

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENTS

DAILY PROGRAM AND STAFF SCHEDULE POSTED

Section 10(2)

Every licensee shall provide a daily program which is consistent with the statement of program required under clause 5(a) and shall post the daily program with a staff schedule for the information of parents and guardians.

Guideline

The daily program and staff schedules are for the information of parents and guardians to enhance the partnership between the centre and the child's home. The postings must always be accurate and note any changes to program or staff.

It is recommended that all parent information be posted in a designated parent information area near the centre's entrance.

Best Practice

Staff ensures children are dressed appropriately for indoor and outdoor play and that naptime and dressing procedures encourage self-help and meet individual needs for safety, rest and comfort.

Staff establishes and uses routines within the daily program to help children feel secure in knowing what comes next. Staff turn these routines into experiences to encourage children's independence and autonomy. Staff are responsive and flexible and extend routines when necessary.

Staff make changes to the daily program to meet the individual needs of children. For example, shorter story time for child with short attention span; child working on project allowed to continue past scheduled time; slow eater may finish at own pace.

Smooth transitions between daily events are provided. For example, having the materials ready for next activity before current activity ends. Most transitions involve a few children at a time rather than whole groups.

Programs cater to the needs, interests and abilities of all children by assisting children to be successful learners.

Free play takes place for much of the day, both indoors and outdoors, while staff carefully observe children and use teachable moments to guide their learning and development.

Children are involved in program planning, such as by suggesting and evaluating activities and themes.

Programs are evaluated regularly.

Staff schedules are developed to meet the needs of the children.

DAILY PROGRAM ACTIVITY

Section 10(3)

Play activity for children shall be in groups which do not exceed the requirements of subsections 8(2), (3) and (4) and shall allow for daily:

- (a) individual and small group activity;
- (b) large and small muscle activity;
- (c) cognitive, language and social activity; and
- (d) child initiated and adult initiated activity.

Guideline

Play activity must respect the needs of both individual children and small groups. As play is the primary activity of children, it is expected that children will be allowed to make their own choices about play activity at least half of the time during a centre's operating day.

Best Practice

The central focus of the centre's daily program is play-based, active learning through children's involvement in well-planned environments.

The planned curriculum comes from the assessed developmental needs of children and their interests.

Staff makes it a priority to know each child well. They talk to children, having many friendly and stimulating conversations with them.

Children are encouraged to explore the indoor and outdoor environments and engage in activities to promote specific kinds of learning in all developmental domains:

- physical
- social
- emotional
- cognitive

Staff is aware of children's activities, as well as opportunities for teachable moments.

During play, staff helps children think about solutions to conflicts, encourages children to talk about activities and introduces concepts through play.

Individual Plans (IP) for children with disabilities ensure appropriate curriculum goals are developed and activities are implemented to achieve the goals. Goals are included in the regular routines and activities of the centre. IPs are updated regularly and all staff are advised of the changes.

A print- and language-rich environment is provided.

DAILY OUTDOOR PLAY

Section 10(4)

Every licensee who operates a full time child care centre or nursery school which provides child care for more than 4 continuous hours per day or a school age child care centre, shall provide outdoor play for children attending the child care centre on a daily basis except where:

- (a) prohibited by a child's parent, guardian or family physician;
- (b) wind chill conditions of more than 1600 watts per square metre, exist;
- (c) temperatures below -25° Celsius exist;
- (d) wind chill conditions or temperatures exist which according to the policy of the school division where the child care centre is located would prohibit outdoor play by children; or
- (e) other forms of inclement weather exist.

Guideline

All children, including infants, are expected to have outdoor play every day, except in the conditions noted above.

Environment Canada combines wind chill and temperatures.

As school age children participate in recess during a regular school day, these children may choose to participate in outdoor play. However, centres must provide the opportunity for daily outdoor play.

Best Practice

Staff respects the need for children to experience the outdoors and the real world. They provide children with opportunities to interact with the environment. Staff helps children:

- learn about safe exploring
- recall and connect prior experiences with new ones
- explore environments using their cognitive skills, including comparing, classifying and predicting

Staff works with children both on the playground and away from it. They know children's activities and whereabouts, as well as recognizing learning opportunities in the environment.

