



CHILD CARE COUNCIL

Serving Columbia, Greene and Ulster Counties

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SUZANNE HOLDRIDGE

Contracts and Policies in Your Child Care Program



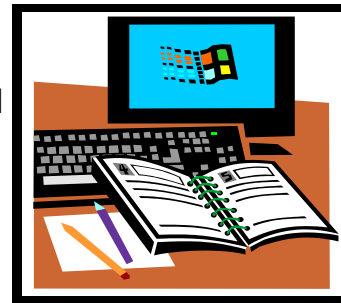
DEVELOPING CONTRACTS, PROCEDURES, AND POLICY HANDBOOKS FOR YOUR CHILD CARE PROGRAM

2013/2014

What's inside:

- *Contracts: What Are We Agreeing To?*
- *Program Procedures*
- *Policy Handbook Guidelines*

As a child care provider, you are also a small business owner, and should establish contracts and policies that go along with running your own business. Having contracts, policy handbooks, and adhering to procedures is not only smart business, but is also required by NYS OCFS Child Care Regulations, as a regulated child care program in New York State.



Having a contract that is signed by both parties makes this an official agreement, and assists the provider to be seen in a professional light, rather than as "just a babysitter". There's lots that go into the making of a high quality, professional child care program. Program Development is important but establishing your policies and procedures regarding your health, illness, safety and transportation policies are just as important.

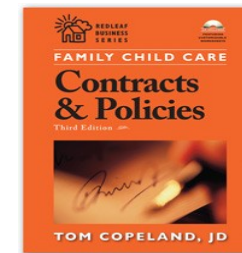
The NYS OCFS Child Care Regulations are designed to promote the health, safety, and development of children enrolled in your child care program, as well as assist you in establishing the foundation of your child care program. Use them to establish policies, procedures, and practices that will engage children in developmentally appropriate practices, while maintaining the health and safety of all children in your care. Once you establish the procedures you want to follow, you can set up your policy handbook, and enrollment policies. After reviewing the day care regulations, you can incorporate those regulations into your programming so you can ensure compliance and offer a high-quality, professional program.

Contracts: What Are We Agreeing To?

It's important to have a child care contract with the parents of the children you're providing care for. A contract is an agreement made between two parties, and both parties expect the other to live up to the terms of the contract. Having a contract makes providing child care more like a business arrangement, rather than simply watching children.



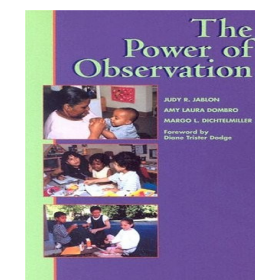
<http://www.ocfs.ny.gov/main>



Family Child Care Contracts & Policies
Tom Copeland, JD



Family Child Care Record Keeping Guide - 7th edition
Tom Copeland, JD

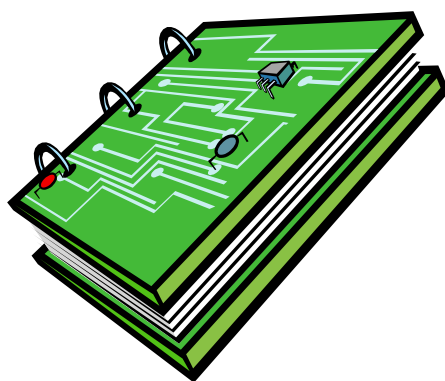


The Power of Observation
Judy R. Jablon
Amy Laura Dombro
Margo L. Dichtelmiller

Mission Statement:
To support the community by expanding and promoting high quality Child Care that meets the needs of children & their families.
Visit our website www.familyofwoodstockinc.org

Conclusion

The basis of your child care program is shaped by your policies. Your policies guide the type of program you are offering. It's important that they are followed by the parents, children, and the caregivers in order to make the system work smoothly.



Contracts are also an important part of your child care program and business, as you are conducting a business and providing a service to your community. The child care provider needs to protect themselves as a small business owner, while offering the very important task of teaching our children.

By being familiar with the regulations, it's easier to establish those policies that explain to parents why you do what you do. Parents of currently enrolled children need to know the policies of your program, as they have some responsibility as well, seeing this as a partnership. Prospective parents need to know the policies to help them assess if your program is the right one for their child and can meet the family's needs.



There are lots of resources on the Internet, and your local Child Care Resource and Referral office is a great resource to assist you in meeting your needs.

