Best Practices Checklist: Early Childhood Learning Centers

☑ Check if meets standard

Organization

- The Center has received or is in the process of applying for accreditation by the National Childcare Accreditation Council
  - The Director of Operations for the early childhood learning center operated by the school reports to a “Board of Trustees” for the center that includes representation from the university
  - The early childhood learning center organization includes a Director of Operations, several state certified teachers (BA or MA), several associate teachers (BA or AA).
- Campus Facilities Department provides maintenance and repair for school operated programs
- General Counsel’s Office has reviewed
  - state law related licensing and employment for early childhood learning centers
  - advertising
  - exculpatory agreements
  - emergency medical consent forms issued by the center
- Director of Operations
  - assures the facility is inspected daily and hazards are removed from child access
  - assures all equipment, toys, materials conform to safety guidelines for the respective age groups
- Assures appropriate action is carried out for behavioral problems and health risks
- Assures the annual maintenance and material budgets are adequate.
- Oversee the center’s application for accreditation by the National Childcare Accreditation Council
- Director of Facilities has assessed the premises for lead paint, radon and asbestos.
  - Lead paint, radon and asbestos have been remediated from the premises
  - Assures key building services, heat, electric, telephone are serviced on a scheduled program
  - Performs a quarterly inspection of the property
  - Assists the Director in budgeting capital improvements to the facility

Employee Selection

- The university maintains a screening process for employees, counselors and volunteers that will work with children:
  - Completion of a formal written application
  - Reference checks
  - An in-person interview
  - Public Safety performs fingerprint, background and motor vehicle record checks for all teachers and staff volunteers.
- Staff seek out professional development opportunities on health and safety issues
- Staff training includes:
  - Emergency evacuation and drills
  - Health, safety and welfare responsibilities
  - Emergency response and evacuation
  - Disaster plan
  - Hazards in the workplace
  - Back and material handling procedures
  - Managing stress
  - Adult immunizations
  - Bloodborne pathogens
How to report safety and health concerns
Responding to an injured child
Incident reporting
Suspect child abuse must be reported to the local police department IMMEDIATELY

University Policy and Procedures
- The university policy and procedures are reviewed by the respective Dean, Human Resources, Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety, Public Safety and General Counsel prior to implementation
- Proposed programs and activities involving minors and children are reviewed and approved by the respective dean, general counsel, risk management and if employment related, human resources prior to acceptance.
- The Risk Management office publishes and distributes a guideline and materials to all departments hosting programs or working with children on campus that discusses the measures they can take to avoid child abuse allegations:
  - Application to approve a new program involving minors and children
  - Avoiding one-on-one situations without others in the area
  - Encourage minimum 1 advisor: 2 children or greater ratio when mentoring
  - Encouraging the child buddy system (2 minors or children working together) when sponsoring youth programs
- The Office of the General Counsel publishes an Acknowledgement of Risk and Responsibilities / Waiver of Liability for each program involving minors and children.
  - An Acknowledgement of Risk and Responsibilities form must be completed and signed by the parent or guardian of all minors and children

Participation agreements include:
- Child Health Form completed by a physician, with immunization records
- Emergency Medical Care Permission Form
- Child Escort Information for individuals who will pick-up the child
- Program Permission Forms for Field Trips
- Permission Form for Medication Administration
- All signed by a parent.
- A guidebook is published for parents outlining
  - Health requirements for children
  - vaccinations
  - communication of allergies
  - known disabilities
  - Types of unacceptable behavior that could result in displacement

Operations
- Cots are provided for naptime.
- Each child provides personal bedding.
- Cots are so arranged to prevent blocking of egress paths and doors
- Each infant is assigned a personal crib, riot to be shared with another
- Cooking on-site limited to toasting in an area away from the normal play area
- Students bring their own snacks and lunch
- Learn and play areas inside and outside are segregated by age group
- Only materials and toys appropriate for the respective age groups as specified by Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines, are purchased.
  - Non-conforming cribs have been destroyed
- Sanitation facilities for storage of soiled diapers are protected from child access
Automatic water sprinkler protection of the building is supplemented by smoke and fire detection with remote alarm to Public Safety or the local fire department and a local building alarm.

Facilities are situated on the first ground floor facilitating evacuation.

Unused electrical outlets are protected from probing fingers.

Window shade cords are cut back as short as practical.

A systematic procedure for checking the safety of buildings, grounds and equipment has been adopted.

- Infants and toddler toys do not detachable parts that are smaller than a film canister
- Staff clear tables throughout the day and sweep floors after each meal
- A safe level area is available for toys on wheels
- Each morning the facility is checked for dangerous objects and other hazards
- The center seeks advice from parents about the safety of the facility
- Medications, detergents, cleaning products, and garden chemicals are clearly marked and stored behind labeled and locked doors
- Diaper storage areas are covered
- Plants are identified and poisonous plants are removed and destroyed

Emergency Management

- The center prepares and publishes an emergency management plan including:
  - Emergency evacuation and drills
  - Inclement weather plan (closure)
  - Lost child response and search

Transportation

- Only pre-qualified bus service providers are contracted for field trips. Certificates of automobile liability insurance are on file in the business office.
- Volunteers transporting locally in their personal vehicles provide evidence of insurance, $100,000/$300,000/$50,000 and uninsured/under insured coverage.
- No child rides in the front seat
- All children wear seat belts, no doubling up or approved car seat with a buckled harness
- Field trips do not exceed one hour drive time

Outdoor Playgrounds

- Design, construction and equipment selection and maintenance conform to state law applicable to playground equipment.
- Signs are posted near the playground designating the applicable age group, 2 –5 years or 5 to 12 years
- Play areas are inspected daily before children arrive.
- The inspection is documented using an appropriate checklist for the equipment provided
- Fencing surrounding the area should be sufficiently distant from the equipment
- A playground maintenance manual is published
  - Who is responsible for inspections and repairs
  - Qualifications of the inspector
  - Frequency of the inspections
  - Procedures for reporting work, repairs and removing apparatus from use
  - Procedures for modifying apparatus
  - Procedures for budget repairs and equipment replacement
- Climbing equipment, swings or large pieces of equipment/furniture are securely anchored and have stable bases