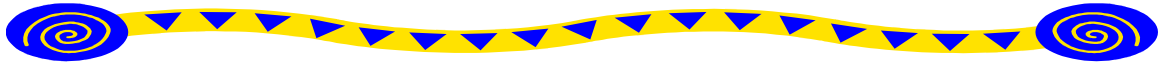


# Chapter 9

## The Successful Caregiver

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## **ROLE OF THE CHILD CARE HEALTH CONSULTANT IN CHILD CARE PROGRAMS**

All child care programs should have access to a health consultant who can provide consultation and technical assistance. The child care health consultant is a health professional with expertise in child health and development who works with caregivers to recognize and promote the health and safety of staff, children, and families.

### **Who is the Child Care Health Consultant?**

The child care health consultant can be a public health nurse, pediatric nurse, pediatrician, family physician, or health professional with expertise in:

- Child health
- Mental health
- Nutrition
- Health education
- Oral health
- Environmental health
- Emergency management
- Infectious diseases
- Issues relating to caring for children with special health care needs

### **What are the qualifications of a Child Care Health Consultant?**

The child care health consultant should have knowledge and expertise in the following areas:

- Routines, conditions, and constraints for caregivers
- Pediatric health care and early brain development
- Community, state, and national resources and regulations
- Principles of consultation

- Working with diverse populations
- Oral, written, and electronic communication
- Communication with non-health-related personnel and local health authorities
- Techniques to teach health and safety to adults and children

### **What does a Child Care Health Consultant do?**

The child care health consultant should be in regular contact with the child care program and be able to:

- Perform an assessment of the program focusing on health, safety, nutrition practices, and facility issues
- Assist in the development and implementation of written health policies
- Assist in linking children, families, and caregivers to community health resources including a medical home, immunizations, and health screenings
- Contribute to the professional development of caregivers
- Assist caregivers with the inclusion of children with special health care needs
- Create health care plans for children with special health care needs, in collaboration with health professionals in the child's medical home
- Delegate prescribed care to caregivers
- Assist the program in the event of a communicable disease outbreak

### **Why does a Child Care Program need a Child Care Health Consultant?**

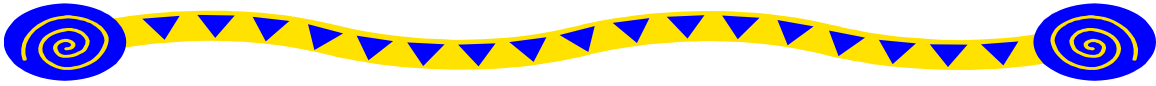
To assist in:

- Preventing infectious diseases in children, staff, and families
- Preventing injuries
- Promoting health by using
  - Written policies
  - Food safety practices
  - Sanitation procedures
  - Play equipment assessments

- Health record reviews
- Illness and injury records
- Education of staff and families

**Where can a Child Care Program find a Child Care Health Consultant?**

- Contact the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Child and Adolescent Health Division: (405) 271-4471
- Call the Child Care Warmline: (888) 574-5437
- Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency through the Oklahoma Child Care Resource & Referral Association, (888) 962-2772



## **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF**

What a tremendous responsibility and awesome opportunity awaits you as a child care provider. You have the joy of living life through the eyes of precious little children. You will watch children grow from helpless infancy to more self-sufficient preschoolers, or even through the school-age years. You will be a part of their memories forever. In fact, it is while with you that many of their early milestones will be reached. Sounds great huh? Then why are many child care providers so exhausted?

It is extremely important that as a child care provider you make caring for yourself your number one job. If you don't think you are worth the effort, just ask any of your parents how valuable your being healthy and available is to them.

### **How often do you feel?**

- Overwhelmed
- Frustrated
- Angry at family or others
- A lack of pleasure in things that usually bring a smile
- Irritable
- Exhausted or unable to sleep
- Not Organized

If you are experiencing any of these on a routine basis, you may have child care provider stress. Left unaddressed, these issues may lead to serious health problems and or burnout. What do you do?

### **Actions you can take to protect yourself:**

- Make time for your annual physical/mammogram.
- Be sure that all physical causes are identified and addressed.
  - Could your lack of energy be due to a thyroid problem?
  - Could you be diabetic?
  - Could you have sleep apnea?

