

Written Procedures/Parent Handbook Suggestions

Prepared by Linda Nelson, Child Care Division

Being certified requires both written and posted procedures for a number of items. It makes sense to compile all these into a parent handbook, which is used not only by parents but for staff as an orientation to the policies and procedures of the program. Having this information on the computer makes it easy to adjust and print.

If you have a website, be sure to include the handbook there—parents can quickly access it anytime and almost anywhere! And it saves you from printing costs.

Parents will respond best to a concise summary of your program—3 pages front and back is a suggested amount. It is nice to be able to give a printed copy. If your computer skills are basic, just get the information into 8.5 x 11 format, and then you can copy front to back. If you have more skills, or a volunteer or office support (don't laugh now!) the format can be on a tri-fold brochure format, done on either 8.5x11, 8.5x14, 11x14, or half folds of the same sizes, stapled in the middle. These sizes fit easily into parents important papers sections, or stick on the fridge with a magnet. In other words, whatever you do, make it brief and of a size that works for parents. I have seen programs have children's artwork and their logo on the front side, to personalize it. If they are on USDA or other funding sources, this is a good place to print any disclosures the funder wants. In these days of printing technology, it makes sense to print them as you need them! Then you are not left with a bunch of outdated ones.

The following is a template of what Child Care Division wants written and posted, and suggestions of what parents find handy to have. It also has many notes to help you decide what to include. There are ideas for items to include or consider. The items covered include those required by CCD both for posting and for written procedures. Remember, you can exceed CCD requirements as your policy—but be sure your policy is stated clearly to parents!

Cover: Be sure to have your full name, phone numbers, address (and any helpful intersections or directions) and e-mail address. This will help them for quick reference.

Logo: This graphic makes for an "open me and read me" approach. Some programs also include a tiny map if their location is challenging to find.

Hours of Operation and Ages Served: State the hours clearly, and ages served.

Introduction: This could be a welcome statement of your mission or philosophy, a brief history, and what your goals are in working with children. If you have a phrase like, "Where Children Grow", this is a good place to explain it! Be sure to say that you are certified by the CCD (Child Care Division), and contact information is listed on your posted license. You can include information about your program here, or follow-up with it in a separate section.

Staffing and Persons in Charge: I would strongly suggest NOT listing all staff, but letting parents know overall what your staff offer—early childhood education background, elementary ed teachers, music or art experience. Speak of the staff as a whole, not individually—when staff changes, then you have less to change! You do need to let people know how to find out who is in charge, so you can refer them to the “people in charge” list on your parent bulletin board. Be sure to state clearly where the parent board is located in the center. Show it on tours. You can post most of your written information here as well.

Program: What is special or unique about you? You could list a sample schedule here, and any special curriculum you use. Do you have a bent for nature or recycling/Christian education/do you bring in gymnastics etc—this is all about YOU! Talk more about the field trips part later in the document, just mention they are part of the program if you do them.

Guidance (and Discipline Policies): State succinctly what it is. Remember that time out is a coping device, and may not be a teaching tool. Do you set up the environment to encourage cooperation? Do you affirm good behavior? Are there clear and simple school rules? Re-direction? This needs to be posted as well, but it is good to have it in the book. Parents cannot give permission to use corporal punishment.

Some centers also include here the possibility of a termination if the child’s behavior poses a threat to other children in the environment.

Enrollment and Trial Period: CCD rules state that a child and parent must have an opportunity for a pre-placement visit with parent present, to the center. Some programs have a two week trial period clearly stated up front. This is a place to talk about your enrollment packet, and what forms/fees you need from them BEFORE they start care. If you have a waiting list, or a holding fee, mention it here. If a payment is needed at time of enrollment, add it to the bulleted list.

Sample: Your child is welcome for a pre-placement visit, with you present. If you choose to enroll, we need you to complete the following:

- *Information/Authorization form and General Information (CCD form)*
- *Information on any allergies or special medical conditions*
- *Schedule of immunizations (from health dept.)*
- *Medication Authorization for any ongoing meds (CCD form)*
- *Any required fees or contracts*

Be sure to update us with any information/phone changes, or provide us with any changes in who may pick up your child.

Clothing/Items to bring (or not!): This is not required by CCD but parents really want to know! Do they need blankets/how big/do they need to wash them, or will you do that if they provide?

