Department of Early Education and Care
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Small Group, Large Group and School Age Child Care Licensing

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Parent Handbook

Parent Handbook

The Parent Handbook is a guide for parents as they can become familiar with your program's policies and procedures. It is an opportunity for you to communicate with parent's information about your program so they will have a clear understanding of policies and procedures that guide everyday operation and programming. It should be designed to foster communication with each family during enrollment as well as throughout the year. Programs should include any information they feel relevant along with information required by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) according to 606 CMR.7.08(6)(a-n) and other regulations noted in this handout. The following outline can be used as a guide in developing your Parent Handbook.

1. Written statement of purpose 7.04(17)(a)
    - Program's philosophy
    - Goals and objectives
    - Ages of children served
    - Services provided
    - Statement of nondiscrimination including toileting status (7.04)(17)(g)

2. Administrative organization of program (if the program employs more than one person) 7.04(17)(c)
    - Organizational chart indentifying lines of authority and supervision
    - Identification of The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) as the licensing authority including the telephone number and address of the EEC regional office
    - Identification of who is responsible for administrative supervision of the program at all times

3. A statement that parents may contact EEC for information regarding the program's compliance history

4. Program calendar
    - Hours of operation
    - Days that the program will be closed

5. Program Fees including for:
    - registration
    - late pickup
    - late payment
    - field trips
    - program materials
    - summer or school vacation weeks if different

6. Parent visitation and communication
    - Policy for visiting the program including that parents are able to visit the program unannounced at any time while their child is present
    - Process for parent input
    - Communication with parents such as: newsletters, surveys, parent advisory, daily notes (especially infants & toddlers)
    - Plan to communicate with parents whose primary language is not English 7.08(2)

7. Children's Records 7.04(7) –(10)
   The program should develop a written plan for maintaining current children's records.

8. Plan for Progress Reports:
    - Parents are given a copy of the progress report and a copy will be kept in the child's file
    - Statement that parents can request a conference to discuss the progress report 7.06(3)
    - Parent may request a conference with their child's teacher. 7.08(7)
    - Frequency of progress reports as follows:
        - infants and children with identified special needs every 3 months.
        - toddler and preschool every 6 months
        - school age children once a year at the midpoint of the child's program year

9. Plan for Child Guidance (7.05)(5-8) should include:
    - Positive and consistent guidance based on individual needs and development
    - Encouraging self control and using positive child guidance techniques
    - Helping children learn social, communication and emotional regulation
    - Teaching strategies that are used to encourage appropriate behaviors and to prevent challenging behaviors
    - Strategies to use when children are physically aggressive
    - How children will be included in the development of classroom rules
    - Ensuring the consistency of techniques used throughout the program
    - Any child guidance practices that will be prohibited by the program's plan

10. Plan for Termination and Suspension 7.04(17)(i) and 7.04(3)(b)
    - Procedures for avoiding termination and suspension of a child due to challenging behaviors
    - Meeting with parents to discuss options
    - Assist the parents in pursuing options for supportive services
    - Develop a plan for intervention in the program as well as in the child's home
    - It is also suggested but not required that this policy include other reasons why a family might be terminated/suspended.

11. Plan for Referral Services: 7.04(17)(h)

- Staff procedures for notifying administration of concern.
- Procedures for observing and documenting need for referral.
- Procedures for meeting with parents to discuss need for referral.
- List of referral resources (social, mental health, educational, medical). Include contact person for St. 1972, c.766 and Early Intervention Program referral.
- Need procedure for written notification to administrator of special education for a child with a disability who is 2 years-9 months or older.
- Need procedure for written notification to administrator of the DPH Early Intervention program for child with a disability who is younger than 2 years-9 months.

12. Mandated Reporting of Abuse and Neglect 7.11(4)

- Educators are mandated reporters and must by law (M.G.L. c119, 51A) report suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). 7.08(6)(1) and EEC (only if the allegation(s) involve a child while in the care of the program).
- Parents will be notified of allegations of abuse and neglect involving their child while in the care of the program

13. Plan for Medication Administration 7.11(2) (a-l)

- Parents must be given your written policy for dispensing prescription and non-prescription medications (this policy is part of your Health Care Policy)
- The policy should describe the procedures for parent authorizations and physician's authorizations for prescription and non-prescription medications
- The requirement for parents to provide the program with an Individual Health care Plan for a child with a chronic medical condition that was diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner. 7.11 (3)
- How and where medications will be stored including emergency medications and medications that need to be kept secured and locked up
- Provide information on returning unused, outdated and discontinued medications as well as medication disposal when needed
- The plan should include that the program will not administer the first dose except under extraordinary circumstances and only with parental permission
- Explain the procedure for using the medication form that documents the name of the medication, the dosage, the time and method for administration, and the name of the person who gave the medication.