Daily environmental conditions are checked online at www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca or by calling Environment Canada at **204-984-6203**.

During the summer, time spent outdoors is limited during the hottest time of the day (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Precautions to limit sun exposure are taken:

- With parent permission, staff applies sunscreen to children with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15
- Staff ensures children have access to drinking water before, during and after playing outdoors
- Staff ensures children wear sun hats to protect them from UV rays. Staff follows Environment Canada's sun protection actions as outlined below.

UV Index	Category	Sun Protection Actions
0 - 2	Low	Minimal protection needed if outside for less than one hour. Wear sunglasses on bright days.
3 - 5	Moderate	Cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen if outside for 30 minutes or more.
6 - 7	High	Protection required. Reduce time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and seek shade, cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
8 - 10	Very High	Take full precautions (see "high" category) and avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.
11+	Extreme	Very rare in Canada. Take full precautions and avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Unprotected skin will be damaged and can burn in minutes. Proper sun protection includes wearing a broad-rimmed hat, a shirt with long sleeves and wrap-around sunglasses or ones with side shields. Choose sunscreen with 15+ SPF (sun protection factor) that offers protection against both UV-A and UV-B rays. Apply generously before going outside and reapply often, especially after swimming or exercise.

Staff models appropriate outdoor dress and routines for children by wearing sun hats and sunscreen.

Staff encourages light-coloured, loose-fitting, long-sleeved tops and long pants when outside. Peak hours of mosquito activity are avoided for outdoor play. With parents' permission, the centre follows Health Canada's recommendations about the use of mosquito repellent:

- Children under six months of age: insect repellents containing DEET on infants six months of age are NOT used
- Children six months to two years of age: Where there is a high risk of insect bites, one application per day of a product with the lowest concentration of DEET (10 per cent DEET or less) may be applied sparingly. Avoid the child's face and hands.
- Children between two and 12 years of age: Use the least concentrated product (10 per cent DEET or less) not more than three times a day. Avoid the child's face and hands.
- Adults and children 12 years of age and older: Products containing no more than a 30 per cent concentration of DEET will provide sufficient protection (30 per cent DEET will provide about six hours of protection against bites).
- Pregnant or lactating women: There is no indication of a hazard to unborn or nursing children when pregnant or lactating women use products containing DEET. Non-chemical methods to reduce mosquito bites (protective clothing, avoiding peak hours of mosquito activity, etc.) can be considered as alternatives to repellents.

Sunscreen is applied at least 20 minutes before mosquito repellent to prevent over-absorption of DEET.

SLEEPING AND TOILETING

Section 10(5)

Every licensee shall provide for sleeping and toileting in accordance with the developmental capabilities of each child.

Guideline

Children should have access to washrooms as needed rather than at scheduled times throughout the day.

Children who nap should be given the opportunity to sleep every day unless a parent prohibits it. Children who do not require a nap cannot be forced to rest.

Parents should indicate if their children require a daily nap(s). Parent preferences may be identified on centre enrollment forms or through parent interviews.

Any child who is not sleeping after a half-hour should not be required to stay in bed. Upon awakening, children should have the opportunity to immediately rise from naptime. A separate space should be designated for those children not sleeping during naptime. The staff-to-child ratios for supervision will apply for these children.

Best Practice

Staff provide flexibility within the sleep and toilet routines to meet the individual needs of children. Staff understands that:

- infants follow their own individual nap schedules (somewhat consistent with nap times at home)
- some toddlers need only one nap while others need two (while these toddlers nap, the others need the physical space and opportunities to do quiet, relaxing, less stimulating activities)
- many preschoolers, especially older ones, do not require a nap but need opportunities and activities to help them slow down and rest
- school age children need comfortable furniture or spaces to wind down or do quiet activities

Diapering and using toilet facilities are used as times to talk with and relate warmly to infants and young children. Staff handle toilet-related accidents calmly and pleasantly.