Sample: Dress your child in comfortable clothes that can get messy. It is always a good idea to bring a spare change of clothes. Your child will need to bring a blanket for

naptime that will fit in his cubby—please take it home on Fridays to wash and return on the next day of care. Special items from home can come on our sharing day, which is _____ . Remind your child that these items are to share. Please do not send your child with snack food, snacks are provided here at school.

Arrival and Departure Procedures: If your program has a policy that the parents sign the child in, then that may be your attendance record as well if times are included. Be sure to have teachers continually double-check during the day if that is what is used as a room “nose-count” list. Note if there is a late fee. **Be sure to use the phrase out of the CCD rule book, “child must be accepted by caregiver before parent/guardian leaves.**

Sample: CCD requires that a child be escorted into the child care program, and the child be accepted directly by a caregiver. This includes school age children. Children will be released only to the parent or an adult whom the parent has authorized by a written statement (enrollment form). Identification will be requested if person is not familiar to staff. If you are late picking up your child there may be a late fee billed to cover the staff overtime. If you do not arrive, your emergency contacts will be called to pick your child.

Meals and Snacks: Be clear what you will provide and what is their responsibility—note that packed lunches must meet USDA guidelines, and that you may need to charge if you have to supplement a lunch. A separate handout about suggested lunches is a good idea. If you want parents to help with snack, have them provide boxes of crackers or 100% juice for a snack closet that you as the center serve from.

Sample: We provide a morning and afternoon snack that meets USDA guideline for the age of children served. The menu is posted on the parent bulletin board, with any substitutions noted. WE MUST BE INFORMED OF ANY FOOD ALLERGIES!

You need to provide a nutritious lunch for your child, in a marked lunch pail or sack. Do not send sodas for a beverage, the center will serve milk. The lunch will be stored in a refrigerator (or if not, they will need to provide an ice pack for any perishable foods, or pack accordingly). If we need to supplement a lunch, a fee will be added to your bill. Refer to the handout provided for some good ideas for lunches and portions.

Birthdays and Special Days: Again, parents want to know.

Sample: Birthdays are special days to be shared. You may wish to bring refreshments for that day. Please check with the child care staff, so they can let you know how many treats to provide! This is true for special occasion days as well. Please be aware that regulations prohibit home cooked foods. Food brought for treats must be commercially prepared, and any beverages must be milk or 100% juice.

Transportation and Field Trips: State if you do any daily transportation, like school pick-ups or drop offs. Do you have an insured vehicle that you use? List if you are on a school bus stop, and what your procedure is if a school child does not arrive as scheduled. Do you walk children to a local school? Field trips are special events that may involve transportation. (Do you need parents to provide car seats? Do you have a

bus that is exempt from ODOT regulation for belts? CCD requires that all staff drivers have an annual DMV record on file at the center.)

Sample: Field trips are an important part of our program and a way to learn about our community. Permission slips are required for each field trip taken. All children need to be secured in a car-seat, which parents must provide. Our center vans are used and all drivers are approved by our insurance company. Occasionally a parent drives for field trips, you will be notified and permission slips completed for parent drivers. We follow all Oregon Department of Transportation regulations, and Child Care Division rules for transport of children. We have a cell phone with us for emergencies. If you are interested in helping us on field trips as a volunteer, please check with the director.

Holidays and inclement weather closure: List the days you are closed for vacations. Do you close over Christmas break—or follow a school calendar? What about those “snow days” again, do you follow the school or will you call a radio station, or have a recorded message on the school phone? Then if it is snowing, the parent won’t try to call you but knows exactly what radio station to listen to (give the call letters)—or use a phrase like, “we follow the school district closure/late open announcements”.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures: From the rules...

Sample: We practice regular fire drills and emergency procedures as per CCD rules. If for any reason we evacuate and cannot return to the building, the person in charge at the time will collect the emergency information file/notebook/cards located in the office/teachers rooms, role will be taken outside at our meeting point _____, and we will proceed to ___ (list name, address and phone if appropriate)__, where we will call the parents or emergency contacts listed in the child’s file. Staff carries cell phones for emergencies. Children may be picked up at the emergency site.

Medications: Right from the rules...