14. Management of Infectious Diseases 7.11(9)(a-c)

- Describe the criteria for excluding children due to serious illness, contagious diseases and reportable diseases- refer to regulations and recommendations set by the Division of Communicable Disease Control, Department of Public Health (also in Health Care Policy)
- How will parents(s) be informed of when a child in the program has a communicable disease or condition?
- The program's plan to care for mildly children 7.11 (8)
- The programs' plan for using insect repellants based on the recommendations from the Department of Public Health (DPH)

15. SIDS Reduction 7.11(13)(e)

- Provide parent(s) information on SIDS reduction practices including:
    - infants sleeping on their backs
    - the safe sleep environment offered by the program including individual crib, portacrib, playpen or bassinet; firm, properly fitted mattresses with clean coverings; slats on cribs are no more than 2- 3/8 inches apart; and slats on cribs are no more than 2- 3/8 inches apart
    - how supervision of sleeping infants will be accomplished ie: lights on, cribs in room, staff positioned to maximize their ability to see and hear
- Explanation for need for physicians' authorization in writing for alternate sleep positions
- A program's statement of the usage of certified cribs that meet the U16 CFR 1219 (standard for full size cribs and U16 CFR 1220 standard for non-full size cribs.
- A program's statement that all educators working with infants have taken the SIDS training as stated in the EEC Infant Sleep Safe Policy.

16. Transportation 7.13(1)

- Describe how children are transported
    - to and from the program daily
    - in the event of an emergency
    - on field trips;
- Describe how the safety and supervision of children who walk and who arrive by public transportation will be ensured
    - who is responsible for documenting their arrival and departures;
    - what will you do if a child does not arrive to the program;
- Describe any special arrangements for children with disabilities
- Include the name and telephone number of transportation coordinator
- Include the name and telephone number of contact person(s) (if different than transportation coordinator)
- How is transportation provided (program owned vehicles or sub-contractor)
- If sub-contractor include the name, telephone number and contact person for the sub-contractor
- Who is responsible for the supervision of children while they are being transported;
- Include how the driver/monitor will respond to disruptive behaviors (children unbuckling seat belts, refusing to remain seated etc.) and to a medical emergency
- Method of communication available to the driver
- Plan that will be followed if the child is not present at the pickup location or if the parent or approved adult is not present to receive the child at drop-off including that children left with only authorized persons
- Include specifics that parents show know such as:
    - The program needs written parental permission for each child's transportation plan
    - Vehicles and drivers are licensed, registered and inspected in according to the laws of the state.
    - Suitable car seats, safety carrier, restrains or seat belts that meet U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and guidelines are used by each child.
    - Children not regularly transported for periods longer that 45 minutes one way between their home or school and the program.

- A copy of the program's complete transportation policies is available for parents to review

17. Plan for meeting potential emergencies 7.11(7)(f) Details the procedures to follow in the case of:
    - a missing child
    - a fire, natural disaster
    - loss of power, heat or hot water
    - or any other emergency situation
- Provide information on the escape routes for each floor level
- Describe how information will be obtained from local authorities in deciding whether to evacuate or shelter in place
- Provide the address of the meeting place if the children need to be evacuated away from the program
    - who will be responsible for contacting the local authorities if the children are evacuated away from the program
    - how will this be accomplished
- The procedure for contacting parents if the children have been evacuated
    - Who is responsible for taking the emergency contact information for all of the children
    - Who is responsible for contacting the parents
- What is the plan to ensure that no child is left after evacuation
- The method for transporting children in the case of an evacuation
- What will you take if you must evacuate such as medications, diapers and food?
- If the emergency requires the children to remain at the program
    - Do you have emergency supplies to keep children safe and comfortable
    - Do you know where the emergency shutoff valves are for power sources

18. List of nutritious foods 7.12(15)(d)
    - If parents provide meals or snacks for children, parents must be provided a list of nutritious items that may be part of a lunch or snack.