Staff works with parents to toilet-train toddlers.

INFANT SLEEP POSITIONS

Section 10(5.1)

Every licensee caring for an infant shall ensure that the infant is laid down to sleep only on his or her back or side.

Guideline

Research has shown that baby's sleep positions may be a factor in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Scientists studying SIDS have found that SIDS occurs less often in countries where infants sleep on their backs compared with countries where infants are usually put to sleep tummy down. Placing babies on their sides to sleep does not seem as effective in preventing SIDS as putting them on their backs. As a result of the link between SIDS and sleeping positions, researchers and health care providers have advised that infants under the age of six months should be placed on their backs to sleep.

The tummy down position may be necessary for some babies in a few special situations. Centres should discuss with parents the advice of the child's doctor.

DAILY RECORD

Section 10(6)

Every licensee shall maintain a written record of every incident which affects the health, safety or well-being of children and staff.

Guideline

The purpose of the daily incident report is to enhance communication between staff and a child's parents or guardians. Daily incidents, such as a child talking about a dispute at home, and events such as injuries, outbreak of illness or communicable disease, change in staff from the posted schedule, changes in food from the regular menu and telephone messages about a child should be recorded and shared with parents daily.

Records must be documented confidentially. Parents can request access to these records.

Best Practice

Staff shares observations about the child's learning and development as part of day-to-day communication with parents of young children. They document noteworthy incidents, as well as the developmental milestones of each child.

Records of children's learning and well-being are maintained by the centre and are used to plan programs, including experiences appropriate for each child.

Staff use daily individual journals for each child with notes about the child's day. Parents have the opportunity to record information about their child's evening/weekend such as special activities/celebrations, sleeping, eating or health issues.

Staff uses a portfolio for their information about the children such as written observations, artefacts and samples of children's work and photographs of various activities. These serve as the basis for regular developmental goal setting with parents and provide information for individual planning.

For school age children, journals are used with parental permission, between the centre, home and school.

Staff uses arrival and departure times to greet and share information with all parents. They welcome and encourage meetings with parents to share information or solve problems.

PLAY EQUIPMENT

Section 13(1)

Every licensee shall provide and maintain indoor play equipment for the use of children in attendance at the licensee's child care centre which is:

- (a) consistent with the developmental capabilities of children in attendance;
- (b) in compliance with the requirements of the *Hazardous Products Act (Canada)* and other applicable safety legislation or standards as determined by the director;
- (c) located in areas accessible for independent selection by children;
- (d) available in a quantity and variety to occupy all children in attendance; and
- (e) arranged in a manner which facilitates small group interaction in areas free from interference and interruption.

Guideline

The *Hazardous Products Act (Canada)* requires all play materials made, sold or advertised to be safe. Child care centres must ensure play materials are safe for use by children. Information on toy product safety is available from Health Canada, Product Safety.

Centres must ensure that there is enough play equipment for all children enrolled. It is recommended that there be a minimum of two times the number of activities as the number of children in attendance at any time. Plan to rotate equipment, too. A required equipment list for infants and toddlers, preschool and school age children is available upon request from the child care co-ordinator.

Best Practice

Equipment is selected based on the following:

- durability
- easy to clean
- appealing to children
- includes many natural materials
- versatility
- safety for ages and stages of the children enrolled
- learning value
- cultural sensitivity
- play value

Equipment creates an environment where children:

- are able to explore freely and safely
- can exercise independent choices
- have opportunities to use materials in unique ways.

Play materials are child-accessible and varied.

Equipment offering different levels of difficulty or skills is available within each play area to provide successes and challenges for each child.

Adaptive equipment and/or adaptations to equipment, if required, are based on the child's needs and abilities and are regularly reassessed.

Equipment and materials are neatly stored in labelled containers or shelving. Labels include both words and pictures.

Equipment is regularly cleaned and inspected for damage. Damaged or incomplete items are removed from use (ex: puzzles and games).

New materials for free play, based on children's interests, are added to enhance children's learning opportunities.

