

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Children thrive when in a stable, predictable, loving environment. The work and influence of a child care provider is invaluable to society, and to individual families. A well-trained child care provider helps children to learn and grow at their own rate, to become self disciplined and to be self motivated. Each teacher has a different type of personality. It is important that you build on your own strengths and develop your own teaching style. Whether you are outgoing and lively or reserved and quiet, you can be a very successful child care provider.

Some important characteristics of child care providers include:

RESPECT

This includes respect for children, parents and staff members. We all have different skills and abilities. Each person must be respected as an individual. Each child's family background, interests, culture and desires need to be respected. Sometimes prejudices or biases are harbored inside of us. We need to recognize those biases and work to overcome them. Stereotyping children because of economic status, dress or appearance is unacceptable. It is vital that each provider learn to appreciate each person for who they are and for their uniqueness.

ACCEPTANCE OF CHILDREN

Each child needs to be understood and accepted. Feeling accepted helps children develop intellectually and emotionally. It helps them develop good self esteem and to have confidence in themselves and their abilities. Not only do your actions affect how the children feel about themselves, but it also shows children how they should treat each other.

PATIENCE

Young children have not yet developed motor skills that are equal to those of the provider. The provider needs to allow extra time to complete tasks and to understand that the task will probably not be done as well as the provider can do it. Children also need time to repeat tasks. Repetition is an important learning tool for young children. Repeating information and reminding children of rules may seem tedious at times, but if handled patiently, the children will grow and learn while building self-esteem.

FLEXIBILITY

Many important learning opportunities are not planned, they occur spontaneously. A good child care provider can change direction at a moment's notice, building on the events and actions occurring throughout the day.

ACCEPT DIVERSITY

Child care providers should be compassionate towards all children. Each family has its own way of doing things. Cultural groups have their own preferences, languages, and beliefs. Each child must be accepted without prejudice. The feelings of children, whether positive or negative, must also be accepted by the provider. Actions which make children feel worthless, such as punishment and shaming should be avoided. Each child must feel accepted and appreciated for who he/she is.

LISTENING

Children feel important and worthwhile if the provider pays attention to them and really listens. Providers must learn to talk with the children and not at them. In many instances behavior problems can be avoided by a provider who listens to the child, understands the stresses a child is dealing with, and then helps them to work through the accompanying emotions.

SENSE OF HUMOR

Laughter is contagious. When children see a provider with a cheerful attitude who is positive, they are more likely to also be cheerful and positive. Laughter helps children to relax and feel content. Humor is often the best means of coping with otherwise difficult or stressful situations. It teaches children to enjoy life. Be careful to laugh with, not at, the children.

CREATIVITY

As a child care provider, you should love new ideas--both yours and the children. Plan activities which enhance creativity in children and beware of those which are stifling.

CALM

A good child care provider is in control of personal feelings and actions. It is important that you do not get upset easily. At times it may seem like everything is going wrong, even then you must remain calm as you work to reverse the situation. When a child is out of control and unable to deal effectively with his/her emotions, a calm provider can help to stabilize the situation and allow the child to get in control and learn to deal more constructively with his/her feelings.

COMMITMENT/PROFESSIONALISM

Demands on the child care provider can be very high at times. Parents will ask advice and expect you to be an expert on the subject. Meeting the demands of this field requires a serious commitment. You must constantly study to keep up with new developments in the field and improve your skills. As a teacher, you must be prepared each day with appropriate activities. The curriculum should be carefully planned to address all areas of a child's development, to provide a balance between active and still, and to appropriately meet children's needs.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

It is not possible to be the perfect provider to all children. A good child care provider knows the types of children and families with whom they are most effective, and also those with whom they are less effective. It may be necessary to refer children to another provider who can more aptly meet the needs of the child. A provider who is aware of personal weaknesses can work to improve in those areas, and become more well-rounded.