



Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals:

Working in Family Child Care



A Companion Guide



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Education



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Companion Guide to Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals: Family Child Care

What Family Child Care Providers need to know and do.

This document is a companion guide to the publication "Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals: Family Child Care." That document can be found on the [Early Learning Resources page on the Minnesota Department of Education website.](#)

Why is this companion guide needed?

Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework describes what early childhood providers need to know and be able to do in order to work effectively with young children and their families. The companion guide combines key concepts found in the framework with suggestions and examples of what it might look like in a family child care setting. It is intended to help providers have a beginning understanding of what to do. This Companion Guide does not replace the original framework but supports it.

For whom is the Companion Guide written?

This guide is for all adults who work with children in family child care settings. The information does not include all that a family child care provider needs to know and be able to do; it emphasizes essential, fundamental skills and competencies.

How does it compare to the Infant-Toddler Companion Guide?

An Infant – Toddler Companion Guide to the Minnesota Core Competencies was published in 2010. It contains important foundational information for those caring for children birth to three years old. Material that is appropriate, for those working with children of any age, is intentionally repeated in this document.

About the organization of this document

The Companion Guide is divided into the same areas as the Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals: Family Child Care:

1. Child Development and Learning
2. Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences
3. Relationships with Families
4. Assessment, Evaluation and Individualization
5. Historical and Contemporary Development of Early Childhood Education
6. Professionalism
7. Health, Safety and Nutrition

The seven areas are further divided into what providers should know and do at a very basic level. Some sections list further examples of knowledge and skills expected of providers as they grow and gain experience. Occasionally, you will find additional items that represent a deeper understanding that apply particularly to leaders in the field. The Companion Guide also includes “Stories from the field” that help illustrate the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality early learning experiences.

At the end of the document there is a section, “Want to learn more?” that contains books, articles and websites that provide additional resource information.

Six things every family child care provider should know about child development

1. Knowing ourselves is part of educating young children.

All adults have personal, family and cultural experiences and knowledge about young children. Providers build on what they already know and believe as they add experience and education. Education, experience and interactions with families may challenge some early values and beliefs. Working with young children and their families can also bring up many emotions. Providers need to reflect on their own feelings, reactions and pay attention to underlying feelings as they decide how to connect old information with new.

2. Relationships are the heart of early learning experiences.

Relationships are critical to working effectively with young children and their parents. Providers build relationships with children when they get to know each child’s likes and dislikes, needs and personalities. Providers create a welcoming place where all children feel they belong and learn to welcome and include one another. When adults treat children with respect, they learn to respect themselves and one another. Building relationships with families takes time and planning. It is important to build a true partnership with families; one in which families and providers bring value to the relationship and respect one another’s beliefs and practices.

3. All children need a rich, engaging environment that is physically and emotionally secure.

Nurturing and responsive care and education helps children develop secure and trusting relationships which support exploration and development. Interesting environments with clear boundaries help children explore and learn. Engaging environments nurture children of all ability levels and those with special needs. Consistent, nurturing routines help children build trust and independence, encourage secure attachment and support development and learning.

4. Young children develop in the context of their families, cultures and communities.

Young children learn by observing the important people in their lives. Their families’ home cultures shape children’s understanding of which emotions to express and how and when to express them, the rate at which they develop motor skills, the way they learn and process new information and the ways in which they use verbal language, facial expressions, gestures and silence to communicate. Culturally responsive providers honor children’s cultural identities

throughout daily practice, interactions and routines. Providers must make this effort with families from all cultural backgrounds (including their own) because each family expresses their culture in unique ways. Children's relationships with others also impact their development.

5. Early childhood represents a period of rapid growth and development that is critical to the foundation of a healthy human being.

Young children are both competent and vulnerable. The care children receive during this critical period will have a powerful influence on how they view the world, relate to others and succeed as learners. Providers have a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young children and their families. Children who receive nurturing, consistent care are more likely to thrive and become sociable, capable children who get along with others, demonstrate self-control and love learning. Development can be at risk not only by delay or disability, but also by a number of traumatic or stressful experiences. Nurturing and responsive care and education for children whose development maybe at risk can help a child develop resilience and skills needed for success in school and in life.

