition.

<£ Don’t use food as a reward or withhold it as a punishment. Food should be used to satisfy hunger and to help build and maintain strong healthy bod-­‐‑ ies.

<£ Never force a child to eat. If a child is being fin-­‐‑ icky, refusing to try new foods, or going through a period of low appetite do not over-­‐‑react. Remember your appetite varies from day to day and that some new foods don’t appeal to you either.

It is important that the meals and snacks you serve are well-­‐‑balanced to ensure that the children are receiving the nutrients they need to develop healthy bodies. The foods are divided into four groups. Your menus should have variety and con-­‐‑ tain foods from each of the four food groups. The following list contains the four food groups; samples of the foods in each of the groups; the number of servings a child needs each day; and the main nutrients found in the foods.



There are also many foods that fall into the category of *Extras*. These foods are high in salt, sugar and fats and have little nutritional value. Extras include: soft drinks, chips, cheese spreads, cookies, choco-­‐‑ late, etc. Keep Extras to a minimum in menu plan-­‐‑ ning.

**Milk and Milk Products:** (e.g., milk, cheese, yo- gurt, ice cream, puddings or soups made with milk.)

* These products are high in calcium, protein and vitamin A. Children require four to six servings of Milk or Milk products per day.
* Examples of a child-sized servings: 125 ml (1/2 cup milk), 30 g (one ounce) of cheese.

**Meat and Alternatives:** (e.g., meat, fish, poultry, eggs, peanut butter, dried beans and peas.)

* These products are high in protein, B-vitamins and iron. Children require three to four servings of Meat or Alternatives per day.
* Examples of child-sized servings: one egg, 30 ml (2 tablespoons) of peanut butter.

**Breads and Cereals:** (e.g., whole grain or enriched bread, muffins, cereal, rice, pasta, noodles, crack- ers.)

* These products are high in carbohydrates, B- vitamins, and Iron. Children require three to six servings per day.
* Examples of child-sized servings: 1/2 to one slice of bread, one muffin.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Vitamin A enriched (e.g., carrots, bananas, apples, apricots, peaches, spin- ach, broccoli.); Vitamin C enriched (e.g., oranges, grapefruits, tomatoes, cabbage, strawberries, pota- toes, broccoli.)

* These products are high in vitamin A and vitamin

C. Children require four or more servings per day.

* Examples of child-sized servings: 125 ml (1/2 cup) of unsweetened juice, 100 ml (1/4 cup) of raw or cooked fruits or vegetables.

Once you have your business and home organized and have thought through your daily routines and health and nutritional considerations, you are likely ready to begin advertising for clients. To make sure you’ll be prepared complete the following:

## Readiness Checklist

<£ Have you investigated local and laws respect-­‐‑ ing family day care?

<£ Have you secured adequate liability insurance?

<£ Have you contacted child care agencies, regis-­‐‑ tries, etc., and explored all your options?

<£ Have you decided:

* + How many children you will care for?
  + What ages of children you will care for?
  + What hours and days you will work?
  + What rates you will charge?

<£ Have you thought through your record keeping system and prepared files, etc., to maintain re-­‐‑ ceipts for tax purposes?

<£ Has your home been thoroughly safety-­‐‑ checked?

<£ Do you have medical history/consent forms prepared for parents to fill in?

<£ Have you considered what you would do in an emergency, for example, a serious injury to a child in your care?

<£ Have you provided appropriate space and equipment for the children’s sleeping, eating and playing during the day care day?

<£ Have you considered how you will organize your daily routines?

<£ Have you planned how you will accommodate children’s nutritional needs? Do you have sample menus or meal plans you could provide to prospective parents if they ask for them?

<£ Do you have the names and contact information of at least two personal references available for prospective clients?

<£ If you have decided to use written agreements, do you have copies available for prospective clients?

## Finding Client Families

**Talk to:** Family Neighbor s

Parents of children in care (present and past) Friends

Spouse’s co-­‐‑workers Other providers in your area

### Check for parents’ advertisements for care in:

Notices posted on bulletin boards

*Penny Saver* or *Bargain Hunter* publications Community newspapers

Local newspapers

After all your pre-­‐‑planning and organizing is done, the real work begins. In the best possible situation, you may already have clients interested in having you care for their children. It is far more likely though that you will have to find client families yourself. There are several methods you can use, depending on the services available in your com-­‐‑ munity:

### Register with:

Child care registries

Private home day care agencies Local welcome wagon

Family day home agencies Resource and Referral Services

### Advise:

Neighborhood schools (speak to the secretary) Neighborhood churches (speak to the secretary) major employers in your area (speak to the person-­‐‑ nel department)

Area day care centers and nursery schools (speak to the Director)

### Post notices on bulletin boards in:

Local libraries Major employers Supermarkets

Family resource centers Community centers Apartment lobbies Laundromats

Drop-­‐‑ins, play groups

### Place ads in:

community newspapers

*Penny Saver* or *Bargain Hunter* publications Local newspapers

### Distribute notices/flyers to homes in your area. Make Your Advertisements Appealing to Parents

For example, a newspaper advertisement that reads, “Friendly, experienced provider in Queen’s University area will care for your pre-­‐‑school and/ or school-­‐‑aged child. Please call 222-­‐‑2222"ʺ reads better than: “Babysitter, Queen’s University area,

$100.00 per week. No infants. Call 222-­‐‑2222.” and would cost very little more.

Notices or flyers that you post on bulletin boards or distribute in your neighborhood should also be ap-­‐‑ pealing. Draw a picture of a house with a sun shin-­‐‑ ing over it, or balloons, or a teddy bear, etc. Having children color in the pictures on the notices for you is particularly effective. Make sure that you have tear-­‐‑off sections at the bottom of notices with your phone number on them.

Don’t attempt to use all the methods that we have described here at once. Pick the least costly and most practical for you to start with. If you are not getting sufficient response, then try some of the other methods. Be persistent and patient. Your hard work will pay off ill the end.

Once parents respond to your advertisement, a very important step in the child care relationship takes place. In Unit Three: “Parents and Provider: Part-­‐‑ ners in Child Care,” we will discuss establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with your parent-­‐‑clients from that first contact and throughout your time providing care.

# Unit Three: Partners in Child Care



Everyone benefits from a good caregiver/parent relationship. Caregivers feel that their work is ap-­‐‑ preciated and respected, parents feel confident that their child is being well cared for, and, most impor-­‐‑ tant, children feel secure and comfortable knowing that the people who take care of them also like each other.

Perhaps the first step in establishing a good rela-­‐‑ tionship with your clients is to try to understand why they chose family day care. For parents who need child care, family day care can offer some at-­‐‑ tractive advantages. Often the most important of these is the individual attention that their child can receive. Family day care is provided by one adult working with a small group of children. It can offer children the individual attention they need, while providing them with an opportunity to develop so-­‐‑ cial skills through spending their day with other children. Parents can choose a caregiver who shares their own philosophies and attitudes about children and child care and will have the opportunity to get to know their caregiver well.

Parents also appreciate the fact that children can receive care in their own neighborhood. This means parents won’t have to add a lot of time onto an al-­‐‑ ready busy day traveling to and from child care and that their older children can stay in the same school, see their usual friends and participate in af-­‐‑ ter-­‐‑school activities. The fact that siblings of differ-­‐‑ ent ages, from infants to school-­‐‑aged, can be cared

for together is also a big plus for many families.

Family day care is usually less expensive than other forms of child care, and may be more flexible about the hours of care. Parents seeking part-­‐‑time care find it especially difficult to find a space in a day care center or to find a nanny to come into their home. A good caregiver can also be a support and resource to the working parent. She can be someone with whom they can share their concerns about their child, an experienced person who can give them advice and reassurance.

And many parents prefer family day care because it comes closest to the type of care, experiences, and environment that they would provide if they were at home with their children.

But there is more involved in developing a good working relationship with clients than understand-­‐‑ ing what parents are looking for in family day care. Like anything else worthwhile, a good relationship with your clients is something you must work at.

And that work begins with your first contact with prospective clients.

## Starting Off Right

Your first contacts with parents will probably take place over the phone and in the pre-­‐‑placement in-­‐‑ terview. The impression you make in these early contacts is very important. After all, parents are choosing someone to care for their child and that is one of the most important decisions they will make as parents. They need to feel that you are a caring, capable person who they can trust and that you take what you do seriously. Keep the following ba-­‐‑ sics in mind during those early contacts:

<£ **Be prepared for both telephone inquiries and the pre-­‐‑placement interview.** Think through the questions you should ask parents, and what infor-­‐‑ mation you should give them, before you begin ad-­‐‑ vertising. If you are nervous about either the phone or pre-­‐‑placement process, ask your spouse or a friend to help you practice by pretending to inter-­‐‑ view them.

<£ **Be business-­‐‑like about the business aspects of your child care.** State your rates and other informa-­‐‑ tion related to money, hours of operation, illness policies, etc. in a confident way.

<£ **Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses.** Most of us have some things that we do very well, many more things that we do adequately, and some things that we don’t do very well at all. So if you really enjoy baking and cooking with children, or if you spend a lot of time outdoors or on outings with the children, say so. On the other hand, if house-­‐‑ keeping is not your strong point, don’t be afraid to tell parents that too. The more you can tell parents about yourself and your style of care giving, the more certain you are of finding parents who will be happy with the care you provide.

<£ **Be clear about your expectations of parents.** Talk to parents frankly about your ‘house rules.’ Discuss everything, from business matters, to items you ex-­‐‑ pect parents to provide for their children, to the amount of notice you require if a child will be picked up late. Encourage parents to clarify their expectations of you.

<£ **Be responsive about parents’ concerns** and re-­‐‑ ally listen to what they are saying. Encourage par-­‐‑ ents to talk about their previous experiences with child care if they have had any. Ask them what they did and didn’t like about it, what kinds of problems they experienced or concerns they had. If a parent has never had their child in care before, ask them what they think good family day care should be.

Showing a real interest in their views and concerns will go a long way in establishing a friendly and open communication between you.

## The Telephone Contact

Your first contact with most potential clients will be on the phone and the impression you make then will be an important one. The telephone contact should provide you and the parents with an oppor-­‐‑ tunity to exchange basic information and to decide whether you should meet with each other.

Provide parents with the following information:

* your name and address;
* directions to your home;
* name and location of nearby schools;
* your child care rates;
* the number of vacancies you have;
* the number and ages of other children in your home (both day care and your own);
* the names and phone numbers of at least two ref-­‐‑ erences.

