



All Children Considered

VOL. II • 2005/06

A NEWSLETTER FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR CHILDREN

High Quality Child Care

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A Missing Piece of the Quality Child Care Puzzle

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The basic ingredients of quality child care have remained constant over time despite the enormous changes we have witnessed in the fabric of our society in previous decades. However, in examining child care, one piece of the puzzle that is often missing is recognition that such care involves paying attention to the children themselves and to the importance of their families, culture, and communities on their development.

Essential components of quality care and its delivery

- **Services matched to each child**
Cookie-cutter models simply do not lead to successful outcomes. Matching the care to the child is done by using the array of existing community services that are culturally familiar as well as comfortable to the child and his family. The neighborhood church is one example that provides an array of services and support to families. This is a great linkage to establish.
- **Responsive system of care**
Children who may be products of chaotic and disruptive lives require

(Continued on next page)

From the editor..

Child care that is attractive, safe, emotionally healthy, and intellectually stimulating is what all parents want for their children. Guaranteeing those qualities is a challenging task for all child care environments, family-based and center-based alike.

Authors in this issue examine this topic of high quality child care from many perspectives: state statutes, regulations, experience, research, resources, and accreditation. We have tried to include articles that will provide ideas and resources for caregivers as they travel the road from minimal standards and licensing to high quality programs and accreditation.

Be sure to check out the Child Care Mailbag for a question on how to find a high quality child care program and also visit our Caregivers' Resource Corner for two bits of timely news. In addition, the Connecticut State Agency Update brings information from the Departments of Public Health and Social Services.

Please feel free to contact the authors or me with comments, or for additional information on the topics presented.

Harry Mangle, Editor



University of Connecticut

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
College of Agriculture & Natural Resources

In collaboration with



Connecticut
Departments of
Social Services
and Public Health

(A Missing Piece from front)

the responsiveness of a system of care that is flexible and continuous as well as unconditional. This suggests that child care providers need to often think “outside the box” of traditional approaches. The term often applied to such interventions is unconditional or “whatever it takes.” It suggests that we need to mold the services to the child’s needs rather than fitting the child into a pre-designed model.

• **Family involvement**

It has been wisely said that a child is what he lives. What implications does this have for child care? The answer is that we must not only care for the child but know and incorporate his family as well. We do this effectively by including the family in decisions involving their child’s care. It means setting up planning meetings and oppor-

tunities to share what worked effectively in the professional setting and showing them how this could be transferred to the home setting. Establishing supports for the child’s family and empowering them produces effective alliances for the caregiver. And in turn, this alliance provides an invaluable source of information for the provider.

• **Acknowledgement of the child’s total social system**

Most importantly, we need to look to the child’s school, his community, and other service-providing agencies that might be involved with the child. These allies can serve as a rich support base and an information resource. Often, many issues frequently loom large as barriers to effective collaboration. To avoid or minimize such problems, try to identify one con-

tact person with each agency and establish an informal, workable relationship. Learning from colleagues is often the most powerful approach in quality child care. In addition, child care providers must have knowledge of the children’s culture and ethnicity- in many ways the child’s very essence. Having knowledge of these components is as important as knowing the child’s name.

In summary, quality child care must be tailored to the child, continuous in delivery, unconditional in nature, culturally relevant, and family/community based. 🌱



Quality Care Matters to Me

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Pride in my Center

As the head teacher of a pre-school class, I am now in my sixth year working at a quality-enhanced center. How do I know it has a high quality program? This is because it has high standards, it’s licensed, AND it’s an accredited child care program. I take great pride in knowing that the center had to meet many requirements and high standards to be an accredited center that provides excellent care of our children. This distinction raises the level of professionalism for all staff members and is a good feeling for all of us who work there.

A Center with High Standards for my Child

I am expecting my first child, and selecting a high quality program for him or her is as important as working in one. That’s why I look for a child care program that has these characteristics:

- A curriculum with monthly themes that gives teachers guidance when planning their daily lesson plans. This helps to ensure a positive learning atmosphere for children. The monthly theme and curriculum help teachers provide a daily routine that is structured but still flexible;
- A program of professional development opportunities that helps staff improve their skills;
- Teachers who receive an attractive salary with full benefits such as paid vacation and time off;
- A low turn-over of teachers and staff;

- An appropriate teacher-to-child ratio, that helps the staff meet the many needs of children;
- Children are treated in nurturing and caring ways;
- Lessons and activities are age-appropriate and stimulate development; and
- A clean physical environment and procedures that provides proper hygiene for the children.