6. Multiple abilities and skills are developing simultaneously in a child's early years.

Development is the result of the interaction between genes and experiences. Experiences and interactions make a difference in early brain development. Providers make many daily decisions about how and when to talk to children, which experiences to offer and when children are ready to take a new step in their development. Providers who know and understand what is taking place during this time of change and growth are better equipped to support that growth. [Find more information about early brain development at the Center for the Developing Child.](#)

Young children's early experiences shape their fast-growing brains. Although young children develop in generally similar ways, each child's individual life experiences (as part of a family, a culture and a community) can result in very different patterns of learning, behavior and developmental outcomes.

Key concept(s): Development occurs in predictable patterns but children develop at individual rates

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Observe and respect what each child can do.
- Get to know each child's unique temperament and personality.
- Get to know how each child is likely to demonstrate interest in something new, communicate their feelings and needs and respond to frustration.
- Respond to each child in ways that support their identity, growth and development.
- Offer children materials and activities that challenge them but are doable.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Recognize that individual children learn at their own rate.
- Set learning goals and plan activities that help each child reach the next step.
- Adjust how they interact with a child to match the child's changing abilities to understand and communicate.
- Help children reach milestones set in state early learning standards known as the [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress](#).

As providers design and lead, they:

- Go beyond relying on learning experiences that have been developed by others and create activities that address an individual child's needs.
- Explain to others what they do and why they do it.
- Understand state early learning standards and how to use them.

Key concept(s): Children grow and learn as part of their family, culture and community

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Talk with family members about how they do things at home and use that information to make the child feel welcome.
- Support connections between experience at home and the family child care program.
- Encourage children to share stories from their daily family life, such as favorite family activities or pets.
- Create a sense of community where children notice and care about each other.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Understand the importance of and support a child's home language by respecting the family's use of their home language, providing materials in the home languages; such as books, games and music and learning some words in the child's home language for songs, conversation and routines.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn about different cultures, traditions, languages and family structures of other children and families.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Develop deeper understanding of traditions, values, child-rearing, and expectations of the various cultures of the children in the group.
- Recognize the global society in which children live and are responsive to differences in culture, ethnicity, language and economics of the children for whom they care.



Stories from the field

Marisela watched as Mason worked with the scissors. She noticed that he was holding the scissors with his thumb in one hole and his index finger in the other. His thumb was on the bottom and his finger on top. Consequently, as he cut, his scissor chewed through the paper. Mason tried a couple of times to make the scissors work before looking around at other children.

Marisela moved next to Mason. She gently turned his hand over while saying, "thumbs up." Then she said, "I think there's room in this hole for more fingers. Try putting some more fingers in this hole." She handed Mason a narrow strip of stiff paper and suggested that he "try again." This time Mason was able to snip off a small section of paper.

All children need a rich, engaging environment that is physically and emotionally secure.

Key concept(s): Children need physically and emotionally safe and healthy environments in order to explore, experiment and learn

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Use child sized furnishings that are comfortable and toys and materials that promote growth and learning.
- Establish and maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.
- Create a welcoming environment that works for the provider's home and business.
- Build a positive relationship with each child.
- Make sure that the environment reflects and responds to each child's needs, abilities and interests.
- Accept and appreciate each child's growing ability to do more on their own.
- Include toys and materials that are interesting and some that look like those found in the homes of the children.
- Chose materials that challenge a child, yet are doable.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Use furniture and gates to define spaces to protect infants playing on the floor or to keep block building from being knocked down.
- Organize supplies so that routines (diapering, eating, sleeping, etc.) are easier to manage and allowing the focus to be on interacting with the children.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Examine their environment and determine ways to improve work flow, space available and access to materials.
- Ensure the environment is culturally and linguistically responsive.
- Identify and use a research-based curriculum that is proven to help children prepare for school.