*Note: It is a good idea to keep this information available in writing close to the phone. It may all seem very familiar now, but you wouldn’t be the first person to become ner-­‐‑ vous and not remember the nearest major cross-­‐‑street to your home or the ages of your own children!*

### Ask parents to provide the following:

* parent’s name and phone number;
* child’s name and age;
* hours and days for which care is needed;
* starting date for care to begin;
* any special concerns the parent may have, e.g., pets, whether caregiver is non-­‐‑smoker, special needs of child;
* other relevant information.

If it appears obvious that this is not an appropriate match, thank the parent for calling and if possible refer them to a child care registry, family day care agency, or other caregivers in your area who might be suitable. If there seems to be general agreement and matching of the parent’s needs and your own, arrange for a meeting.

## The Pre-placement Interview

The interview is an opportunity for you and the cli-­‐‑ ents to get to know each other and to decide if you will be a good match. It is important that you both provide as much information as possible in the pre placement interview. If it can be arranged you should meet more than once before a decision is made and care begins. You and the parents might meet first, and then have the parents visit with the child. But whether you are meeting once or several times before arrangements for care are finalized, make sure all the matters listed below have been discussed.

### What You Should Tell Parents About You and Your Care:

* your child care experience (including your experi-­‐‑ ence as a parent);
* your child care training (i.e., workshops, first aid training, courses);
* the number and ages of children in your home (your own and day care);
* the kind of care you provide (what kinds of activi-­‐‑ ties the children will be doing during the day, what are your normal routines, how much television is permitted and what programs, etc.);
* how long you intend to continue providing care;
* what other adults are present in the household during the day care day;
* what are your plans for coping with an emergency situation (e.g., what would you do if a child were in-­‐‑ jured while in your care);
* what types of meals and snacks you serve;
* what forms of child guidance you use (time out, withdrawal of privileges, etc.).

### What Parents Should Tell You About the Child and Family:

* information about the child’s family structure (does the child live with both parents, number of sib-­‐‑ lings, etc.);
* the child’s previous experience in child care;
* the child’s medical history, record of immuniza-­‐‑ tion, and any medical or health concerns (i.e., aller-­‐‑ gies, known conditions);
* the child’s personality (i.e., is child outgoing, shy, nervous) the child’s eating, sleeping, toileting habits;
* the child’s favorite activities, books, foods, etc.
* any recent changes, upsets or problems that might affect the child (e.g., marriage breakdown, birth of sibling)
* if child is school-­‐‑aged: What arrangements can be made regarding transportation to and from school, as well as to and from any extra-­‐‑curricular activities in which the child might participate? How much supervision is required (i.e., is the child allowed to go to the park or to visit friends, which friends and where?);
* parents’ employers, hours of work, phone num-­‐‑ bers and addresses at work and home;
* parents’ medical insurance number, name and phone number of child’s physician;
* name and phone number of emergency contacts if parents are not available.

### What You and the Parents Should Agree on About Business Matters:

* money matters: basic fee, method and frequency of payment, overtime rates, payment for absences from care and statutory holidays, receipts for child care payments, etc.;
* hours and days for which care will be provided;
* items which parent and caregiver will be provid-­‐‑ ing (e.g., who will provide lunch, snacks, formula, diapers, car seats);
* alternate care: Who is responsible for finding alter-­‐‑ nate care if caregiver is not available because of ill-­‐‑ ness, holidays, etc.?;
* your policies concerning the child’s illness (e.g., how ill is too ill to be brought to care);
* the amount of notice required if you or the par-­‐‑ ents’ wish to terminate care.

## Written Agreements with Parent-Clients

While it is not necessary to use a written agreement with your parent-­‐‑clients, many experienced caregivers have found that using them saves both the caregivers and the parents many misunder-­‐‑ standings. A written agreement simply puts on pa-­‐‑ per the arrangements that you and the parents have agreed to when care begins. Your agreement could simply state the hours of care, the rate of payment, and when payment is to be made, or you could have a more detailed agreement covering all of the caregiver’s and the client’s responsibilities in re-­‐‑ spect to the care arrangements.

You may be uncomfortable at first about using a written agreement, but if you think about the agree-­‐‑ ment as simply confirming what you and the par-­‐‑ ents have said to each other at your first meeting, it makes sense for both of you to have that informa-­‐‑ tion in writing. Often, both the caregiver and the parents are a little nervous at the initial interview and it may be difficult to remember six months later whether you said you expect to be paid for Christmas Day, etc.

If you do decide to use a written agreement, the fol-­‐‑ lowing information should be included:

<£ The name, address and phone number of the caregiver;

<£ The name, address, home and work phone num-­‐‑ bers of the parent-­‐‑clients;

<£ The name(s) of the children for whom care is to be provided;

<£ The hours and days of the week for which care is to be provided;

<£ The amount and frequency of payment (i.e., the rate of payment for care will be $90.00 per week, including statutory holidays and absences due to holidays, illness, etc. to be paid on Friday of each week) and overtime rates and terms;

<£ Conditions for termination of care (i.e., the caregiver and parent-­‐‑clients agree to provide three weeks notice if care is to be terminated).

A more detailed agreement *could* include:

<£ List of conditions when parents should notify caregiver including late arrival, sickness, planned absences due to holidays, changes in address,

phone numbers at home or work, changes of emer-­‐‑ gency contact, any changes of circumstances that would affect the child’s well-­‐‑being;

<£ List of conditions when caregiver should notify parents including illness of caregiver or member of household, change of phone numbers, holiday plans, etc;

<£ A list of other caregiver responsibilities which may apply;

<£ A list of other parental responsibilities which may apply;

<£ Agreement about how sick is too sick for the child to come to care (e.g., children will not be brought to care if they have diarrhea, a temperature of over 101\*F, are vomiting, have severe colds, conjunctivi-­‐‑ tis [pink eye], or any contagious or potentially con-­‐‑ tagious illness).

Include anything else that you or the parent-­‐‑clients would like to have in your agreement.

**Child Care Agreement (Sample)**

The following agreement is made between:

Parent’s Name(s) Address Phone # Home Work

Caregiver’s Name Address Phone #

For the care of (child/children’s name/s) Child Care will be provided at (caregiver’s address)

It is agreed that child care will be provided from (e.g., 8:00 a.m.) to (e.g., 5:30 pm) for the following days of the week (e.g., Monday to Friday). The (e.g., weekly, daily) fee for child care is $ , due and payable on the (e.g., Friday of each week of care). The full fee is due and payable whether the child attends care on the agreed days or not. Overtime fees will be charged at a rate of ($3.00) per (e.g., 112 HR) or part thereof and are due and payable on arrival on day of overtime.

The caregiver and parent(s) agree to provide (eg., four weeks) notice if this agreement is to be terminated.

Caregiver’s Signature

Parent’s Signature Parent’s Signature Date

A more detailed agreement would contain all of the information contained in the basic sample agree-­‐‑ ment and in addition, after the paragraph dealing with fees and before the termination clause, you could add some or all of the following:

The day care home will be closed on the following days, for which payment will/will not be required:

New Year’s Day Victoria Day Civic Holiday Thanksgiving

Boxing Day Good Friday

Canada Day Labor Day Christmas Day

With the exception of the above-­‐‑noted statutory holidays, if the caregiver is not available to provide care, payment is not required.

In the event of the caregiver’s absence or illness, (eg., the parent) is responsible for making arrange-­‐‑ ments for alternate care.

### Caregiver Responsibilities:

Will provide a safe, healthy environment

Will provide all necessary equipment (e.g., car seat high chair)

Will provide nutritious morning and afternoon snacks, and lunches

Will provide outdoor play time each day, weather permitting

Will notify parents as soon as possible regarding: illness of self or other household member; changes of emergency contact numbers; contagious illness of other day care child; holiday plans involving ab-­‐‑ sence of caregiver

### Parental Responsibilities:

Will provide adequate quantities of diapers

Will provide seasonally appropriate changes of clothing

Will provide any necessary equipment (e.g., car seat, high chair)

Will provide appropriate snacks, lunches

Will notify caregiver as soon as possible regarding: late arrival of child; late arrival of parent; changes in employment hours; illness of child in care; conta-­‐‑ gious illness of members of child’s household; holi-­‐‑ day plans involving absence of child; any family

change which may affect the child’s health or well-­‐‑ being (i.e., serious illness of family member, marital breakdown)

## Maintaining a Good Relationship with Parents

A good beginning is just that -­‐‑the beginning. Build-­‐‑ ing on that good beginning will require some work and thought.

One of the most important things that you can do to build your clients’ confidence and trust in you is to find

ways to make the parents feel involved in their child’s day. Many parents are anxious about what goes on during the day care day. Is their child happy in the day care home? Is he fitting in well with the other children? The more you can tell par-­‐‑ ents about what goes on and the more ways you can find to make them feel a part of the child’s care, the more confident and reassured the parents will feel. Try some of the following ways to encourage parental involvement:

<£ Talk to parents and encourage children to tell them about their day. What did they do, where did they go, what did they play and with whom? It’s often little details that give parents a real sense of ‘being there.’ Share something about the child’s day with the parents every day.

<£ Provide parents of infants and toddlers with a brief note at the end of the day, to let them know about how long baby slept, how much he ate, how many bowel movements he had and whether they were soft or hard, and anything else newsworthy. It doesn’t take much time to jot down a simple note and it will mean a lot to parents.

<£ Make yourself and your day care home available to parents during the day. If a parent (especially at the beginning of care) really feels better calling ev-­‐‑ ery day, suggest a time of the day when it is conve-­‐‑ nient for you to take calls.

<£ If a parent is able to visit during the day, encour-­‐‑ age them to do so. If a parent visits so often that it is disruptive to your daily routine, they may have concerns that the two of you should discuss. If they really just need that constant reassurance, you may want to suggest that they restrict visits to a more reasonable frequency and settle for a phone call at other times.

<£ Let parents know about special plans that you have for activities in the home or special outings you are planning with the children.

<£ Ask for parents’ suggestions for outings and ac-­‐‑ tivities, stories or games their children enjoy, etc. This is especially important if your client families are of another culture or religion. Ask them about their special celebrations, practices, foods, etc. and include them in your day care home.

<£ Arrange a time, at least every three or four months, for you and each child’s parents to sit down and talk about the child’s development and any concerns that either of you may have. Try to arrange a time in the evening when the children won’t be offering any distractions.

<£ Invite parents to join you and the children for an outing or for lunch occasionally. Even if the child’s behavior is a little unruly when Mom or Dad is around, you’ll all benefit from the experience. This has the added advantage of letting parents see just how much work it is to look after a small group of children each day.

