

Child Care Provider **NEWS FLASH**

NEWS ABOUT THE TENNESSEE CHILD CARE REPORT CARD AND

STAR-QUALITY PROGRAM

Parents Know, Kids Grow Network <http://parentsknowkidsgrow.org>

The Parents Know, Kids Grow website is user friendly and is designed for parents and others to learn more about a variety of early childhood topics. This website can serve as a great resource for you and your parents when they have questions about free-play, creating learning environments that meet age appropriate developmental needs, safe sleep practices, their child's development, and other topics surrounding best practices in group child care settings. Parents Know, Kids Grow is an online wealth of information and parent/family support resources.



Connecting with Nature



There are many ways that care givers can help children to connect with nature—create an outdoor garden, create a play area that builds in natural elements, or create opportunities where children can be outside to feel the fresh air, watch clouds in the sky, and explore their own connections with the earth.

As you make plans to implement natural connections with the children in your care, you will need to define how it will work with your existing program. You will want to identify additional resources that might be available in your community as you think about ways to help children connect with nature. Be sure to talk with your parents and with those in your community that might be able to help build interest and momentum for connecting children with nature. You might even find folks that can help you with some of the activities you might want to add to the child care schedule. There are licensing and safety concerns that you will also want to consider.

Remember to start small and within your program's means.

As a child care provider you should determine whether the outdoor experiences will attach to already existing learning areas for the children or will the activities and connections with nature be freestanding? For example, if you have a garden, is it already a portion of the classroom to which you are introducing additional materials or elements, or is it the addition of a feature or several features in the class or outdoor play space (willow arch, container plants, rain barrels, etc.)?

Pay attention to what is Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) for the children in your program. Remember to include safety considerations in your planning and in preparing the children's introduction to new nature-based experiences. A few questions to ask staff about what is considered DAP might be:

- Is the nature-based experience planned in a way that is sensitive to the child's attention span and personal schedule needs?
- Does the connection naturally encourage creativity?
- Are teaching aids designed to encourage communication and connections for the children?
- Does the experience create a sense of joy while bringing the child to nature?
- Have all staff considered possible hazards and do they understand how to help children learn and experience while addressing safety concerns that might arise?

Identify what additional training needs might exist for staff, parents, and others.

Children of all ages enjoy and benefit from exploring and playing outdoors. With good care giver planning and preparation, almost any activity you might do with children indoors can be provided outdoors too.

Connecting children with nature can be accomplished in many ways. Keep in mind that the connection your children make with nature in child care may very well be their first. Be sensitive to that possibility as you plan and consider how to help children positively connect with nature. As you guide the children in your care toward a connection with nature, you might make a new connection yourself!

Safety and Supervision

Providing high-quality, well-supervised, and safe care to children in child care is important to all of us. To avoid the possibility of children being found outside of the child care program without a child care provider or adult supervising them, DHS is asking that all providers and child care staff review the child care licensing rules that are intended to prevent such incidents. You are urged to ensure that everyone who works at your agency and all the parents of the children in your care know your policies and procedures for children and parents who enter and exit the program and your sign-in/sign-out requirements. The Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Licensing Rules can be found at: <http://www.state.tn.us/sos/rules/1240/1240-04-/1240-04-03.20090314.pdf>

Are Your Cribs Safe?

New federal safety standards for manufacturers and distributors of cribs are already in effect. Beginning December 28, 2012, any crib provided by child care facilities and family child care homes must meet these safety standards. Because the safety of all children is a shared concern, noncompliant cribs should not be resold through online auction sites or donated to local thrift stores. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends disassembling the crib before discarding it so the cribs cannot be reassembled and used, unnecessarily placing children at risk.

You can request a Certificate of Compliance from the crib manufacturer if there is no label attached with the date of manufacture on the crib. DHS has distributed a flyer titled "Child Care Providers Your Guide to New Crib Standards" to share with providers. To get additional copies of this flyer or learn more about the safety standards that must be met for safe crib sleeping environments, visit the www.cpsc.gov website.

Handwashing

Handwashing upon arrival into a child care facility or home helps minimize the spread of germs being brought into a program. Young children are especially susceptible to illnesses because of their weaker immune systems. In an effort to reduce the spread of germs, health items in the ITERS-R, ECERS-R, and FCCERS-R scales will require handwashing of children upon arrival into the caregiving area. Adults who enter the caregiving area and remain with the children or handle materials will also be expected to wash hands on arrival. This is already a requirement for ITERS-R Item 10 indicator 3.2 and FCCERS-R Item 11 indicator 3.2. This will be a new requirement for ECERS-R Item 13 indicator 3.1 effective August 1, 2011. For assistance with ways you can incorporate handwashing into your arrival routines, please contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

For other assessment scoring information, don't forget to check out www.tnstarquality.org. New additional notes were posted in April and are updated occasionally during the year.