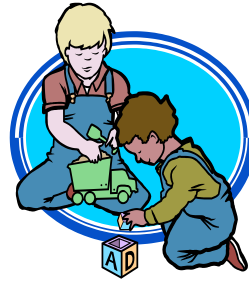
There are 5 specific items that should be included in your written contract:



- 1- **The names of each party** It's important to ensure that not only the parent's names are included, but also those of the child or children being cared for. A good rule of thumb is to include the names of the parents you will be receiving payment from. Along with their names, you should also include their address, phone numbers, email address, and place of employment.
- 2- **Hours of operation and specific hours of care agreed to for each family** Your contract should state your overall hours of operation, as well as those specific hours that you are providing care for each family. In other words, you can state the hours that you are available, but also include the hours you are caring for a specific child on each individual contract. You want to make this clear, so parents don't think they can bring their child at any time and pick up at any time. Include a start date for child care as well. Make sure you are clear about the period of time the parent will be paying you for.
- 3- **Terms of payment** Your payment terms should be very clear as far as what your rates are. There are different ways to set your rates: per day, per week, per hour, part-time care, full-time care, and so on. You should set that according to what works best for you. It's a good practice to actually state 2 additional clauses that could save you from future trouble: Payment will be made one week in advance, and the last 2 weeks of child care would be paid for upon signing the contract. In the event a parent removes their child with no notice, having this clause could prevent you from non-receipt of payment after a child has ceased attending care.
- 4- **Termination procedure** It's wise to have a process stated in writing for how to terminate care, on either the parent's end or the provider's end. If a parent chooses to end the agreement, the contract should require a 2 week notice in writing. Make sure that termination and payment notices are clear and concise. For example, that you must receive a written 2 week notice terminating the child care contract, and that payment for these 2 weeks is expected, even if the child is not attending program during this period. The provider should be able to terminate the agreement at any time, so a general statement that the provider may terminate this contract at will would give you that flexibility, for any reason.
- 5- **The signatures of each party** Make sure each party signs and dates the contract. You should include a statement that the parent agrees to the provider's policies and the provider reserves the right to make changes to the policies without notice.

Program Procedures

Your program procedures are those things that you have set your program around. These may depend on various points: the ages of the children in your care, what type of program you are providing, how you have set up your program to operate. Maybe you have decided to offer only school age child care, or you have decided to only operate a pre-school program, or have opted not to provide infant care. Whatever the type of program you are operating, there are procedures surrounding how you operate. In any program, it's a good idea to engage in some observation of the children in your care to further develop your program and the procedures you are planning on following. Observing the children gives you some important insight into how children learn and what they need. You can adapt your program to ensure you're promoting children's learning and various interactions they have on a daily basis.



When setting up your program procedures related to routines, observations of children assist in shaping those routines. Children work well with consistency and by implementing routines. Children learn what is expected of them throughout the day, which makes things run more smoothly for the provider and the children. Procedures are helpful in letting the parents know what is expected of them, as well as the children.



Observation of children is helpful in establishing any procedures regarding your program, children's learning, health policies, behavior policies, the needs of various groups of children, including individual and group needs, and for building and fostering those important relationships with the families for whom you are providing care.

It may be helpful to have an area that parents can go to review the procedures, or the routine for each day. Some items are required by the regulations to be available for parents to review, so perhaps having a parent board or welcome center established would be helpful in meeting this need. If you have a message board or an area specified as a message center established, parents would know to go to this area at drop-off and pick-up times to review the program plan and meal plan for the day. You could also use this area to post information about day care hours, vacations, upcoming field trips, and any other pertinent information parents need to know. This space could also be used to post children's crafts and activities they did for the day, that can be sent home with the child at the end of the day. However you choose to arrange this, is up to you and what works best for your program and your room arrangement.



Policy Handbook Guidelines

It's a great practice to have a separate policy book that explains your day care policies and procedures that you can share with parents of the children in your care, as well as prospective parents. NYS OCFS has recently revised the regulations, adding the requirement that certain policies need to be shared with parents.

Your policy handbook should include those procedures and policies you need to follow to maintain compliance with the day care regulations. These policies are items that are non-negotiable with parents. This would be a great spot to explain what type of program you are offering and you can also choose to tell a bit about yourself and your qualifications. Topics that are required by regulations to have in your policy handbook include the following:

- The responsibilities of the program and the parent
- Policies regarding admission and disenrollment
- How parents will be notified of accidents, serious injuries and incidents
- The behavior management plan
- The evacuation plan
- The program activities
- A summary of the health policies, including the acceptable level of illness
- Actions the program will take in the event a child isn't picked up as scheduled
- Meal plans and arrangements
- Instructional materials on the procedures for parents if they suspect child abuse or maltreatment
- How to access the regulations
- Contact information for the Office, including the child care complaint line
- The transportation policy
- Whether there is a firearm, shotgun, rifle or ammunition on the premises

Other suggested topics to include in your policy handbook are:

- Children's necessary records
- Bad weather conditions and policies
- Toilet training
- Medication administration
- Field trips

For more information, please see the book [Contracts and Policies](#), by Tom Copeland, listed in the back of this tip sheet.