<£ Encourage parents to contribute ‘junk’ from their home and office for arts and crafts materials. Egg cartons, empty toilet paper rolls, ends of computer paper, etc. will all be useful for activities and par-­‐‑ ents and children will feel they are contributing something to the day’s activities.

<£ Remember that parents, especially those who have not had their child in care before, may need extra reassurance that it is normal for a child to take some time to adjust to a new situation. It’s also nor-­‐‑ mal, as a child goes through different stages to re-­‐‑ sist going to or going home from day care. Of course if a child seems really unhappy through the day care day, some action should be taken. But let parents know if their child fusses for only five min-­‐‑ utes after they leave and then settles happily into the day care home. For the parent who has left for work with their child in tears, a phone call when they arrive at the office to reassure them that all is well can mean a lot.

## Problem Solving

Problems between caregivers and parents can arise for several reasons: misunderstandings, differences of opinion on child rearing practices, or a failure of

the parents or caregiver to live up to their responsi-­‐‑ bilities and obligations. You can minimize the num-­‐‑ ber of problems that you may have by taking the steps to establish and maintain a good working re-­‐‑ lationship with parents, as outlined earlier in this Unit.

But even in the best of relationships, there are likely to be times when problems occur. So it is important that you be able to approach these problems in a calm and rational manner. Remember that when you’re dealing with a problem you are looking for a solution, not a victory. The following steps should help:

* **Identify the problem and make sure that it is what you think it is.** For example, you feel Parent A is always late. For a week or so keep track of everyone’s pick-­‐‑up times. You may be surprised to find that Parent A doesn’t arrive late any more often than Parents B or C, but because Parent A picks up their child last, when they are late, it is more notice-­‐‑ able and more annoying. The point is that it would be unfair to single out Parent A about late pick-­‐‑ups. A more effective and fair method would be a re-­‐‑ minder to all the parents about their agreed upon hours of care and your late arrival policy. The same applies to any problem you may be having. Before you speak to parents about it, get your facts straight.
* **Think about what you want to happen or how you would like to see the problem resolved.** For ex-­‐‑ ample, a simple problem might be a parent who is supposed to be bringing diapers for their child each day but often forgets. More difficult might be a situ-­‐‑ ation where you feel the parent shows little or no appreciation for what you do. In the first case, all you really want is to make sure that you have suffi-­‐‑ cient diapers on hand to get you through the day. But the second example is more difficult and may not be one that can be resolved through a discus-­‐‑ sion with parents. When you are considering a problem and the kind of solution you want, be real-­‐‑ istic about how much change you can expect and how quickly you can expect it.
* **If there are several difficulties you want to dis-­‐‑ cuss with a parent,** you may have to prioritize the problems rather than try to deal with them all at once. Decide on one or two of the most serious is-­‐‑

sues to tackle now and put some of the minor diffi-­‐‑ culties on the back burner. By resolving some of the major issues, you may discover that the others re-­‐‑ solve themselves.

* **Find the right time to talk to parents about the problem.** Don’t try to discuss a problem when you are angry or upset. Arrange a time that is conve-­‐‑ nient to both you and the parents, even if it is on the phone in the evening, to talk about it.
* **State the problem clearly using ‘I’ messages.** For example “I feel very frustrated/upset when. “I find it very difficult when. . . “ “I’m having a lot of trouble with....”
* **Listen to the parent’s viewpoint.** It could be that there is an explanation for the difficulty which hadn’t occurred to you. However, it is always im-­‐‑ portant to listen to what the other person has to say and to show respect for a different point of view, even if you don’t agree.
* **Keep the discussion focused on the problem at hand.** Don’t bring other issues into the conversation; focus on the problem that you want resolved. If the parent raises other issues, tell them that you will be happy to discuss any other matters with them after you have worked out a solution to the problem at hand.
* **Be prepared to compromise.** You may not be able to get exactly the solution you were looking for, but if you can work out a compromise that both you and the parents are happy with, then the situation will

have at least been improved.

* **Once you have reached a solution, repeat the terms of your agreement so that they are clear to both of you.** If in the diaper problem that we men-­‐‑ tioned above, the parent has promised to bring a box of diapers each Friday for the following week’s use, end the diaper discussion with: “So you will be bringing a case of diapers each Friday starting this week.’.’

*Open the discussion to other issues.* If the discussion to this point has gone pretty well, ask the parents if there are other matters that they want to discuss. If you feel that you’ve both had enough for one dis-­‐‑ cussion, tell the parents that you’ll be happy to ar-­‐‑ range another time to talk if there are other matters that they would like to discuss.

*Think about how the conversation went afterwards.* What did you do right, where did you go wrong, how would you handle the same situation if it came up again? Experience is our best teacher, but only if we make use of it to learn something.

And of course, when problems arise between the parent and caregiver, you both should remember that the child’s best interest is the top priority.

Keeping the needs of the child uppermost should help both parties look harder for compromises and solutions to any difficulties that do arise. In Unit Four: “Focusing on the Child-­‐‑Ages and Stages,” we will discuss children’s needs as they go through the all important process of growing up.

# Unit Four: Ages and Stages

Good child care is not provided instinctively. While we often use our instincts to guide us, good quality care requires an understanding of how children grow and develop and what our role should be in assisting them in that process.

## Child Development

our lifetime, it is in the early years that children expe-­‐‑ rience the most rapid development in all of these ar-­‐‑ eas and the stage is set for the type of adults that they will become.

We can’t hope to cover the subject of child develop-­‐‑ ment fully in a single unit, but you will find a list-­‐‑

ing of some excellent books on the subject in the

Children develop in four important ways:

* **Physical development** involves both the growth of children’s bodies and their ability to use their bod-­‐‑ ies to do everything from jumping and running (gross motor skills) to cutting and pasting (fine mo-­‐‑ tor skills).
* **Intellectual development** is the growth of a child’s ability to think and problem solve, from an infant discovering that pulling the string will make the mobile turn to the school-­‐‑aged child understand-­‐‑ ing New Math.
* **Emotional development** involves a child learning to experience and express their emotions, ranging from love, happiness and affection to sadness, fear and anger.
* **Social development** involves the child’s learning how to interact and get along with the people around them.

While we continue to grow and develop throughout

Appendix. Most of these books are available through your Public Library. You can also find courses on child development through most com-­‐‑ munity colleges, universities and many school boards.

Why study child development? Understanding children’s needs and the ‘whys’ of children’s behav-­‐‑ ior at any stage will help us to find constructive, positive ways of assisting them in the all-­‐‑important task of growing up. It’s also reassuring to know that the various stages are just that, a normal part of a child’s life, and something that they may soon grow out of the chart that follows outlines the milestones of a child’s development. Keep in mind that all chil-­‐‑ dren will develop at their own rate. When we dis-­‐‑ cuss the age at which a child is likely to be able to do a specific task, this is simply the average age.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| CHILD DEVELOPMENT CHART | | | |
| Age | Physical | Intellectual | Social And Emotional |
| One to Three Months | * holds head up for a few minutes * sucking reflex for eating * rooting reflex (responds to touch on the mouth) * begins to roll * makes a fist * jerks in response to loud noise | * begins to learn when he cries, something happens * responds more to noise * knows mother from others * makes small sounds and grunts | * responds to faces, expecially mom’s * recognizes parent’s voices and can respond with smile * coos when happy * cries when frightened, hungry or in pain |
| Three to Six Months | * can sit with support * can pull to siting position when hands grasped * may stand if weight supported * follows moving object with eyes * attempts to reach and grasp object | * more curious about his world * babbles constantly * some imitation of sounds m-m-m * coos, chortles, laughs | * senses that feet and hands are part of self * is becoming aware of strangers * wants to be near people * responds to voices and faces other than parents |
| Six to Twelve Months | * sits well • seeks out hidden object * crawls • wants to taste, touch and * pulls self to standing position shake objects   on furniture - may be able to • imitates more sounds (e.g., stand alone mama, dada))   * pre-walks (using furniture, etc) • responds to own name * eye-hand coordination improving • knows own toys * able to feed himself crackers • may say some words (e.g., * develops pinder grasp (able to dog, bye) pick up small objects) | | * enjoys peek-a-boo * shouts for attention * may fight for a toy they want * shows moods like anger and reacts to being left alone * knows the difference between angry and happy talking * imitates adult movements |
| One to Two Years | * walks, but still a bit unsteady * feeds self * can sit from a standing position * begins to climb and explore * can throw objects and begins to catch | * likes to explore his world * wants to be independent * uses the words “no” and “mine” * can follow simple instructions * is curious - gets into everything * understands more than he can express | * very self-centered * may be possessive of toys and has difficulty sharing * plays next to other children but not with them |
| Two to Three Years | * shows signs of being ready to begin toilet training * likes to climb, run, ride tricycle * can string beads, build towers with blocks * can feed self but often spills * enjoys painting or play dough | * attention span about 10 minutes * uses three-to-four word sentences * recognizes some shapes and colors * has difficulty with abstract concepts such as time * begins to count * memory begins to develop | * likes to imitate adult actions and wants to help with chores * can tidy up toys * can dress self partially and is better at undressing * still possessive but learning to share * seeks approval from adults |
| Three to Five Years | * able to ride a tricycle, climb stairs easily, hop and skip * can throw and catch a ball * well-dresses self but needs help with zippers and snaps * enjoys puzzles, painting, lacing-type toys, and crayons * able to cut with scissors * learning tocopy designs, letters and numbers | * longer attention span * very curious and asks many questions * is interested in “why” * imitates others * likes dramatic play * begins to distinguish between fantasy and reality * begins to understand the   concept of past, present and future   * apreciates music, rhythm, stories * may have an imaginary friend | * can ask for help when they need it * plays more with their peers, able to share turns * wants to please and be helpful * can be bossy, and at other times protective of younger children * has a sense of right and wrong * has a sense of prode for his belongings and accomplishments |
| Six to Nine Years | * plays actively with children their own age * enjoys rinning games: tag, dodge ball, skipping, etc. * catches with one hand * capable of using tools, scissors with ease * becoming more coordinated | * leaningto read and grasp basic math concepts * can plan ahead and problem solve * likesto play with peers and can play cooperatively * shows greater interest in reality and less in fantasy play * improving vocabulary and ability to use language to explain emotions | * likes group activities and team games * can accept more responsibility * enjoys a challenge * likely to have a best friend * likespraise and seeks approval from adults and peers * often states dislike for opposite sex   •learning to control his fears |

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## What Every Child Needs

In the sections to come we will be discussing children from infancy through school-­‐‑aged and the special needs of each age group. But there are many things that every child needs from infancy onward.

