

On the day of the trip, put tags on all children, giving the center's name, address, and phone number. Do not write children's names, addresses, or home phone numbers on the tags.

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**WAC**
**WAC 170-295-2080**
**What must I communicate to parents?**

- You must have written documentation signed by the parent in each child's file stating that you have:
  - Explained to the parent the center's policies and procedures
  - Discussed the center's philosophy, program and facilities
  - Advised the parent of the child's progress and issues relating to the child's care and individual practices concerning the child's special needs, and
  - Encouraged parent participation in center activities.
- You must also give the parent the following written policy and procedure information:
  - Enrollment and admission requirements
  - The fee and payment plan
  - A typical activity schedule, including hours of operation
  - Meals and snacks served, including guidelines on food brought from the child's home
  - Permission for free access by the child's parent to all center areas used by the child
  - Signing in and signing out requirements
  - Child abuse reporting law requirements
  - Behavior management and discipline
  - Non-discrimination statement
  - Religious and cultural activities, if any
  - Transportation and field trip arrangements
  - Practices concerning an ill child
  - Medication management
  - Medical emergencies
  - Disaster preparedness plan, and
  - If licensed for the care of an infant or toddler:
    - Diapering
    - Toilet training, and
    - Feeding

Parents are the child's first and most important teachers and have the greatest influence in their children's lives. In order to meet the needs of children in your care, you and your staff will want to establish a positive relationship with each child's family.

**Best Practice:** Teachers and families work closely in partnership to ensure high quality care and learning experiences for children and parents feel supported and welcomed as observers and contributors to the program. Caregivers need to listen to parents, seek to understand their goals and preferences for their children, and respect cultural and family differences. Parents should feel welcomed when they enter the classroom. Parents should be encouraged to observe, eat lunch with their child and/or volunteer to help in the classroom.



Parents should feel welcome when they enter the classroom.

Parent communications are the lifeline of your program. Good communication means letting parents know what they need to know when they need to know it. It means:

- ◆ Describing your program to parents so they can decide whether to enroll their child
- ◆ Obtaining the parent information you need to allow you to do a proper job of caring for their child
- ◆ Keeping in daily contact with the parents (it is important to communicate at every drop off and pick up time)
- ◆ Making sure parents pass important information on to you (for instance, you need to know if their child is going home with someone else that day)
- ◆ Informing parents of your program's curriculum and inviting them to enrich at home what you are doing at the center
- ◆ Letting parents know how their child is doing (they love to hear about amusing incidents or new developmental milestones)
- ◆ Ensuring parents know about center events, holiday closures, and center policies, and
- ◆ Reassuring parents that, although you have their child with you many hours each day, you recognize the parents as the child's primary caregivers. You want the child's time with you to meet the parents' wishes and expectations as much as possible.

Communication flows two ways. You will want your parents to share:

- ◆ How their child was feeling last night
- ◆ Major changes in their family situation
- ◆ Exciting or unexpected new things the child is doing at home, and
- ◆ Concerns about the program or their child's care.

You want the parents to talk with you. Complaints to other parents or silence do not help you solve the problem or meet the needs of their child.

## First contact with parents

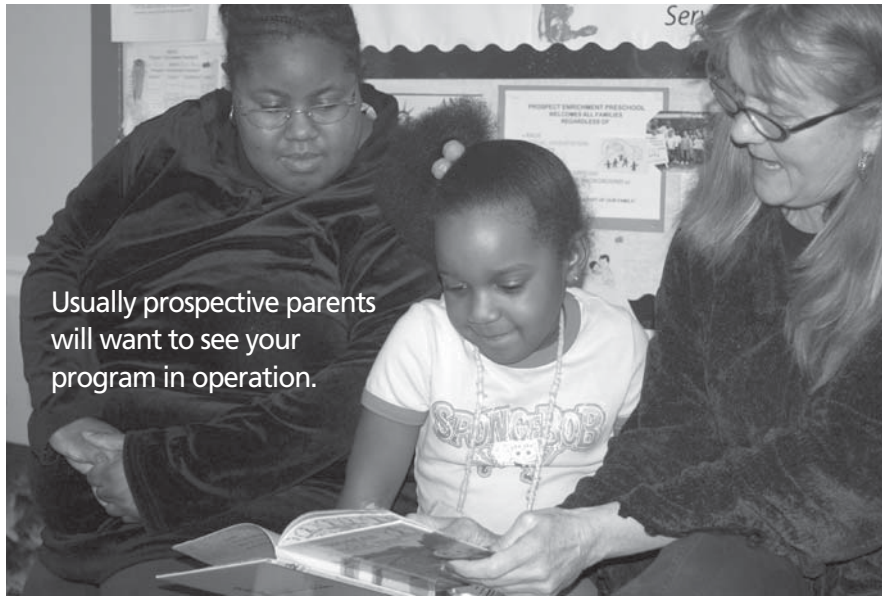
### Information Parents Will Want From You