- All of these can lead to frustration, exhaustion, sleeplessness, or depression.
- It is important to exercise. It can change your mood! Even short walks help.
- Develop good eating habits.
- Develop a network of friends who are in child care as a support group.
- Enroll in a class on a subject **NOT** related to child care.
- Meditate, pray or attend a religious service of your choice.
- Go for a walk with a friend after work
- Get a pedicure and manicure.
- Go see a funny movie.
- **LAUGH EVERY DAY**, it will change your mood!
- Curl up on your couch with a blanket and your pet and read a great book.
- Go shopping and treat yourself to something special (not expensive).
- Make popcorn, toss M and Ms in the bowl, and watch a classic movie.
- Plan short “get away” weekends or vacations to reduce stress.
- Make time for your hobbies.
- Perhaps one of the **MOST** helpful ways to care for yourself is to **ASK** for help from a co-worker when a specific child interaction is becoming **MORE** than you can handle. Asking is **NOT** a sign of weakness, but of strength.

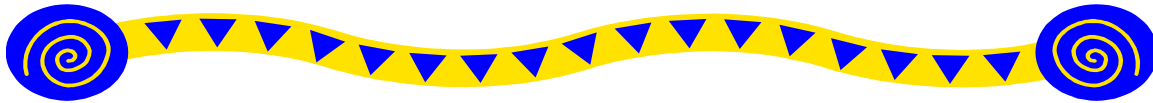
**How to prevent becoming ill or injured:**

- Stay current on **YOUR** immunizations
- Have you had your hepatitis immunizations?
- When was your last tetanus immunization?
- Do you get a yearly flu shot?
- Be sure to keep your skin moist and intact. Your skin is your first line of

defense against many illnesses. Be certain to keep any sores, cuts, or scrapes clean and COVERED.

- Review proper lifting techniques, these can save you from back pain and injury.
  - Lift comfortably. Choose a position that feels natural but is safe.
  - Avoid unnecessary bending.
  - Avoid reaching out. Handle heavy objects close to your body.
  - Remember to bend with your knees, not your back.

Do **NOT** work when you are ill. Have a back up plan in place. You are human and you will be ill sometimes. If you “just keep going” when you are ill, you run the risk of infecting the children in your care also. Remember you are very valuable to both the parents and children in your care; take CARE of yourself!



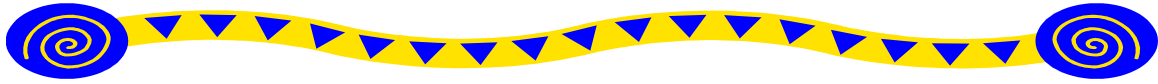
## TIPS FOR TALKING WITH FAMILIES

Communicating with parents on a regular basis is important. If there is a concern you want to discuss with parents think through what you will say and how you will say it.

### **Before bringing up the issue:**

- Think through what the real problem is.
- What are the consequences of not doing anything?
- What are the consequences of talking to the family?
- What resources can you suggest the family turn to?
- Make copies of brochures of agencies that might help.
- Don't forget informal resources like relatives, neighbors, or the faith community.
- Choose an appropriate time:
  - The least stressful and hurried time of the day is best.
  - Ask if the parent or parents can stop by on their lunch hour, during naptime, or if they can stay a few minutes late when picking up their child.
- Present the problem in a factual way:
  - "I noticed..."
  - Avoid being judgmental.
  - Do not shy away from stating the obvious.
- **After stating what you are concerned about:**
  - Ask the parent if they have seen a similar behavior or have a similar concern.
  - This gives the parent an opportunity to provide background information you may not know about.
  - This also gives the parent an opportunity to agree or disagree with your definition of the problem before you move on to discussing solutions.
- **Discuss the issue in terms of how it affects the child:**
  - Focus on your shared concern.

- Remember you and the parents are both working toward a common goal; what is best for the child.
- **Listen to what the parents say in response:**
  - Try to use the same words the parents use as you reply “I hear you saying, is that correct?”
  - This lets parents know you heard them and value their input.
- **Remember:**
  - You cannot fix things for other people.
  - Your role is to educate parents, provide support, and link them to resources that might be helpful.
  - Always end your conversation with parents on a positive note.



## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CHILD CARE

- Does your family celebrate birthdays with a piñata?
- Do you have an Easter ham or do you grill chicken?
- Do you live with your parents and grandparents in the same home?
- Is breastfeeding until two years old acceptable to you?
- What forms of discipline did you grow-up with? Did your Mom often say, “You are in trouble now! Just wait until your Father gets home...” relegating the task of discipline to him. Did your aunt have the same right to discipline you as your dad?