Every child needs adequate food, rest, fresh air, cloth-­‐‑ ing appropriate to the weather, exercise, proper hy-­‐‑ giene and appropriate medical and dental care. Chil-­‐‑ dren also need an environment that is safe from haz-­‐‑ ards, and one which provides sufficient space and light for their needs.

But children have other needs that are not as tangible or as easy to meet. In order to feel good about others and the world around them and to fit successfully and happily into that world, children must first feel good about themselves. A sense of self-­‐‑esteem and confi-­‐‑ dence develops in many ways. As a caregiver you can greatly influence the way children feel about them-­‐‑ selves through:

**Warmth and Affection:** Children need to know that we like them. Greet them warmly each day and let them know throughout the day that you’re glad they are with you. This isn’t always done with words. A warm smile, showing an interest in something they do, tak-­‐‑ ing time out to really listen when they want to talk, sitting right down on the floor with them to build that block village, stopping the vacuum cleaner to go and examine that wonderful tent before the blankets fall down again. All of these things, while they may not seem important at the time, convey the message to a child that you enjoy being with them and think they are special people.

Children also need physical contact. From a gentle pat on the shoulder to a warm hug, we all need to touch; it makes us feel warm, cared about and caring.

**A Sense of Accomplishment:** A feeling of accomplish-­‐‑ ment is very important in developing self-­‐‑esteem. The twelve-­‐‑month-­‐‑old who wants to feed himself, the two-­‐‑ year-­‐‑old who wants to put her own snowsuit on, the six-­‐‑year-­‐‑old who insists on picking out his own clothes for school, are all trying to gain control and independence. Even if lunch is a little messier or if it takes twice as long to get dressed to go outside, or if the school clothes don’t match, letting children do things themselves tells them you have confidence in them, a big step toward their having confidence in themselves.

**Encouragement:** Make positive and encouraging words and phrases the most often used part of your vocabulary. Every child needs to hear phrases like: “Well done!” “Nice try!” “Great job! You’re getting better at that!” This doesn’t mean you have to be phoney in praising a child. You can comment posi-­‐‑ tively on the colors in a picture, even if you don’t quite know what it is a picture of. When a child has tried and failed for days to learn to tie a bow, a comment like “Well, you’re sure getting good at ty-­‐‑ ing knots, and if you keep practicing your bows will be just as good,” will do far more for the child’s ego than “I’ll do it.”

**A Sense of Responsibility:** Even a toddler feels more of a sense of self-­‐‑worth and belonging if they have a part to play and feel that they are helping out. Get everyone involved in the day care day.

From making decisions about what activities you’ll do, to planning and helping out with snacks and lunches, to tidying up the toys, there are many ways children of all ages can help out and feel pretty important doing it.

**A Chance to Learn and Explore:** Your home offers thousands of wonderful opportunities for children to learn and explore, from the empty margarine containers and wooden spoons that make such wonderful music in your kitchen, to the blankets thrown over the card table to build a ‘hide-­‐‑out’ in the play room. Children do not need a lot of expen-­‐‑ sive toys and equipment to play and learn. In fact, the most important thing you can teach a child is the joy of exploring and enjoying the world around him or her.

In the sections to follow, when we discuss activities for the different age groups, we will be talking about some basic, good quality toys and games that you may want to purchase. But we will also offer many ideas that don’t require any expense and make use of what you already have in your home or neighborhood. When you and the children are looking at your home and community in this way, the possibilities are endless.

## Child Guidance

Children need the adults who care for them to teach them what is and is not acceptable behavior. As caregivers, we have to be realistic, consistent and

clear about what we expect from children. And above all, we must be patient. We have to remem-­‐‑ ber that the purpose in correcting a child’s behavior is not to punish. There is nothing that can be done

to change what has already happened. Concentrate instead on teaching the child appropriate behavior.

The following are some basics to keep in mind when helping children learn appropriate behavior:

<£ Keep your rules clear and simple and make sure that they are appropriate to the child’s age and un-­‐‑ derstanding.

<£ Don’t embarrass, ridicule or humiliate a child. Talk to him the way you would want to be spoken to if you made a mistake.

<£ Don’t use corporal punishment. Hitting, slap-­‐‑ ping or shoving a child doesn’t teach them any-­‐‑ thing, and it’s against the law.

<£ Respond to a child’s feelings even if you have to correct her actions. For example when Mary hits Sue you might say “It’s OK to be angry. It’s not OK to hit.”

<£ Help children learn the words to use to express their feelings. Don’t wait until there is a problem or an incident to deal with. Children love playing games where they make sad, happy, angry and sur-­‐‑ prised faces. Read or tell stories that discuss feel-­‐‑ ings. Talking about how people are feeling and why they feel that way teaches children the language that they need to express their own feelings.

<£ Remember to comment on appropriate behavior. If two children have just worked out a way to share a toy or resolved a conflict you might say “You handled that well,” or “I liked the way you settled that.”

<£ When a child does misbehave remember to com-­‐‑ ment on the deed, not the doer. In the same way, when praising a child, focus on the deed, i.e., “good climbing” rather than “good boy/girl.”

<£ Try not to let what other people may think influ-­‐‑ ence the way you react to a situation. For example, you may find you feel differently about misbehav-­‐‑ ior in a shopping center than you do about the same misbehavior in your living room. Try to forget the audience of onlookers and deal with the situation as you would at home.

<£ If a child has a temper tantrum, help him first by calming him and helping him to regain control. You

may have to hold or restrain a child physically until he is calmer. Hold him gently but firmly and tell him you will help him calm down. Children can be terrified by tantrums and feel totally out of control when experiencing them. Once the child is calm you can discuss what started the incident and how he might deal with that sort of situation differently in the future.

<£ Calm yourself before you deal with any situa-­‐‑ tion. Take a few deep breaths and count to ten if you have to. You are the adult and must be the one who maintains self-­‐‑control.

<£ Make allowances for children when they are tired, hungry or just plain having a lousy day (chil-­‐‑ dren have them too).

<£ Encourage children, praise their efforts, applaud their successes and minimize their failures. Let them make decisions and challenge themselves. Be there to offer them guidance and act as their safety net when they need you-­‐‑and they will.

## Caring for Infants 0 Months - 18 Months

A child’s development in the first eighteen months of life is truly amazing. From a totally helpless and dependent new born, unable to focus their eyes or control their movements, the infant will learn to crawl, sit, stand, walk, talk and more. An infant will also begin to identify with other people and the world around them. They’ll learn whether or not the world is a friendly place, whether their needs are met promptly, kindly and consistently, and whether contact with people brings pleasure and comfort.

In addition to an infant’s need for food, dry and warm clothing, bathing, sleep and fresh air, what an infant needs most is your warm, loving care and attention.

**Infants Needs:** An infant learns so much from the people who care for him that his most important teacher and plaything will be you. Not only do you provide for his physical needs, but through you an infant learns about language, emotions, movement and much, much more.

### From Birth to Six Months

Baby is not yet mobile and will depend on you to provide interest and variety in his life. Infants will sleep much of the time during the early months, but during waking periods keep him with you or at

least within sight and sound of the action.

<£ A good infant chair will be a bonus for you and the baby. When you don’t have a hip or shoulder free for baby, place her in the chair so that she can still see and hear what’s going on. For those occa-­‐‑ sions when you need both hands and the baby needs to be held, purchase or borrow a baby snugly.’

<£ Talk, coo, sing, read, hum, and whistle softly to baby. Respond to his sounds and mimic them.

<£ Use the time that you spend feeding, changing and bathing the baby as special times together. Spend that time talking to baby, playing peek-­‐‑a-­‐‑ boo, singing nursery songs, stroking and gently tickling her.

<£ Babies enjoy movement and find it very sooth-­‐‑ ing. Bounce baby gently on your knee, sit with baby in a rocking chair or use a carriage indoors and out-­‐‑ doors to gently rock baby to sleep or soothe him during cranky times.

<£ Babies love to see their own faces, so place mir-­‐‑ rors where they can see their reflection.

<£ Store bought or home-­‐‑made mobiles and crib gyms will provide baby with hours of enjoyment.

<£ Provide lots of different kinds of pleasant sounds for the baby. Wind chimes in the window, music boxes, ticking clocks, music from the radio or tapes, and especially the sound of your voice.

### From Six to Twelve Months

The six to twelve-­‐‑month-­‐‑old infant will be much more active. No longer content to watch and listen to what’s going on, this age group wants to partici-­‐‑ pate! Babies will be sleeping less and will need more in the way of activities to keep them occupied. They will also make very clear their desire to spend a lot of time around you and the other children in your home.

<£ This is the age for crawling backwards and for-­‐‑ wards, rolling over and over, and eventually get-­‐‑ ting on their feet. This age group needs lots of room to practice these important skills.

<£ While not able to say words that you understand yet, baby’s language skills are developing rapidly at this stage. Point to parts of your body and his, objects of furniture, food, -­‐‑ in fact, anything -­‐‑ and name them over and over again. As baby gets a little older ask her to point out eyes, nose, chair,

door, etc. Long before she can say the words, baby will understand them, and this ‘showing off’ for you will be one of her favorite activities.

<£• Play Pat-­‐‑A-­‐‑Cake and Peek-­‐‑A-­‐‑Boo. While baby watches, hide a toy under a cloth (with just a bit peeking out) and let baby ‘find’ it, or cover your face and let baby pull the cloth to find you.

<£ To help baby develop those important ‘crawling’ muscles, provide cushions and pillows for baby to climb.

<£ If you haven’t already begun, now is the time to start reading to baby. Read books with large, color-­‐‑ ful pictures. The six-­‐‑month-­‐‑old will not be ready to follow a story yet but will enjoy the sound of your voice and the pictures as you talk about them. By twelve months they will enjoy a very simple story, especially one that you read to them often.

<£ At this age, baby will spend hours filling and emptying containers. Provide lots of fill and dump toys like plastic bowls, oatmeal boxes, and shoe boxes to fill with plastic measuring cups and spoons, plastic and wooden kitchen utensils, large empty spools of thread, jar lids, etc. Other popular toys for this age group are:

* + Pots, pans, boxes of all sizes
  + Squeeze/Squeak/Shaker toys
  + Stacking and nesting blocks and rings
  + Cloth books
  + Rubber hammer

<£ Everything that gets into their’ hands ends up in their mouths at this stage, so supervise carefully at all times-­‐‑and try to keep things clean!