Usually prospective parents will want to see your program in operation. They will ask questions and want a formal orientation to your program. When parents visit your program, you will want to share with them important information about your program, including:

- ◆ The philosophy of your center
- ◆ The age groupings, staff-child ratios, and physical layout of your center
- ◆ Opening and closing times
- ◆ Part-time or drop-in options
- ◆ A typical schedule of activities for their child's age group (they will want to know about meal times, when nap time is, and when the children are scheduled to play outdoors)
- ◆ Tuition and other fees
- ◆ Meal and snack policies
- ◆ Field trips
- ◆ Religious, holiday, or other cultural activities in your program
- ◆ Licensing and accreditation
- ◆ If you accept child care subsidies (and what kind)
- ◆ How long your center has served the community
- ◆ The background and experience of your staff
- ◆ Parent participation in center activities, and
- ◆ What openings you currently have or how long their child might be on a waiting list.

In addition:

- ◆ Parents will be interested in:
  - Meeting the staff person who will be their child's primary caregiver
  - Staff-child ratio and group size for their child
  - Feeding, diapering, and napping policies, and
  - How caregivers and parents pass information back and forth about the day's events or schedule.



Usually prospective parents will want to see your program in operation.

### Information You Will Want from the Parents

You and the parents are trying to decide if your center is a good fit for their child. You will need information from the parents as well. You should know:

- ◆ About the child's history in group settings
- ◆ General personality and activity level
- ◆ Special interests, talents, or fears
- ◆ Foods the child cannot eat and acceptable substitutes
- ◆ Allergies, possible learning disabilities, or other special needs
- ◆ Major life changes recently (Did the family just move? Has there been a recent divorce or a new stepparent? Is there a new sibling?)
- ◆ How the parents discipline their child at home, and
- ◆ How the parents describe their family (Are both parents at home? Does the child have brothers or sisters? If so, how many and what ages? Are there any extended family members at home?).

Note: Parents from some backgrounds, cultures or situations may be uncomfortable sharing information about themselves and their family. Let them know why this information is useful to you. Do not pressure them if they appear unwilling to share.

At the end of the initial contact, you and the parents will have to decide whether to enroll the child. If a parent is undecided, give the parent a brochure or flyer that gives highlights about your program. This way the parent has the basic information (it is costly to give every parent who takes a tour of your center a copy of your parent handbook and enrollment forms).

### Enrolling a Child

If the parents choose to enroll their child, give them a registration packet. You should include all the forms and authorizations you need for the child to start your program. It is important to provide all information, including enrollment forms, the parent handbook, and parent newsletters in the family's home language. Required forms include:

- ◆ Registration form
- ◆ Certificate of immunization status form
- ◆ Medical emergency authorization form
- ◆ Health history form
- ◆ Blanket field trip authorization form

A sample Registration Form and Annual Information Update form are included on the following pages.

**Registration Form**

Date: Enrolled \_\_\_\_\_ Left program \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian(s) name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Child's home address: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Is child living with both parents? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, with whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 1: Name/Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 2: Name/Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer address: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Names, addresses, and phone numbers of person(s) permitted to pick up your child from center:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, address and phone number of your child's physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of last physical exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, address, and phone number of your child's dentist (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have any specific health problems which the staff should be aware of? (i.e., vision or hearing loss, allergies, physical limitations, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list names and ages of other children in your home: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List any specific fears, likes, or dislikes your child has that might help us to know him/her better:

\_\_\_\_\_

How does your child act when ill? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your child take naps? \_\_\_\_\_ What is an average nap time? \_\_\_\_\_

Has your child had any previous group experiences? (i.e., co-ops, Sunday school, family home child care)

\_\_\_\_\_

What was your child's experience? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who disciplines your child at home? \_\_\_\_\_

What methods are used at home? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your child fully toilet trained? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, at what age did this occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have a good appetite? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your child's interests and favorite activities? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Information Update**

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 1: Name/Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 2: Name/Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency person: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Dentist (if any): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

People permitted to pick up child:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Special concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date last seen by a doctor/last physical exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Medical concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Recent immunizations: \_\_\_\_\_

New sister or brother? \_\_\_\_\_

New family living arrangements:? \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parent handbook