Key concept(s): Children learn trust and feel secure when they have predictable routines that meet their needs for activity, interaction, food and sleep

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Provide predictable daily routines that meet the needs of children to eat, rest and play both indoors and out of doors.
- Post a daily schedule that helps children and families know what to expect.
- Use routines as one-on-one opportunities to build closer relationships.
- Recognize that children at different ages require different levels of supervision.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Find flexibility within the schedule to meet each child's need for eating and sleeping.
- Include times during the day, when children play alone, in small groups and as a large group.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Reflect on and continually adapt the schedule and routines to make sure there is a balance between predictable routines and flexibility that supports children.
- Explain to others the importance of engaging children in play and problem solving.

Key concept(s): Family child care providers promote curiosity when they allow children to explore and ask questions

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Provide safe space, materials and time for children to actively explore.
- Comment enthusiastically on things children notice and learn.
- Ask questions that can't be answered with "yes" or "no" to encourage children to think more deeply.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Talk with children about cause and effect; Respond to an infant's awareness of cause and effect (for example, when a baby plays with a pop up toy you could say, "you pushed the button and it popped up").
- Encourage children to ask questions, find answers and organize information.
- Give children ways to experience natural materials and environments by giving them time to play outdoors and bringing the outdoors in (such as sorting pinecones or planting seeds).
- Wonder out loud with children (say, "I wonder what will happen" or "I wonder why...").

As providers design and lead, they:

- Help children observe and collect information, ask questions and make predictions.

Key concept(s): Children need a strong foundation in language and vocabulary for later reading success

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Talk to children to support the development of vocabulary and an understanding of how we use words to communicate.
- Imitate the sounds babies make; playfully taking turns just like a conversation.
- Sing songs and play with language using rhymes and gestures, repeating them many times to help children learn.
- Give simple directions and help children follow through on them.
- Read and tell stories to children.
- Expect and accept mistakes as children try to pronounce new words.
- Ask questions that do not have a yes or no answer to encourage children to use increasingly longer sentences.
- Provide play opportunities that encourage conversations such as dressing up or using props like play telephones, restaurant menus and stuffed toy animals.
- Make sure there are lots of books and printed materials appropriate for their level for children to look at.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Encourage conversation during snack or mealtimes, play time, arrival and departure and all other times of the day.
- Encourage child to ask questions, wonder what will happen and solve problems.
- Help children talk to one another including opportunities for children to engage in home language conversations.
- Encourage children who are learning more than one language to feel confident as they try to communicate using the new language.
- Include different types of reading materials (for example, fiction and non-fiction books, resource materials and maps) and materials written in languages represented in the group.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Explain to parents and peers the importance of home language development.
- Help children understand the relationship between spoken and printed words.



Stories from the field

As you walk into Macy's Family Child Care, you see signs with words hung around the room; furnishings and materials that are labeled; an alphabet line hung near the door; and books not only in the reading corner but in each area of the room.

As Brianna arrives, she signs her name on a sheet of paper, next to a picture of a bracelet. She exclaims, "Bracelet starts with 'B' the same letter as my name." After talking with Brianna's mom, Macy says, "I better write down Brianna's dentist appointment so I don't forget."

Brianna goes to the shelf and gets a notebook. She sits with other children at the table and takes a pencil from the container in the middle of the table. She starts writing in her journal and talks about the trip she and her dad took to the farmer's market. Another child joins the table, carrying a photo book with pictures of a party they recently had. She starts "reading the book" remembering the steps they took to make frosted cookies for the party. And describing, with giggles, how messy their faces were after eating them.

Key concept(s): Children learn mathematical and scientific concepts by exploring and experimenting with the things around them

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Offer opportunities for children to count, measure, sort and group objects.
- Provide materials for children to explore, experiment and problem solve.
- Use math words like "more," "less," "over," "under," "taller," and the names of shapes and numbers.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Help children recognize patterns.

