



**Department of
Early Education and Care**
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Large Group and School Age Child Care Licensing

POLICY STATEMENT: Developmental Placement

Child Care Licensing Standards 606 CMR 7.10(9)(a) Group Assignment of Children requires that “*All group assignments must be developmentally appropriate for the individual child.*” This regulation allows a child to be assigned to a fixed age group outside their chronologically defined age group based on a review of the child’s most recent progress report, assessment/evaluation, or a narrative from the child’s parent addressing the child’s abilities in the area of mobility, fine and gross motor control, communication, social interactions and cognition.

Developmental placement can be considered for children currently enrolled in the program and for new children entering the program. In either case, if a child is being considered for placement in a group outside his chronologically defined age group there are several issues that a program must consider to ensure the smooth transition of the child. Only when all of the conditions are met can placement outside of a chronological age group be considered. The program (educators) must consult with the child’s parent(s) to obtain approval but also to allow them the opportunity to give input in the decision. If the child is enrolled in the program, the meeting with the parent(s) to discuss the developmental placement should include the educator currently working with the child and the educator that will be working with the child.

The meeting with the parent(s) must be documented and maintained on file at the program. The documentation must include the responses to the following:

- What are the specific reasons why the alternative group assignment is proposed? How does the child’s verbal, cognitive, social, emotional, gross and fine motor skills differ from his/her chronological age group?
- How will the child be able to effectively participate in the proposed group’s activities?
- How will the staff and the group accommodate the child’s needs and behaviors?
- What will be included in the transition plan to ensure collaboration and sharing of information between classrooms and programs and to assist the child in understanding this transition?

The program must ensure that the classroom environment and equipment are appropriate to meet the needs of the child. For example, for an infant placed in a toddler room or a toddler placed in a preschool room, the equipment used by the group must be age appropriate and must not be considered hazardous to the child. Indoor as well as outdoor equipment must be of adequate size for all of the children in the group. In addition, the building inspection certificate must reflect a use group appropriate for the age of each child placed in the alternative group assignment. For example, if a toddler is placed in a preschool classroom/group, the building inspection must indicate that the space is approved for I-2 or I-4 usage.

The program must ensure that each child is assigned to a consistent group with consistent staffing. Staff assigned to the classroom that includes children placed outside their chronological group must be trained to meet the specific needs of all of the children. The ages of all of the children in this group must not be so divergent as to inhibit each child's growth and development. For example, although it may be appropriate to place a toddler in a 3 year old group, a 2 year old may not appropriately fit with a preschool group of 5 year olds.

Lastly, if the child is younger than the defined age of the group (a toddler placed in a preschool room), the program must document and maintain on file a monthly review of the child's adjustment to the group until the child reaches the minimum age for the group. If the child is older than the defined age of the group (a toddler placed in an infant room), the program must document and maintain on file a monthly review of the child's skill development as well as a transition plan. The transition plan must include a description of how and when the child will be moved to a group consistent with the child's age.

Points to remember:

- No more than two children outside the chronologically defined age range may be assigned to a fixed age group.
- The program's Building Inspection must include usage approval for alternative group assignment.
- Ongoing communication with the child's parent(s) regarding the child's monthly progress review must occur.
- Child's file must include documentation of the meeting with the parent as well as evidence of parental approval for the placement; documentation collected at the time of the decision to do the alternative placement; documentation of monthly progress reviews and when needed, the written transition plan for moving the child to a group consistent with the child's age.
- Classrooms that include children who have been placed outside their chronological age group are staffed according to the requirements of the regulations for Fixed Age Groups 606 CMR 7.10(9)(b)1-6. For example if a toddler is placed in a preschool room, the staff assigned to this group need to be preschool qualified only.

Developmental Placement Recommendation

(Child's name) _____, age _____ is being considered for alternative assignment to _____ group. The specific reasons why the alternative group assignment is proposed are described below.

1. Explain how the child's verbal / cognitive / social / emotional / gross motor / fine motor (circle as many as apply) skills are different from the children in his/her chronological age group:

2. This child will be able to effectively participate in the proposed group's activities because:

(give examples of activities that proposed group will offer that are not available in the child's chronological age group, and explain why you believe that the child is ready to learn / enjoy / succeed at these tasks.)

3. The proposed group will readily accommodate this child's needs and behaviors because:

(discuss the composition of the proposed group, including gender, ages, abilities, temperaments)

4. There are presently _____ other children (not including this child) who are placed in this group through alternative placement guidelines.

5. Describe how the transition plan ensures collaboration and sharing of information between classrooms. What has been done to help the child understand this transition?

6. A. If this child is **younger** than the minimum chronologically defined age of the proposed group:

We will document a monthly review of the child's adjustment to the group until _____ (date child reaches minimum age of group). Dates of monthly reviews:

B. If this child is **older** than the chronologically defined maximum for the group:

We will move him/her to her to a same-age group under the following circumstances:
(Specify what criteria the child must meet prior to placement with age-mates.)

Criteria for transfer: _____

Our plan to support development of skills necessary for transition to the next age group is:

We will document a monthly review of the child's progress until s/he is able to transition to the next group. Dates of monthly reviews are:

Signature of Program Administrator

Date

Signature of Educator

Date

Signature of Educator

Date

Date of Developmental Placement meeting with Parent(s):

Date

To Parents: I have discussed my child's assignment to the _____ group
and I **agree** **disagree** (circle one) that this is best for my child because:

Signature of Parent

Date