

Family Child Care Assistants: A Guide for Educators

EEC regulations require that Licensed Family Child Care Educators only allow approved caregivers to participate in the care of Family Child Care children. In the course of providing Family Child Care, many Licensed Educators will work with an assistant at some point in time. A Licensee may work with an Assistant because they are licensed for 10, they wish to care for more infants in their program, or they have a household member that wishes to assist in the program, among other reasons. In any case, all Licensed Educators should have a basic understanding of Assistants as they are defined by EEC regulations, as well as the requirements that both they and the Assistants that work with them must meet. Whether you are a Family Child Care Educator, or you are interested in becoming an Assistant, this guide should be helpful to you.

There are two types of Family Care Assistants as defined by the EEC regulations:

1. A **Regular Assistant** is a person who holds a Regular Assistant letter of approval issued by the Department; who does not meet the qualifications of the Licensee for whom they are working; and who may replace a Licensee or Certified Assistant on a limited basis in a Family Child Care home as allowed under 606 CMR 7.09(15)(c)(2)(a).
2. A **Certified Assistant** is a person who holds a Certified Assistant certificate issued by the Department; who, at minimum, meets the qualifications of an Educator licensed to care for six children; and who works with or substitutes for the Licensee in a Family Child Care home, depending on his/her level of qualifications (like Licensed educators, Certified Assistants can be approved for 6, 8 or 10).

When and How Can Licensed Family Child Care Educators Utilize Assistants?

Because Regular and Certified Assistants meet different levels of qualifications, their roles in the program are different from a regulatory standpoint. Regular Assistants do not meet the same level of qualifications as a Licensed Educator, and therefore are intended to provide care under the general supervision of the Licensee. Certified Assistants are required to minimally meet the requirements of an Educator who is licensed to care for six children, and may meet the requirements of an Educator who is licensed for eight or ten. Because of this, Certified Assistants may actually substitute for a Licensee in addition to working with them.

There are exceptions to the limits placed on Regular and Certified Assistants, which are:

Regular Assistant	Certified Assistant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Regular Assistant may be alone on the premises with up to six children for up to twenty-five (25) hours in a twelve month period, or up to eight hours in a seven day period, provided s/he is currently certified in first aid and CPR. • In programs licensed to care for seven or more children, a Regular Assistant may provide care only under the supervision of a Licensee or Certified Assistant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Certified Assistant who meets the qualifications of the licensee may replace the licensee at any time, provided notice is given to parents in advance, in accordance with 606 CMR 7.08(8)(c). • An Educator who meets the qualifications of a Family Child Care Educator licensed to serve six or fewer children may substitute for a Educator licensed to care for up to ten children for up to twenty-five (25) hours in a twelve month period.

Regulatory Requirements for Assistants

Much like Licensed Educators, there is an approval process for Assistants that they must complete prior to working in a Family Child Care program. The regulatory requirements for both types of Assistants are:

<p><u>Regular Assistants</u> must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be at least 18 years old• Have a background free of conduct which might bear adversely on their ability to care for children (verified by a Background Record Check)• Complete an <i>online</i> orientation offered in the “Workforce and Professional Development” section of the EEC website (www.eec.state.ma.us)• Maintain the physical, mental and emotional ability to care for children in a way that meets the generally accepted physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of children• Follow good hygiene practices at all times• Exercise good judgment at all times• Demonstrate an ability to handle emergency situations appropriately <p>*If a Regular Assistant will ever be left alone with the child care children, he or she must be certified in First Aid and CPR</p>	<p>In addition to meeting all of the requirements that Regular Assistants meet (with the exception of the online orientation), <u>Certified Family Child Care Assistants</u> must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold current certification in First Aid and CPR• Have experience caring for children, which must include at least:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One year of full time experience caring for children younger than 14 years of age (may include parenting experience, baby sitting does not count), or○ Nine months of full time experience caring for children younger than 14 years of age and 15 hours of training approved by EEC, or○ Six months of full time experience caring for children younger than 14 years of age and 30 hours of training, approved by EEC, or○ A certificate of qualification as a teacher or site coordinator issued by EEC;• Complete the EEC Family Child Care Orientation within one year before application
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For Educators: Choosing the Right Assistant for Your Program

If you are a Licensed Family Child Care Educator who has decided to work with an Assistant, it's important to make sure the Assistant is a good fit for the program. To maintain a consistency and quality in the care provided to children, it's necessary for all Assistants to be familiar with and able to implement your curriculum, activities and routines.

You should interview a potential Assistant prior to working with them, to ensure they understand your program philosophy and your expectations for them when they will be working with you.

In addition to being approved or certified by EEC, Assistants must also submit to you a copy of a current medical form, which should list any physical limitations they may have while providing care. You must take this information into consideration when determining if an Assistant will be able to implement your curriculum, activities and routines. **(NOTE: Whenever an Assistant renews their EEC approval or certification, they should provide you with a current medical form.)**

Documentation and Training Requirements for Licensed Family Child Care Educators When Using an Assistant

Any Licensee who utilizes an Assistant in their program is required to keep documentation regarding that Assistant. Licensees should set up a file for any Assistants that will be working with them, as they will need to maintain ongoing documentation of attendance, certifications and approvals, as well as professional development.