- Expand children's knowledge of nature, living things and materials by providing objects, tools and experiences that allow them to observe closely and explore nature and scientific concepts (cause and effect, time, temperature, sink and float, and changes in materials).

As providers design and lead, they:

- Extend children's thinking by helping them observe and collect information, ask questions and describe what they are learning.
- Give parents ideas about how to do simple math and science activities at home

Key concept(s): Children need safe, stable, nurturing relationships with adults who help them learn to behave in a way that is firm, fair and friendly

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Sit on the floor and play with children.
- Provide warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, acceptance and safety.
- Set clear expectations and simple rules.
- Redirect children before they engage in disruptive behavior.
- Help children learn another way to act without shaming them when they do something considered wrong or dangerous.
- Use positive statements to guide children's behavior so they learn what to do. For example, "Remember to hang up your coat."
- Recognize and respond to signs of stress by offering consistent routines, a reliable nurturing relationship and by comforting the child.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Figure out ways to interact with more than one child at a time such as singing with one child while rocking another.
- Avoid disruptive behavior by changing the schedule, offering activities that are of interest to the child, offering activities that challenging yet doable and establishing smooth transitions.
- Help children learn to stop, take a breath and think before responding to upsetting situations.
- Partner with family members to prevent challenging behavior and to respond in consistent ways at home and child care. Follow licensing regulations if the parent requests responses to behaviors that are not allowed.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Find ways to help children be involved in making decisions such as what they will play next or between two snack options.
- Adapt schedules, routines and environment to avoid challenging behaviors.

Key concept(s): Children need help learning to calm themselves, express their feelings and pause before reacting to situations

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Recognize, respect and help children learn to express feelings and understand the feelings of others. For example, you might say to a child, “You look angry. Tell Alex you don’t like it when he knocks down your blocks.”
- Help children learn to manage their physical and emotional responses, pay attention and make simple choices.
- Help infants, toddlers and young children calm down when they can’t on their own.
- Model self-control.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Support children’s growing independence by encouraging children to choose their own activities and solve conflicts.
- Encourage children to think a minute before reacting to a problem.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Teach children to control their impulses, express a range of emotions and think of various solutions to problems (see resources below).



Stories from the field

A few minutes before story time, Maria went from child to child and talked with them briefly about their play. Before moving to the next child she told each one that in five minutes they

would be cleaning up to go outside. When Maria reached Luis, he was using the blocks to outline pens for each type of plastic toy animals in his pretend zoo. She bent down next to him and said, "Luis, you have a lot of pens for your animals. Looks like you've been working for a long time." Luis looked up briefly and said, "Yeah and it's almost time for the zoo keeper to feed all the animals." Maria said, "We're going to be cleaning up and going outside soon." Luis complained, "No, I just got this all set up!" Maria asked, "What can you do when you want to save your work in the block area?" Luis brightened and answered, "I can take a picture of it or I can make a sign that says 'save'." Maria answered him, "That's right. Which would you like to do today?" Luis thought for a minute before making his decision, "I'm going to put a save sign on it." Soon after, Maria started to play the cleanup song and all the children worked to put their things away. When the room was clean Maria asked the children, "Who won today? The song or the kids?" The children excitedly cheered, "The kids! The kids!" And Maria tallied the win in the children's column of their chart.

Key concept(s): Young children are developing strength and coordination in their large and small muscles

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Set time aside for children to move their bodies by creating safe places for infants to roll, crawl, walk, and for older children to run, jump, climb, dance, jump, pedal and throw.
- Provide opportunities for infants to practice using the muscles in their hands, fingers and arms to reach, grasp, move, stack, and assemble things like puzzles and stacking toys.
- Provide opportunities for older children to practice using muscles in their hands, fingers and arms to bead, latch, screw and unscrew and pick up and place small objects.
- Give children materials that they can use to draw and write.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Encourage families to participate in physical activities with their children, both indoor and outdoor and in natural settings like parks whenever possible.

As providers design and lead, they

- Find ways for children to move while involved in all types of learning activities.