For all of these reasons, I will choose the same center for my child as the one in which I work. It provides all the things I look for in a high quality program. 🌱

Essential Components of High Quality Afterschool Programs

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Afternoons, school vacations, and summer leave large blocks of time that are ideal for children to learn, explore, and develop new skills. Quality afterschool programs offer an ideal environment that allows children to use their creativity, explore their environment, and to develop into responsible young people. Although we are constantly reminded of the importance of high quality programs, just what ARE the components of such programs?

Although various academic research institutions and practitioners have offered exhaustive descriptions of the types of high quality care programs, there is general agreement among experts on the following key components:

- Trained caregivers/staff who are skilled in conducting activities that children enjoy;

- A safe place that meets the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social needs of children and youth;
- Clear goals and intended outcomes;
- Small staff to child ratios and/or small groups for program activities;
- A wide variety of materials appropriate to ages and developmental levels of the children;
- Family involvement;
- Sharing, supportive, and informing relationships with schools;
- Opportunities for children to choose activities and pursue interests;
- Staff sensitive to all aspects of diversity;
- A climate characterized by positive interaction of staff with children;
- Willingness to work with other community resources and partners; and
- Willingness to continually improve.

The National AfterSchool Association (formerly National School Age Care Alliance), in collaboration with the National Institute on Out of School Time, developed a set of standards that provides:

- A baseline for quality in afterschool programs; and
- Reassurance that programs are committed to providing each child with a unique growing and learning experience.

The standards describe the best practices in out of school programs for children and youth between the ages of five and fourteen. There are 36 keys to quality in the National AfterSchool Association standards organized in six categories:

- Human Relationships
- Indoor Environment
- Outdoor Environment
- Activities
- Safety, Health, and Nutrition
- Administration

Understanding The Standards for Quality School Age Care and using them as a guide for staff in making improvements is the first step in the NAA program improvement and accreditation system and a good first step to improve the quality of any afterschool program.

Sources:

Defining Quality After School Programming: NIOST Completes Three Year Study. *Research & Action Report*, Fall /Winter 2005, Volume 27 No. 1, Wellesley Centers For Women, Wellesley, Massachusetts.

The NSACA Standards for Quality School Age Care, National AfterSchool Association, Boston Massachusetts, 1998.

After School Programs Promote Child & Adolescent Development: Summary of Workshop. Board of Children Youth and Families, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1999. 🌱

2-1-1 Child Care Infoline Mailbag

Question:

I am returning to the work force and have recently visited child care programs in my area. I am in the process of determining which program I like the best. How do I know that the program I choose has the characteristics of a high quality child care program?

Answer:

A high quality child care program is important to help your child meet all their developmental milestones, no matter the age of the child. Consider visiting the child care programs and have an accessible check list to help you determine the quality of child care that the program offers. The list

may consist of observing the environment to ensure it is geared toward the child's needs. Here are some questions to ask yourself, as tips to help you determine the quality of the program:

- Is there child-sized furniture?
- Are activities planned that encourage physical activity?
- Would the noise level be comfortable for your child?
- Are the children happily and actively involved?
- Do caregivers provide reasons for rules?
- Is independence encouraged?

For additional quality indicator tips you can contact 2-1-1 Child Care

Infoline to speak to a Child Care Referral Specialist at 2-1-1 or 800.505.1000, Monday – Friday, 8 AM – 5 PM, or visit our website, www.childcareinfoline.org; click on “Parents” and then “Quality Indicators.” This will give you additional help on choosing a high quality child care program in your area.

Once you have narrowed down your search, contact the Connecticut Department of Public Health, our state licensing agency, to inquire if any substantiated complaints have been filed against any licensed facility. You can call Monday – Friday 8:30 – 4:30 at 800.282.6063. 🌱

Keys to Quality Child Care: Adult-Child Relationships

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Your Relationship with Children is Most Important

We know that high quality child care consists of fun and appropriate learning experiences, a safe and healthy environment, and meaningful interactions with parents. It also is no secret that positive relationships between adults and children as well as among children themselves are very important for healthy development of children. This article, however, will explore the fundamental aspects of quality in the relationships between caregivers and children. If we know that relationships are so important, how can you determine if YOUR relationships will have a positive impact on the development of the children under your care? A checklist for high quality relationships follows:

High Quality Adult/Child Relationships Are:

Responsive

Do you respond to the children when they cry, talk, or express themselves to you? Do you respond in a timely fashion and in a manner that is warm and supportive?