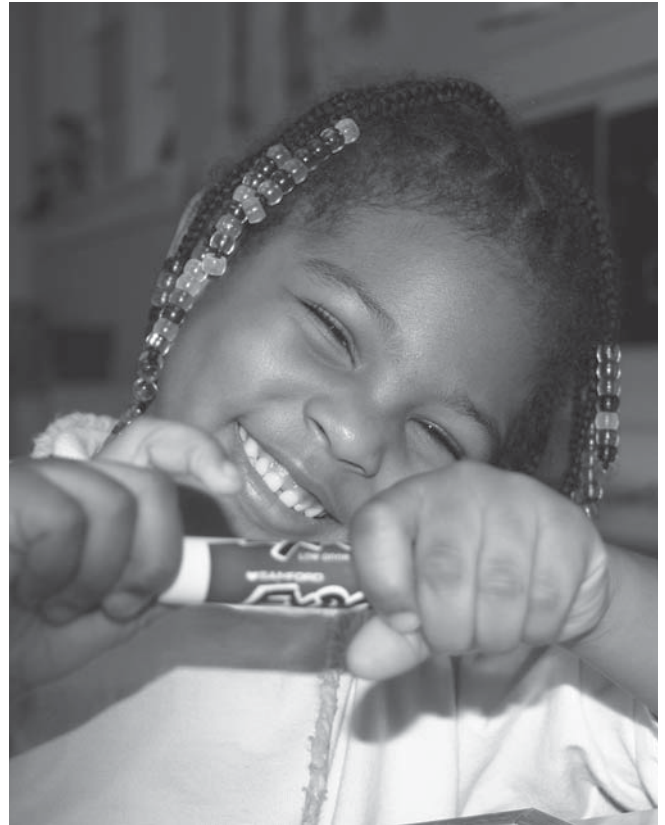
DEL requires that you give parents written policies and that you explain these policies to them. It is best to put all your policies and procedures in a single handout called your “Parent Handbook” or “Parent Information Guide.”

Parents need some way to keep all your policies in one place for future reference. A three-ring binder, a pocket folder, or simply stapling them together works well for this purpose.

**Note:** Some information (like your tuition rate or holiday schedule) changes from year to year. Make sure this information is current on all forms you give to parents. You may want to hand these out as separate pages.

Policies and procedures which you are required to include in your parent handbook are:

- ◆ The fee and payment plan
- ◆ Enrollment and admission requirements
- ◆ Hours of operation
- ◆ Typical activity schedule for the various age groups of children in care
- ◆ Statement informing parents that they are free to visit any part of your center their child uses without prior notice
- ◆ Meals and snacks served at the center (including an example of menu items and guidelines on food brought from the child’s home)
- ◆ How and where to sign their child in and out each day
- ◆ The center’s sick child policy, medication policy, how minor injuries and major medical emergencies are taken care of
- ◆ The center’s behavior management and discipline policies
- ◆ Transportation and field trip arrangements
- ◆ If caring for infants and toddlers, a description of diapering, toilet training, and feeding procedures
- ◆ A description of any religious, holiday, or cultural activities in your program
- ◆ A statement of non-discrimination
- ◆ Procedures and obligations for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services, and
- ◆ Disaster preparedness plan (this is discussed at length in Section 6, Safety and Environment), and
- ◆ Parent’s signature that they have received, read, and understand the parent policies.



On the following pages, guidelines for a Parent Handbook are included. You can use these guidelines as you develop the written information for your parent handbook.

## Guidelines for Developing a Parent Handbook or Written Information for Parents

### Introduction

Child care centers are required to provide parents with written information about their facility. The following items are required. Under each required item is an outline of recommended information to include. This specific information may vary depending on the unique services provided by your child care center. You may add other information that you wish parents to have.

### Enrollment and Admissions Requirements

- ◆ Ages of children served.
- ◆ Policy regarding trial visits.
- ◆ Policy regarding part-time or drop-in care.
- ◆ Policy regarding acceptance of DSHS subsidized child care.
- ◆ Required enrollment forms. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Registration form, including the child's health history
  - A signed fee and payment plan
  - A complete record of immunizations
  - Written consent for children to receive emergency medical care
  - Signed consent for children to go on field trips, including walks and swimming
  - A signed agreement for the child care provider to furnish transportation. Specify the type of transportation, which may include public or chartered bus, van, parent or staff vehicles, etc.

### Fee and Payment Plan

- ◆ Rates:
  - Do you charge by the hour, half-day, week, or month?
  - State your refund policy.
  - Do you have a sliding fee scale?
- ◆ Are there charges for additional services such as registration, field trips, diapers, special activities, etc?