Key concept(s): Children gain a sense of competence, enjoyment and learn to express themselves through open ended materials, activities and questions

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Provide musical experiences in a variety of ways such as singing, musical toys and different types of recorded music (jazz, lullabies, classical, and children's songs from a variety of cultures and languages).

- Offer a variety of art materials to use independently as a form of self-expression, focusing on process (how they are using the materials) rather than copying a pattern.
- Provide a variety of things for children to look at such as pictures, photos and children's artwork without overwhelming the space.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Encourage exploration of open ended materials such as play dough, finger paint and markers.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Explain to others how children learn to represent their thoughts, feelings and ideas through art, dance and music.
- Introduce children to art, music and dance from a variety of cultures.

Key concept(s): Children learn through play and interactions with their peers

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Allow long blocks of time for play so children are not interrupted. Their play becomes richer and more meaningful when they have 30 to 40 minutes to pretend.
- Provide materials that allow children to dress up, pretend and play out scenes they observe such as setting the table for dinner or going to a restaurant.
- Help children learn through play by sometimes being a play partner, playing next to a child or offering resources to support play.
- Model ways to share, help others and take turns.
- Give children room and time to solve problems on their own or with others (when safety is not an issue) staying close and offering help when needed.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities they:

- Can identify which learning standard is being learned through play. For example when a child is counting out pretend money to a "customer" they are working on math skills.
- Extend children's play ideas by having them make props or expand the storyline. For example when children claim they need money to get on the pretend bus, suggest they make money from green construction paper.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Explain to others the importance of play and the standards that are being learned through play.



Stories from the field

The children have made a line of chairs. Will says, "Let's pretend we're on our train and we're going northwest." The child in front is wearing a hat and Wanda hands her a steering wheel. Stephanie takes squares of different colored sheer fabric from a box and hands one square out to each child. She announces, "We're going to somewhere cold to see penguins you might need this blanket." Wanda says, "It must be a long trip because you have pillows and blankets." Wanda notices Mia standing nearby and says, "Is there a place for Mia to sit?" Stephanie hands Mia a pillow and says, "She can sit on the pillow." Jerome says, "I want to go exploring." Will declares, "We can't do that. We're on a train." Wanda says, "We need to listen to everybody's ideas. Let's practice sharing ideas. How could we do both things?" Stephanie says, "I know, we can explore for penguins when we get off the train."

Content Area III: Relationships with Families

The most important relationship a child has is with his family. Providers who understand this will spend time building a positive, respectful relationship with the child's family. Frequent communication between the provider and the family will help make certain the child's needs are being met in ways that support healthy development.

Key concept(s): Families are children's first and most important caregivers

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Help parents/family members feel welcome.
- Recognize, respect and build on family strengths.
- Support positive separations and reunions during drop off and pick up times by allowing time for families to say goodbye and letting children save their work or materials so they can continue to play with them the next time.
- Listen with understanding to parents' needs and concerns while keeping professional boundaries.
- Respect and promote the rights of families to make their own decisions about what their children need.
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of each family's information, only making an exception when filing mandated reports to protect the safety of a family member (for example Children Protective Services).
- Support the child's home language and culture with an openness and sensitivity to cultural and family style of care, communication and interaction.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Partner with families to resolve problems and work with families on mutually agreed upon child-rearing practices that are within the regulations. Sometimes there may be parental requests that are not allowable such as agreeing to let an infant sleep with a blanket.
- Be clear about who is responsible for helping a child during drop off and pick up.
- Establish open and cooperative communication including descriptions of daily activities and events.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Reflect on personal cultural heritage and assumptions which influence values, decisions and behavior in order to recognize when these assumptions (beliefs) may cause problems or conflicts.
- Support children and parents in transitioning to school or their next program.

Key concept(s): Children and families need providers who are knowledgeable about the community and can direct them to resources if necessary

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Identify community resources and provide families with information.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Refer parents and guardians to community agencies, health or social services, when necessary.
- Work in partnership with families and specialists (for example, medical, dental, speech, nutrition and mental health), to meet a child's needs.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Work with other professionals involved with the child to better meet their needs.



