

## January Newsletter

A New Year most often means a new contract with the parents you provide care for. This year, take some time to pump up your contract/parent handbook, put more into it, get a little creative, and see if you can use it to accomplish more. I have no doubt that it was my Parent Handbook that took my business to a whole new level, and I learned quickly that almost everything I wanted to fix in my program, could be done so through the parent handbook. This month's article will help you take a critical look at yours and be sure it's doing all it can to support the success of your business.

Hug a kid for me!  
Patricia

Pump Up Your Contract I am often contacted to consult with a child care business owner, whether family child care or center, to help them with a particular issue they are encountering. And about 95% of the time, their solution has something to do with their contract, or as I call it: The Parent Handbook.

The most basic of issues, is that the business has only created a contract, and it has not evolved into a Parent Handbook. A contract tells the parent what you want them to know: how much they need to pay you, when they pay, your hours, who the child being enrolled is, and maybe some things about sick days or vacation. It's saying "you do this and your child can come here." And that's all good, it's information that needs to be clear. But it is very one sided.

As a parent, it's tough to sign a contract that says they are paying you for the right to come - and that's it. They want to know so much more! They want to know what is going to happen with their child while in your program, they want to know if you expect anything more of them, they want to know what to expect over time as their child grows and changes.

The best way to start a successful partnership with parents in your program is to take the time to tell them - in writing - what they want to know, not to just tell them what you want them to know. And that comes in the form of a Parent Handbook.

The Parent Handbook has three sections: Program Information, Policies & Procedures, and the Contract. The first section shares with the parent all the answers to their many questions on what they can expect their child's experience to be like. The second lays the roadmap for how both you and the parent will function as a team and clearly defines each of your roles and responsibilities. The last pulls all this together into a formal agreement.

In a nutshell, the first section - Program Information - is where you share all about what the child will experience and why. What your school philosophy and mission statement are, how they affect your curriculum, how you make lesson plans that will meet their child's needs, the types of activities they will have, including holiday events, field trips, special speakers, and the everyday or weekly activities that make up their day. It's where the parent sees how things will evolve - what will you provide the child as they need toilet training, preschool instruction, reading readiness, help with homework after school. Many times, just adding in this section takes care of many of the issues a provider encountered because it clarifies a parent's expectations.

Then, there are the other problems - the parent who is always late paying or

picking up their child, the parent that expects their child to have some type of special treatment, whether it be a special diet, more one-on-one time, a different place to sleep, etc. These are the issues where the parent thinks either they or you will do one thing, and you know it will be something else - but everyone is making assumptions because nothing is in writing. Policies & procedures are not just guidelines for parents, but for the business too. It dictates behavior in particular situations.

You can write a policy and procedure for just about anything. From late payment policies, to potty training policies, to perfume or dress code policies. The key is to go beyond writing a "rule" and really flesh it out. First, write your policy short and clear. Then write the procedure: what will happen when this policy is broken to fix things? Then, and this is what I see missing most often, write the reasoning behind it. WHY? What is jeopardized by this policy being broken? Your business license? The child's well being? Showing this goes a long way towards parents better understanding and accepting a tough policy.

Then finally the contract. This should state that all parties have read, and will abide by, the contents of the parent handbook. Name the child, the days/hours of the slot they are paying for, and the amount it will cost. Date for one year. Short and to the point.

Think back to last year. What issues did you encounter? With parents? With the children? With your staff? With licensing visits? With achieving quality improvement? Now consider how adding something to your parent handbook can change that. And don't be afraid to get creative! I once wrote a policy that no one could use the word "Hi-Ya!" I was going crazy with all the karate kicks my Power Ranger fanatic kids were doing. The problem wasn't necessarily the Power Rangers - they are the good guys after all and children need good role models to play out. But I had narrowed down the problem to see it was that word that was ALWAYS followed by someone being kicked. Remove the word, remove the problem. And it worked.

Providers, all child care owners, tend to forget one thing when writing policy and working on Parent Handbooks - you are dealing with human beings. Humans are all different. The group of children you care for this year will have a completely different energy than the group you have next year. Same with parents. Same with teachers. That energy may or may not create problems, and if so, you need to address them in your Parent Handbook. That energy may also uncover some wonderful things you want to add to your program, and therefore your Parent Handbook.

In other words, don't look for or create a cookie cutter Parent Handbook. The point of the handbook is to clearly define YOUR business. Not any child care business. Be sure it showcases the passion and energy of you and your staff. Take it beyond a simple contract so that anyone who reads it will feel as though they've known you for years. They should feel they know exactly what to expect from a partnership with you and exactly what is expected of them. If you do this, you may just have the best year of your business!