### From Twelve to Eighteen Months

Children are very active at this age. In fact, early infancy’s long periods of sleep during the day will be only a dim but fond memory. While still enjoy-­‐‑ ing many of the activities discussed for younger in-­‐‑ fants, the twelve to eighteen-­‐‑month-­‐‑old will also enjoy the activities in the following section for “Toddlers.” In fact by twelve months a child is of-­‐‑ ten more toddler than infant.

## Caring for Toddlers 18 Months - 36 Months

These are active years where children seem to race from one activity to another throughout the day, at

times even resisting sleep in case they miss some-­‐‑ thing. These are busy and important years in a child’s development. Language skills and self-­‐‑help skills (including feeding, dressing themselves and toileting) are all developing quickly. They are also learning a lot about their world and how things in it work and what they can do to cause some reac-­‐‑ tion.

The toddler is developing more control of his body. The early unsteady steps become a run, then a jump, and the sixteen-­‐‑month-­‐‑old who couldn’t

seem to get the spoon to his mouth becomes the thirty-­‐‑month-­‐‑old who can help spread peanut but-­‐‑ ter on crackers.

By this age definite personality traits are evident. Serious and shy, cheerful and outgoing or some-­‐‑ where in between, the child takes on a distinct per-­‐‑ sonality. The toddler is also learning to socialize with other children now as well as with adults. But the toddler is still not ready to spend long periods of time playing co-­‐‑operatively with other children. Concepts like sharing and taking turns are difficult for toddlers, in part because they have very little sense of time. Even a few minutes can seem like for-­‐‑ ever to a two-­‐‑year-­‐‑old. Don’t expect toddlers to share or take turns well -­‐‑they’re just not ready yet.

To help children develop socialization skills, offer opportunities for them to play and enjoy activities with other children with your direct involvement and participation. If there are no other young chil-­‐‑ dren in your home, participate regularly in a library story hour or play group in your community.

This is also the time where children begin to de-­‐‑ mand more independence. All toddlers will make a remarkable discovery. They will learn the power of the words “no” and “mine.” This discovery often brings about a radical change in the child we once knew.

Toddlers have very little control over their emotions and have limited ways of expressing those emo-­‐‑ tions. If they are upset, tired or angry, you and ev-­‐‑ eryone within a two mile radius is likely to know about it. It can be a frustrating age for the toddler because they want so much to be able to do things themselves but they don’t have the necessary skills yet.

Toddlers have a wonderful sense of curiosity about the world around them. Everything is new, every-­‐‑ thing is interesting, from the worm crawling back-­‐‑ wards on the sidewalk, to the way the water goes down the toilet in circles. Natural comedians, tod-­‐‑ dlers are fun to be with and funny (even when they’re not trying to be). Affectionate, busy and al-­‐‑ ways willing to ‘help’ you out with the housework, caring for toddlers may be tiring, but it is seldom boring.

### What Do Toddlers Need

A toddler’s world is expanding but they still de-­‐‑ pend on the adults around them to provide oppor-­‐‑ tunities to develop the skills they need to reach their full potential.

*Every Day Activities:*

<£ Toddlers love to do ‘real’ work and will follow you around helping you to dust, tidy, sweep, even wash dishes. Provide them with some props to work with: a rag to dust and clean with, a child-­‐‑ sized broom for sweeping and some unbreakable dishes to wash up from lunch.

Imaginative play can be encouraged by providing dress-­‐‑up clothes (old jackets, hats, blouses, suit-­‐‑ cases, purses, shawls, etc.). A blanket over a table to make a tent, chairs put together in a row to make a train or bus, or any small ‘escape’ comer can add to the fun. Toddlers are avid ‘packers’ and ‘movers’ so provide suitcases, child-­‐‑sized shopping carts or small wagons for them to load up and pull, push and drag around the house. Sand and water play are soothing and pleasant activities for toddlers and pre-­‐‑schoolers. For water play, an obvious choice may be the kitchen sink. But for sand or water play try a plastic baby bathtub, a plastic dish pan or a kitty litter pan. As a change or instead of sand you can use puffed wheat or corn meal.

Children can use small and large yogurt containers, measuring cups, funnels, spoons and small shovels for hours of fun. Toddlers love to pound, press and mold play dough. Homemade play dough is less expensive, has a nicer texture and will last longer. Use rolling pins, spoons, tongue depressors, cookie cutters and plastic dishes to play with the dough.

To make play dough:

Mix together in saucepan: 1 cup flour

1. cup water 1/2 cup salt
2. tbs. cooking oil

2 tsp. cream of tartar food coloring (optional)

Cook at medium heat stirring frequently until mix-­‐‑ ture is thick and pliable. Allow to cool slightly and knead well. You can store play dough in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. For special effects, use sea-­‐‑ sonal colors such as orange for Halloween, green for Christmas, red for Valentine’s Day.

Music and dance increase children’s sense of rhythm and improves their balance. Play tapes or records of music and encourage children to move, clap, dance and play their own simple instruments to the music. Teach children the words and actions for finger plays, verses and action songs like Head and Shoulders, This Old Man, Where is Thumbkins, The Teensy Weensy Spider, etc. The public library is an excellent source of books of children’s songs, verses, and finger plays.

Toddlers have energy to burn and need lots of op-­‐‑ portunity for active play both indoors and out.

Weather permitting, spend some time outdoors ev-­‐‑ ery day in the backyard or local park. When the weather is poor provide some clear areas indoors for running, jumping, climbing and generally burn-­‐‑ ing off steam.

### Language Development

Encourage children’s vocabulary development by repeating what they say and adding to it. For example:

<£ Child says: “Look birdie”

<£ Adult says: “Yes, the yellow bird is in the tree.”

<£ Read simple stories and encourage the children to talk about the story and the pictures. Children enjoy To increase children’s vocabulary and to en-­‐‑ courage them to discover more about the world around them, use descriptive words when talking about things and feelings (e.g., hot, cold, soft, hard, happy, sad, surprised).

<£ Use complete sentences when giving children directions. For example instead of “Put that away,” say “Put the book on the bottom shelf, please.”

<£ Cut out pictures from magazines, catalogues, etc. of animals, clothing, people, food. Talk to children

Toys for Toddlers

Blocks Ride- on toys Peg Boards

Stuffed Animals/dolls Rubber or Plastic Animals Toy Telephone

Large wooden stringing beads Simple puzzles

Pull and push toys Cobblers bench Puppets

Cars and Trucks Plastic people Wagons

Arts and Craft Materials

Large crayons Washable Tempera paints Glue (mix flour and water)

Old magazines, etc., for collages Crinkly foilFabric scraps Wallpaper scraps Construction paper

Textured sandpaper Newsprint

about the pictures and ask them questions. For ex-­‐‑ ample, with pictures of clothing you might ask “Do we wear clothes like this in winter or summer?” “Do we wear clothes like this on our hands, or our feet?” Have the children sort several pictures, i.e., put all the animals together; pick out all the foods you like to eat; which foods are the same color?

## Caring for Pre-Schoolers Three to Five Years

These are important years in children’s develop-­‐‑ ment as they prepare to leave the more sheltered world of their family and day care homes and par-­‐‑ ticipate in the larger world of school. Pre-­‐‑schoolers rely less on the adults around them to plan activi-­‐‑ ties and are likely to spend a good portion of the day in self-­‐‑directed play.

This is the time when children are strengthening and refining their skills. Pre-­‐‑schooler’s large muscle

abilities are developing and the rather clumsy tod-­‐‑ dler can now do somersaults and hop on one foot. Small muscle control is also improving and the pre-­‐‑ schooler is ready to take on more complex skills like tying shoe laces.

Pre-­‐‑schoolers are very sociable and will enjoy play-­‐‑ ing with children their own age for much longer periods of time than the toddler. Pre-­‐‑schoolers need play-­‐‑mates and if you are providing care to only one pre-­‐‑schooler, you’re likely to be ‘it.’ Highly imaginative, pre-­‐‑schoolers will spend hours making up games, developing their own rules and creating their own little world in miniature.

With a rapidly developing intellect the pre-­‐‑schooler is no longer willing to accept things as they are.

They want, in fact, need to know the how, when, where, what and who of everything. Pre-­‐‑schoolers have an insatiable thirst for knowledge and you’ll find your day spent answering (or not being able to answer) questions like “Why do raisins wrinkle?” and “Why is the sky blue?”

### What Do Pre-­‐‑schoolers Need?

As caregivers, our role increasingly becomes one of providing the necessary tools and opportunities, giving direction and encouragement when needed and enabling pre-­‐‑schoolers to make choices and de-­‐‑ cisions, resolve conflicts on their own and develop confidence and independence.

Many of the activities and toys that we discussed in the Toddler section will still be appropriate for preschoolers. For activities like dress-­‐‑up, arts and crafts, and fine motor play, you should provide some additional materials. For other kinds of activi-­‐‑ ties like play dough, sand, and water play, the pre-­‐‑ schooler themselves will use the same materials but on a more sophisticated level.

### Every Day Activities:

Imaginative play will form an important part of the pre-­‐‑schooler’s day. In addition to the clothing and props mentioned in the Toddler section, pre-­‐‑ schoolers will enjoy more specialized dress-­‐‑up props. For example:

<£ A doctor/nurse kit can be made up of a white jacket or shirt, tongue depressors, a toy stethoscope, elastic bandages, etc.

<£ An office kit could contain paper, paper clips, stamp pads and rubber stamps, envelopes, hole

puncher and even an old typewriter, if you have one.

<£ Playing store takes on new meaning with a toy cash register, some Monopoly money, a toy shop-­‐‑ ping cart, paper grocery bags and some real canned goods and empty cereal boxes.

Active play, both indoors and out, is important in helping children gain confidence and control over their bodies. Activities and equipment that encour-­‐‑ age active play include:

<£ Riding tricycles

<£ Skipping ropes

<£ Simple tumbling exercises (turning somersaults)

<£ Outdoor play equipment like swings, slides, jungle gyms

<£ Building blocks and bean bags

<£ Balls of all kinds

<£ Punching bags (\* Make your own by stuffing pa-­‐‑ per or plastic bags with crumpled newspapers and tying the bag at the top.)

<£ Mind and memory stretching activities help de-­‐‑ velop the pre-­‐‑schooler’s ability to sort, classify and remember information. Some fun ways to help de-­‐‑ velop these skills include:

<£ Provide several different sizes of jars and jar lids and have children-­‐‑match them up.