Stories from the field

Tremaine and his mom open the door to Joy's Child Care. Tremaine is holding tightly to his mom's hand. She helps him hang his coat and take his boots off. After washing his hands they come into the room where the other children are playing. Tremaine is still holding tight

to mom's hand and crying quietly. Joy says to the child she is sitting next to, "I'm going to go help Tremaine say goodbye. He's feeling a little sad today." She squats down so she can talk quietly to Tremaine. They scan the room together and she describes what the children are doing. "Tabitha and Izzy are working on a puzzle. Shawn is putting the loops together. His chain is already bigger than he is! What would you like to do first?" Tremaine says, "I'll help Shawn." His mom says, "Ready for me to go now? Give me a big hug. Then get a big hug from Joy and I'll see you right after nap." Tremaine says, "Bye Mom, bye Mom, bye Mom," as he and Joy move toward the long chain of loops in the center of the room.

Careful observation of a young child's play, interactions and how the child explores the surroundings can help providers offer learning activities and experiences that will be the most meaningful to each child.

Key concept(s): Children do best when providers observe them and use what they learn to promote growth

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Pay attention to each child's individual abilities and interests.
- Offer activities or materials that individual children enjoy (Marisela knows that Mason likes football. She goes to the library and finds picture books about football players.)
- Observe the skills children are working on and plan activities that will help them practice.
- Share with families what the children enjoyed, learned and are practicing.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Regularly keep a record of children's abilities and achievements (written notes, checklists on specific areas of development, work samples and photos).
- Look for progress over time in learning and development.
- Use observations of child to intentionally plan activities that promote growth.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Use assessment tools to collect information about each child.
- Use information from assessment to plan for and guide curriculum, instruction and interactions with children.
- Identify and use an assessment tool that helps identify a child's skills and purposefully plan activities that will encourage child's growth and learning.

Key concept(s): Providers need to know the requirements for growth and development screening and how it can help identify individual needs

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Know the rules and regulations for health and developmental screening.
- Provide families with information about screening and screening requirements.



Stories from the field

One morning a few months ago, I walked in to my daughter's family child care home and noticed Nicole, our provider, was wearing a black apron like wait staff would wear. I asked her why she was wearing it and she said she had gone to a class a few days before where they talked about tracking the growth and development of the children. She showed me the mailing labels she carried in the pocket of the apron and said that I could look forward to seeing notes on what Linnea was learning in child care.

Over the next several weeks, I did see notes describing what Linnea was doing. Nicole had started a notebook with several sections like playing with friends and pre-math. When she noticed Linnea working on a skill she'd write it down on a mailing label and stick it in one of the sections. Sometimes she gave a mailing label to Linnea and asked her to write her name on it. It was really fun to look back at the first times she wrote her name and see the changes as she practiced.

Linnea's Mom

Content Area V:

Historical & Contemporary Development of Early Childhood Education

A provider understands how what was believed and done in the past impacts current practice. Providers also strive to understand how current events and issues affect children, families and programs.

Key concept(s): Providers need to understand the thinking that underlies current practices

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Recognize how historical practices and current trends impact programming and interactions with children.
- Recognize the value of quality and program enhancements in early care and education.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Work to continuously improve and provide high-quality care.



Stories from the field

I wanted to be part of the Parent Aware program because I would describe Parent Aware as a rating program that allows providers to prove to parents that they have what it takes and

are adding quality to their Family Child Care program. It ensures that children are ready socially, cognitively and emotionally for kindergarten. It says a lot about you as a provider when you go the extra distance to make a quality program. It shows that you are really truly dedicated to your position and to making a difference for the children. I think parents are starting to come around and view me as an educator and not the babysitter anymore and that is really important.