Equipment lists are available for staff to use as they rotate play equipment to ensure an adequate variety and quantity are available. For example, the puzzle area contains a variety of mediums, such as lacing, stacking/nesting, peg and peg boards, wooden puzzles with/without pegs or large floor puzzles.

Quiet and active centres do not interfere with one another. For example, the reading or listening area is separated from blocks and dramatic play area.

Space is arranged so other activities are not interrupted. For example, the shelves are placed so children walk around, not through activities; furniture placement discourages rough play or running.

EQUIPMENT – OUTDOORS

Section 13(2)

Every licensee shall provide and maintain outdoor play equipment for the use of children in attendance at the licensee's child care centre which meets the requirements of clauses (1)(a), (b) and (d).

Guideline

A variety of activities may be provided during outdoor play, including some or all of the activity areas identified under Program Activities.

New playspaces, equipment, additions and replacement parts of existing playspaces and equipment meet Canadian Standards Association (CSA) International standards.

For further information on the safety of outdoor play equipment, see the CSA publications *Children's Playspaces and Equipment (Z614-03)* and *What's New in the Z614?*. Copies of the publications may be available in your local library or through the CSA.

Best Practice

Outdoor playspaces are extensions of the indoor playrooms, providing many of the same opportunities as indoor spaces, including creative, structured, quiet and fantasy activities.

Outdoor environments and equipment provide unique experiences in sensory, discovery and mobility reflecting the larger world and providing opportunities for age-appropriate risk-taking.

All outdoor activity areas are kept clean and safe.

Staff develops and uses an outdoor safety checklist to ensure a safe and healthy outdoor play environment. The checklist includes all potential playground equipment and environmental hazards.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Section 13(3)

Every licensee shall provide for children in attendance at the licensee's child care centre space and equipment for a variety of activities including dramatic, fine motor, block, creative, reading, large muscle, water, sand, music, science and construction activity according to guidelines provided by the director.

Guideline

The activity centre is the basic unit of a child care centre's organization. Dramatic, fine motor, block, art, literacy, large muscle and science should be provided on a daily basis. Water, sand, music and construction should be provided on a regular basis.

The arrangement of program equipment and activities in a child care centre should consider the amount of physical activity, the noise level, the need for washable surfaces, the location of play equipment and activities on floor, tables or walls and the number of children participating. Child care co-ordinators can provide additional information to child care centres about program activities and the physical space in a centre.

Centres Caring for Infants and Toddlers:

Space for centres caring for infants and toddlers need simple organization. The way caregivers interact with the child is the single most important factor in the environment. Other factors include space, objects and structures.

In an infant centre, there should be four primary activity areas including gross motor, sensori-motor, imitative and language concept areas. The following chart lists these areas, the percentage of space recommended for each and activities that might occur within each of the areas.

Activity Area	Activities within the Area	% of Space in Room
Gross Motor	crawling, climbing, riding, running	40%
Sensorimotor	block play, water, sand, creative, construction, science	30%
Imitative	dramatic play	20%
Language/Concepts	fine motor, manipulative, reading, music	10%

Best Practice

An environment rich in multicultural, age-appropriate, inclusive experiences and materials is provided to:

- create a sense of belonging
- be flexible and open-ended
- connect the child to nature
- stimulate wonder and joy
- reinforce a positive image of the child

The curriculum and activities are designed and used to meet the needs and developmental levels of all children, including those with disabilities, as well as to encourage the child's further development.

Program activities are planned with parents and relevant specialists. Activities meet the unique needs of all children, including those with disabilities.

Staff uses a curriculum designed to address the needs, joys and interests of childhood.

An area is provided where children's long-term projects can be protected, so that they may come back to their project daily.

Staff meaningfully includes music and movement activities throughout the day to help children develop a sense of patterns. Singing helps develop language, reduces anxiety, helps keep children happy and enhances hearing.

A cozy area for children and staff for quiet time and reading is provided. Staff recognizes the need for children to have space and time alone or with small quiet groups.