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**HIGH QUALITY
CHILD CARE
STATEMENT**

The Association for Early Childhood Education, Ontario

Prepared by
The Public Policy Committee
of
The Association for Early Childhood Education, Ontario

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DEFINITION OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE

High quality child care is provided by knowledgeable and sensitive adults in an atmosphere which supports their efforts to ensure a creative and secure learning environment. The program is carefully planned and evaluated to meet the developmental needs of all children. Effective communication and mutual respect are recognized as an integral part of the environment. Through the collaborative efforts of parents, educators and community, the opportunity for optimal growth is provided for every child.

HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE

- is provided by knowledgeable and sensitive adults
- requires a supportive atmosphere
- ensures a creative and secure learning environment
- is carefully planned and evaluated
- meets the developmental needs of all children
- requires effective communication and mutual respect
- is based on the collaborative efforts of parents, educators and community
- ensures the opportunity for optimal growth for every child

STAFF

HOW SHOULD ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE AND SENSITIVITY OF STAFF BE DETERMINED?

a) Minimum qualifications should include:

The Supervisor

- a diploma in Early Childhood Education
- two years of experience working with young children and their families
- training in administration and supervision

The Program Staff

- a diploma in Early Childhood Education
- specialized training in child development and programming for the age group they work with (e.g. infants, school age)
- certification or in the process of receiving certification

The Program Staff who do not have ECE training or equivalent

- untrained staff should be working on professional upgrading in the field of Early Childhood Education
- assistants should have access to inservice training in the following areas:

child development; program planning; communication

b) Minimum staff requirements should ensure that the number of children in a group is limited to facilitate adult-child interaction and constructive activity among children (Day Nursery Act ratio/group size or better)

PROGRAM

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPTIMAL GROWTH AND A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT FOR EVERY CHILD?

Positive adult/child interaction, characterized by:

- respect ● affection ● freedom from bias ● humour
- is based on the recognition of the child as an active participant in his or her own learning
- requires an environment which promotes a high standard of nutrition and health
 - child health records are complete
 - staff are alert to the health of each child
 - meals and snacks are planned to meet the child's nutritional requirements
 - mealtime is a pleasant, social and learning experience for the children
- includes the provision of opportunities for problem-solving, independence, choice and decision-making
- includes the provision of opportunities for creative expression and free exploration
- must encourage pro-social behaviours in children such as co-operating, helping, taking turns, talking to solve problems
- engages children in a broad variety of stimulating activities which encourage growth in gross motor, fine motor, arts, drama, co-operative games, individual and group play
- ensures the daily schedule provides a balance of activities
 - indoor/outdoor
 - quiet activity
 - individual/small group/large group
 - small muscle/large muscle
 - child initiated/adult initiated
- provides non-competitive/non-sexist social experiences
- reflects parental and community values and expectations
- makes full use of community resources (e.g. field trips, student placements)

PROGRAM

HOW SHOULD PROGRAM PLANNING OCCUR IN ORDER TO MEET THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN?

The staff must:

- have a thorough knowledge of all areas of child development
- have acquired knowledge of the individual child through discussions with parents and colleagues, frequently recorded observations, and ongoing developmental assessments
- respect and respond to cultural, ethnic and religious background
- be flexible enough to change planned or routine activities
- plan and implement programs that ensure a variety of developmentally appropriate hands-on activities
- ensure that materials and equipment are developmentally appropriate and are available for each age group (infants, toddlers, preschool, school age)
- ensure that space is arranged to accommodate the individual child in both small and large groups
- ensure that areas are available indoors and outdoors where children can play or work alone or with a friend
- complete individual, written descriptions of the children's development; compile and use them as a basis for planning appropriate learning activities

PROGRAM

WHAT IS NEEDED TO ENSURE A SECURE AND CREATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?

Staff shall:

- establish clear expectations and consistent routines
- encourage and expand on children's ideas and actions
- provide opportunities for both challenge and success

HOW WILL THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM BE MEASURED?

Indicators of an effective program are:

- adherence to all licensing standards on the basis of an annual assessment which identifies strengths and weaknesses of the program and sets program goals for the year
- planning of appropriate learning activities based on written descriptions of each child's development and the use of such information in communications with parents
- collection of regular feedback from parents used to revise the program
- allocation of staff time for program planning and evaluation is arranged on a weekly basis (two hours minimum)

PARENTS

HOW SHOULD THE PROGRAM SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN THE CHILD-REARING NEEDS OF PARENTS?

A high quality Early Childhood Education program should ensure:

- staff and parent communication about home and program child-rearing practices (discipline, feeding, toileting) in order to minimize potential conflicts and confusion for the children
- through a verbal and/or written system, sharing of day-to-day events which affect the children
- conferences to discuss children's progress, accomplishments and difficulties at home and in the program are held at least once a year and at other times as needed
- organization of parent meetings in response to their interests
- information sharing with parents about the availability of community resources
- regular monitoring and reporting to parents on all areas of the child's development

PARENTS

IN WHAT WAYS ARE FAMILIES ENCOURAGED TO CONTRIBUTE IN A HIGH QUALITY PROGRAM?

Every Early Childhood Education program should have:

- a written description of the program's philosophy and operating policies which is available to parents at the time of enrollment
- a process of orientation to the program for children and parents which may include a pre-enrollment visit and a gradual introduction of the child to the program
- a philosophy that welcomes parents and visitors to the program
- a philosophy that encourages parents and other family members to be involved in the program in a variety of ways (e.g. board participation, repairs, fundraising, participating in field trips, sharing a meal/snack)
- methods to inform parents about the centre's program through regular newsletters, bulletin boards, frequent notes, telephone calls and other similar messages
- an opportunity for parents to evaluate the program and make suggestions for change

ADMINISTRATION

HOW CAN THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES CONTRIBUTE IN A HIGH QUALITY PROGRAM?

Administratively, the program should have:

- written policies and procedures for operating which include philosophy, reporting of child abuse, reporting of a serious occurrence, program principles, hours, fees, illness, holidays and refund information
- written personnel policies which include job descriptions, compensation, resignation and termination, benefits and grievance procedures
- hiring practices that are non-discriminatory
- accurate attendance records
- confidential personnel files
- fiscal records kept with evidence of long range budgeting and sound financial planning
- a co-operative, supportive relationship with the staff
- a commitment to excellence

RELATIONSHIPS

WHAT MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ENSURE COMMUNICATION AND MUTUAL RESPECT? (STAFF, CHILDREN, FAMILIES, COMMUNITY)

- there should be frequent and supportive conversations between parent and staff about the child's activities and development
- problems with a parent or child must be solved constructively
- parents must have regular opportunities to give feedback and staff should respond by making appropriate changes
- a non-competitive relationship between the parents and the staff should be encouraged
- there must be frequent interaction between the staff and the children
- positive reinforcement rather than criticism must be given
- the environment must be arranged to minimize rules
- the staff must speak frequently to the individual child as well as to the whole group
- children must have the chance to talk frequently in informal conversations as well as in teaching situations
- confidentiality must be ensured in all situations
- staff interactions should provide resources and be supportive rather than competitive

RELATIONSHIPS

WHAT INTERACTION WITH THE COMMUNITY IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS?

Community interaction should include:

- awareness and appropriate use of community resources
- communication and interaction with elementary school teachers
- sensitivity and appropriate response to changing community needs (e.g. provides a school-age program, obtains the resources to serve children with special needs)
- co-operative projects within the community, such as:
 - High School Co-op Program
 - Early Identification Projects
 - Multi-Generational Projects
 - Public Education