



Providing Quality Child Care

Handout #28

Healthy Children, Strong Families, Caring Communities



What Determines Quality Child Care?

Whether you are a parent, teacher or child care provider there are ways to evaluate the quality of the child care you provide. National associations and child development agencies have set standards to define quality care. These standards have six common elements essential for a quality program:

- Staff
- Environment
- Curriculum
- Parent involvement
- Supportive climate
- Inclusive care

The following is a description of these standards and ways to identify them in a child care program:

Six Standards of Quality Child Care

✓ *The Staff*

In a quality child care program, providers play a critical role in fostering children's healthy development. Children flourish when providers are knowledgeable in the field of early care and education, they meet current health and safety requirements, and they are able to meet the needs of the children in their care. The relationships that providers form with the children in their care can ensure a warm and welcoming environment for the children to grow and develop.

✓ *The Environment*

A quality child care program offers an environment that nurtures, celebrates, and protects all children, while conforming to state and local licensing requirements, as well as fire and health regulations. The environment is organized, properly equipped and maintained, and each child is recognized, respected and has their needs met. A quality environment balances child- and teacher-initiated activities, and encourages social interaction and development of skills such as sharing, responsibility and self-reliance. The environment should also allow space for children to learn through wonder, discovery, and experimentation.

✓ *Curriculum*

Curriculum refers to the philosophy and the activities that the child care program offers. A quality program promotes the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of the child. A quality curriculum provides goals, objectives and developmentally appropriate activities based on the age, ability, culture and background of all the children.

✓ *Parent Involvement*

In a quality child care program, providers recognize parents as the most important influence on their child's growth and development. Parents are well-informed about the program, and providers welcome them as both observers and contributors. Families develop positive and productive relationships with the provider so that the program reflects familial interests, values and concerns. Providers respect and honor all families. Parents have daily verbal communication with the provider, as well as communication through newsletters and meetings.

✓ **A Supportive Climate**

An effective child care program maintains an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for everyone involved. Interactions between children and staff are responsive, full of warmth, respectful, individualized, and supportive. When discipline is necessary, quality providers clearly state rules and positively reinforce appropriate behaviors. Providers redirect children to more acceptable behaviors or activities, and listen to and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations. They guide children to resolve conflicts, and model skills that help children solve their own problems.

✓ **Inclusive Care**

An inclusive child care program provides the best care and education possible by making sure every child feels welcome and included. An inclusive program is accepting of differences and responsive to the needs of each child, and providers of such programs appreciate the unique gifts and talents that every child has to offer.

Professional & Personal Growth

It is important for child care providers to seek knowledge and professional growth on a regular basis. Many community colleges offer Early Childhood Education classes. Child care providers can network with others in the early care and education field by joining a professional association and/or attending local conferences and workshops.

What About Accreditation?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are the two largest organizations that accredit child care programs. Providers who are accredited have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than most state licensing requirements.



For More Information

Child Action, Inc.

916/369-0191

www.childaction.org

Free training for child care providers

Family Child Care Providers, Inc.

916/36-CHILD (362-4453)

Training and monthly support groups

North Area Care for Mothers

916/971-0425

Support groups for child care providers

Sacramento Valley Association for the Education of Young Children

916/683-6771

Training, membership and meetings

California Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC)

916/486-7750

www.caeyc.org

Professional organization for child care providers in California

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

800/424-2460

www.naeyc.org

Professional organization for child care providers in the United States

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

800/359-3817

www.nafcc.org

Professional organization for family child care providers in the United States

Zero to Three

www.zerotothree.org

Resources for parents and child care providers