Maintaining Quality While Expanding Your Capacity

Welcome to this on line-training for family child care providers interested in expanding the capacity of their program. Before you can be considered for a license to serve more than six children, you must already have at least one year of experience as a family child care licensee or certified assistant.

If you wish to serve 7 or 8 children, two of whom must be school aged, you must also have either a second year of family child care experience, or qualification by EEC as a teacher or site coordinator.

If you wish to be licensed to serve up to 10 children with an assistant, you must have either 3 years of experience as a family child care licensee or certified assistant, or two years of experience working with children in group care (in addition to your year of family child care experience); or be certified by EEC as teacher or site coordinator and have one year of experience working with children in group care, in addition to one year of family child care experience.

If you are unsure whether you have the required experience and qualifications, talk with your EEC licensor before completing this training.

If you are planning to increase the capacity of your family child care program, chances are you will be serving school age children – perhaps for the first time. Serving children of any age can be challenging, as you have already learned as a family child care provider. But serving more children of more ages makes it even more important that you know some of the basics about how children learn – and play - differently. Knowing more about child development will help you plan for better supervision and child guidance, and for a more interesting and fun curriculum for all children.

This training will cover some of the basics of child development and how you can support optimal growth in children, by keeping them safe and engaged. It will also discuss planning for children of all ages in your program, and dealing appropriately with multiple transitions. The training will discuss how to hire and make the best use of an assistant in your program, and some important business considerations for you, like taxes and insurance. If you have additional questions about any of the information discussed in this training, you can consult your regulations or the resources provided at the end of the training, and you can also talk with your licensor.

You will need about an hour an 15 minutes to complete this training. You can choose to complete the training all in one session, or to stop at any point and resume the training later. You can also repeat one or more slides at any time by hovering your mouse over the bottom left corner of your screen and clicking on the left arrow that appears; and you can review the training as many times as you wish. You can download and print the presentation and the narration text by printing the “notes” version of the presentation, so that you can refer to it later.

At the conclusion of the training there will be four slides with a total of 15 questions that you must print out and answer. You will need to submit those questions and answers with your application for capacity increase.

If your current license was issued before January, 2010, you may not be aware that new regulations were promulgated at that time. Before any expired license can be renewed, and before a capacity increase can be approved, your program must be in compliance with all regulations currently in effect.

If you are unsure about whether you are in compliance with the new regulations, please go to the EEC website and review the powerpoint presentation, “2010 Regulations Training for Family Child Care Providers”. Starting at the home page, this can be found under *Key Resources / Professional Training / Training Resources for the 2010 Regulations.*

To be successful at family child care, you need to know something about child growth and development. You may have learned about child growth and development by taking care of younger siblings while growing up; through babysitting or raising your own children, by working in a child care program, or in college. Let’s review a few of the basics.

First, every child is different! Each child comes from a unique background and develops at his own pace, with his own strengths and weaknesses. But every child is subject to the same influences on development.

Although each child develops at his own pace, with his own strengths and weaknesses, there are stages of development that every child goes through, in a predictable sequence. Infancy comes first, (the first year) followed by early childhood (ages 1 – 5) and middle childhood (ages 5 – 10).

Children cry, coo and babble before they learn to talk. Children learn to roll over before they walk; and walk before they run. Children hold a cup or bottle before they can write or draw, and they understand language before they can speak it. They play alone before they play in groups. Understanding some basics about child growth and development will help you design and carry out a program where children grow, thrive, learn, and have fun!

Developmental Domains” is the term used to describe the different areas of child development. They include social, emotional, cognitive (intellectual or thinking), physical and language. Physical development includes fine motor skills (small muscles, like hands and fingers, and eye-hand coordination) and gross motor (large muscles, used for walking, running, throwing, etc). EEC regulations require that you structure your program, your environment and your interactions to support growth and development across all developmental domains. (See curriculum at 7.06(1)

Even though we talk about development within these domains, all learning is closely linked because it takes place in the same brain! Development in one domain influences development in the others. If a child has difficulty speaking clearly, or cannot keep up with her peers because of delays in walking, running, or other gross motor activities, this may make it more difficult for her to build strong social skills. Delays in the child’s language skills may lead caregivers to underestimate the child’s cognitive abilities, thus avoiding talk about concepts like colors, shapes and numbers. That lack of stimulation will in turn have a negative effect on cognitive skills.

To take full advantage of their opportunities for development across all domains, babies must be adequately and sensitively nurtured. They must be fed, held, talked to, protected from heat, cold and injury, and they must receive sufficient sleep and appropriate medical care, including immunizations. Infants will sleep as much as 20 hours per day, and will typically eat every 3 or 4 hours.

(Regulations about Interactions are found at 7.05. Infant feeding requirements are found in the Nutrition and Food Service section at 7.13(10).

If you are spending full days with the children in your care, you may be the child’s primary source for nurturing and stimulation.

Babies must not be left to cry for long periods of time. One of the most important tasks for infants is to learn that the world is a safe place, and that they can trust their caregivers to respond when they need them.. [Growth in the social/emotional domain] It is important to respond to their fussing and crying promptly, to identify and correct the problem whenever possible. Is the child hungry? Does the child need a diaper change? Does the child need to be burped? Or does the child simply need some “TLC”, some stimulation or some quiet time? All of these are legitimate needs, and responding promptly will NOT “spoil“ the child.. Instead, it will help the child develop trust, which is necessary for all human relationships as the child grows.