- ◆ Payment dates and payment procedure.
- ◆ Do you have a policy regarding children being picked up late?
- ◆ Policies regarding vacation notification and sick days
- ◆ State when you plan to re-evaluate rates and how much advance notice will be given.
- ◆ Policy regarding terminating child care:
  - Conditions and notice parents will be given
  - Notice expected from parents. Is there a penalty fee if parents do not give adequate notice?

### A Typical Daily Schedule

- ◆ Provide parents with a typical daily schedule including:
  - Hours of operation.
  - Times when meals and snacks are served.
  - Time when naps are taken.
  - Activities provided for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children. It may be more practical to prepare a separate schedule for different age groups.

### Meals and Snacks Served

- ◆ List meals and snacks provided, including breakfast or dinner.
- ◆ Describe a typical breakfast, lunch, and snack.
- ◆ List any foods parents are expected to provide. Include requirements and suggestions for providing nutritious foods, including what kinds of food not to send.
- ◆ Indicate that foods brought from home will be monitored to ensure safe preparation, storage, and nutritional adequacy (when parents send food for a child, it can be eaten by that child only, and not shared with other children).
- ◆ Indicate that foods brought from home that do not meet nutritional requirements will be supplemented. State extra charge for supplement.
- ◆ State that snack and meal menus will be prepared at least one week in advance and indicate where menus will be posted for parents to review.
- ◆ Describe how children with food allergies will be cared for.



### **Permission for Free Access by the Child's Parent to All Center Areas Used By the Child**

- ◆ Inform parents they have free access at all times to all areas of the center that their child uses.

### **Sign-in and Sign-out Requirements**

- ◆ Inform parents they are required to sign their full legal signature when they bring and pick up children.
- ◆ Identify the location of the sign-in/sign-out record.
- ◆ Staff will sign out school-age children when they leave for school, and sign the children back in when they return from school.
- ◆ Children are not permitted to sign themselves in or out of the child care center.
- ◆ Children will only be released to persons authorized on the registration form unless given written permission by the parent or guardian who enrolled the child to release the child to another person. State that you and your staff must ask for verification of identity.
- ◆ Children will not be released to a parent or any other person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

### **Child Abuse Reporting Law Requirements**

- ◆ Inform parents that you and your staff are required by Washington State law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services any instance where there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation.
- ◆ Explain that you may not be able to notify parents when the police or Child Protective Services are called about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, depending upon the recommendation of Child Protective Services.

### **Behavior Management and Guidance**

- ◆ Describe your guidance practices.
- ◆ Any form of corporal punishment (which includes biting, jerking, shaking, spanking, hitting or kicking) is not used at your center.
- ◆ Any form of corporal punishment is not permitted on the premises of the child care center by anyone, including parents.
- ◆ State your policy regarding children who have difficulties with behavior management. Indicate steps that will be taken to resolve problems.

### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

- ◆ Child care is provided to any family regardless of race, creed, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or physical, mental or sensory disability.

### **Religious Activities**

- ◆ Describe any religious, cultural, or holiday activities, including grace before meals, religious stories or songs, religious instruction, cultural celebrations, etc.
- ◆ State your policy for parents or children who do not want to participate in a religious activity, and alternatives that will be provided.

### **Transportation and Field Trip Arrangements**

- ◆ If providing before- or after-school care, state whether or not transportation is provided. If providing transportation list the schools to which it is provided.
- ◆ If you will be taking field trips, state how transportation is provided (child care center vehicle, staff vehicles, parents, chartered bus, or public transportation).
- ◆ State safety measures used when transporting children including seat belts, car seats, current first aid and CPR training requirements, and first aid kit, etc.

- ◆ Drivers must have a current Washington State driver's license and medical and liability insurance, and vehicles must be in safe operating condition.
- ◆ Written parent permission for field trips is required.
- ◆ State your policy regarding children who cannot or choose not to go.
- ◆ If you do not plan to take field trips, state your 'No Field Trips' policy and inform parents of alternatives for enriching the children's experience (for example, bringing the fire department to the center).

### Practices Concerning an Ill Child

- ◆ Children are given daily health checks when they arrive at the facility.
- ◆ State the policy for excluding ill children and give examples of symptoms that will indicate the need for exclusion.
- ◆ State how and where you care for a child who becomes ill at the center and how you will notify parents to pick up their child.
  - State how illnesses are recorded.
  - State that communicable diseases are reported to the local health department and licensor, and that all parents are notified.

