



Handout #26

Flexible Child Care

Meeting the Needs of Today's Families

Healthy Children, Strong Families, Caring Communities

This handout discusses:

- Considerations to keep in mind in providing flexible child care
- How to comply with licensing regulations

To serve families needing caring during non-traditional hours, you may want to offer extended evening hours, weekend or overnight care. This will take a supportive family and careful planning.

Licensing Regulations

- Overnight care equals care of less than 24 hours
- The provider must remain awake whenever children are awake
- The door to the room where the provider is sleeping must remain open when the provider is sleeping
- If the sleeping arrangements are not situated in such a way that the provider can be assured of hearing a child awaken, a monitor system must be used and maintained in good working order at all times
- The home must be equipped with smoke alarms and a fire extinguisher approved for home use in or near all sleeping areas
- Appropriate cribs or beds, complete with adequate clean bedding and nightclothes, must be available for each child
- Health & Safety Code Section 102352 addresses 24-hour child care: "Family Child Care means regularly provided care, protection and supervision of children, in the caregiver's own home, for periods of less than 24 hours per day, while the parents or guardians are away." Your license will not allow for 24-hour care.

What to Consider

When you decide to offer extended hours, overnight or weekend care, there are a few things to consider.

You need a policy for cancellations and no-shows. Sometimes families that request additional drop-in space will be required to pay for it at the beginning of the week and must ask two weeks in advance. Some providers will ask parents to call and discuss rates. Each family may have different needs, and many providers feel working with parents on a case-by-case basis allows both the provider and the parents the flexibility to work out a mutual agreement. Some providers will provide care within a few days notice. In these situations, parents pay for the extra care at the time of the request.

Overnight care may require the provider to bathe children; toothbrushes for the children must be brought from home or kept at the provider's house. The children's sleep patterns must also be accommodated. Providers need to make additional arrangements for children who sleepwalk, have nightmares or are bed wetters.

Many providers serve meals for evening and overnight care, especially if they are already providing meals for daytime children. There are providers who supply diapers, wipes and even formula. For most, however, whatever services they offer to daytime clients they also offer to nighttime clients.

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