



Quality Standards for Family Child Care Settings

The Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education document is based on a vision for early childhood educators and families, to make certain that children have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate programs. Family child care providers are a key group of early childhood educators. The Quality Standards is intended to help family child care providers adapt the standards to the services they provide. Thanks to the Executive Board of the Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas, Inc. for their contributions to this section.

Quality Standards in Family Child Care Homes

To implement the Quality Standards, home child care providers must first look at the standards and indicators and adapt them to their own programs. At the same time, care must be taken to keep the actual intent of the standard. The family child care provider must realize there are numerous ways to achieve the quality outcomes and indicators. The indicators may be manifested differently depending on each individual child care provider. Providers assess themselves when using the Quality Standards. Assistance, as needed, is available from the Child Care Providers Coalition of Kansas or other providers across the state who are more familiar with the interpretation of the Quality Standards.

To be licensed as a home child care provider, many requirements must be met to assure that minimum standards for health, safety, adult-child ratios and training will be maintained. However, the Quality Standards challenge the provider to aim for a higher level of standards--standards of quality for all providers of early childhood care and education--as a method of increasing program quality.

Implementation of Quality Standards Areas in Family Child Care Settings

Family involvement: Identify ways parents can be involved in the total child care program, considering

the diversity of families. As a provider, part of our role is as a resource person for families. We can be a resource by keeping abreast of children's issues, community activities and resources of interest to children and families. We must communicate clearly to families (orally and/or with daily notes) about their child's learning experiences and progress (eating, sleeping, social skills, etc.). We must convey that parental involvement and participation with their child in our child care home is encouraged and the "door is always open." We might offer opportunities through the year for parents to participate with their child. Some examples might be field trips, potluck dinners, special programs, and family work nights.

Community: As providers, we should inform ourselves as to what resources are available in the community and how we might become involved. Resource and referral agencies, health departments, schools, Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services offices, county extension offices, and hospitals are good sources for this information. We can then assist families in locating services they need. Since we are observing their child every day, we may be able to counsel a family about a suspected delay in development and let them know whom to contact for a developmental screening.

Program Administration: Reflect on how you feel about children and child care and write policies and procedures. Families could benefit from having written materials so they know what is expected from them and what their provider will or will not do. Policies can remain flexible and changes can be made to policies that are not working. Effective program administration is reflected by activities that recognize each child's individual strengths and weaknesses and the variations of each family, while operating within policy guidelines.

Personnel: In a family child care home, the provider usually works alone and is the only "staff." The provider is the administrator, teacher, cook, nurse,

nutritionist, janitor, chauffeur, therapist, and maintenance person. To keep up with these many roles, we should avail ourselves of a variety of training opportunities, enhancing our knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice for young children, as well as other topics such as nutrition and business management. We might observe other family child care homes to increase our expertise and use the Harms-Clifford "Family Day Care Environment Rating Scale" or another tool to assist in planning changes in the environment. As providers, we should know our enrollment capacity and what we can personally handle. It may not always be effective or advantageous to work at full capacity.

Doing a self-evaluation can be very helpful. Acquiring national accreditation through the National Association for Family Child Care of a credential as a Child Development Associate would be another way to enhance our abilities and the quality of our care.

Learning Experiences: In a family child care home, children are of mixed ages, which can be challenging in planning daily activities. The needs of each child, their interests, abilities, and temperaments can all be reflected in a program plan. The way a child learns is through experience and imitation of adults and peers. As caregivers, our job is to provide materials and facilitate, allowing each child the freedom to be creative and learn through process, not product. A daily routine of activities is important to the children and providers. Planning a balance of quiet and noisy, large and fine motor, free choice and group activities will provide variety. Flexibility in the schedule is also needed to allow for spontaneous learning experiences.

The child care provider should become well-versed in child development. This goal can be met through reading pamphlets and brochures, taking courses through the Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities Program, attending conferences and workshops, and / or enrolling in early childhood college courses.

Health and Nutrition: Family child care providers are eligible to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program offered in Kansas through the Department of Education. As care providers, we need to be aware of the importance of serving nutritious, well-balanced meals and providing a healthy child care environment. Demonstrating health habits, such as

safe food preparation and hand washing, provides daily models for our children and families. Individual policy and state requirements are available as handouts for parents as reminders about immunizations required, contagious diseases, physical exams and the like. These may be obtained by contacting Dr. Gainfranco Pezzino at (785) 296-6536.

Child Assessments: In family child care, we often observe a child's progress, but do not document it in writing. Children develop at different paces, and skills are learned at different times. Assessment means identifying what it is the child is doing now compared to two or three months ago, not comparing one child to another. If there are areas of concern to us as providers and the children's parents, then necessary steps should be taken to address the issue. This may entail contacting a physician and other trained professionals in the area of concern. Assessment should identify both the child's strong and weak areas. We can help supply information to the parents on how they can promote their child's progress and develop a plan with them for how we might facilitate their child's development through our care.

Simple assessment tools are available to help providers show parents, in a tangible way, the skills the child has mastered and those that are emerging. Scheduling conferences with parents on a regular basis can be helpful for communicating with parents about their child's progress.

Program Evaluation: An annual evaluation or checklist given to each family is one tool to help providers confirm their strengths and identify areas of concern. Suggestions from other providers or "mentors" can give new insights about our programs. Our most valuable asset is a satisfied family, giving us positive feedback and referrals for future families. As child care providers, we can look at our programs annually by reviewing the Quality Standards, talking and listening to families and children, and using other checklists and assessment tools.

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