Jackie-Family Child Care Provider as part of a You Tube Video: [In Their Own Words: Family Child Care Providers Talk about Parent Aware.](#)

Content Area VI: Professionalism

Child development research is growing and best practices are rapidly improving. It is essential that all providers continue to take professional development training and participate in professional organizations to increase their knowledge and improve their skills.

Key concept(s): Family child care providers comply with rules and regulations

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Personally work within the requirements of federal, state and local law agencies' policies and practices.
- Focus on child care during business hours.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Keep current with changes to licensing regulations food program rules and regulations.
- Establish policies and procedures that are in compliance with all rules and regulations.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Go beyond the minimum standards set in rules and regulations by becoming accredited or participating in Parent Aware.

Key concept(s): Family child care providers strive to continuously improve their own skills

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Fully participate in ongoing professional development by asking questions, reflecting on learning and acting on new information.
- Personally work within the National Association for the Education of Young Children code of conduct.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Intentionally plan and engage in professional development to improve their own skills.
- Understand and act within professional boundaries.
- Use the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct in solving dilemmas (see resources).

As providers design and lead, they:

- Model best practices for others.
- Critically reflect on their own practice, research and trends in the field and adjust their behavior.
- Become a member in and participate in professional organizations and activities.

Key concept(s): Early childhood providers learn from others and implement best practice

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Observe others interact with children demonstrated in videos or various programs and learn from their strengths.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Reflect on their own skills and work to continuously improve them.
- Seek professional feedback and coaching and reflect on success or challenges.

Key concept(s): Family child care providers use sound business practices

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Create an annual budget.
- Plan cash flow depending on enrollment and expenses for groceries, cleaning supplies, educational materials and licensing fees.
- Keep clear and accurate business records.
- Talk with parents about policies.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Enter into a clear contract with families.
- Write policies in parent handbook and discusses with families.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Review and regularly update their contract and parent handbook.



Stories from the field

Carolyn, a veteran Family Child Care provider, said the most important thing I would tell others starting out in FCC:

“Running a family child care business is so much more than playing with and teaching children. Don’t get me wrong, that’s my favorite part. But, you really have to know and use good business strategies. You can do a lot to teach yourself, take classes, and talk to other providers. Don’t be afraid to recognize when you need a good consultant. After all, you don’t know what you don’t know! You need to figure out how to keep good records, what tax requirements are and insurance issues. You need to know where your money goes, calculate time and space and the most important thing -- plan for your retirement.”

Content Area VII: Health, Safety and Nutrition

When parents are asked what is most important to them when looking for a program for their child, a healthy and safe environment is at the top of the list. Young children in group settings need adult supervision to stay safe and healthy. A healthy environment also means providing young children with nutritious food and physical activities. Research has shown that children whose basic health needs are met are better able to learn from their environment and are much more prepared to succeed in school than those children with poor health.

Key concept(s): Children who are healthy are better able to participate in and learn from activities

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Promote healthy eating and active living by providing physical activities and offering a variety of nutritious foods for snacks and meals.
- Use, and teach children to use, basic health habits like covering a cough by coughing into their elbow, hand washing and brushing their teeth.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Keep current with health and safety information and incorporate updated information into daily practice.

Key concept(s): Children learn to develop lifelong healthy habits from the adults around them

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Bring children outdoors as often as possible.
- Give children time and opportunity to take care of their own needs in the bathroom and in dressing themselves.
- Encourage children to engage in a variety of physical daily activity to instill a habit of healthy habits.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Model and encourage children to develop healthy eating, exercise and rest habits.

Key concept(s): When the environment is safe, children are better able to explore and learn

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Keep emergency telephone numbers handy.
- Follow health and safety guidelines during hand washing, toileting, sanitizing toys and diapering to reduce the spread of infectious disease.
- Arrange the environment so that children under school-age can be seen or heard at all times.
- Keep materials, equipment and condition of home safe and clean; keep the environment smoke-free.
- Follow safe sleep practices such as laying babies on their backs to sleep.
- Make prompt and correct reports of harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare to protective services.
- Know health conditions of children (such as diabetes, food allergies, asthma, etc.) and how to respond to potential health needs.

