



Guidance for Policy Development

This policy guide is to support anyone who is responsible for or involved with a child care program's policy writing. The guide is based on principles found within general child care business standards, ChildNet 3.0 and Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K®).

Definition of Policies

The rules or standards set by the organization. A written statement of purpose and objectives. The plan and practices of operation shall be consistent with this statement.

Business Expectations

Defining business expectations reduces confusion, conflict and misunderstandings. These legal documents provide all persons served, program, staff and clients a written plan for managing various scenarios, thus reducing emotional conflict.

The Purpose of Policies

To provide a guide for decision-making and practices. Policies are written by the individuals within the organization to communicate responsibilities in one organized, structured resource.

Policies need to be written in the voice and culture of the individual program, enhancing the specific work done within the program. They should be adapted as needs change, situations, problems, growth and development make it necessary. The people who are responsible for upholding the rules written in the policies need to understand them and know them.

Word Choice

Word choice matters. Contradictions are easily made and need to be avoided. Careful organization of the policy handbook puts like items in the same place and gives structure to the thought process.

Explanation of Word Choice Importance

Safe Sleep, for example, should be written in one section of the policy handbook. Under this section, all safe sleep requirements, procedural concerns and expectations should be addressed and policies recorded. Addressing safe sleep under many topics and age groups makes understanding the expectation difficult. Considering word choice, the use of words like should, recommended, encouraged and suggested typically would lead one to believe that safe sleep standards are an optional practice. A better writing practice would be to use more definitive words so that there is no misunderstanding. Safe Sleep is one policy that demands that procedure be followed. All of the safe sleep expectations need to be written in one space, likely under health or safety.

Policy Inclusion

In the chart below, please see one option of possible organization of the many policies that could be written and included in a policy handbook. Child care quality initiatives such as ChildNet 3.0 or IQ4K have specific requirements of policies. However, programs will need to write many more policies to share the expectations, guidance and rules that explain what needs to be addressed for each program and community.

To assist with organizing the document and allowing for growth and easy use, consider using an index or table of contents. Divide and organize in a fashion that enables you to make the best use of your document.

Policy Sections, Organization and Suggestions of Content	
Welcome	Introduction to the program – including logo, branding, business contact information, mission and orientation.
Operating Guidelines	This section would include what the daily expectations are to operate, communicate and work together.
Adult Partnership, Family and Communication	Family expectations – communication preferences, building relationships with caregivers, bringing clarity and unity of expectations of children, families and caregivers.
Health, Illness and Medication	This section includes procedures and forms for ill children and health-related emergencies, Emergency Preparedness and injury report forms.
Emergency Plan	Emergency, evacuation, fire and tornado, transportation, lock-in-place. Explanation of preparation, planning and practice.
Safety	Record of procedures and practices to maintain equipment, train staff and supervise all environments.
Schedule, Routine and Activities	Explanation and understanding of time, activities, transitions and routines. Children thrive when they know what to expect and can trust their environment and caregivers.
Environment	Rules, expectations and guidance in regard to the environment.
Handbook Index	Both the contract and policy may be combined into one handbook. They should be separated and clearly defined. Anything to do with time and money should be considered when entering a contract; these items are easily enforced in court. Policies are the rules of a child care business and are not easily enforced in court.

Role of Child Care Consultant Regarding Policy Guidance

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Child Care Consultants are not legal counsel. They are offering support, knowledge and resources to assist you in the development of your business tools. The information and resources provided by CCR&R staff are based on many resources and best practices. What the individual who uses this information does with the information and resources is up to their own professional process.