Individualized

Do you take the time to get to know each child as an individual? Are you able to use this information to make changes in your child care setting so that you can meet each child's individual needs to the best of your abilities?

Enriching

Do you talk with the children often and engage them in conversation? Do you help them to discover the world around them through a variety of learning

materials and experiences?

Respectful

Are you aware that children will learn social skills by watching you? Do you guide children's behavior in a way that is appropriate for their age and recognizes that learning social behaviors is a process?

Nurturing

Do you provide love, reassurance, and comfort to the children in your care? Are you patient as they go through common childhood phases such as stranger anxiety, biting, or name-calling?

Consistent

Are you consistently available to meet the high physical and emotional demands of young children? Do you follow through on what you have said so that children develop a sense of trust with you?

Creating Positive Relationships

With your knowledge of child growth and development, you will be able to create a child care experience that benefits young children by carefully monitoring the quality of human relationships in your child care. If you are a program director, be sure that you create a climate that allows staff to develop these quality relationships. This would include providing training, thoughtful and reflective feedback, appropriate staffing levels/patterns, and appropriate supplies/equipment. If you are a family child care provider, be sure that your own personal needs are being met so that you can have high quality relationships with your children.

When prospective parents come to visit your program, help them to recognize the quality relationships that exist between caregivers and children. Let them know that their children will benefit greatly from these relationships.

Lastly, celebrate yourself for providing high quality care. Keep in mind that you are one of the most essential ingredients in the recipe for positive outcomes for the children in your care! 🌱

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Licensing: The Foundation of Quality Child Care

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http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/day_care.htm

A Necessary Strong Foundation

Before erecting the frame of a building, the contractor must ensure that a strong foundation is in place; without it, the structure will crumble. Likewise, a child day care program must achieve and maintain a basic level of quality before it pursues and achieves even higher, more beneficial levels of quality. This first level of quality, or the strong program foundation, is licensing.

Minimum Requirements

Licensing establishes minimum requirements for family day care homes, group day care homes, and child day care centers. These mini-

mum requirements are defined in Connecticut statutes and regulations. Such statutes require the Department of Public Health to adopt licensing regulations to assure that child day care programs meet the needs of enrolled children. Before enactment, licensing regulations are subject to a rigorous review process, which begins with the Office of Policy Management and the Governor's Office. Following this review and a public comment period, regulations are formally approved by the Attorney General's Office, the Legislative Commissioner's Office, and, finally, by the Legislative Regulation Review Committee. Ultimately, Connecticut's licensing requirements are designed to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children through prevention and reducing risks. They address critical areas such as program administration, physical plant, staffing, education, health and safety, and administration of medication.

Going Beyond Minimum Quality

A program may voluntarily choose to

go above and beyond the minimum licensing requirements, or baseline of quality, in an effort to improve the quality of its program. For parents, children, program staff, and licensing regulators, this is a welcomed endeavor. However, a program needs to ensure that it has first mastered the basic floor of protection that is defined by licensing requirements before pursuing higher standards. This two-step approach is a significant indicator to predicting a program's success. Failure to first establish and implement a system to maintain compliance with minimum licensing requirements may result in a program's failure to successfully achieve and maintain higher standards.

The Department of Public Health provides technical assistance to applicants and licensees on the licensing process and requirements. To request technical assistance, contact Sandra Ferreira or the Child Day Care Licensing Help Desk at 860.509.8045, 800.282.6063, or 800.439.0437. 🌱

Caregivers' Resource Corner

New Connecticut Car Seat Law

Connecticut's car seat law has changed to make kids safer. As of October 1, 2005, children must ride in a child restraint (car seat or booster seat) until they are over 6 years old and over 60 pounds. They must meet **both** the age and weight requirements. After children outgrow their car seat, they must ride in a booster seat using a lap and shoulder belt. Additionally, children must remain rear-facing until they are over one year old and 20 pounds. For additional information, refer to www.ctsafekids.org or contact Karen Brock, MPH, Director, CT SAFE KIDS at 860.545.9977