Key concept (s): Children need proper nutrition to fuel their bodies and help them grow

To provide quality care and education providers:

- Practice safe storage, preparation handling and service of nutritious foods including breast milk.
- Follow individualized feeding and sleep schedules for infants and toddlers.
- Sit, eat and talk with children during meal and snack time.
- Recognize and avoid health hazards related to food such as choking and allergies.

As providers grow in knowledge, skills and abilities, they:

- Provide family style meal and snack times which encourage healthy eating.

As providers design and lead, they:

- Accommodate cultural food preferences.



Stories from the field

At 11:45 a.m., the children at Elizabeth's Family Child Care finish washing their hands and go to the kitchen for lunch. In the kitchen, they find a child-sized table and chairs set for six. The high chair is pulled up close to the table. Each child finds the cup that is their color and sits down at their place. They wait for Elizabeth to put down the bowls of broccoli, corn on the cob and sliced strawberries. The pizza is cut into slices on the cutting board and set in the center of the table. Once Elizabeth sits down with the children, she invites one child to take a spoonful of broccoli and then pass it. She encourages another to take a spoonful of strawberries and pass it. And she reminds another to "squeeze the tongs really, really tight" to take a cob of corn. The children push the cutting board down the center of the table to take and pass the pizza. Elizabeth chats with the children as they talk about movies they've seen with their families. Then she offers second helpings to those who are still hungry. She reminds children to think about their friends who might still want some more. As the children finish, they scrape their plate into the garbage can, load their plate and fork into the dishwasher and wash their hands.

Want to learn more?

These additional resources will help you learn more about the care and education of young children:

[Business Resource Center for Family Providers](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/businessresourcecenter/family-2/)

(<http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/businessresourcecenter/family-2/>)

Caring for Our children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition. (2011).

[Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/) (<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>)

[Center for Early Education and Development](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CEED/) (<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CEED/>)

Center for Early Education and Development. *Questions about Kids*. St. Paul: Center for Early Education and Development

<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CEED/publications/questionsaboutkids/default.html>

Center for Early Education and Development. *Tip Sheets*. St. Paul: Center for Early Education and Development <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CEED/publications/tipsheets/default.html>

Chapter 9502 Licensing of Day Care Facilities. (2007). *Minnesota Administrative Rule Chapter 9502*. State of Minnesota: Office of Revisor of Statutes.

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=9502&version=2014-01-18T09:55:51-06:00&format=pdf>

Copeland, T. (2004). *Family Child Care Legal and Insurance Guide*. St Paul: Redleaf Press.

Copeland, T. (2006). *Family Child Care Contracts and Policies*. St Paul: Redleaf Press.

Copeland, T. (2009). *Family Child Care Money Management and Retirement Guide*. St Paul: Redleaf Press.

Copeland, T. (2012). *Family Child Care Marketing Guide*. St Paul: Redleaf Press.

[Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc) (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>)

[Early Education: Getting your Children Off to a Healthy Start](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdr/earlychildhood/index.html)

(<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/chp/cdr/earlychildhood/index.html>)

[*Infectious Diseases in Child Care Settings and Schools Manual*](#). (2008). Hennepin County.

Minnesota Department of Education. (2005). *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Education.

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/index.html>

Minnesota Department of Education. (2013). *Parent Guides for Minnesota Early Learning Standards*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Education.

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/JustParent/EarlyLearnKReadi/index.html>

[National Association for the Education of Young Children](http://www.naeyc.org/) (<http://www.naeyc.org/>)

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2005 Code, Reaffirmed and Updated 2011). *NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

[National Association for Family Child Care](http://www.nafcc.org/) (<http://www.nafcc.org/>)

[National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic) (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>)

[The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Early Child Care and Early Education](http://nrckids.org/) (<http://nrckids.org/>)

[Zero to Three](http://zerotothree.org/) (<http://zerotothree.org/>)