<£ Have children sort different sizes, shapes or col-­‐‑ ors of buttons, macaroni, cereals, etc. into the com-­‐‑ partments of an egg carton or muffin tin.

<£ Give children old catalogues and have them cut out cold weather/warm weather clothing, or pic-­‐‑ tures with specific colors, etc.

<£ Lay out three or four objects (pencil, spoon, ball, etc.) on the table, cover them up and see if children can remember what they were. Increase difficulty by adding more objects.

<£ Place ob . etc. in a paper bag. Have child feel and try to identify the object by its shape.

<£ Provide opportunities for fine motor develop-­‐‑ ment by offering activities and material like:

<£ Scissors, hole punchers, paper, pencils, markers, crayons, stickers, paper clips.

<£ Wooden beads and shoe laces or wool for threading beads.

<£ Corking sets.

<£ Sewing cards (\* Make your own sewing cards by punching holes in pieces of cardboard in a variety of designs. Children can ‘sew’ with wool. (If you dip the end of the wool in nail polish it’s easier to thread through the holes.))

Toys for Pre-schoolers Lotto games

Lego blocks/Tinker toys Puzzles Tracing tools Pencils/markers/crayons Paints/scissors Carpentry sets Magnetic

Numbers and Letters Dominos Sewing cards

Dishes/cutlery sets Skipping ropes

Hula-Hoops Chalk/chalk boards Housekeeping equipment

Arts and Crafts Materials

All the materials mentioned in the toddler section plus:

pipe cleaners stickers

glue sticks smaller paint brushes stickers stars

pipe cleaners

### Language Development

While it may sometimes seem that pre-­‐‑schoolers do nothing but talk, they still need help to develop story telling skills and to increase their vocabulary. Try some of the following suggestions to improve language skills:

<£ Ask open-­‐‑ended questions that encourage more discussion. For example:

<£ What would happen if ?

<£ Tell me about ?

<£ What can you do with ?

<£ Can you think of a way to ?

<£ What would you do if ?

<£ Encourage children to make up stories from pic-­‐‑ tures in books and magazines.

<£ Tell ‘round’ stories. One person starts a story and each child adds to it in turn.

<£ Use a felt board and felt pieces to encourage children’s story telling.

### School Readiness

The following activities will help to ease the pre-­‐‑ schooler’s transition from home to school:

<£ Teach the child her name, your address and phone number. If they have difficulty memorizing the phone number try making it into a chant. It’s more fun to practice and children learn more easily when they’re having fun doing it.

<£ Get to know the school and school grounds. If the school is located in your neighborhood, call and ask if you can all come to visit. During summer months take a walk to the school and let children play in the school yard.

<£ If the child will be bussed to school and has not traveled by bus before, plan some outings on a city bus.

<£ Reinforce and practice safety rules about cross-­‐‑ ing the street, talking to strangers, etc. If you have a Block Parent program in your area, talk to children about the program and point out houses that par-­‐‑ ticipate.

<£ Practice self-­‐‑help skills, especially dressing and undressing. They will be very important when a child starts school. With several children in each class, teachers have limited time to assist children who are unable to get their own jackets on and off or visit the bathroom unattended.

<£ Label a child’s chair, coat hook, art work, etc. with their name printed in clear letters to help him with name recognition.

<£ Encourage activities that familiarize children with letters, numbers, shapes and colors. For ex-­‐‑ ample:

* Play simple counting games like counting the cars on the street, counting the apples in the bowl, counting fingers and toes, etc.
* Practice color recognition in everyday activi-­‐‑ ties. Have children point out red foods, green foods, talk about the color of clothes you’re wearing, etc. Have a ‘color treasure hunt,’ having children point out red, blue, green objects in your home
* Take a walk through your house or neighbor-­‐‑ hood and have children point out circle, square, triangular and rectangular shapes.
* Practice the alphabet song. To encourage children to make the connection between words we say and words we read label com-­‐‑ mon objects in your home, (i.e., table, chair, wall, door, telephone, etc.) and have children run, hop or skip to the object you call out and read you the label.

## Caring for School-Aged Children Six to Twelve Years

School-­‐‑aged children are taking giant steps towards maturity. For the first time a large part of their lives is separate from parents and caregivers. They will spend half of their waking hours in the classroom and the school yard and their peer group will have an important influence on their interests, behavior and even their values.

Still anxious to please the adults in their lives, school-­‐‑aged children are even more concerned with acceptance and approval by their peer group. Sensi-­‐‑ tive and at times unsure of themselves, many of their hurts will be on the inside now. Not being chosen for the team, not receiving enough Valen-­‐‑ tines, not knowing the right answer in class will re-­‐‑ place the bumps and bruises of earlier years as sources of pain.

Their bodies at times will seem to be working against them. Between six and twelve years, chil-­‐‑ dren will experience several growth spurts. In fact the moment children begin to gain control of their bodies, their feet, legs and arms start outgrowing them again and they experience yet another stage of awkwardness.

And like their bodies, the school-­‐‑aged child’s emo-­‐‑ tions are also changing frequently. They may be cheerful and chatty one moment, and deflated bal-­‐‑ loons the next. Sometimes the silence and moodi-­‐‑ ness are just a part of the growing-­‐‑up process and we should respect this and allow them some private

time and space. But silence and moodiness (espe-­‐‑ cially if it persists) could be an indication that the child is really troubled about something and needs you to draw him out about what the problem is.

You’ll have to be something of a mind reader to know which silences to respect and which ones are a cry for help and understanding.

Their language skills and social abilities are also evolving and the school-­‐‑aged child can be a pleas-­‐‑ ant companion. School-­‐‑aged children are even will-­‐‑ ing to take an interest in what you are thinking and doing, providing they get equal time. They are proud of their new found abilities and, if given tasks that interest them (and make them feel impor-­‐‑ tant), they can be a real help in the day care home and this helps build their self-­‐‑confidence at the same time.

Their intellect is blossoming and children are be-­‐‑ coming more selective about their interests. As their ability to concentrate increases, school-­‐‑aged chil-­‐‑ dren will devote hours to their chosen hobbies, from needlepoint to baseball.

The school-­‐‑aged child is striving for independence and needs to be allowed to assume new responsi-­‐‑ bilities. As we mentioned in Unit Three, it is very important when caring for school-­‐‑aged children that you, the child, and the parents, discuss and agree on boundaries (e.g., the amount of supervi-­‐‑ sion required, where the child is permitted to go and with whom, arrangements for extra-­‐‑curricular and community activities). School-­‐‑aged children frequently want to test their ‘wings’ and it is impor-­‐‑ tant that they understand their responsibilities and both your and their parents’ expectations.

These are fascinating years. The school-­‐‑aged child will be taking on new responsibilities, asserting their independence, trying out new behaviors and perhaps even rebelling against authority. In fact, they’ll be growing up.

### What Do School-­‐‑Aged Children Need? Talking to Your School-­‐‑Aged Child:

<£ Get to know what they are doing at school (projects, science experiments, etc.), who’s who in the classroom, who the child chums with at recess and what their favorite activities are at school. This will help encourage real conversations about what is going on.

<£ Share memories of your childhood with them, both the good experiences and the bad. Talking to them about times when you were embarrassed or you didn’t get invited to the party may make it easier for them to open up to you. It’s also reassur-­‐‑ ing to them to know that other people experienced similar crises and lived to tell the tale.

<£ Don’t try to make every conversation you have with a child a ‘learning’ opportunity. For instance, it is not always necessary to correct grammar and pronunciation. And nothing will stop a child from talking to you about their experiences faster than having to listen to a lecture on morality or behavior every time they tell you a story about something that happened that day that you feel was wrong. Sometimes it’s more important to just listen. You don’t have to condone inappropriate behavior, and later you can find a way to discuss the matter in a round-­‐‑about way and make your point.

### Activities for School-­‐‑Aged Children

School-­‐‑aged children have spent most of their day in a fairly structured environment. After school, there should be time to relax and choose an activity they enjoy, even if that activity is listening to music or watching television for a while. Some children, after sitting at a desk for the better part of the day need vigorous physical activity. Some just want to relax. It’s important to let children set their own pace of activity after school. Some activities you might offer include:

<£ **Encourage hobbies and interests** by providing the necessary materials. Collections of all kinds can make a great hobby for a child. For example: rocks, stamps, leafs, bugs (preferably dead), baseball or other sports card collections are all popular. Other types of hobbies include baking, sewing, knitting, crocheting, drawing, painting, needlepoint, wood-­‐‑ working, etc. Share your own hobbies and special skills with school-­‐‑aged children. Your own enthusi-­‐‑ asm may be infectious.

<£ **Card Games** like Solitaire, Old Maid, Crazy Eights and War are all old favorites. Library books of card games are available if you’ve forgotten the rules to the Golden Oldies or want to try something new and different.

<£ **Board Games** like Scrabble, Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders, Parcheesi, etc.

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<£ **Board Games** like Scrabble, Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders, Parcheesi, etc.

<£ **Encourage active play and sports** to help build muscles and improve co-­‐‑ordination and confidence. Sports equipment might include: basketballs, base-­‐‑ ball, bat and glove, golf clubs and balls, horseshoe sets, polo sticks and stilts. To help school-­‐‑aged chil-­‐‑ dren bum off steam equip a mini gym with a punching bag, skipping rope,

<£ Have a **Help-­‐‑Yourself Craft** Box on hand when the creative urge strikes. (See suggested contents in the “Pre-­‐‑School” section.)

<£ Some old favorites still work well. Paper dolls, magic sets and books, science activity sets, chemis-­‐‑ try sets, jacks and marbles can provide hours of fun.

<£? Have a private space where school-­‐‑aged chil-­‐‑ dren can play, relax and store materials and on-­‐‑go-­‐‑ ing projects out of the reach of younger children.

Toys for School-Aged Children Word and Number games

Kites Bicycles

Sports equipment

Activity books (crossword, dot to dot) Building/construction sets Science/Chemistry sets

Board games Yo-yos

Pogo sticks

Cards and Card games Complex puzzles Embroidery, sewing sets, etc. Computer games

## Different Ages-Different Stages

Most caregivers work with a small group of chil-­‐‑ dren of different ages. In addition to the care of children there are other time-­‐‑consuming but neces-­‐‑ sary tasks that have to be completed in the day, like meal preparation and tidying up. Fulfilling your other responsibilities and meeting the individual needs of each child at their particular age and stage of development can be an impossible task if each need is looked at separately. Fortunately, many of the activities, toys, equipment and opportunities in a normal day can meet many different needs at the same time.

