



# Model Work Standards

for Early Educators in  
Family Child Care



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## for Early Educators in Family Child Care

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Second edition, 1999

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Third edition

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We would like to thank the hundreds of educators, providers, and directors from around the country who contributed their ideas to the 1998 Model Work Standards. Born out of the Worthy Wage campaign in the 1990s, these standards build on the work of the Worthy Wage movement and the rallying advocacy of its members. The campaign and varied perspectives of educators and advocates form the foundation of this updated text.

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# PREAMBLE

When the Model Work Standards were first crafted more than two decades ago, they were built on the premise that quality child care jobs are the cornerstone of high-quality services for children and families. These standards:

## DECLARE

- The right of family child care providers to work under conditions that support their economic, physical, and socioemotional well-being;
- The importance of receiving support and resources from the community in which family child care providers work, from state and local government, and from advocates — all of whom have a stake in providing high-quality early learning experiences for children and a vibrant workforce for families; and
- The need for family child care providers to work actively to improve their working conditions and make decisions that affect their work lives.

## ACKNOWLEDGE

- The dual role that family child care providers play as both educators of young children and business managers;
- The complexity of a job that requires knowledge of child development and business practices, along with competence in putting that knowledge into practice; skill in observing, assessing, and documenting children's learning; emotional strength and physical endurance; intense human interaction; compassion for self and others; a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence in order to instill the same in children; and a commitment to engage and support families; and
- The responsibility and challenge of recognizing the vital impact family child care providers have on young children, families, and communities, both for today and for our future.

The intent of these standards is to make it possible for those who choose family child care as a career to reasonably and responsibly support themselves and their families without having to hold second jobs, be dependent on another wage earner, or rely on other income supports. It is also our intent that family child care providers feel pride in their career choice, rather than the need to defend it to others or question it themselves. In short, these standards are about

## RIGHTS, RAISES, AND RESPECT FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

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# INTRODUCTION

## Why do we need Model Work Standards?

When the Model Work Standards were first crafted more than two decades ago, they were built on the premise of Good Child Care Jobs = Good Care for Children. Today, we revise these standards to reflect a 21<sup>st</sup>-century context in which “quality improvement” efforts have consistently missed the mark when it comes to addressing the needs of the adults providing early care and education. We have yet to fully embrace the fact that the needs of the children and the needs of the adults are interconnected. As documented in the *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018* (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018), little has changed to improve wages and working conditions. It is with renewed focus and commitment that the **Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE)** has updated the Model Work Standards, in collaboration with some of the original authors and with the permission of the Center for the Child Care Workforce, now a project of the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (CCW/AFTEF).

## How were the Model Work Standards created?

The original Model Work Standards were developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce after engaging early childhood educators from around the country in a process of envisioning a high-quality work environment. Through a nationwide postcard campaign, focus groups, and professional gatherings, family child care providers helped create a set of standards that reflected the value of their work and the knowledge, skill, and dedication they bring to it. *Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards* was first published in 1999. Similar documents were created for center-based teaching staff and school-age care providers.

Between then and now, a major shift took place in our industry. The Worthy Wage Campaign of the 1990s was overshadowed by a new focus taking hold in states throughout the country: the development and implementation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). In defining “high quality” and designing systems to rate quality, states have predominately focused workforce-related standards on the amount of education and training family child care providers receive but have done little to identify standards that address compensation, adult well-being, and other aspects of the work environment or to help family child care programs meet such standards.

Many family child care providers have risen to the challenge of meeting higher standards but now struggle to sustain the improvements they’ve made. Those who raise their educational qualifications rarely see a commensurate increase in pay. As the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education* consensus report notes, there exists a “misalignment of compensation and educational advancement” in the current funding of early care and education systems (NASEM, 2018).

As a result, some providers have found more lucrative occupations after attaining a degree, and many of them continue to leave the field each year. This paradox results in fewer child care options for families and greater challenges in accessing child care. The number of family child care homes has decreased significantly across the country, despite family child care being the option of choice for many, especially for those with infants and toddlers and within communities of color. These are the consequences of trying to improve the learning environments of children without simultaneously improving the work environments of those who care for and educate them.

Today, we recognize the need to once again amplify the voices of family child care providers and solidify careers that garner the rights, compensation, and respect they deserve. Attending to the quality of the work environment is about achieving economic and social justice for and valuing the work of those who teach our youngest children. It is also the only way we will achieve and sustain high-quality early learning opportunities for all young children.

The good news is that in re-creating these Model Work Standards, we didn't have to start from scratch. For the most part, they are as relevant today as they were 20 years ago because our original vision remains the same.