### Medication Management

- ◆ Inform parents about the requirements for administering medications, both for prescription and non-prescription medication.
- ◆ State how you document and record that the medication has been given.
- ◆ State how and where you store children's medication.
- ◆ State how and when you return the medication to the parent.

### Medical Emergencies

- ◆ Life threatening emergencies:
  - Describe how you and your staff will care for major emergencies.

- Describe what you will do and who you will contact if you cannot reach parents.
- State how you will document major emergencies.
- ◆ Minor emergencies:
  - Describe how you and your staff will care for minor emergencies.
  - Describe what you will do and who you will contact if you cannot reach parents.
  - State how you will document minor emergencies.
- ◆ List hospitals used for emergencies. State that if parents have a preference other than those hospitals listed, the child care facility will try to accommodate parents, if possible.

### Policies Regarding Infants and Toddlers

If the center is licensed for infant and toddlers, the following policies must be included:

- ◆ Diapering Policy
  - State whether diapers and other supplies are provided by parents or the center.
  - Do you use a diaper service or disposable diapers?
  - Describe your diaper changing policy and procedures.
  - Indicate if soiled diapers will be returned to parents at the end of the day.
- ◆ Toilet Training Policy
  - Describe your toilet training policy. State that toilet training is initiated when the child indicates readiness and in consultation with the child's parent. Indicate whether you or parents supply training pants.
- ◆ Meals/Food
  - State that you and the parents will agree on a schedule for feeding infants.
  - Indicate whether the parent or the center will supply bottles, nipples, milk, formula or bottled foods.
  - State your policy regarding labeling bottles and foods either brought from home or prepared at the center.

- State your policy regarding providing semi-solid foods to infants
- State your policy regarding mothers who wish to breast feed their infants.
- ◆ Disaster Policy
  - Summarize your Disaster Policy by outlining the natural disasters that may occur in your area and your plan of action for each one.
  - Inform parents that a full copy of your Disaster Policy is available for their review in your office or other location.
  - Parents must sign a statement that they have reviewed your Disaster Policy.
  - Inform parents that you have written documentation that staff have been trained on the Disaster Policy.

### **Other Information You May Want to Give Parents**

The following information is not required, but may be helpful to parents in your program.

- ◆ A description of your activity program, developmental approaches with children, cultural relevancy, and how you serve children with special needs.
- ◆ A description regarding how children are grouped according to age and/or stage of development, the staff-to-child ratio, and the group size that is maintained for the various age groups in care.
- ◆ A description of how you communicate with parents, how parents can communicate with you and your staff about their children and any concerns they may have
- ◆ State ways that parents can become involved in your child care center. These may include parent advisory boards, classroom observation, parent training provided at the center, volunteering for field trips, and center activities.
- ◆ List items that parents must provide, including bedding for naps, containers for soiled diapers, change of clothes, outdoor wear, toothbrushes, etc.
- ◆ State your policy about labeling of clothing, bedding, etc.
- ◆ State your policy regarding infection control. Include handwashing procedures, sanitation of toys and equipment, general cleanliness of center, TB testing of staff and volunteers, and HIV/AIDS training for staff and volunteers.
- ◆ State your policy regarding children bringing their own toys, and who is responsible if toys are lost or broken.
- ◆ State your policy about bringing gum, candy, birthday treats, etc.
- ◆ State your policy about items not to bring to the center.
- ◆ Describe your qualifications and background and give information regarding staff qualifications.
- ◆ Provide a center calendar, including vacation schedule, parent conferences, library day, etc.
- ◆ Explain the importance of fresh air and outdoor exercise for children, general rainy day policy, whether parents can request that you keep their child inside on a particular day, and the importance for both child and staff to be clear on what days the child will be present. Request that parents let you know when their child will have an extended absence.
- ◆ Explain the importance of informing you when information on file about them or their child changes (for example, additional immunizations, or a new work phone number).
- ◆ Explain procedures for parents to arrange a conference with their child's caregiver or the center director.
- ◆ State reasons the center may decide it can no longer provide care for the child.
- ◆ Lost and found procedures.
- ◆ How your center celebrates birthdays.

### **You Might Also Want to Find Out from Parents**

- ◆ What talents they might be willing to share with the center, and
- ◆ Whether they are available to occasionally help at lunchtime or drive on field trips.

Note: Licensing requires you to have written documentation that parents have received your written information (parent handbook) and that you have explained and discussed the center's policies and procedures with them. This signed written document is a contract and a legal document. Its main purpose is to make the agreement between you and the parents perfectly clear and business-like. Sign and date the agreement. Give the parents a copy and keep the original copy in the child's file.