For instance, a walk through your neighborhood with the children gives infants the fresh air and change of environment that they need. Toddlers will enjoy the outdoor exercise and the opportunity to explore the sights and sounds you might see and hear on your way. Industrious pre-­‐‑schoolers might be collecting twigs, pebbles and bottle caps to make a collage later in the day, while learning more about their community. Even school-­‐‑aged children might use the opportunity to add to their stone, leaf or bug collection.

Art activities provide the same kinds of opportuni-­‐‑ ties. Watch a group of different ages of children painting for example. Infants will enjoy seeing the bustle of activity and the bright colors. The toddler will enjoy the process, dabbing the brushes into the paint and making it ‘go’ on paper and finding out what happens when blue paint mixes with yellow. The pre-­‐‑schooler will be refining fine motor (small muscle) skills and learning about color and shape, and the school-­‐‑aged child will enjoy the satisfaction of creating a ‘work of art.’

But painting and taking walks are things that you do with the children. What about the things that children can do with you. There are many tasks in a day care home that have to be done each day. Pre-­‐‑ paring meals, cleaning up, personal care, laundry, etc. Many of these activities can provide important learning opportunities for the children in your care and be lot’s of fun as well.

Your kitchen provides a wonderful ‘learning labo-­‐‑ ratory’ for children of all ages. Take baking muffins or cookies, for example. The school-­‐‑aged child gets practice in reading the recipe and following direc-­‐‑ tions in sequence, the pre-­‐‑schooler can measure, pour and mix ingredients, the toddler can knead

and pound the dough and even the older infant will enjoy the texture, odor and taste of the dough.

Everyone can learn something about the effect that heat has in cooking foods as the pale sticky dough becomes a brown crunchy cookie or a warm, soft muffin. And you will all enjoy eating freshly baked treats you’ve made yourselves.

Think about all the normal activities that go on in your home everyday and how they can be adapted to include the children. It might take longer to pre-­‐‑ pare lunch and snacks with a couple of toddlers and pre-­‐‑schoolers involved, but what a great oppor-­‐‑ tunity for them to learn something about nutrition, to identify foods by color and food group, and to talk about likes and dislikes. The same applies to virtually everything you do, from sorting laundry to tidying up toy shelves.

While children will enjoy and benefit greatly from activities you provide just for them, they can learn and experience even more by being included in ‘real life’ activities that adults tend to take for granted. Including children in your daily activities does more than just provide them with natural ways to learn important things and develop skills, it can also help them to develop a sense of belong-­‐‑ ing, responsibility and confidence. And given time, you will even find that children develop real com-­‐‑ petence in many household tasks, another valuable reason for getting everyone into the act.

Below is a list of some of the every day activities that children can participate in. You’ll probably be able to add more ideas of your own.

Toddlers to School-­‐‑Aged Children Can Help Out with the Following Tasks:

<£ Pet Care: feeding, grooming and exercising of pets.

<£ Snacks and Meals: planning, preparation, setting table, serving, clearing, washing, drying and put-­‐‑ ting away dishes.

<£ Groceries: listing, shopping and putting away.

<£ Laundry: collecting, sorting, folding, putting away.

<£ Gardening: planting, thinning, weeding, har-­‐‑ vesting.

* Raking leaves
* Making beds
* Dusting
* Sweeping
* Picking up toys
* Washing toys
* Vacuuming
* Wiping up spills

And for older children: Helping with the care of younger children-­‐‑reading stories, feeding, and dressing them.

## Children and Television

How much television children watch, or whether they should watch at all, is an issue that generates very strong feelings. This is definitely an area that you should discuss with your day care parents and arrive at a mutually satisfying agreement about some ground rules for television use.

Many people feel that provided the shows that chil-­‐‑ dren view are carefully chosen, and the amount that they watch is moderate, television can be both edu-­‐‑ cational and entertaining. But no matter how well chosen the show is, children will gain far more from the experience if you watch with them to ex-­‐‑ plain, clarify, and encourage them to think indepen-­‐‑ dently about what they see and hear.

# Unit Five: Helping the Caregiver



Family day care can be delightful and rewarding work; it can also be frustrating and stressful. Ironi-­‐‑ cally, it can be all of these on the same day. As you have seen in the first four Units, and as you know from experience if you are already providing care, family day care is a challenging job. Meeting the needs of your own family, the children in your care and your day care clients, while managing both your home and your business is a balancing act that few can manage without sometimes experiencing difficulties.

In this Unit we will talk about some of the difficul-­‐‑ ties experienced by caregivers, look at some pos-­‐‑ sible solutions, and explore resources that can help. We’ll also look at stress, an occupational hazard for people providing care to young children, and effec-­‐‑ tive ways of managing it. Most of all, this unit is about taking care of you-­‐‑the most important person in your family day care home.

## Difficulties Caregivers Experience

There are many difficulties inherent in providing family day care.. Most have solutions or can at least be minimized by actions you can take. You can learn techniques to reduce stress and take active steps to combat isolation. Other problems cannot be easily resolved. In fact some have no real solution. Let’s explore some of the most common problems in family day care.

### Differences in Parenting Style or Attitudes of Clients

A common difficulty experienced by caregivers is a situation when you are in disagreement with the parenting style or attitudes about child-­‐‑rearing of a client-­‐‑family. Since you spend several hours a day with a child, it is natural for you to develop a bond with that child. But it is important to remember that you are the child’s caregiver-­‐‑not the child’s parent. It is essential for the child’s sake as well as your own that you accept that your role in the child’s life is a limited one. Your responsibility is to provide the best child care you can for the time the child is with you. The parents are the child’s primary care-­‐‑ takers and will remain so long after the child has left your care.

Of course, if you become aware of any situation where you feel a child is a victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect, you have both a legal and a moral responsibility to notify the appropriate authorities promptly.

### Long Working Day

Another unsolvable difficulty of family day care are the long hours on the job. By having family mem-­‐‑ bers help out with household tasks, you can cut down on the amount of time you spend working outside day care hours. But the fact remains that the day care day is a long one, covering not just par-­‐‑ ents’ working hours, but their time to and from the job as well.

### Negative Attitudes Towards Family Day Care

Other people’s attitudes about family day care can also be difficult to contend with. But this is an area where something can be done, and as caregivers it is your responsibility to do it. Speak about what you do in a positive and enthusiastic way to family, clients, friends and acquaintances. Make media more aware of the existence and the quality of fam-­‐‑ ily day care. When you see a newspaper, magazine or television feature on day care that does not talk about family day care, or does so in a negative way, send a letter to the editor or call the radio or televi-­‐‑ sion station and present your point of view. Encour-­‐‑

age your family and clients to become family day care boosters with their co-­‐‑workers and friends. And work with other caregivers to change public perceptions and attitudes about family day care. Together you can have a much stronger voice.

### Isolation of the Job

Perhaps the most common problem that every caregiver must face is the isolation of working with-­‐‑ out other adults. You have no co-­‐‑workers to discuss a problem with, to share your joy at a child’s new accomplishment, or to take over when you are hav-­‐‑ ing a bad day. Caregivers living in rural areas are even more isolated and are less likely to have access to services in the community.

To get the support and adult contact you need, you’ll have to make a conscious effort to stay in touch with the ‘outside world.’ If you have trans-­‐‑ portation or if there are facilities within walking distance of your home, consider participating in community programs for children and caregivers. Even if you can’t get out on a regular basis or if there are no programs in your area, try meeting other caregivers, friends or neighbors at the park occasionally.

Even when weather or circumstances prevent you from getting out, a telephone buddy can make a real difference. Many caregivers use nap time as their social hour when they sit down with a cup of tea and call a “big person” for a chat.

You might also consider taking a night course re-­‐‑ lated to child care, as a way of meeting other caregivers as well as furthering your professional development. And, finally, find opportunities to meet and/or talk regularly with other caregivers. Sharing information, experiences, problems and so-­‐‑ lutions with people involved in your chosen field will be an enriching part of your life as a caregiver.

### Stress of the Job

Providing child care can be physically and emotion-­‐‑ ally demanding work and creates as much, and sometimes more, stress than any form of employ-­‐‑ ment outside the home. But before you can meet the needs of the children in your care and your own family, you first have to take care of yourself You need proper rest, good nutrition, and exercise.

And, as we discussed in the preceding Unit, you need support in what is a difficult and challenging job. Most important, you need to find ways to deal

with stress in your life and to pamper yourself.

Stress is a factor in everyone’s life and is not in it-­‐‑ self a negative thing. In manageable amounts, stress helps us achieve things and motivates us to get through our days. It becomes a problem when there is too much stress in our lives for us to cope with.

As caregivers, we have many responsibilities and therefore tremendous potential for allowing stress to play too big a role in our lives.

### Stress Reduction Methods:

<£ Get proper rest, nutrition and exercise;

* Find simple relaxation techniques that work for you. From simple deep breathing exercises to yoga routines, there are many stress reduction/relaxation techniques to choose from. Your public library will have books available on stress reduction and in many communities, courses are available through local schools, colleges and recreation and commu-­‐‑ nity centers;

<£ Avoid isolation. Participate in community activi-­‐‑ ties with the children or create your own by meet-­‐‑ ing with other caregivers or parents and children regularly during the day care day; On a day when nothing seems to be going right, try something en-­‐‑ tirely different, a picnic on the play-­‐‑room floor, or a favorite children’s movie on the VCR;

<£ Learn to say NO when people are making unfair or unrealistic demands on you, or when you simply can’t take on any more;

<£ Pamper yourself. Make time for a coffee break in the morning, a longer break during the afternoon nap, and time in the evening that is just for you.

<£ Be a caregiver to yourself and at the same time reduce the stress in your life. Find ways that work for you and never feel that you have to apologize for taking good care of yourself. You Are Worth It.

## Community Services for Caregivers and Children

Below we will look at some of the types of services and programs that may be available in your com-­‐‑ munity to help you reduce the isolation of your work, enhance the quality of care that you provide, and give the children in your care opportunities to socialize, try new activities and explore their com-­‐‑ munity.

**Play Groups:** A play group is any group of adults

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(caregivers and parents) and children who come together on a regular basis to socialize and play. Some play groups have been established through family resource or community centers, child care agencies, registries, and provider associations. Many more have been established by parents and caregivers in their own neighborhoods.

There are many different kinds of play groups. A casual or informal playgroup can be as simple as three or four caregivers getting together with the children in one another’s homes on a regular basis. The adults may visit while keeping an eye on the children’s free play or may take turns organizing activities for the children.