## **How are Model Work Standards different from other standards, and why are they needed?**

In states throughout the country, early learning standards and professional competencies are being developed to define the “high quality” that everyone wants. Tools like the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation standards, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), and the Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS) identify the types of environments and activities necessary to promote children's optimal development. These standards and systems also set forth the qualifications and competencies that adults should have in order to meet children's needs.

Model work standards have been developed to complete the picture of a high-quality family child care program. When they are used in concert with other widely accepted quality indicators (i.e., early learning standards used in QRIS, NAFCC accreditation, and the BAS), we draw attention to the critical role the work environment plays. Family child care providers who are supported in their workplaces can more effectively engage with children, build relationships with families, and identify the practices and policies necessary to achieve high-quality services.

Through a self-assessment process, the Model Work Standards can help family child care programs develop an improvement plan that assures quality careers for adults and quality care for children. This process also helps providers to identify areas that need additional funding and support from state and local quality improvement efforts. These standards also complement other efforts to address the adult work environment, particularly SEQUAL (Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning), also published by CSCCE (see the *Model Work Standards and SEQUAL* box on p. 4).



## Model Work Standards & SEQUAL

The Model Work Standards and the newly created SEQUAL (Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning) for Family Child Care are both tools that focus on the adult work environment. Together, they support complementary goals: collecting data on the workplace and supporting the change process.

**SEQUAL for Family Child Care** is a survey tool designed to collect data on how a provider's workplace helps or hinders a family child care program's ability to engage in good teaching practices, manage a successful business, and assure continued learning on the job. It assesses five overarching domains of the workplace that support professional growth and high-quality care and invites the provider to rate the work environment on a variety of scales under these domains: 1) Teaching Supports; 2) Business Practice Supports; 3) Learning Community; 4) Adult Well-Being; and 5) Program Management and Leadership. This data may be exclusively for the provider, but it may also be collected as aggregated data that serves to inform a community in a specific region about the status and well-being of family child care providers in their area.

The **Model Work Standards** are presented as statements that specifically identify what a high-quality family child care program is striving to achieve. Through a self-assessment process, providers will be able to reflect on particular strengths and determine priorities for making changes. Providers are encouraged to seek support in developing an action plan that identifies concrete goals, a process of achieving them, and a means to measure progress. Model Work Standards harness the intentional work of making real change to benefit the providers.

## Model Work Standards, NAFCC Accreditation Standards, QRIS & BAS

National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation standards, state standards established as part of their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), and the Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS) identify the type of environments and activities that promote children's learning and development, engage families, and enhance daily operation of a program. Model work standards in general were developed to complete the picture of a high-quality program for young children by defining the necessary components of the adult work environment. While there may be some overlap among these varied sets of standards, the Model Work Standards are meant to complement, not replace, accreditation and early learning standards. While it may be possible to become accredited or achieve a high rating without meeting these Model Work Standards, maintaining a high level of quality over time depends on family child care providers feeling rewarded by their work, staying in the field because their working conditions encourage retention, and having a positive sense of economic security and well-being.

# How are the Model Work Standards organized and ranked?

The Model Work Standards are divided into five categories, including 1) Model Contract and Program Policies, 2) Professional Development, 3) Family Child Care Work Environment, 4) Provider as Employer, and 5) Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care.

In order to develop a plan for improving the work environment, the provider first reviews the standards, noting strengths and priorities for making change. The provider then has the opportunity to assess the program by either focusing on a single area first or looking at the whole and then narrowing the focus to identify one or several goals to focus on. Ranking is on a five-point scale based on these markers:

