

Professionalism in Early Care and Education - by Amanda Kelkenberg

The work you do every day on behalf of the children in your care is the most important work in the world today. Research over the last decade has proven the importance of providing young children with a "good start" in the areas of physical, cognitive, and social emotional development. Yet, there are many people who still do not understand the important foundation caregivers are establishing each and every day. Here are some tips to help providers gain the respect and recognition you deserve for your commitment to our children.

1. Have a contract. Establishing a contract that clearly outlines the days and times for care as well as payment obligations can eliminate any misunderstandings between a caregiver and a family. It is acceptable to request that payment for care is made at the beginning of the week or month.. Families need to be aware that their payment is necessary to provide food and experiences that encourage the healthy development of their child.

2. Develop a family hand book. A family handbook can help establish clear guidelines on your policies for caring for sick children, inclement weather, the philosophy of care, disciplinary procedures and any other information relevant to your program. It is important for caregivers to schedule time for themselves within a year. Any holiday or vacation time should be scheduled (preferably) a year in advance and included in the handbook so parents can plan ahead in making any alternative arrangements. If possible, involve your staff and families in the creation of new policies for your business.

3. Participate in professional development. Attend trainings and/or college courses. Training allows you to stay on top of the latest research from the field in providing quality care for children. It also allows for networking and developing relationships with other providers in your area.

4. Parent education. Being a professional means that it is your job to educate parents about the important work that, you do with their children. Make sure they are aware of the trainings that you attend. Develop communication through a newsletter that outlines the experiences that you have engaged the children in and the important areas of development that you are encouraging every day.

5. Become an advocate for children. Contact local, state, and federal officials about the importance of early care and education as well as what is needed to provide the highest quality care for the children in this area, state, and country. Never underestimate the impact you can have on making positive changes that influence the lives of children.

To help raise the bar on quality child care by getting involved and letting local and national leaders know that quality child care is important to you and your community. Every voice counts. Join thousands of CCR&Rs, child care providers, and parents like you to make quality child care a reality for all families. [Click here](#) for more information on becoming a child care advocate.