### Parent's "Right to Know"

Valid complaints about your center are public information. Parents can call a toll-free number or go to a website to find out more information about your center, including the number and findings of complaints.

- ◆ Toll-free telephone number: 1-866-482-4325
- ◆ Web-site: [www.del.wa.gov/ccel/parents.shtml#lccis](http://www.del.wa.gov/ccel/parents.shtml#lccis)

You must post a notification advising parents that you are required to keep for their review:

- ◆ Copies of the center's most recent licensing initial or renewal checklists
- ◆ Copies of the center's most recent monitoring checklists, and
- ◆ Copies of Facility Licensing Compliance Agreements for any corrective actions needed.

You may also want to have available for parents to review:

- ◆ Results of health or fire inspections, and
- ◆ Substantiated complaints by the department.

### Preparing For A Child's First Day

For many families, bringing their child to your center for the first time can be a stressful experience. Both parents and children need to be comfortable and prepared for this new adventure. To help parents prepare their child for the first day of care, you can:

- ◆ Invite the parents and child to visit before the first day



Suggest ways for parents to say goodbye the first day (invite parents to stay for a while the first few days when appropriate).

- ◆ Show the parents what room or areas the child will be in
- ◆ Introduce them to their child's caregiver
- ◆ Suggest ways for parents to say goodbye the first day (invite parents to stay for a while the first few days when appropriate)
- ◆ Ask parents to tell their children when they will return at the end of the day (remind parents that it is unsettling for a new child to be the last person to go home)
- ◆ Ask parents to label all clothes and personal belongings
- ◆ Tell parents things children should bring with them their first day such as a lunch, slippers, or a special nap blanket (ask if the child has a special security item that will help him or her feel more comfortable in your setting)
- ◆ Ask parents to send an extra set of clothes appropriate for the season (let parents know the procedures for sending home wet or soiled clothes), and
- ◆ Let parents know the things children should not bring to the center, such as toys or candy.

You also have things to do to get ready for a child's first day. You will need to put the child's name on a cubby and cot or crib. Add the child's name to the sign-in list. Put the family's name on the parent bulletin board. Make a cheery welcome sign. These little touches can help a child and family feel welcome and make the transition to your center go smoothly.

When the child and parent(s) arrive, greet them warmly. Parents may react in different ways to leaving their child. Every family is different. Some adults may find it very difficult to leave. Others will know just when to say goodbye to their child. Still others would prefer to rush out the door and not deal with their own or their child's feelings about this major change in their lives.

All parents will benefit from your support and understanding during what may be for them a difficult time, even if they treat it casually. You set the tone by being calm and friendly, welcoming the parent and the child alike.

During those first few hours, the child may have a lot of difficulty getting used to the new people and surroundings. Watch carefully and take any steps necessary to make the child and the parent feel a part of your program.

Parents of very young children, or of those who are enrolled in a group for the first time, may want to stay a full day and then gradually decrease the number of hours over the next week or two.

Some parents do not have the luxury of that much time and some children do not need this kind of a transition. Talk with the family about the best arrangements for everyone involved. Saying goodbye is not easy, but it is not in the best interest of child or family to prolong it unnecessarily.

If a parent must leave a clinging child in tears, you are responsible to comfort the distraught child. After the child has calmed down, be sure to take a minute to call the parent and offer reassurance that the child is now feeling more comfortable. Let the parents know that it is okay for them to call and check on their child. Then, at the end of the day, again describe how the child settled into the day.

## Communication with Parents

Each day, you and the parents will need to exchange information about important events that occurred since you saw each other last. Take just a few minutes when the child arrives and again when the parent returns to fill each other in on what is happening with the child.

If parents do not have the time to spend even a few moments in casual conversation, you might want to arrange a time when you can call them to talk about how their child's day has been. Or if parents are always in a hurry, jot down a quick note about the day's events and pin it to the child's backpack. You will need to find ways to share information about the child with the parents.

If you have a large program with many staff members, written notes between teachers and parents may be essential. If caregivers change between arrival and pick-up time, work out a system that is easy to use and allows everyone to feel well-informed about the children. The system should work for both parents and staff.

## Advising Parents of Their Child's Individual Progress

WAC 170-295-2080 states that you must have written documentation signed by the parent in each child's file stating that you have "advised the parent of the child's progress and issues relating to the child's care". This may include documentation that they have received written observations or assessments, reviewed a child's portfolio (a collected sample of their work), or attended a parent-teacher conference. You can contact your local resource and referral agency or community and technical college for more information about developmentally appropriate assessments of children.