Sometimes, however, in spite of your best efforts, you will not be able to figure out WHY a baby is crying. Even at those times it is important to let the child know that you are there to help if you can. Holding the baby, singing or speaking quietly, or just patting the baby’s tummy after you have put her down to sleep is reassuring and comforting to the child.

Talking to a baby, no matter how young, is one of the most important ways to stimulate the child’s brain development. It may seem silly to talk to an infant who cannot talk back, but what you are doing is teaching the child about language. You are letting the child know that language is an important and valuable way to communicate. You are teaching about the sounds our language is made up of, as well as the different voice tones we use and what they mean. If you make eye-contact with the child while speaking, the child will learn what human faces look like, and what facial expressions mean. The child will learn to turn toward your voice, to vocalize and imitate speech sounds, and eventually, to talk. Reading to an infant is another excellent way to support language development. [Development in the social and language domains; regulations at 7.05(2)]

As babies grow, they sleep less than they did as newborns, but still may need two naps per day. They begin to sleep through the night. They decrease their feedings to 3 to 5 times per day, and they are ready for more stimulation. They will begin to grasp and hold objects offered to them; to reach for things; to shake and bang objects, to roll over, and to sit up with little or no help. Providing safe, colorful toys that respond to touch with sound, or that have different textures or patterns are useful developmental tools, and they keep babies happy too! Remember that toys do not need to be expensive, electrical, automatic or battery operated…they just must be safe.

[ These activities stimulate growth in both the cognitive and physical domains. Regulations regarding activities and materials at 7.06(1)(c)]

During the second half of the first year, babies generally begin to crawl, pull themselves up to a standing position, and may even begin to take their first steps. It is important to make sure that their environment is safe, (we’ll talk more about that later), but it is also important to give them opportunities to explore and to practice their new skills. They will begin to eat solid foods, and may begin to feed themselves finger foods like cheerios or small chunks of soft or cooked fruits or vegetables, and they may hold their own bottle. They will often respond to their own name, play pat-a-cake, wave bye-bye, and understand the meaning of “No-no!” [Crawling, standing and learning to walk are physical / gross motor activities. Eating “finger” foods and holding a bottle are physical / fine motor activities. Understanding “No” is a cognitive activity. Regulations regarding infant activities at 7.05(1)(b)14.]

At one year old, the period of infancy ends and the stage of early childhood begins. Early childhood extends from one year old to five years old. Between one and two years old, children will typically learn to walk well, run, kick a ball, build a tower of blocks, understand more spoken language, begin to speak more and more words and learn to feed themselves. They are capable of obeying a few commands, but by the time they turn two they may begin to throw “temper tantrums.” This unpleasant, but normal behavior is the child’s way of asserting his independence, as well as learning whether caregivers will keep him safe by putting limits on his behavior. They may give up one nap, start to use short sentences, and be possessive with toys.

By three years of age many children can pedal a tricycle, use 3 – 5 word sentences, repeat simple rhymes, name several colors correctly and sorts objects by shape and color . They can complete puzzles with three or four pieces, recognize and identify almost all common objects and pictures, put on their shoes and get dressed (with help), jump with both feet, know what is food and what is not food, hold a crayon well, and turn book pages one at a time. They imitate adults and playmates, take turns, and express affection openly.

Most children are well on their way to being fully toilet trained by this age.

By age four most children can hop and stand on one foot for up to five seconds, catch a ball that is bounced to them most of the time, and go up and downstairs with alternating feet. They understand the concepts of “same” and “different”, tell stories, and speak well enough for most strangers to understand. They know their own name, and many can be taught their address and telephone number. They correctly uses the pronoun "I" , and recognize gender differences and will correctly say "I am a girl" or "I am a boy." They use a pencil with good control, and can copy a cross, circle and possibly a square. They can draw a person with a face, arms and legs. Many children this age will talk about their day's activities and experiences, and most can identify emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety and fear. They usually enjoy the companionship of other children and play cooperatively.

Hop and stand on one foot, catch a ball and go up and downstairs with alternating feet = Gross Motor / Physical

Understand the concepts of “same” and “different”, tell stories, and speak well know their own name, use the pronoun "I" , recognize gender differences = Cognitive

Use a pencil copy a cross, circle and square’ draw a person with a face, arms and legs = Fine Motor

Talk about their day's activities and experiences = Language

Identify emotions such as sadness, anger, anxiety and fear = Emotional

Enjoy the companionship of other children and play cooperatively = Social

By five years old children can often do somersaults, swing and climb. They may be able to skip. They can copy a triangle and other geometric patterns, can cut shapes with safety scissors and often can print a few letters. They usually use a fork and spoon, and they show independence and self-help skills by getting out the milk, spreading butter on bread, and pouring cereal for themselves. They can care for their own toilet needs. Many children can count 10 or more objects, understand the concept of time, and may use the future tense in their speech. They can usually distinguish fantasy from reality, and understand and often agree to “rules”. They are still learning about the meaning of lying. They usually have fewer emotional outbursts than they did at age four, and many no longer nap during the day. They still need about 10 – 11 hours of sleep at night. However, five-year-olds can be very rigid in their thinking, especially in their ideas about what is right and wrong. They may not yet have a sense of "gray areas." At age five, many children have a “best friend”, but will also play in groups of children.

Middle childhood is the period between 5 and 10 years. During these years, children are more independent and physically active than they were during early childhood. There is wide variation between children in height, weight and build…even among children of the same age. Strength, hand-eye coordination and stamina continue to progress rapidly, allowing children to perform tasks like riding a bicycle, play sports or a musical instrument. School age children begin to think more logically and consider many parts of a problem, and they develop strong preferences. Self-esteem tends to be strong, and relationships with peers becomes important. Children typically learn to read before age 8, and begin to do basic math operations like adding and subtracting. They enjoy organizing and planning, and begin to enjoy games that involve strategy, like checkers.

To support child growth and development, your program must include opportunities for children to engage in activities that support each developmental domain. You must plan activities and provide opportunities for children to participate in creative activities, like art, music, and dramatic play, and to explore and experiment. They need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, and indoor and outdoor activities that exercise small and large muscle groups, thinking, speaking, self-control, self-help skills, and decision making and critical thinking. They need opportunities to learn about nutrition, good health, personal safety, as well as to appreciate other cultures and individual differences in ethnicity, gender, family composition and skills and abilities. All of these activities must be appropriate to the age and developmental levels of the children in your care. [Regulations regarding curriculum and activities are found at 7.06(1).]

Regulations regarding curriculum are found at 7.06(1)

Activities must be appropriate for different ages….and different interests. Some activities can be enjoyed by children of all ages, if they are adapted to meet their skills and abilities. Most children like to paint….but the painting done by a toddler or preschooler will look very different from the painting done by a school age child. Most children enjoy playing outside; but while a toddler may have fun in a sand box, a school age child may want to shoot hoops or practice gymnastics.

At other times, you will need to plan separate activities for the different age groups. Toddlers and preschoolers will not have the skills, the patience, and the coordination that are often required for older children’s activities…and older children may be bored by the opportunities we present to toddlers and preschoolers.

As we said, your program must offer a well-balanced curriculum of planned activities to support development of the whole child.

Plan ahead, but be flexible! Have several options available. Older children may prefer to choose their own activities on a given day, or may prefer to plan ahead for long term projects, such as building collections and working at hobbies.

Activities must support development of the child across the **social, emotional, physical, intellectual (or cognitive) and language development domains.**

**Emotional development**: older children have lots to learn about themselves as they become more independent and more interested in their peers. Learning to recognize and deal appropriately with feelings of anger, jealousy, envy, and disappointment are lessons we continually learn as we grow and mature;

**Social development**: School age children may be happiest if they have age-mates in your program. Adding one 11 year old to a program full of toddlers may not work out; but two or three children of about the same age can work together and enjoy each other’s company, particularly if they share similar interests. Of course, being exposed to children of other ages also promotes social development, and sometimes brings out characteristics not noticed previously. For example, sometimes older children are particularly caring or protective toward younger children, or seem to become natural leaders. At other times, older children may need to learn that younger children don’t “play by the rules”, or don’t have the patience for planning elaborate games or activities.

**Physical**: gross motor activities and eye-hand coordination activities often morph into individual or group sports in school age children, refining the basic muscle control children have learned as toddlers and preschoolers. Shooting hoops, playing tennis, badminton or soccer, ice or street hockey, dancing and gymnastics, and/or practicing skills used in team sports are often fun for older children, and a good way to get some much needed exercise after a day sitting at a school desk. Older children may also have the fine motor coordination and the maturity and self-control to enjoy more complex arts and crafts, such as sewing, weaving, building kits or models, and more elaborate puzzles and building kits.

**Intellectual / Cognitive**: Some school age children will have homework to do, which focuses primarily on cognitive and intellectual development. But planning (real or imagined) trips to far away places, including learning about the history, culture, weather, food, transportation systems and currency of the place are also fun and educational activities. Planning for field trips within the program and some hobbies (Soduko, crossword puzzles, stamp or coin collecting, astronomy, oceanography, ecology, etc) also make fun and useful intellectual or cognitive activities. Games based on strategy or on trivia or on knowledge of a particular topic are also fun for school age children, as are science activities and experiments.

**Language:** Reading and writing activities are especially appropriate for school age children, who may want to keep a daily journal or a journal recording their hobby; may want to join a “pen pal” program, or may enjoy reading a particular magazine, or even the newspaper.

Regulations regarding curriculum are found at 7.06(1)

Activities should reflect specific goals for learning in the areas of English language arts, math, science, history and social science, comprehensive health, and the arts.

Again, the goals will be different for different age groups. The youngest children will learn to speak, then learn colors and shapes, and experiment with finger paints, water play, listening to music and playing instruments. Goals for preschoolers may include learning to recognize the alphabet and numbers, count by rote and count objects, know who are the helping professionals in their town, and why too much candy and soda is not good for you. Goals for school age children will include increasing vocabulary, reading and writing, beginning to understand fractions, and money; learning a bit about our government, both local and federal; recognizing different types of art or music, and learning a variety of ways to keep healthy and strong.

Children benefit from routines. Routines add structure and order to the day, help children to learn about predictability and develop trust and feel secure. Routines help children develop a sense of time, and know what is expected of them. Routines also help to keep educators organized. Routines are important both indoors and outdoors.

Knowing that outdoor time is followed by snack time, or circle time is followed by free choice, or rest time follows lunch helps children be mentally and emotionally prepared for the change, and may diminish difficult behavior.

Allowing children opportunities to choose their activities gives them a sense of control and helps them to take responsibility for their time and their learning. It gives them an opportunities to problem solve and make decisions and to experiment, create, and explore .

Children have different personalities, and while they all need to develop social skills, some need more individual time than others. Working alone on a project of their choice may be relaxing, may help them to pursue a particular interest, and may minimize difficult behaviors.

Supporting healthy growth and development requires regular outdoor time, which can allow children to run off energy and exercise large muscles with fewer constraints than they find indoors. The regulations require that children spend time outdoors every day, weather permitting. Sixty minutes per day must be spent in physical exercise, either indoors or out.

the Regulations regarding curriculum are found at 7.06(1)

A good routine:

Is consistent, flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of children. Children coming to your program after a day of very structured activity at school may need time to “wind down”…either individual time, or group time. They may not be ready to jump right into an activity choice.

A good routine allows for free choice. School children whose day has been completely structured may especially need the opportunity to make choices for their out-of school time. If they[‘ve been sitting for a good part of the day, they may need to get outside and exercise and run of excess energy. Be sure to have several appropriate options available.

A good routine provides a balance of active and quiet play and individual and group play… Some children “unwind” by reading or listening to music, while others may need to run and be physical. Some need time alone, while others will be looking for company. Make sure you offer children the opportunity to choose their activities whenever possible.

Regulations regarding curriculum are found at 7.06(1)

Your program must provide opportunities for children to learn self-help skills. For younger children this may include setting the table for snack; dressing and undressing, toileting and hand-washing. For older children, this may mean *making* the snack, learning how to read a map, access important community services (including emergency services) and exercise healthy choice in food and activities.

Self-help skills include knowing when and whom to ask for help. Older children may encounter or witness bullying or other forms of abuse, and may need a trusted adult to turn to. Make sure you make time to talk to – and listen to - the school age children in your program. Remember your responsibilities as a mandated reporter, and be aware of the professional resources in your community that may be able to help children.

Whatever activities you plan, you must accommodate children with disabilities who enroll in your program.

Regulations regarding curriculum are found at 7.06(1)

Your program must provide opportunities for children to explore cultural, social and individual diversity issues, and to develop an appreciation of differences in gender, language, culture, ethnicity, family composition, and differing abilities.

School age children in particular will encounter new and different family forms and children from diverse religions and cultures. They are more aware of their parent’s opinions, values and beliefs, and you will need to find a way to support an appreciation of differences without contradicting parents’ teachings.

Use a variety and quantity of materials and equipment that support the curriculum both indoors and outdoors. You will need more than one of each item, so that several children can share an activity and avoid long “wait” times. And remember….more kids means more equipment!

Choose materials and equipment that are appropriate to the children’s ages and stages of development. Materials for infants and toddlers are very different from materials for preschoolers and school age children.

You need age-appropriate equipment and materials for both indoor and outdoor activities.

You must consider both the safety of the materials and the children’s interests, as well as the skills they need to develop.

These are some of the materials you will need for your program!

In programs serving children of multiple ages, children can help each other and seek others with similar interests. This may give older children, or children with a particular skill or talent an opportunity to build self-esteem and leadership skills.

Plan activities so that each child feels successful in his/her own way, and learns in his/her own way, through discovery and experimentation. Young children will use materials differently than older children

Children should not be expected to learn the same thing in the same way at the same time even in the same age range.

Provide hands-on activities which should be able to meet a variety of interests and needs. Building blocks may lead to a 7 block tower for knocking down for a 3 year old…but for a 10 year old, those blocks may become a city. A keyboard may be used just for banging for a younger child, but an older child may compose his own song…or pick out one he has heard on the radio.

Remembering that you need to keep the little ones safe, while providing interesting and stimulating materials for the older children,

Arrange play areas with a wide choice of activities.

Provide some areas for specific age groups, like study areas for school age children.

Add a safety gate or a sofa as barrier without obstructing your view of the children.

Conduct some pre-school or school age activities while younger children are napping.

Adapt activities for all ages.

Store materials from the bottom up…(infant and toddler materials on bottom shelf, where crawling children can reach them. School-age materials on the highest shelf, where younger children can’t reach them).

Remember, if you are adding school age children to your program, you will need to develop multiple program schedules. Your routine will vary, depending on whether the school age children spend a few hours after school with you on a regular school day; an afternoon (when they have a “teachers’ professional day”), a full day (when there is a holiday like Columbus Day or Veteran’s Day), or a full week, like winter or spring vacation. Think about how your schedule will need to change.

Keeping school age children entertained and engaged may be fairly easy when they come to you following a full day of school, ready to eat snack and then go outside to play. It may be much more difficult to plan activities to keep them engaged for 8 or 10 hours a day for several days in a row. If you like to take the children in your program on outings, how will those activities be impacted by the older children? Are their “field trips” that you can take that will be enjoyable for all ages? If you use television or videos in your program, is it possible to choose programs that are appropriate and interesting for all ages?

 Will your licensed space accommodate younger children watching 30 minutes of Dora and Diego while the older children are reading or conducting science experiments? Will your space provide peace and quiet for school age children to enjoy on occasional 2 hour movie on a vacation week while the younger children do arts and crafts, build with blocks or nap? Do you have sufficient space for the additional children to store their personal belongings? Remember that for programs serving 7 – 10 children you must have 35 square feet of approved indoor activity space for each child. For 10 children, that is the equivalent of three rooms, each with an area of usable space at least 10’ by 12’; or a family room of 15’ x 24’ , devoted entirely to your child care children. Remember that areas that are “off limits” to children and furniture/equipment that is exclusively for adult use (the stairmaster or pool table?) cannot be counted as children’s activity space.

Child Guidance may look different, depending on the ages of the children you are working with. But there are some basic principles that hold true regardless of children’s ages.

As we said earlier, everything that children see and hear is an opportunity for learning. For that reason it is important for you to model appropriate behaviors. If you want children to be polite when speaking to you or each other, you must be polite when speaking to them, to your assistants and to their parents. Say “please” and “thank you”. Be patient if interrupted. Respond positively when asked for help. In addition, it is important to focus on the positive. Recognize and reinforce appropriate behavior with praise.

When difficulties arise, as they inevitably will, you should:

Resolve problems as they occur. Don’t let small problems escalate into big ones by waiting too long to intervene. Younger children are unlikely to be able to resolve problems on their own. If they aren’t developmentally ready to share or take turns, don’t wait to see if they can work it out! This may be the time to redirect and refocus their attentions. If young children are squabbling over a toy, offer another toy or another activity. Lead one of the children out of the immediate area. Talk about something different. When working with older children, once you have interrupted the immediate conflict you may well want to ask them to suggest some possible solutions to the problem, and see if they can agree on one of them. Since they are much more skilled at language, they should be able to express themselves in words and perhaps negotiate a solution.

Teach coping mechanisms. This means:

First, recognize children’s feelings. Depending on their age and language abilities, ask how they are feeling, or share your observations about how they are feeling. “You look angry” or “you look sad” helps children to feel understood and helps them learn to use words, rather than actions to express their feelings. This builds “emotional literacy”.

Second, remind children of the rules, and depending on their ages, ask them for possible solutions or offer your own. These may be practical solutions to the original problem (both children want the same toy) or to the resulting emotions (a child is angry, frustrated, disappointed or bored). Teaching children to handle their feelings (take a time away, run laps around the yard, write about their feelings, take deep breaths) is as important as solving the original problem (finding another activity or toy, taking turns, playing together with the toy). Since each child is different, your response to a problem may be based on an individual action plan for the child, based on your knowledge of his/her individual differences.

[Regulations regarding child guidance are found at 7.05(5)]

With school age children, it is important to include them in establishing the rules. It’s usually best to start with the broad, general rules. Ask the children what they think are the most important things for the program. You are looking for responses like:

 everyone must be safe…no one should be hurt;

 everyone should have fun;

 everyone should learn things.

Then ask the children for things they can do to make sure those goals are met. Still try to focus on general rules that cover lots of behaviors, like “be kind”, or “respect each other”, rather than details like: “no hitting”, “ no pushing”, “no shoving”, “no tripping”, “no name calling” . If the children do suggest lots of individual behaviors, like those above, make a list of those that seem to fall in the same category, and then talk with the kids about how those rules all seem to focus on the same goal.

If you have potential safety hazards on your premises (an in-ground pool, a busy street), you may want to add some specifics like “we play only in the play yard”. It’s best to focus on the positive, such as “We need an adult to use the pool” rather than saying “No going near the pool”, or “no going in the street”.

Once you have agreed on some basic rules, write them down and post them in your program. If you refer to the rules when you correct children’s behavior, you will find that the children will take responsibility for reminding each other when they have broken the rules. You may want to include the older children in setting appropriate consequences for breaking the rules, and these should be written and posted as well.

Even though school aged children receive regular report cards from school, you must complete a progress report for each school age child in your care once per year, ideally about half-way through your program year. You have information about each child in your program that may be different from what his parents or his teachers see. In your program, in a group of younger children, this child may show extra patience or kindness or leadership skills. Away from the classroom she may have great dramatic talent, or artistic or musical ability. You may introduce a child to a new activity at the beginning of your program year, and find that he or she has a real talent for it, and that leads to improved confidence and increased self-esteem. Or perhaps the child has shown a love for pets, which he does not have at home. Just as you do with the younger children in your program, occasionally make notes about children’s activities and skills and talents in various domains, keep samples of their work, or take pictures of their work and/or their play with other children. After a period of time compare your earliest and latest observations. This will form the basis of your progress report for parents, which should include as may “domains” as you feel able to comment on: social/emotional, cognitive, fine and gross motor, language and life skills.

[Regulations regarding supervision are found at 7.10(5)

Depending on the activity and the individual children involved, older children may need less direct supervision than younger children. Children age 7 or older may, with parent permission, be on a different floor level engaged in an activity, with neither you or your assistant present. As long as the space has been approved for use and the activity is appropriate for the age of the child, older children may use a computer in an upstairs den, play Wii in a downstairs playroom, or go outside unaccompanied, provided you or your assistant are aware of the child’s location and monitor the child’s activity regularly. In making decisions to allow children to be in a space without direct supervision, think about the individual child and his/her usual behavior. Think about the combination of children, and whether they are more likely to get into mischief as a pair or small group than they would on their own. You may decide its more appropriate to have your assistant supervise the children playing in a separate space.

If you are serving children aged 9 or older in your program, you may have a child with asthma who is accustomed to carrying his/her own inhaler for use when needed. In that case, you will need to develop an individual health care plan, and some rules or precautions that spell out how you will keep the other children in the program safe from access to the child’s inhaler. Details about the individual health care plan are found in the regulations at 7.11(3).

If you are planning to include school age children in your program you should know that there may be some differences in the records that you will keep. Notice that school age children don’t need a physical and immunizations on file. Enrollment forms for school age children include a place for parents to certify that the required immunization records are on file at the child’s school. However, if the child will be allowed to participate in activities on another floor level or in an activity space that is not within the direct supervision of an educator, or if a child will be allowed to play outside with periodic supervision, parents must sign the Indirect Supervision Form and or the Outdoor Play with Periodic Supervision form. In addition, if a child age 9 or older will be allowed to leave the premises for any activity, the parents must also complete a written permission form. Sample forms are available on the EEC website.

Every day, children in your program experience the transition of arriving and departing from your program. Transitions are stressful, and require thought and preparation to be handled well. If you are adding school age children to your full day program, you’ll have more transitions …more comings and goings…each day. More children, and more times.

Whether they are accompanied by parents, walk to your home or arrive by school bus, each child must have an individual transportation plan, signed by his/her parents. Each child should be greeted individually upon arrival. A hug, a handshake, high five, or simply calling them by name is an important way to acknowledge and welcome their presence.

Make sure that your routine allows time for children to say good-bye to their parents, and offers attractive options to invite children into the daily routine. If you are offering care in the early morning or before school hours, you may want to have breakfast available when children arrive. If you are adding children to your program after school, you may want to plan to have snacks available when they arrive.

If children will be leaving from your home to go off to school, plan in advance for how this will affect your routine.

How will you be sure each child has what s/he needs to take to school? What if a child forgets his lunch, or leaves his backpack at your home? What if the bus is early, or late? What if the child forgot his lunch at home, or his note from mom for some activity, or his money? What if the child is afraid of school, or decides s/he’s too sick for school after mom or dad leaves?

Where do the children meet the bus? Do you have written permission for school age children to walk to the bus unescorted? What if it’s raining?

First, make it a habit to have children leave all their belongings together in their assigned space, so they’ll be ready to go when they leave. A space near the door may be most helpful.

Try to arrange for children who are brought by parents not to arrive at the same times children are leaving for school.

Have clear written policies that you have discussed with parents in advance regarding lending money to children, caring for children who are sick and/or don’t want to go to school, and/or providing lunches for children who forget theirs.

Plan activities for the children who remain with you during transitions to school that do not require a lot of attention to detail and close supervision. Keep yourself open and available for good-byes, problem solving and ensuring timely departures.

Talk with parents about how they manage transitions with their child…get them involved!

When children arrive at your program after school, how will their arrival impact the activities you have scheduled for the younger children? Will younger children be napping, and if so, will the noise and commotion of arriving children disturb their naps? How will you assist children who are upset after an incident at school or on the bus? If you have your own children also arriving from school, will they be looking for your complete attention to share information about their day? Are there any (younger) children who will be leaving while school age children are arriving?

If possible, plan plenty of time to transition sleeping children into activities ( or snack) before the school age children arrive. Alternatively, plan for the school age children to make their own snacks, or help themselves to their snacks while you focus on the children who are just waking from nap. Have an activity planned and/or available for school age children to begin if you must focus on the younger children. Make sure you talk with the older children about the schedule in advance, so they won’t be surprised if you focus on the younger ones first. Be sure to give them their share of time and attention once the little ones are settled.

Running a program for 10 children requires that at least one additional caregiver be present in order to ensure appropriate supervision of children, and to ensure all children benefit from the range of activities and services the program provides. This means that before you serve more than 8 children you must have an EEC-approved Assistant working with you.

If you are expanding your program from 6 to 8 children without an assistant, two of the children must be school aged.

What is a school age child? A school aged child is either a kindergarten child, or a child who is attending a public or an approved private elementary school.

A kindergarten child is a child who is 5 years old or will attend first grade the next year in a public or private school. So if you are expanding your program to include 8 children without an assistant, two of the children in your care must be either attending school daily, or old enough to go to first grade the next school year.

The number of children you care for depends on the ages of the children and whether or not you work with an assistant. If you want to work alone, you can care for six children as long as at least 3 of the children are more than two years old. There can be no more than 3 children younger than two years, and at least one of those three children must be at least 15 months old and walking independently. In addition, if you have the required experience and complete this training and the upgrade application , you can be licensed to care for two more children (a total of 8) provided they are school aged.

If you work with an assistant and you have the required experience, complete this training and the upgrade application, you can be licensed to care for a total of 10 children, provided there are no more than 6 children under two years old, including no more than 3 infants.

Caring for more than six children younger than two years old or more than 3 infants requires a third educator.

If you have questions about the number and ages of children you can care for, with or without an assistant, check the regulations at 606 CMR 7.10(4) (d-h), or ask your licensor. And don’t forget….depending on their ages, your own children may count too. Always check with your licensor if you are unsure.

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. That is, the licensee must be on the premises with the regular assistant while children are present, except in rare circumstances. To enable the licensee to keep a doctor’s appointment or dentist appointment that can’t be scheduled outside of child care hours, or even to attend her own child’s school play or performance, the Regular Assistant can supervise up to 6 children alone on the premises for up to 25 hours per year, and no more than 8 hours in any given week.

Certified Assistants must at least meet the requirements of an Educator who is licensed to care for six children, and may (depending on experience) meet the requirements of an Educator who is licensed for eight or ten children. For this reason, a certified assistant may substitute for a Licensee if their qualifications are equal. In addition, an assistant who is certified to care for six children an also substitute for a licensee approved to care for 10 children for up to 25 hours per year, and no more than 8 hours in any given week. But don’t forget: Educator / child ratios always apply. If the certified assistant is substituting for the provider licensed for 10 children, she must still have an assistant working with her. And if the ages of the children require additional educators, those additional staff must be present, whether certified or regular assistants.

To run a program for 10 children, you must have an EEC approved assistant working with you. You are free to choose either a regular assistant or a certified assistant, provided you stay within the limits EEC has established for their use.

The information we have presented about the number of educators required with children of various ages and different group sizes, and when they can be alone with children, is complicated. Please refer to your regulations at 7.10(4)(d-h), and 7.09(15)(c) to review this information….and don’t forget: when in doubt, ask your licensor.

Hiring an assistant is an important responsibility, because this person will work with you every day; will have an impact on your program’s reputation and success; and most importantly, will have an impact on the lives of children in care and their families. While your neighbor or your cousin (or even your mother) may need a job, if you know that person hates noise, can’t stand messes and thinks children should be seen and not heard, she’s probably not going to be the best person for the job you are offering. Remember, you are responsible for everything that happens in your program: it’s your license! EEC is trusting you to use your good judgment in finding the best assistant you can.

So…before you hire an assistant, make sure that person is patient and kind; can follow directions and accept feedback; understands how you run your program, and enjoys working with children. Make sure they understand and agree to the hours they are expected to work, how much and when they will be paid, and whether you will pay for sick days or holidays or vacations. Make sure you discuss any other expectations you have for them…such as how they will dress, whether they will ever be expected to stay late, when and where they can take breaks and/or eat, and don’t forget to mention that smoking on the premises when children are in care is prohibited. In order to minimize transitions for children, let your assistant know that you expect him/her to remain with your program for at least a year.

Ask lots of questions like……why do you want to work with young children? Why not work in a child care center? What would you do if a child hit another child over the head with a toy? What would you do if a child was having a difficult time letting Mom go in the morning at drop-off time? What would you do if an older child told you to “shut up”? What age children do you enjoy working with the most, and why? What kinds of behaviors drive you crazy? What would you do if a child fell off the swings?

When you hire an assistant, you’ll need to make sure you keep documentation that he or she has had:

 a physical exam less than one year before hire, that includes any limitations on working with children;

all immunizations recommended by DPH; and

CPR and First Aid certification, if the assistant will ever be alone with children. In addition, you must keep a copy of the assistant’s:

Driver’s license, if s/he will be transporting children;

Car registration, if s/he will be using her own vehicle to transport children.

Then post a copy of the assistant certificate of letter of approval along with the program license

You will need to document that your assistant has completed:

 the EEC on-line Orientation for Family Child Care Assistants;

 training in the common side effects and adverse interactions among various medications, and potential side effects of medications being given in your program;

An orientation to your program;

Training in Standard Precautions and Nutrition and Choking Hazards

Registration in the EEC Professional Development Registry.

You must also make sure to document the days and hours that your assistant works in your program, and that s/he completes the required annual professional development / training hours.

An assistant is much more than a “warm body”, hired to keep EEC happy. An assistant should be a partner and a helper…someone who will improve your program and help children benefit from and enjoy their time with you.

Having an assistant in family child care is not just about “crowd control”. Certainly, working with a larger group of children requires more hands; but working with a larger group of children means accommodating more interests, more skills, more abilities, more learning and play styles, more families, more challenges, and, hopefully, more joys.

Even if you have a large group of children of approximately the same age, they will have different interests and abilities. Use your family child care assistant to enable you to separate the children into small groups with like interests and abilities. One group of children may do finger painting, while another group may be ready to take on papier mache. Or, if you are serving a mixed age group of children, you may wish to separate them into two groups with one or two older children in each group to act as “helpers” and/or “leaders” or “role models” for the younger children. Always have an educator assigned to each group to provide appropriate supervision and support for all of the children, younger and older.

You may separate children according to schedules. You may choose to separate the children who nap from those who don’t, and have your assistant supervise one group while you supervise the other, either indoors or out. Or you may have your assistant supervise tooth brushing for children who finish lunch first while you remain at the table in conversation with those who are taking their time. You will surely want to allow some time for older, school age children to work at activities that are not appropriate for the little ones, and you and your assistant can each supervise a separate activity, either in the same area of the home, or in different rooms.

All of this requires planning, preparation and communication; and, as always, flexibility and the willingness to change or adapt plans when things don’t go as expected.

Because you are responsible for your program, it is up to you to see that things are done the way you’ve planned. This starts with orientation.

When you hire an assistant, you must make sure that s/he has all the information she will need to help you run your program. You must spend time discussing children’s records and where they are kept; your emergency procedures, especially evacuation procedures and how to reach emergency management personnel; and your regular curriculum, so your assistant will be prepared to help you implement daily activities and work towards learning goals.

ou must spend time with your assistant discussing your expectations around supervision of children, your child guidance philosophy and policy, EEC Safe Sleep regulations and guidelines, Children’s individual health needs and the location of the first aid kit. You must explain the assistant’s obligations as a mandated report. Also, if your program has been granted any variances by EEC, you should make sure your assistant is aware of this.

Finally, you must document completion of the orientation by having your assistant sign an acknowledgement that the information was provided to her, and that she understood it.

This complete list is found in the regulations at 7.09(15)(d).

As we said earlier, you are responsible for ensuring that your program operates the way you have planned. Even though you will be busy working with some of the children, you must also make time to observe your assistant and notice what she does well, and areas where she needs to improve. Make notes about specific things you observe, including situations she handles well and situations where she could have done better. Does she intervene too quickly with the older children when they disagree? Is she too directive about their activities, or does she not get involved and provide guidance and leadership, and encourage new directions for their play? Does she expect too much of the younger children? Do you notice that she seems to encourage girls to participate in certain types of activities, and discourage them from others?

When you hire your assistant, you should let her know that you will be talking regularly with her about how things are going, and discussing not only program activities and individual children’s needs, but also how she can improve her performance. You may want to set a regular schedule for supervision, so that you don’t wait until a problem occurs, and use supervision only as a “punishment”. When you meet, make sure she hears some positives, as well as negatives, and try to avoid value judgments in labeling her activities. Be specific in any criticism, and point out how she might have handled the situation better. And always give your assistant an opportunity to give you feedback, ask questions, and make suggestions. Even though she is your employee, a successful program depends on your working in partnership.

Just as you, the licensee, are required to complete professional development hours each year, your assistants must also complete professional development. If the assistant work with you on a regular basis, as will be the case in a program serving 10 children, she will need to complete 10 hours of PD per year. It is your responsibility to ensure that your assistant completes the required training, and you must maintain documentation that she has done so.

You may want to work together to develop an individual professional development plan that sets long term goals and short term objectives for professional growth, and identifies ways to meet those goals and objectives. There is lots of training offered by EECs professional development partners and others in the community that can support your professional development plan…both yours and your assistant’s. You can find course and workshop listings on EEC’s Professional Development Calendar, and you can obtain counseling/mentoring and other supports by contacting the Professional Development Partnership in your area.

In most cases, your assistant will be considered your employee. As an employer you have certain obligations for taxes that you must be aware of. While this training cannot give you legal advice or explain all of your obligations as an employer, you should be aware that you will be responsible for certain tax obligations that you must calculate, withhold and submit to the state and/or federal government. You will be responsible for federal social security and medicare (FICA) taxes and employment taxes; and state workman’s compensation and employment taxes. The amounts depend on the amounts you pay your assistant, his/her marital status and how many deductions s/he claims. Some of the money is withheld from the employee’s pay, but you will also be required to pay an amount equivalent to the FICA taxes from your own funds.

In order to properly calculate, report and pay your tax obligations, you must first have each employee complete a “witholding certificate”, or form W-4. This will give you information that you need, such as your assistant’s marital status, and number of deductions to be taken. You must also complete a form I-9, which verifies that your employee is legally eligible to work in the United States. To do this you need proof of identity, such as a government issued photo ID. Once you have that information you should verify that the social security number and the name you have been given match in the federal government’s records. Call 1-800-772-6270 or 1-800-772-1213 to verify that the name and number match. If they do not match, do not hire the assistant. If they do match, you can legally employ, pay, and tax the assistant’s wages.

As we said earlier, we cannot give you legal advice or explain all of your tax obligations in this training. For information you need as an employer, visit the website www.IRS.gov/smallbiz, and review in particular Publications 15, the Employer’s Tax Guide, and Publication 583, Starting a Business and Keeping Records.

You may also want to obtain liability insurance for yourself and your employees, to protect your home and your business against any claim of abuse, neglect or injury. Many homeowners policies do not cover against any loss resulting from a family child care business. Check with your insurance company to see whether or not your business is covered, and how and where to obtain proper coverage.

Now that you have reviewed all of the information in this presentation, it’s time to check your understanding. Please print out the next two slides (slides 69 and 70) and answer the questions in the spaces provided. (If you need more space, you can always write on the back of the page.)

Now that you have completed this training and the follow-up quiz, you should print the certificate at the end of this presentation to keep with your licensing documents. Then submit your application for license upgrade, together with the quiz questions you answered. Once EEC receives your completed application for license upgrade, your licensor will contact you to schedule a site visit. You will receive a report from that visit, and you must respond with any corrections that are required. Once your assistant has been approved, EEC will send you a license reflecting your new capacity, and you can begin enrolling and caring for additional children.