*For more help on pumping up your Parent Handbook, check out From Babysitter to Business Owner. For my newsletters readers only, if you purchase the book, you'll get a free copy of The Patty Cake Preschool Parent Handbook CD, a \$25 value! See the code at the end of the newsletter and buy now at: [www.patriciadischler.com/books.shtml](http://www.patriciadischler.com/books.shtml).*

Holiday Tips & Tricks Valentine's Day is coming soon, here's something the kids can make for their parents:

### **Love You Throw Pillow**

Ask your local hospital for white sheets, or buy inexpensive ones at a local thrift store. Wash and bleach. Cut into squares, 1 ½ feet by 1 ½ feet at least. Using red and pink fabric paint, have each child make hearts with their handprints on a square of fabric. Dip hands in paint, point their fingers towards each other, touching thumbs, to make the heart shape print. Do as many as they would like, on one side of one square. Use the fabric paint to write their name as well. When dry, sew a simple pillow: put together wrong sides of two squares, sew around the edges leaving about a 4 inch opening on one side. Fill with fiber filling. Turn edge in and sew shut. If you have older children in your care, the sewing portion is a great fine motor project for them! The stitching doesn't need to be perfect since it will be inside the pillow when done. Or, ask a friend who sews to help you out and do it on a machine.

Parents love to get this little keepsake pillow to throw on their bed or couch! In the News

Start now to plan to attend the 2012 NAFCC Conference - Join me in Atlanta, Georgia! Easy layaway plan available, check it out at: [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org). We just booked a FABULOUS keynoter you won't want to miss - Jason Kotecki who will cure every attendee of their "Adultitis" and get you re-energized to continue the important work you do. Check him out now here, [www.KimandJason.com](http://www.KimandJason.com), read some of his books, and I'll see you in Atlanta!

Thanks so Michelle Gorman for sharing my poem, "Remember Why", with her followers on her blog:

<http://kozykidslc.blogspot.com/2011/11/providers-are-only-human.html>.

Thanks so my publishers, Redleaf Press and Corwin Press, for donating a selection of their books to give away at the upcoming Wisconsin Family Child Care Association Conference at the beautiful Kalahari Resort in the Wisconsin Dells, May 10-12. Jeff John is our keynote extraordinaire, find out more at [www.wisconsinfamilychildcare.org](http://www.wisconsinfamilychildcare.org). Find all the great books my publishers put out at: [www.redleafpress.org](http://www.redleafpress.org) and [www.corwin.com](http://www.corwin.com).

Monthly Sale Items

#### **January Sale Item: KIDBIZ Professionalism Kit - \$15 Off!**

Everything you need to jump-start your child care business towards success!

Includes a copy of

From Babysitter to Business Owner and Tips & Tricks, the Patty Cake Preschool Parent Handbook CD & binder, a KIDBIZ Teleseminar: Marketing & Interviews, a parent board, and business card paper. The book will tell you how all these tools can help raise your level of professionalism and earn you success!

**Regular Price: \$65 Sale Price: \$50**

#### **February Sale Item: Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy - 20% Off**

Before children can learn their 3 Rs, they need to know their 3 Cs! Filled with dozens of fun activities, and indexed by state standards for easy lesson planning, this book will help you to build a strong foundation for early learning.

**Regular Price: \$27.95 Sale Price: \$22.36**

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Fieldtrips**

Send me an email when you order through the website with this code and you'll also receive a copy of my teleseminar on taking fun and educational fieldtrips with children. 1 hour training certificate included! Use the email form on the website or email me directly at:

[pdischler@wildblue.net](mailto:pdischler@wildblue.net)

**Order yours today at: [www.patriciadischler.com](http://www.patriciadischler.com) or  
[www.KIDBIZResources.com](http://www.KIDBIZResources.com)!**

Speaking Events

January 28, 2012

Salt Lake City, Utah

The Professional Family Child Care Association of Utah

Half Day Training: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

Topics:

Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

Parents Can't Hear Me!

Tips & Tricks

For more information visit: [www.pfcca.org](http://www.pfcca.org)

NEW! I've been doing school bookings for awhile, but getting more organized with it because it's something I love to do! To learn more about bringing me to your child's school to inspire the emerging writers there check out: [www.patriciadischler.com/school.htm](http://www.patriciadischler.com/school.htm)

If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit [www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.htm](http://www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.htm).