

Tips for Writing Successful Policies



The Power of Policies

How can policies help your program?

Policies are important for early care and education settings. They build a common understanding of how the program operates. This helps teachers, staff, children, and families work together and avoid misunderstandings. More than just stating rules, policies can also express the vision and values of your program.

Preparing

Before writing a new policy, it is important to have a clear understanding of your center's mission and the kind of culture you want to create.

When preparing to write a policy, meet with teachers and families. Getting them involved will help address different perspectives and allows everyone to take ownership of the policy and the plan to put it in place. This is key if teachers or families will need to make changes to their day-to-day practices due to new policies. Your Go NAPSACC self-assessment results can provide a good starting point for discussions.

Get staff, teachers', and families' feedback on new policies by asking:

- "How do these new policies support our mission, values, and overall philosophy?"
- "What is most important to include in our policies to support children's health?"
- "What will we need to change in order to meet this policy?"
- "How will we keep track of whether we are staying true to our policy?"
- Consider each module as you update your policies.

Writing

When writing your policy, it is important to be as clear as possible.

Be sure to:

- State why the practices are important and how they fit into the philosophy of your program
- Make sure that practices included in the policy are specific and measurable. This sets clear expectations which can be continually tracked to determine if policies are being followed. For example:
 - "We will provide a pleasant setting for meal times" (**vague**), becomes "During mealtimes, the television is turned off and teachers and children sit and eat together family style." (**specific**)
 - "Toddlers will be provided outdoor and indoor playtime," becomes "Toddlers will be provided with at least 90 minutes of outdoor and indoor playtime every day." (**measurable**)

Turning Policies Into Action

Policies are only effective if they are understood and followed.

Be sure to:

- Share policies with staff and families in a variety of ways, including e-mail, staff and family handbooks, bulletin boards, newsletters, social media, child care apps, and/or the program's website.

Check in to make sure policies are being followed. This could mean reviewing menus and lesson plans or talking with staff to track activities related to policies.

Tip: Is there anything that you often have to **remind** families about? Think of new ways to communicate, like through a **sign** on the classroom door or sharing in your **daily update**.

Reviewing and Revising

It is easy to finish a policy and forget it. However, policies should be adjusted to meet the changing needs of the program. Consider reviewing and revising policies each summer, or before new families and staff usually start, to keep the staff and family handbooks current.