*1 - Not Met*

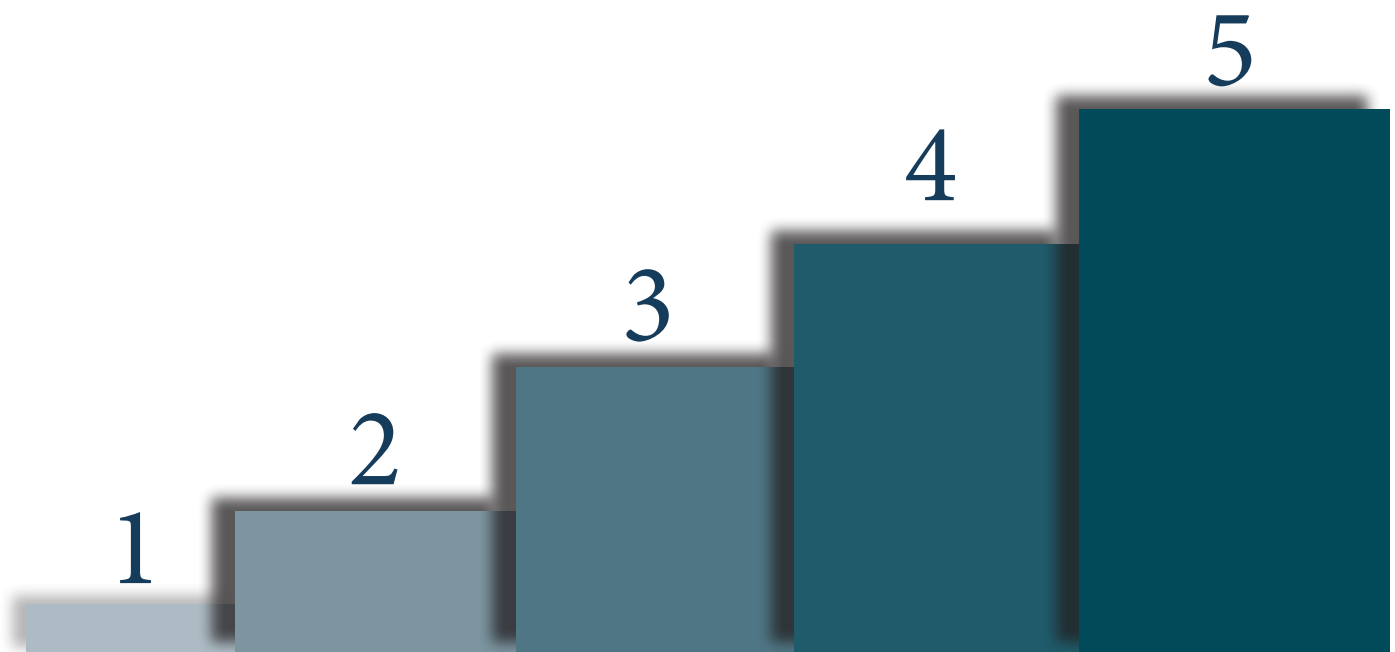
*2 - In Planning Stage*

*3 - In Progress*

*4 - Near Completion*

*5 - Consistently Met*

*N/A - Not Applicable* - In some cases, a standard may not be directly applicable to your program. Note such items in your review using the assessment worksheets beginning on p. 25.



## How can the Model Work Standards be used to create change?

Improving a work environment requires an investment of time, energy, and money. A program may have achieved many of these standards already, and others may seem within its grasp. Some standards may be unattainable within the current scope of a provider's budget, and some will depend on community support. Some changes or improvements may require minimal financial investment, while others may challenge the provider to re-prioritize existing resources, raise rates, or find additional funding sources. Still others may call for a community-wide plan to unite forces and take action. These standards, especially those that require greater resources, are not included to frustrate, but to help us all hold fast to a vision of and commitment to social and economic justice for the family child care workforce and the need for greater public investment in the care and early education of our children.

The Model Work Standards are intended to be used:

- By family child care providers as a vehicle for immediately beginning to improve their work environment and job conditions;
- In local communities, where representatives of family child care programs and support agencies can identify cooperative ventures to improve the child care infrastructure; and
- With policymakers and funders to raise awareness about the amount of resources that will be necessary to make lasting, comprehensive improvements in the nation's child care system.

The goal of assessing a work environment is ultimately to create a plan for change. Because providers have the highest stake in the process, they must be at the center of this endeavor. However, a variety of stakeholders may need to be involved in the change process, including parents, policymakers, higher education faculty, and community advocates. Following the Model Work Standards is a guide that addresses the various stakeholders in more detail (see **Appendix B**, p. 45).

## Suggestions for Getting Started

### ***1. Assess your current work environment using the Model Work Standards.***

Look at each standard and rank it based on the ranking scale. Take time at the end of each section to reflect on the strengths of your program in this area and note where you'd like to begin to make improvements. Provider assistants (if you have them), other trusted providers, colleagues, and parents could all be engaged in this process, creating a "team" approach to the assessment process.

### ***2. Determine where you want to focus your improvement efforts.***

Begin by acknowledging all the standards you already consistently meet, then choose a focus for continued work. You may choose to focus your attention on just one of the five categories, or you may choose to look more closely at specific rankings across several categories — for example, paying

attention to standards that are “near completion” or ones that are “in the planning stage.” Invite your own family members, a supportive parent of a child in your care, employees if you have them, and those who know your business well (perhaps someone who has provided good advice in the past) to take part in this conversation. You may also consider partnering with another provider or providers to go through the process together, offering each other ideas and support. Achieving some success, even if small, can encourage you to take further action. To help in this process, a series of worksheets for written reflection is available beginning on p. 25.

**3. *Make an action plan for one or more of the priorities you’ve identified.***

An action plan worksheet is found at the end of this document (see **Appendix C** on p. 48). Start your plan by identifying a standard that you believe will be both achievable and meaningful to you and then be specific about the change you desire. For example, “I will increase the number of paid sick days from zero to five days per year.” In addition to stating your goal, your action plan should include a timeline: specifying, for example, when you will alert parents of the change and when it will be added to your contract. