



Department of Early Education and Care

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EEC Child Care Licensing

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Planning Field Trips

The use of off-site facilities, or “field trips”, can be a fun and educational way to enhance your early childhood education or out of school time curriculum. To be sure that children enjoy a safe and productive field trip, some advance thought and planning are required.

Consider Children’s Interests

First, consider the ages, abilities and interests of the children you are serving. Is the activity or location you are planning to visit appropriate for all of the children? Will they enjoy and be able to learn from the resources that will be available to them? While a trip to the zoo may be fun and educational for children of all ages, a trip to the science museum may not be interesting to infants and toddlers. A trip to the fire station may be exciting for preschoolers, but older school age children may find the same activity boring. Make sure the activity you are planning holds something of interest for everyone (ideally, including your staff)!

Consider the Time Required

Second, consider the time required to make the best use of the activity or location. Is this an activity that can be completed in an hour or two, or is a longer visit required? Will a short visit satisfy the children, or leave them begging, teasing, and crying for more? If the activity or location offers a full day (or more) of education and entertainment, are the children you serve old enough to enjoy such a long visit, or must you plan around nap times? Similarly, consider the time required to reach your destination. Given the ages of the children you serve, will the children happily travel that distance, or are you likely to have many unhappy children echoing “when are we going to be there” and “are we there yet?”

Contact the Field Trip Site

Once you have determined that the activity or location is suitable for the ages of children you serve; that the time you have available is sufficient; and that the travel distance is not too far, be sure to contact the location and discuss your visit with them. Let them know the number and ages of the children you are planning to bring, and ask about program, event and activity schedules. Determine which days would be best for your visit, considering the activities that will be available and which days may be especially busy or crowded at the field trip site. Ask if they have any suggestions for making the trip more enjoyable for the children and adults in the group. Verify the cost, and identify any hidden or unexpected costs that may arise, including costs for parking. Find out if there is a group or membership discount, or a reduced price (or reduced wait time!) for purchasing admission tickets in advance. Ask about bathroom facilities: are

they conveniently located, well-maintained, and easily supervised? Are the toilet facilities individual, so that school-age children can help themselves, or will a staff person need to accompany children into a multi-use facility? Ask whether the foods that are available nutritious and safe for young children, or might they present a choking hazard? You may decide it is easier, healthier and less expensive to bring along your own food and drinks. Ask whether your whole group will remain together, or will they be separated into smaller groups, each working or playing in a separate area. Plan to visit the field trip site yourself before finalizing your plans so that you can identify any potential hazards and take appropriate measures in advance to minimize risks.

Consider Needed Resources

Based on the information you have received, consider the resources you will need to keep children safe and happy en route and after you arrive at your destination. How many educators or other chaperones will be necessary to properly supervise the children and keep them safe and happy? Could the children wear brightly colored T-shirts or caps or some other article of clothing to make them easy to identify as part of your group? If bathrooms are multi-use facilities, you will need to ensure sufficient numbers of staff to accompany children to the bathroom while you maintain appropriate supervision of the rest of the group. Be sure that your staff are gender-appropriate for the children you are serving. An 8 year old boy does not want to be accompanied by a female staff in the restroom! If the facilities allow, you may be able to rely on a buddy system for older, school age children. If the activity you are planning is one which may result in wet or dirty clothing, you may need to bring additional clothing for children to change into. And, of course, make sure you are prepared for the weather. Outdoor activities in cold weather require that children wear layers of clothing, and protect themselves from wind chills with mittens, gloves and hats. Outdoor activities in hot weather require that children wear sunscreen and have an opportunity for rest in the shade, as well as sufficient drinking water to prevent heat stroke and dehydration. Develop contingency plans in the event that a child or chaperone becomes ill or separated from the group, or in case of a natural disaster.

Plan Your Transportation

Consider your means of transportation, and the supervision required. More chaperones may be necessary if children will be travelling by public transportation than would be required if you are using a bus or private vehicles. If you are using private vehicles, will you have sufficient car seats for the ages and number of children you will transport? You will need to be sure that you have completed a background record check for all volunteers driving children, that all drivers have a valid driver's license and that all vehicles are properly registered, inspected and insured. If you will use public transportation, is there a way to purchase a group ticket or pass that will save waiting time as children enter the station or board the train or bus?

Get Written Permission

Provide parents with written information about your trip: your plans for transportation, supervision, food, activities, and what you hope children will gain from the experience. Make sure you receive a signed permission slip for each child that includes transportation arrangements, date, time and place of your trip.

Prepare the Children

Prepare the children for their experience by talking about the location or the activity periodically before the day of your trip, pointing out what they can expect to see and

learn, and talking about the rules they will need to follow to stay safe and happy (such as stay with your group leader, don't talk to strangers, if you need to use the bathroom, ask permission). Include in your curriculum books, speakers or other activities related to your field trip. Allow time and encourage children to ask questions about their field trip, and decide whether the questions should be answered in advance, or explored during the trip. Take time to assign small groups of children to individual chaperones, and make sure that both children and chaperones know where and with whom they belong!

Pack for Your Trip

Pack sufficient food, water, clothing, tissues, sunscreen and diapers (if necessary), and make sure you take along children's emergency information and consents, any necessary medications (properly labeled in their original containers), first aid kits and emergency telephones. Take a group list so that you can take attendance frequently using the list, not memory. If parents or staff will transport children in their vehicles, make sure that the car seats are properly installed and the vehicles are filled with gasoline. Make sure that each child is carrying the name and telephone number of the program, and then...have fun!

During your Trip

Before you leave your program premises, take a count of all the children participating in the trip. Make sure that each chaperone knows the names of every child assigned to his or her group, and recognizes the face that goes with each name. Take attendance frequently using your group lists and matching the names with the faces present. Do not rely on memory! Take sufficient breaks for water, food and bathroom use. If a child is given permission to leave the group (for example, to use the bathroom), take a count of all children immediately after the child returns. Before leaving your destination to return home, repeat your count of all children, matching faces to names on the list. If you are all travelling together on a single bus, have one staff take the count from the back to the front of the bus, and have a second staff repeat the count from the front of the bus to the back. Immediately investigate and resolve any discrepancies in the count!

After Your Trip

Talk with children about all of the things they did and saw on their trip, including things that happened on the way to and from their destination. Ask what they liked most and least about the day. Ask children to write stories or draw pictures, or have staff assist children in recording memories from the trip to include in a trip scrap book, or to display in the classroom or family child care home. Talk with your staff and chaperones about what they liked most and least about the day, and ask for their suggestions about future field trips. Are there ways to improve the experience for everyone? Record your conclusions and keep them handy to assist with planning future fun and enriching field trips.



Field Trip Checklist

Contact Site

- Check date Activities Bathrooms Costs / Discounts Meals / snacks / drinks
- Group sizes

Visit Site

- Check bathrooms Hazards Exits Parking

Plan

- Day Time Transportation Chaperones Pre-trip activities Ticket Purchase
- Group / Chaperone Assignments Lost child Sick child/chaperone Disaster / weather
emergency

Check

- Volunteer background checks Drivers' licenses Car seats / seat belts
- Vehicle registration, inspection, insurance Gasoline Permission slips

Pack

- Emergency information Medications Food / water / snacks First aid kits
- Telephones Group lists Clothing Sunscreen Program name, phone number tags

Supervise

- Face to name count before leaving program Face to name count after each activity
- Face to name count before returning to program