**Best Practice:** Parent-teacher conferences are held at least once a year to share information with parents about their child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

### Bulletin Boards

Your program will benefit from having a central information area in an entryway or main hallway where parents pass through. You may want to display all your information on a bulletin board somewhere near the sign-in/sign-out sheets.

In addition to things you must post for licensing (WAC 170-295-7080), you may want to post the following items for parent interest:

- ◆ General announcements, upcoming parent meeting, field trip, or parent conference schedule
- ◆ Payment envelope or driver sign-up sheet for field trip
- ◆ Copies of newsletters
- ◆ Names and pictures of staff (and the hours they work)
- ◆ Photo display of recent center activities
- ◆ Names of new children just starting your program and their parents
- ◆ Credentials of staff
- ◆ Accreditation of program
- ◆ Memberships in education or professional associations
- ◆ Information concerning child or family health (immunization reminders, product safety, healthy recipes, etc., and
- ◆ Designated area for parents to post information.

**Note:** Getting an important message to parents can be difficult. Many parents are busy and in a hurry to get to work or home at night. The parent who drops off the child may not be the same parent who picks up the child at night. Announcements should be big, bright, and posted where parents can be sure to see them.

Do not assume that letting the parents know once means they will remember. Strongly encourage parents to mark upcoming events on their calendar. Send home a calendar with center events, dates, and reminders of upcoming events.

### Inviting Parents to Observe

Inform parents that they may visit your center at any time (this is required by licensing). You can suggest good times to visit or observe a special activity, or times that are least disruptive to the children.

Some centers use a handout covering observation guidelines. Talk with parents before their visit about what they would like to see. Allow parents an opportunity to talk to a staff person about what they observed and ask questions.

### Newsletter

A good way to get information to parents routinely is through a monthly newsletter. It can cover a variety of topics, such as:

- ◆ Summary of activities children have done in the past month
- ◆ Suggestions of activities that parents can do at home with their children
- ◆ Notes from staff members about things that have happened in their rooms
- ◆ Announcements about activities planned for the month to come
- ◆ Ways parents can help out
- ◆ Important dates for parents to mark on their calendars
- ◆ Pats on the back for parents who have helped out recently
- ◆ Child care information parents might find useful (such as discipline techniques, sack lunch or snack recipes, or illness prevention), and
- ◆ Gentle reminders about center policy.

**Parent Meetings**

Parent meetings may be a mix of business and topics of interest to your parents. For example, you might want to have meetings devoted to:

- ◆ Common parenting problems (getting children to bed or getting them to eat healthy foods are high interest topics)
- ◆ Teaching children about personal safety
- ◆ Developing an anti-bias perspective, or
- ◆ Behaviors to expect at different stages of development and how to respond to them.

Note: Name tags are a good idea at parent meetings. Have parents write down not only their own name but their child's. Parents can start to associate the names of their children's friends with the faces of their parents.

Not every parent get-together needs to be a business meeting. You might want to organize social events. Picnics in the park offer a fun and informal way for families and staff to get acquainted.

**Parent-Caregiver Conferences**

You may want to schedule conferences to share child-related information with parents. Organize ahead of time points you want to cover. Always begin the conference with a positive comment or two about the child. Things you may want to include in the conference are:

- ◆ Specific observations or assessments of the child's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development
- ◆ Activities the child enjoys and particular skills they are working on or have mastered
- ◆ A discussion of typical developmental ages and stages and expected behaviors
- ◆ Any concerns you or the parents have, and
- ◆ Goals you plan to concentrate on in the near future.

Also, let parents know they can contact you and/or their child's provider at any time.

**Parent Involvement in Your Program**

Most parents will not volunteer unless they know you want their help. If you want to get the parents involved, give them a list of ways they can participate in your child care center. These include:

- ◆ Be on the advisory board
- ◆ Be a child care helper (parents who are regular volunteers receive the same orientation you give all staff members)
- ◆ Be a lunch helper
- ◆ Help prepare materials
- ◆ Contribute to topics children are currently exploring (fossils from home, books, or stamp collecting)
- ◆ Help with repairs
- ◆ Share their cultural heritage or travel experiences in cooking projects, clothing, songs, slides, books, or special objects
- ◆ Help with holiday celebrations
- ◆ Contribute their time and skills to special projects such as art, music, dance, cooking, weaving, or woodworking
- ◆ Help with trip planning, organization, or driving
- ◆ Help with fund-raising, or
- ◆ Attend a parent work night.

Note: Parent involvement improves the quality of your program.

