



Summer 2004

Beyond Traditional Child Care

O F C *An early childhood education agency*

Update

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**CREATE
MORE**

**BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITIES**



Most child care programs operate between 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Child care providers usually care for children between the ages of three months and 12 years of age and many of these children do not require any special care. These types of services are often called “traditional” child care.

More and more providers, however, see opportunities in “non-traditional” child care. Non-traditional care opportunities include:

- Care for children with special needs
- Services for older children
- Care during weekends, evenings or part-time
- Emergency back-up child care

There are many reasons to consider doing non-traditional child care, including:

- Meeting the needs of growing numbers of working parents who need these services
- Specializing services to match your talents or own needs
- Enhancing the marketing of your family child care business

This issue of *Update* will give you some new ideas for expanding your family child care business or even specializing in one of these valuable non-traditional child care services.

“Being available (for non-traditional care) is good for my business!”

Najam Raja, Provider, Alexandria

CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS -----



Parents of children with developmental delays, chronic illness or disabilities look for care that will meet the needs of their children. The Americans with

Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits the exclusion of children with disabilities from child care centers or homes, unless the accommodations cause “undue burden” on the provider.

Children with disabilities may have a variety of special needs:

Some are medical: an infant may be on an apnea monitor, a child may need to use an inhaler or nebulizer for asthma, a child with spina bifida may need to be catheterized.

Some are physical: a child in a wheelchair will need access to child care spaces, a child with a heart condition may need to be watched during active play and allowed to rest as needed.

Some are emotional: children with emotional disabilities need care givers with patience, a

willingness to listen and lots of projects and activities to help them successfully participate in play.

Some are cognitive: children with mental retardation, Downs Syndrome, limited verbal skills or delays in learning may need activities or materials that are rich in sensory feedback and promote hands-on play.

Most accommodations needed to include a child with special needs are minor, yet critical to successful care. For example, a provider might read stories to children while a child with asthma sits next to her and completes his nebulizer treatment.

Caring for children with special needs does not require training or experience, although both can be helpful. The Office for Children provides some of this training and can let providers know about other resources. Once providers get this training or experience, they can list this in their on-line profile on *Child Care Central* www.fairfaxcounty.gov/childcare.

“The parents of special needs children are so grateful that you can take a little pressure off of them. I can’t explain how rewarding it is to teach these children things that they are not supposed to be able do.”

Margie Glover, Provider, Alexandria

CARE FOR OLDER CHILDREN -----

Most providers care for children from infancy through elementary school. Many families, however, have found that they would like supervision for children beyond age twelve. Care for older children may take several forms:

- Older children, including children with special needs, can be part of a mixed age group. They may have strengths or interests in working with younger children and could help a provider serve snacks, read stories or play games with younger children.
- A program can specialize in care for older children. These programs adjust their programming to include activities that interest this age like sports or hobbies. Responses of



families to OFC’s “Club 78” program at Holmes Intermediate School, for example, indicate there are many parents who would

like after school services for their children and that older children love to develop new hobbies and skills.

- Transportation may be key to making this type of child care arrangement work. An older child may have after school activities like Cub Scouts, soccer practice or an art class for six weeks in the fall.

PROVIDING EXTENDED HOURS AND PART-TIME CARE -----



A growing number of parents are finding work that does not fall into a 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. pattern. Many parents are attracted to such schedules to help them balance work and family. And

more employers are offering employees adjusted or flexible work schedules in an effort to be “family friendly.”

Providers who consider offering services to accommodate the work schedules of parents can avoid the demands of meeting the varying schedules of each parent by specializing their own child care hours and marketing their services to parents with similar work arrangements. Some providers also help manage non-traditional schedules by partnering with another provider.

In some cases, such as weekend or overnight care, adjustments in services may impact the fees parents are charged because providers will be serving additional food and may need to set-up the environment to make space for sleeping.

EMERGENCY BACK-UP CARE -----

Many families find they need temporary child care in situations when their regular child care arrangements are not available. For example, their family child care provider may be sick or on vacation. Sometimes families have advance notice to make alternative arrangements, but other times situations will happen suddenly.

The Office for Children encourages all parents to consider making arrangements for back-up child care. If you have space in your program, you can let parents know you are available for this type of temporary care. Sometimes a

The details of flexible work schedules need to be worked out in advance and the expectations of parents and providers need to be discussed during the development of contracts.

Examples of Flexible or Adjusted Work Schedules

Parents with adjusted or flexible work schedules want child care providers who can offer services during different hours or days of the week. Some examples of these schedules include:

“Compressed” work weeks: nine longer days with one day off each alternate week.

“Flexible” schedules: may alter from day to day or include an earlier starting time.

“Part-time” work: which may range from 20 to 30 hours of work over five days or two or three full-time days.

Shift work: which may be regular evening shifts or shifts that vary from week to week.

Seasonal work: employees, such as teachers, who may have the summers and holiday break periods free.

Temporary work: short-term work assignments with little advance notice.

“Children are more like part of the family if they sleep over.”

Jasbir Kaur, Provider, Springfield

group of providers in a neighborhood or family child care chapter will agree to be back-ups for one another.

If you are interested in this type of non-traditional care, you can ask parents to register so that you have the necessary immunization and contact information in your records. In addition, children can visit your program in advance so they are familiar with your setting and the other children.

SUPPORT FOR PROVIDERS OFFERING NON-TRADITIONAL CHILDCARE

The Office for Children understands that offering non-traditional child care can be different from typical child care services. Support is available to help providers who are interested in exploring these options and who have questions as they begin this work:

- Training is available from Community Education and Provider Services (CEPS) as well as the Institute for Early Learning. Check the offerings listed in *Update* as well as the Institute catalog.
- Technical assistance is available from child care specialists during permit

and Food Program visits. They can give providers ideas on setting up the home environment or writing contracts for non-traditional types of child care. They can also help providers with suggestions and techniques to use in feeding children with special needs.

- Marketing of specialized services is available within the Office for Children's database on *Child Care Central* and when parents call Child Care Assistance and Referral (CCAR) for help in finding child care. Be sure you have included your information in the database.