The answers to these questions help define your cultural preference. In child care, it is very important that you acknowledge the cultural differences represented in your facility. The different cultures in your center can create a beautiful patchwork quilt.

As a child care professional it is imperative that you seek to understand how a child’s culture will impact your care. Let us examine how provider Lori handles this situation.

Lori welcomed 3-year-old Trey to her family child care home. Trey and his family recently moved here from another country. Trey entered the home and immediately removed his shoes. He then wandered from room to room as if looking for something. Several times during the day he stopped what he was doing and looked around as if waiting for special instructions.

At lunch, Lori served soft tacos and pudding, a favorite among her long-term children. Trey did not touch his taco, but did enjoy his pudding. At naptime, he kept moving his cot away from Melissa the girl next to him. Trey was very respectful, even saying yes sir to every request Lori had. He shared toys easily, but moved away when other children stood very close to him. Although he was able to toilet himself, he seemed incapable of redressing himself after toileting. During Katie’s birthday party, her dad brought hamburger pizza and cake. Trey did not eat the pizza or the cake.

At the end of the day, he was quick to hug his mother and ready to go home. Lori sensed that he was not very comfortable in her home. She was delighted to have such a pleasant and respectful young child in her home and wanted to help him feel more at ease.

Lori quickly scheduled a parent meeting with Trey's parents. Lori shared her observations with the parents and asked for their input on how she could help Trey feel more comfortable. Trey's parents explained that they do not eat meat and offered to pack Trey a lunch from home. Trey's parents went on to explain that sweets such as cake were considered a real treat in their home and were reserved for weddings and celebrations of elders birthdays, rather than children's birthdays. Fruit is the preferred sweet in their home. The parents explained that Trey might have been looking for the family altars in Lori's home as he went from room to room. His parents also explained that he might have also been looking for grandparents or other elders in the home. In his home, boys did not sleep in the same room as girls, even for naptime.

Equipped with this new information, Lori was excited to be able to work with Trey's parents to make his child care experience a happy and positive one. She was pleased that Trey's parents offered to meet with the other parents during parent night and share their culture and answer any questions that others might have. Trey was happy to be asked to bring items from his home for show and tell. He brought a picture of his grandparents and a picture of his family's village.

Because language is the primary method of communication it is important to assess the words used in the child's home and remain consistent with this while they are in your care. For example: does the child "urinate", "pee", or "tinkle." If English is the second language in the home, try these suggestions to help with communication:

- Make a picture board and practice the correct word to use to express the need.
- Keep the message simple. Rather than, "Put your socks and shoes on. It is time to wash your hands and go outside for a picnic." Break it into small baby steps. "Put on your socks. Put on your shoes etc."
- Talk out loud about everything as you do it. For example: "Now I am going to get the green play dough out. Now I am making it flat." Be sure to use hand gestures as you talk, pointing to the green play dough.
- Sing lots of repetitive songs.
- Partner English speaking students with those who are learning.

Correct nutrition is how a child's brain and body grow. Food and mealtime have different meanings in different cultures. In some cultures, certain types of meat are not to be eaten during certain times, or even to be served or offered. Offering a mealtime prayer may be a priority in one family and not considered important in another. One family may feel that continuing to spoon feed a child when they are old enough to do it alone is not only appropriate, but also expected. Another family might see that as delaying a child's independence. When a family starts feeding solids to their infant, is also to be considered in light of their cultural norm.

In many countries it is the accepted norm for children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins to share the same home. All share in the training and discipline of the children. While respect for the elders is not only expected, it is required. Children are seen as prized belongings. How a child behaves both in the home and outside the home is considered a parent's measure of pride in rearing their children.

- As a professional child care provider, culture and how it impacts the care that you provide should always be an influence in your program. Factors to consider are:
  - perceptions of time and punctuality
  - acceptable personal space
  - eye-to-eye contact
  - personal hygiene
  - acceptable display of emotion
  - giving unsolicited advice
  - gender roles
  - formality in use of names and titles to show respect
  - appropriate physical touch
  - holiday celebrations
  - nutrition
  - personal achievement vs. good of the community

Learning about the child's nuclear family and culture will add many varied patterns to the patchwork quilt of care you provide.