



What to Expect from Your Childcare Provider

Every day you and your child jump among several different worlds. You get your child out of his nice, warm bed and take him to childcare where he is with different people. You go to work away from your child. At the end of the day, you leave your work world. You enter the childcare world when you pick up your child. Then you both return to your home. Your provider also lives in different worlds. She goes away from her home to care for other children, or she opens her home to other children. In each world, there are different people and different rules. The different worlds can work together well, but it is important to know what to expect.

The transitions from one world to another will be much easier if you and the provider talk about your needs. For example, it is important to tell the provider about your schedule. Then she will know when you will drop off your child and pick her up from childcare. It also helps her know how to reach you if there is an emergency. In the same way, it helps if you know your provider's rules and feelings about issues like discipline, toilet training, and payment.

Remember that childcare is a business. Your provider is at work when she cares for your child. Try to be professional with each other. Tell her what you expect from her. Ask her what she expects from you, too. It is good to start talking about these things before your child starts in the childcare.

What you can expect from your provider

You pay your provider to do a job for you. You pay her to care for your child. There are some things you should expect of her.

Business arrangements:

- *An open door.* You should be able to visit at any time. Tell them that they may come and observe in your program. But you should be welcome any time. Try not to interrupt the schedule or upset the children.

- *A written statement of policies.* This statement should tell you how and when to pay fees, what you should do when you drop off and pick up your child, what to do when your child is sick, the rules of your childcare, and so on. You should also know what will happen when the provider is sick.

- *Detailed information about every adult who may work with your child.* You should expect your provider to tell you who will work with your child in the childcare. You should know if you can trust them, if they are trained, and how the provider will keep track of what they are doing.

- *An early explanation about any changes in schedule or routine.* This is very important if it means you need to bring the child earlier or later. It also will help you get the child ready for the change.

- *Information about important events such as field trips.* You want your child to be able to do the special activities. Your provider should tell you where your child will be taken, how your child will get there, and how you can help your child get ready for the event. She should get your permission before your child goes anywhere different.

- *Supplies and equipment.* You should know what the provider will take care of and what you need to bring. You should know about diapers, clothing, food, art supplies, and other materials.

Provider knowledge and training:

- *An understanding of child growth and development.* Your provider should know about normal patterns and differences in development and about unusual things to watch for. She should know how to do the right things for children at different levels of development.

- *Knowledge of important rules and regulations.* Your provider should know the rules for licensing and registration. She should know whom to call if she has questions or problems.

The childcare setting:

- **A safe and healthy setting for your child.** You should expect the provider to have a clean and safe area for children to play, sleep, and eat.

- **A rich learning environment.** You should expect your provider to give children many things to do in the childcare. The children should be able to play safely indoors and outdoors. There should be enough toys for all of the children. There should be many ways the child can learn many different skills.

- **Supervision.** The provider should pay attention to the children. She should know where the children are and what they are doing. She should notice when your child is behaving in an unusual way or is ill. She should be able to do your child's things to do for his age and interests.

Support for parents:

- **Respect and support.** You and your provider may be very different from each other. You should feel that your provider accepts you, though. When there are problems, you should be able to talk about them.

- **Feedback about your child's day.** Your provider should be available when you pick up your child. She should tell you about important things that happened that day. You cannot expect her to have a lot of time every day. But you should have a way to get information and way to give messages to her.

- **Information about your child's development.** You should expect your provider to tell you how your child is doing. She should tell you about good activities for your child. She should also tell you if she is worried about your child. Find times when you can both talk only with each other.

- **Advice on important issues.** You can expect your provider to suggest answers to questions. You and she can work together to solve problems. Do not expect her to have all the answers, but expect her to help. You are partners.

What providers can expect from you

You pay your provider to do a job for you. In a way, you are the employer. You have responsibilities as an employer. These are things your provider should be able to expect from you.

- **Respect and support.** You and your provider may be very different from each other, but you need to work together for your child. If you cannot trust and respect your provider, look for another childcare setting.

- **Detailed information about your child's routines, activities, and likes and dislikes.** You are responsible for helping your provider understand your child. Some providers have a form to parents to report these things. When you tell your provider about your child, she can take better care of your child.

- **Information about any changes in your child's patterns.** Tell your provider about any changes in your child's routine. This could include changes in your child's sleeping pattern, eating habits, a new allergy, sickness, and so on.

- **Information about your needs and routines.** Tell the provider where you will be and how she can reach you. Tell her about any important events in your family's life. This will help the provider understand your child.

- **Early information about any change in your schedule.** You probably do not like surprises in your job. Providers do not like sudden surprises, either. Tell your provider as soon as you know about any changes in your day-to-day schedule. Work together to find a way to adjust to the changes, if necessary.

- **Bringing the child and picking him up on time.** Providers may not be able to start the day's program until all the children arrive. At the end of the day, they need to be able to close the childcare. Call the provider right away if you know you will be late.

- **Quick refill of supplies.** Replace the supplies that your provider needs for your child's care right away. For example, you might need to bring diapers, snacks, or clothes to the childcare. Let the provider know if you will not be able to bring new supplies right away.

- **Early notice when the child will be leaving the childcare.** Your provider depends on the income from your child's care. Let her know early if you will be leaving the program. Then the provider can try to find another child to fill the spot.

- **Responsible care when your child is sick.** Your provider or the childcare center should have rules about children coming to childcare when they are sick. Follow those rules. Be honest about your child's health. Tell your provider what the problem is. This is the best way to keep all the children (and the provider) healthy.

- **Paying fees on time.** Childcare is your provider's job. If you pay late, the provider's paycheck might be late. Talk with the provider if your family has money problems. Work out a solution.

Source:

DeBord, K. (1993). *Communicating Expectations*. In Todd, C.M. (Ed.) *Family child care connections*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. http://www.nncc.org/Families/fdc32_communic.expect.html

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