Connecticut Early Childhood Education Council Comes to an End

The officers and members of the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Council announced that at the end

of December 2005 the Council ceased operation, after thirty-five years of service to the early childhood community. In addition to providing yearly regional conferences for early childhood teachers, program directors, school administrators, and college students preparing to work with young children, it provided yearly scholarships for teachers/directors to attend conferences or further their education. The Council also wrote and disseminated several significant position papers concerning early childhood education. We thank the many statewide public and private sector organizations, representing early childhood interests and concerns, that joined our ranks to further our mission. Lastly, we are grateful to those members who gave so much of their time to the Council and who helped to organize and conduct the Early Childhood Conferences in collaboration with administrators and teachers. For additional information contact: Shula Chernoff, President, Connecticut Early Childhood Education Council, 203.387.4026 or Carolyn Lester, 860.228.1750. 🌱

Breastfeeding: Meeting the Challenge

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Child Care Providers Support Breast Feeding

Babies who are sick less often, diapers with less odor, less spitting up..... just a few of the reasons why so many child care providers enthusiastically support breastfeeding. In 2000, the Surgeon General released the Health and Human Services Blueprint for Action on Breastfeeding, which established a comprehensive breastfeeding policy for the nation. It included the following recommendation:

“With a large number of infants enrolled in child care, it is also important that child care facilities be supportive of breastfeeding. Child care centers should make accommodations for mothers who wish to breastfeed their children or have their children fed expressed milk at the facility.”

Proper Care of Breast Milk

One of the most common concerns of child care providers is the proper handling of breast milk that the mother “expresses” and brings to the facility. Bottles should be clearly labeled with the child’s name and the date the milk was expressed. Fresh, expressed milk can be refrigerated for up to 5 days. Thaw bottles of frozen milk in the refrigerator or run under lukewarm tap water. Before feeding, gently warm the milk by swirling the bottle in a bowl of warm (not hot!) water. Thawed breast milk should be used within 24 hours and must not be refrozen. **Never** use a microwave or

stovetop to thaw or heat breast milk, as this can scald a baby or damage the milk. Discard unused portions of breast milk after each feeding because the baby’s saliva will spoil it.

Precautions Regarding Infectious Diseases

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not list human breast milk as a body fluid to which universal precautions apply. Therefore, breast milk does not need to be stored in a separate refrigerator and gloves do not need to be worn when handling breast milk. HIV and other infectious diseases can, however, be transmitted through breast milk. Therefore, if a child is mistakenly fed another child’s bottle of expressed breast milk, the possible exposure should be treated just as if an accidental exposure to other body fluids has occurred. Keep in mind that all pregnant women (or their babies) are required by state law to be tested for HIV. Any HIV-positive mom is counseled to give formula and not to breastfeed. It is important to note that babies receiving breast milk in child day care settings are very unlikely to have HIV-positive mothers.

Encouraging Breastfeeding Mothers

Breastfeeding mothers need encouragement to continue to nurse, especially when they return to work or school. Many child care providers have a “nursing nook” where moms can breastfeed when they pick up their child or visit during the day. Remind moms to bring in a small bottle of fresh or frozen breast milk to tide a hungry baby over until she arrives to nurse. Ask your nursing moms for other ideas to help make their child care experience positive. And, congratulate yourself for helping Connecticut meet the challenge to make breastfeeding the social norm for infant feeding!

Breastfeeding Recommendations:

Proper Handling and Storage of Human Milk

http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breast_milk.htm

Breastfeeding Recommendations: What To Do If an Infant or Child Is Mistakenly Fed another Woman’s Expressed Breast Milk.

http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/other_mothers_milk.htm

Additional information about child day care licensing and AIDS can be obtained at the State of CT Department of Public Health Web Site: www.dph.state.ct.us

For more information about the Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition or if you would like to attend a meeting, please call DPH at 860.509.8074 or contact CBC online at Info@breastfeedingct.org.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline (800.994.9662) provides Breastfeeding Peer Counselors that offer breastfeeding advice and information in English or Spanish (M-F, 9 AM-6 PM). ↗



Taken from the CDC Guidelines of Breastfeeding Intervention.

Department of Social Services (DSS)

<http://www.dss.state.ct.us/ccare/>

High Quality Child Care and Accreditation: A Perfect Match

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Accreditation Quality Indicators apply to all child care environments

High quality child care is an investment that can result in many benefits, including enhanced social and cognitive skills, later school success, and a decrease in juvenile incarceration rates. For parents or home-based child care programs, indicators of quality are readily available from many sources, including the website at the end of this article. For center and school-based child care programs, one reliable way to ensure quality care is to become accredited. Although accreditation is only for centers or school-based programs, most of the standards are generally applicable to home-based care as well.

New Accreditation Program Builds on 20 Years of Experience

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a membership organization for people working with and on behalf of children, established its accreditation system in the early 1980's to bring a high quality standard to early childhood programs. It has been the major professional association involved with accrediting early childhood programs and providing a comprehensive framework for program improvement and quality assessment.

After almost three years of deliberations, this past September the NAEYC launched their new accredi-

tation system, based on its earlier system and updated with pertinent research and the input of countless child care professionals. In the new system, the NAEYC standards define the characteristics of a high quality program. The Accreditation Performance Criteria give programs the opportunity to examine their practices in a holistic and straightforward manner.

The standards are grouped in 4 focus areas: Children, Teaching Staff, Partnerships and Leadership/Administration. Each focus area incorporates key standards that lead to high quality in child care. The primary focus area in the new accreditation model is Children, which has five associated standards. The standards within the **Children** focus area are briefly summarized below.

Focus area #1: Children

Standard 1 (Relationships) Developing social competence is recognized as the hallmark of early childhood. A quality program views relationships as fundamental and expects teachers to help children develop positive social skills through warm and responsive interactions. Teachers should engage infants by talking, repeating sounds, smiling, and engaging in face-to-face interactions each day. Teachers of older children foster pro-social behaviors by helping children interact with each other and developing a community that allows them to build friendships.

Standard 2 (Curriculum) Young children learn through the variety of materials offered, the daily routine and schedules, and the planned activities. In a quality program, deliberate decisions are made to enhance learning in every area of development.

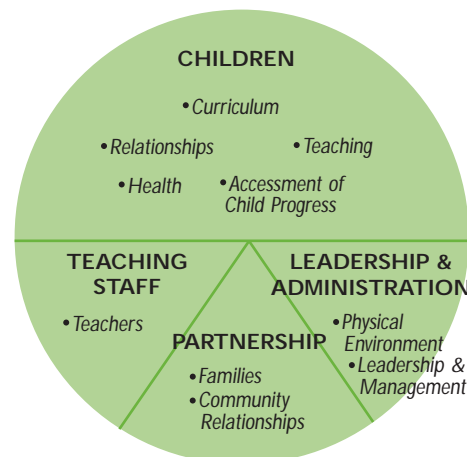
Standard 3 (Teaching) A quality program is dependent on the teachers' ability to implement intended goals.

Teachers ensure enriching experiences by working as a team to develop approaches and strategies to help children succeed.

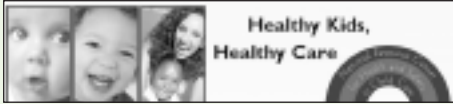
Standard 4 (Assessment of Child Progress) Quality promotes program accountability, and the process of observing and documenting children's growth and development is essential to program improvement. Information gained through formal, written assessments, as well as informal observation is used to plan curriculum, address individual needs of children and inform families.

Program Standard 5 (Health) Addressing the complete physical, oral, mental, and social well being of children has been long recognized as a necessity to learning. NAEYC Performance Criteria gives guidelines for health consultation, including nutritional evaluation of menus for nationally recommended limits of sugar, sodium, and fats.

For more information about the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the new Accreditation standards and criteria, please go to <http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/> or contact Sandra Fowler at the email address above. 🌱



Valuable New Online Resource For Parents and Child Care Providers at
<http://www.healthykids.us/>




The new website, Healthy Kids, Healthy Care, contains 34 key health and safety practices for parents and families to consider when evaluating and choosing child care/early education programs. An

excellent, user-friendly website that is helpful for parents and caregivers, it gives specific ideas for parents on how to help and work in partnership with their caregivers to ensure healthy children and safe environments. A few examples of the topics covered are: staff background checks, biting and other aggressive behaviors, discipline, toys, selecting child care, and staff ratios.

This website is a valuable resource for providers since it gives information on the many aspects of quality child care. The original reference document, from which much of the

information above is drawn, is the publication, *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, 2nd Edition*. It can be downloaded or ordered for \$34.95 from:

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