**Special Communication Needs of Parents with Infants**

Parents of infants need to know how much and when their child ate, how many diaper changes they had that day, and when the child took naps. You might want to use the Infant Daily Report found on the following page to keep track of this information and then tuck it in the child's bag when it is almost time to go home. Translate the chart into all the languages spoken by families in your program.

**Infant Daily Report**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Time In: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last slept: \_\_\_\_\_ Last fed: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Family's instructions for today: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Family Contact phone number if different today: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected time of pick-up: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child slept from: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Your baby ate (when & how much)

Your baby was changed (when and wet/B.M.)

1st \_\_\_\_\_

1st \_\_\_\_\_

2nd \_\_\_\_\_

2nd \_\_\_\_\_

3rd \_\_\_\_\_

3rd \_\_\_\_\_

4th \_\_\_\_\_

4th \_\_\_\_\_

5th \_\_\_\_\_

5th \_\_\_\_\_

General Disposition: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Health Notes (include any medications given): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments about your child's day: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### Sign-in/Sign-out

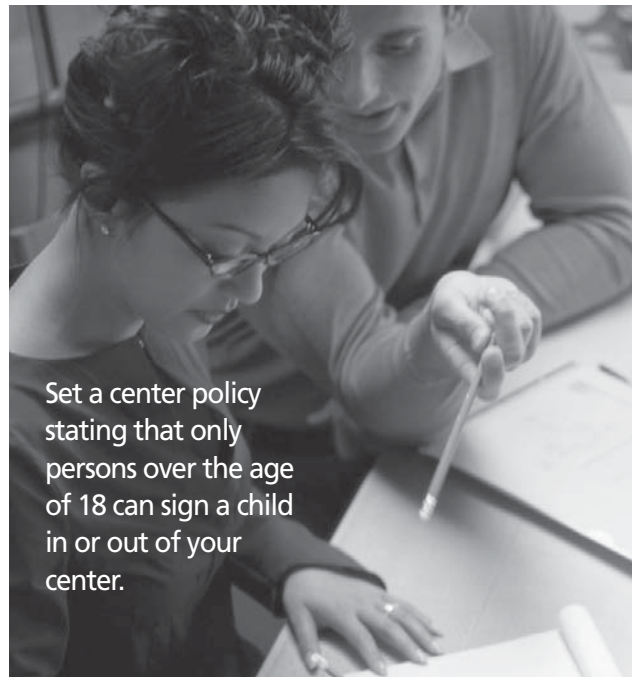
Parents are required to sign children in and out each day with their full legal signatures. This makes sign-in/sign-out sheets a perfect place to pass important information back and forth. It takes a little time, but it gives parents a sense that their child is important to you and helps you inform them about their child's "other world." You can add a column to the sheet for messages such as:

- ◆ Reminders to give medicine or to take medicine home
- ◆ Parents authorizing other people to take their children home
- ◆ Notes from parents that their children will be going home early
- ◆ Reminders for parents to bring in extra clothes

Some messages will be personal or too long to fit on the sheet. The person leaving the message can write on the sheet that a folded note is attached with the person's name on it.

School-age sign-in/sign-out sheets need morning columns for parents to sign them in and caregivers to sign them out to go to school. They also need afternoon columns for caregivers to sign them back in from school and parents to sign them back out.

WAC 170-295-7030 states that "the parent or other person authorized by the parent to take the child to or from the center must sign in the child on arrival and sign out the child at departure..." Licensing requirements do not state a minimum age of a person authorized to sign a child in or out. However it must be a responsible person who can assure the safety of the child once they leave the center. Many centers, due to liability issues, develop their own center policy stating that no one under the age of 18 years of age (or 16 years of age) may sign a child in or out. If you have a policy regarding a minimum age for signing in and out, be sure to clearly state it in your parent handbook.



Set a center policy stating that only persons over the age of 18 can sign a child in or out of your center.

If you do not have a center policy (or if you make an exception), you must decide on an individual basis whether a particular older sibling is responsible and capable of signing out their younger sibling and walking the child home. Before making a decision to allow an older sibling to remove a child consider the following:

- ◆ The age and maturity level of the older sibling
- ◆ How busy the traffic is on the route home (if they have to cross busy streets)
- ◆ If the younger child listens well and follows directions, and
- ◆ Whether there are other options or alternatives for the family to consider.

**Best practice:** Set a center policy stating that only persons over the age of 18 can sign a child in or out of your center. You can make exceptions to your policy as needed in order to meet the individual needs of your families based on the particular children involved. If you do make an exception, have the parent sign a statement giving authorization to their under-age child to remove the child from your program and keep it in the child's file.

Sample daily attendance sheets are included on the following pages and can be used as models for your center.