Sample: Prescription medications will need a completed medication authorization signed by the parent, with complete instructions for the staff before they can be administered. The medication must be in the original container and be current.

For non-prescription, over the counter medications, the medication authorization form must be completed, and the med must be in the original container, and be current. The dose stated by parent cannot exceed that on the medication container.

All medications must be labeled with the child’s name, and given directly to staff. No medications are to be sent in diaper bags or backpacks! Medications are kept in a locked area away from children.

Staff will administer meds, and then list date, time, dosage given and initial the record.

Accidents/Injuries/Emergency Care: Again, right from the rules...

Sample: Children will be checked for injuries and necessary first aid will be given. The staff has first aid and CPR cards. Parents will be notified if needed or if injuries may require further medical attention. If a parent cannot be reached, emergency numbers will be called. If we deem it a medical emergency, we will call 911, and contact the parent simultaneously. We need the doctor's name and number on your enrollment form so an EMT or emergency room doctor can quickly contact a dr. for any pertinent information. Children will be transported to (list hospital) and are seen by doctor on call.)

For school age children, you should have a process for dental emergencies:

In the event of a dental emergency, an injury that causes a tooth to become dislodged, we will: / _____.

Accident reports are done for all incidents; and require parent signature. A copy is always available at your request.

Illnesses: As stated in rules...

Sample: As required by Child Care Division regulations, we cannot admit or retain in care children with the following symptoms. Parents will be notified and asked to arrange pickup for children who show signs of illness:

- *Fever over 100 degrees taken under the arm*
- *Diarrhea*
- *Vomiting*
- *Nausea*
- *Severe Cough*
- *Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes*
- *Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping or pus filled*
- *Stiff neck and headache*
- *Difficulty breathing or abnormal wheezing*
- *Complaints of severe pain*

This is a REALLY good place to list your head lice policy—is it "no nits"?

Fees and Payment Policies: This is NOT a CCD requirement, but parents do want to know. Don't list your fees in the handbook, but refer to a rate sheet insert—that can be changed without having to reformat your entire handbook. I would suggest that you have an opening statement like, "Our fees are dependent on the care provided (list if you are only full time, or will do part time or part week, or what your minimum amount of care is. You may want to mention if you have a vacation policy/sick policy.

Say fees are payable by _____. Late fees may be incurred (leave a loophole). Do you do direct deposit, or work with flexible spending accounts? If there are payment issues, call the Director as soon as possible to discuss the situation. (I would suggest having them NOT tell teachers, so that the payment issue is separate from the direct service to the child.)

Are there things that cost extra, or on one-time costs? Enrollment fees, lunch supplement fees field trips as needed? (If they can't afford the field trip, what happens? Can you afford to leave a staff with those children?) Be sure to state clearly the total costs. You might also state that you will work with subsidy systems—they will know what that means!

If your program has scholarships available, or will help with field trip fees, that is good information—tell them who to contact, probably the director.

List if you have late fees, and how/when they are to be paid.

Do you have a two-week notice required for **termination of care**? Be sure to tell them up front!

Sample: Our fees are dependent on the care given. Please refer to the rate sheet, or call the director at _____ for a specific amount for your child. We work with subsidy systems to help fund your care, and have some scholarship dollars available. Fees are due by the 5th of the month, and are payable in advance of care. We can work with visa or electronic fund transfer if necessary. If you ever have questions about your bill or need to discuss payment, please contact the director.

Grievance: The following language needs to be posted on the bulletin board, but can be made available in a parent handbook as well if you want and have room—otherwise, just post it. The Child Care Division can provide a personalized version.

All inspection reports concerning this facility are available for review by custodial parents. These include fire, sanitation, and Child Care Division inspection reports. Also available are current rules governing child care facilities.

This program is open to any custodial parents during all hours of operation.

Compliance history of the program is available from the State Certification Specialist. Parents are encouraged to discuss concerns with their child's teacher and the center director. If you feel your concerns are not being addressed, or if you feel uncomfortable discussing the issue with center staff, please call the Child Care Division.

CCD Certification Specialist: Linda Nelson 541-757-5007
The Child Care Division does not intervene in money matters.

Disclosures—anything else funders may want you to share with the public, such as non-discrimination policies.

And any nice closing statements you may want to include!!!