The following sections detail the documentation and training that the Licensed Educator and Assistants are responsible for.

Initial Documentation and Training

Any Assistant that plans on working with a Licensed Educator must provide the following documentation to the Educator:

- A copy of their EEC Assistant Certificate or Letter of Approval (a copy of which should be posted along with the program license)
- Evidence of a physical examination within one year before application
- Evidence that they have been immunized in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Public Health
- Copies of CPR and First Aid Certification (if applicable)
- Work schedule

Licensees must provide any Assistant that works with them a program-specific orientation, during which they review the following information with their Assistants:

- Location of approved space including rooms, decks and outdoor space
- The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations, including responsibilities as a mandated reporter and EEC's right to visit.
- Location and contents of children's records (as well as guidelines for maintaining confidentiality)
- Location of first aid materials
- Plan for emergencies that includes:
 - Emergency evacuation routes and meeting place outside
 - Emergency supplies
 - Location of emergency telephone numbers and method of contacting fire department or other authorities after evacuation
- Schedule of daily activities and ongoing curriculum
- Supervision policy
- Child guidance philosophy and policy
- EEC Safe Sleep regulations and guidelines
- Children's individual health needs
- Any variances that may have been granted to the Family Child Care home

Ongoing Documentation and Professional Development

Once an Assistant is approved or certified by EEC, they must meet the professional development requirements of the EEC regulations. Licensees that are utilizing an Assistant in their program must maintain documentation that the Assistant they are utilizing is meeting EEC requirements.

The requirements for professional development are as follows (as per regulation 7.09(15)(3)(f)):

- Assistants in family child care working more than 25 hours per year but less than 10 hours per week must complete at least 5 hours of professional development activities per year.
- Assistants in family child care working more than 10 hours per week must complete at least 10 hours of professional development per year.

At least one third of the required professional development must address diverse learners.

Massachusetts has developed categories of knowledge and skills that help licensed educators, trainers and professional development institutions organize professional development needs and opportunities.

Licensed Educators and Assistants looking for professional development can use the core competencies as a guide.

The following are the current core competencies being utilized in Massachusetts:

- Understanding the growth and development of children and youth
- Guiding and interacting with children and youth
- Partnering with Families and Communities
- Health, safety and nutrition
- Learning environments and curriculum
- Observation, assessment and documentation
- Program planning and development
- Professionalism and leadership

For more information about the core competencies, please visit www.eec.state.ma.us.

To help Licensees organize the file they need to maintain for the Assistants in their program, the following pages are a record template that may be used in an assistant's file.

Family Child Care Assistant Record

The Department of Early Education and Care requires Family Child Care educators to maintain a record for any assistants that work in their Family Child Care program. This form is intended to be a helpful outline of what is required for an assistant's file as well as what aspects of the program an Assistant must be oriented to before working with an Educator. This form can be used as a checklist or top sheet to be kept in the Assistant's record.

*NOTE: As EEC does not require Assistants to submit much of the information listed below, it is the Assistant's responsibility to submit copies of documentation to the Educators they work with. Licensors will review assistant files during licensing visits.

**NOTE: Please remember that all parental permissions for the children in care must include any Assistants that will be working in the program.

Assistant's Name: _____ Date Started at Program: _____

Work Schedule:

Monday: _____ Thursday: _____
Tuesday: _____ Friday: _____
Wednesday: _____ Other: _____

DOCUMENTATION TO BE KEPT ON RECORD (Please check when documents are placed in file):

- Copy of EEC Certification or Approval
- Copy of First Aid and CPR Cards
- Copy of Physical / Immunizations
- Plan for needed professional development training
- Copy of Driver's License and Car Insurance (if transporting children)
- Evidence of training in medication administration (if administering medication)
- Attendance Log (*anytime a Regular or Certified Assistant is working in a Family Child Care Program, their attendance must be documented, including the specific hours they worked.*)

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC ORIENTATION LIST (Please check each item when it's reviewed):

- Location of approved space including rooms, decks and outdoor space
- The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) regulations, including responsibilities as a mandated reporter and EEC's right to visit.
- Location and contents of children's records (as well as guidelines for maintaining confidentiality)
- Location of first aid materials
- Plan for emergencies that includes:
 - Emergency evacuation routes and meeting place outside
 - Emergency supplies
 - Location of emergency telephone numbers and method of contacting fire department or other authorities after evacuation
- Schedule of daily activities and ongoing curriculum

- ___ Supervision policy
- ___ Child guidance philosophy and policy
- ___ EEC Safe Sleep regulations and guidelines
- ___ Children’s individual health needs
- ___ Any variances that may have been granted to the Family Child Care home

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Regulation 7.09(15)(3)(f) requires that Family Child Care Educators and Assistants pursue ongoing training and professional development. The requirements for professional development are as follows:

- Educators (including Assistants) in family child care working more than 25 hours per year but less than 10 hours per week must complete at least 5 hours of professional development activities per year.
- Educators (including Assistants) in family child care working more than 10 hours per week must complete at least 10 hours of professional development per year.
- At least one third of the required professional development must address diverse learners.

Assistants should provide the Educators they work with a copy of any training certifications or documentation, which should be kept in the Assistant’s record.

Our signatures indicate that we have reviewed and discussed the information listed above.

Certified/Regular Assistant

Date

Licensee

Date