More structured playgroups might take place in church basements or community centers with equipment, toys, and fixed routines that might in-­‐‑ clude free play, sand or water table, play dough, circle or story and snack time. Adults may be ex-­‐‑ pected to volunteer on a regular basis to help out with some aspect of the group and there is often a small fee involved to cover the costs of materials and snacks.

**Drop-­‐‑In Programs:** Somewhat like play groups, drop-­‐‑ins are usually located in resource or commu-­‐‑ nity centers and provide a place for caregivers and/ or parents and children to go during the day. The drop-­‐‑in may operate mornings only or may be open all day. It is usually well-­‐‑equipped for children’s play with sand and water tables, a housekeeping and dress-­‐‑up comer and a variety of toys. In addi-­‐‑ tion, activities such as arts and crafts are often set up by staff or volunteers.

Adults who bring children to the drop-­‐‑in are ex-­‐‑ pected to supervise those children and may be asked to help out with activities. While most drop-­‐‑ ins require that you remain with the children, some centers offer drop-­‐‑off programs where arrange-­‐‑ ments can be made to have children cared for while you attend doctor’s appointments, etc. There is sometimes a membership fee to participate in a drop-­‐‑in, but many are operated free-­‐‑of-­‐‑charge or charge a nominal fee per visit to cover snacks and materials.

**Toy Lending Libraries:** Toy lending libraries oper-­‐‑ ate in much the same way as public libraries. Toys are available (usually for two-­‐‑ to three-­‐‑week peri-­‐‑ ods) on loan. Toy libraries offer a wide variety of

toys and play materials appropriate for children of different ages, and may also offer larger toys and equipment like climbers, riding toys, and play kitchen items (fridge, stove, sink).

Most toy libraries charge an annual membership fee but may waive the fee if it presents a financial hard-­‐‑ ship. Some toy lending libraries (especially those in rural areas) even have a mobile service that will pick up and deliver toys at your home on a regular basis. Many toy libraries have evening or Saturday hours for those unable to get there during week-­‐‑ days. Toy libraries often operate as part of a Family Resource or Community Center or a Child Care Registry.

**Story Hours:** Public libraries are not only a source of books for adults and children of all ages; many branches also offer special activities for children. Story hours, films, crafts, music or poetry mornings are just some of the services which the Children’s Branch of your library may offer. In addition, some libraries have mobile services that go out into the community to provide book lending as well as other programs.

**Swimming, Skating, Gym and Recreation Prorams:** If there are public skating rinks, swimming pools or community centers in your area, they likely offer programs during weekdays for young children.

Many programs, like “Mom and Me” (caregivers are equally welcome) and “Gym and Swim” classes, encourage adults and children to partici-­‐‑ pate together. Other programs may be offered just for children. Even if an organized program or class is not available, most public pools and rinks pro-­‐‑ vide special times for adults and young children to use the facilities during week days at reduced or no cost.

In Unit Two we discussed various types of commu-­‐‑ nity agencies that could provide both start-­‐‑up and on-­‐‑going information services to caregivers. Many of these programs also provide other kinds of ser-­‐‑ vices of benefit to both children and caregivers.

**Caregiver/Provider Associations:** In addition to the start-­‐‑up and information services discussed in Unit Two, caregiver associations may also offer orga-­‐‑ nized activities for children and caregivers, includ-­‐‑ ing playgroups, outings to local places of interest, Christmas and Halloween parties, etc.

Associations may also offer a variety of other ser-­‐‑ vices, such as workshops, newsletters, telephone and neighborhood networks (services linking caregivers living in the same area for mutual sup-­‐‑ port and the development of alternate care lists, cli-­‐‑ ent referrals, play groups, etc.), warm-­‐‑lines (tele-­‐‑ phone services providing information, advice and a friendly adult ear), First Aid and other child care related courses, resource book libraries, Group Li-­‐‑ ability, Disability, Dental and Medical Insurance plans.

**Child Care Registries/Resource and Referral Ser-­‐‑ vices:** In addition to start-­‐‑up information and refer-­‐‑ rals for parents seeking care, some registries pro-­‐‑ vide on-­‐‑going support services such as newsletters, workshops, First Aid courses, drop-­‐‑ins, etc. to caregivers on the registry.

**Private Home Day Care/Family Day Home Agen-­‐‑ cies:** Private Home Day Care/Family Day Home Agencies provide a number of services to caregivers and to children, some of which might include: han-­‐‑ dling fee collection from parents, assistance with problem solving, alternate care, referrals of client families, toy and equipment lending, play groups and/or drop-­‐‑ins, workshops and training courses, social gatherings, newsletters, etc.

**Resource Centers:** Often called Family or Parent/ Child Resource Centers, these facilities offer a num-­‐‑ ber of services to caregivers and families, including child care registries, drop-­‐‑ins, workshops, newslet-­‐‑ ters, support groups for caregivers and parents, and toy and resource book libraries. Resource book li-­‐‑ braries loan books of interest to parents and caregivers; books about parenting, child develop-­‐‑ ment and behavior, nutrition, health, activities for children, etc. may all be available. A small fee or deposit may be required to borrow books, but the cost is minimal compared to the cost of purchasing such material.

## Finding the Services You Need

ters, Toy Lending Libraries, Caregiver Associations and Child Care Registries are often listed in the yel-­‐‑ low pages under Day Care or Child Care Services. To find out about Community Centers, Public Swimming Pools and Skating Rinks in your area, check the blue pages of your phone book under Municipal Government Recreation listings. The na-­‐‑ tional organizations listed in the Appendix may also be able to direct you to their member agencies in your area.

Since many play groups are organized informally, they are harder to locate. If information on play groups is not available through a Community Infor-­‐‑ mation Office, Resource or Community Centre, try contacting church, school and community associa-­‐‑ tions for information.

If any of the services that you need or want are not available in your area, get involved in their devel-­‐‑ opment. All levels of government are making ef-­‐‑ forts to meet child care needs, including the needs of the parents, children and providers involved in family day care. But it is your responsibility to let the powers-­‐‑that-­‐‑be know what your needs are. Talk to other caregivers and parents in your area. Speak to staff of existing programs in your community to see how they could better meet your needs. And speak to your Social Services Department and the . . responsible for child care in your about the services you would like to see offered in your community.

### Child Care Provider/Caregiver Associations

Each day, caregivers have to make decisions, deal with problems, and face situations that even an ex-­‐‑ perienced parent may not have dealt with before. And we do all of this alone. There are no co-­‐‑work-­‐‑ ers on hand to talk over a problem with, or Direc-­‐‑ tors available to handle a difficult situation with a parent. You may even find that the other adults in your life, including your spouse and friends, don’t share a real interest in what you do. How often, when trying to discuss a child care problem with a

friend or spouse, has their only advice been, “Get

To find out what services are available in your area, you’ll have to invest some time on the telephone. If there is a Community Information Service or a Child Care Referral Service in your area they will be able to give you information on programs avail-­‐‑ able. Services such as Private Home Day Care/ Family Day Home Agencies, Family Resource Cen-­‐‑

rid of them!”?

You need to have people you can talk with who will share your interests and your concerns and who will recognize the challenges, delights and frustra-­‐‑ tions of your job. Who better to do these things than other caregivers?

If there is a Caregiver Association in your area, get involved. If there is not yet an Association in your area, get one started. You can begin in a very infor-­‐‑ mal way by getting in contact with other caregivers in your community. If you don’t know other caregivers, contact Child Care Resource Centers, Child Care Registries and Agencies, Community Information Offices, the Public Health Nurse, play groups, toy libraries, or school and church secretar-­‐‑ ies, and ask for the names of caregivers in your area.

You can even approach other caregivers (you can usually tell a caregiver by the number and ages of children with her) at the neighborhood park or gro-­‐‑ cery store and talk to them yourself Tell staff at pro-­‐‑ grams you contact and any caregivers you get in touch with that you are interested in starting a caregiver support group/association.

Don’t be discouraged if it takes a little while to find other caregivers who are interested. Many people are hesitant to try something new. But if you are persistent and patient, you will find other caregivers who will be enthusiastic about the idea. Once you have made contact with other interested caregivers (even one or two will do), arrange to meet one evening for coffee and conversation in your home. The first evening, just plan on some very general discussion about care giving and some ideas about what a support group might be able to do. Some ideas for a small group starting out might include:

<£ Organizing group outings or play groups with the children;

<£ Planning regular evening discussion groups for caregivers;

<£ Arranging a substitute care list for parents if caregiver is sick or on holidays;

<£ Exchanging the names of parents looking for child care, when you have no spaces available;

<£ Arranging a toy/record/book exchange.

You will probably all have some good ideas for the kinds of things that a support group/association could do. Don’t feel you have to make a lot of deci-­‐‑ sions at the first get-­‐‑together. But do plan when and where you’ll meet again, and be sure everyone knows that they are welcome to invite any other caregivers they know.

Again, don’t be surprised if things seem very slow

to get started. Even if your numbers are small at the beginning, the support, encouragement and friend-­‐‑ ship that you give one another will be well worth the effort.

## Professional Development

Many people begin providing family day care with-­‐‑ out any special training in child care. But care giv-­‐‑ ing is a job that presents new challenges and situa-­‐‑ tions every day, often calling for solutions that may not be within your experience and present knowl-­‐‑ edge. On-­‐‑going training is a must to develop new skills, access further information, and continue to improve the quality of care you provide. There are many forms of training available; in the following we will discuss some training venues that may be available in your community.

**Workshops:** Child Care Associations, Agencies, Re-­‐‑ source and Community Centers often offer work-­‐‑ shops on topics ranging from income tax to child behavior that will help keep you up to date on new information and techniques.

**Conferences:** Child Care Conferences, often one-­‐‑ or two-­‐‑day events, provide wonderful opportunities to attend workshops, see displays of new resources and materials available to people working with children, and meet other people involved in your chosen profession.

**Courses:** Many Community Colleges and local Boards of Education offer a range of training op-­‐‑ tions including evening, full-­‐‑time, and correspon-­‐‑ dence courses of interest to caregivers. Family Day Care Certificate Programs, Early Childhood Educa-­‐‑ tion Programs, and Parent Effectiveness Training are just some of the possibilities that may be avail-­‐‑ able to you.

### To Find Out About Training Opportunities:

For information on training available in your area, contact local Community Colleges, Boards of Edu-­‐‑ cation, and Child Care programs, and watch local newspapers for advertisements for courses of inter-­‐‑ est to you.

Membership in national, or local child care associa-­‐‑ tions will help keep you informed about upcoming child care conferences, new resources that have been developed, and current research concerning issues of child development and care.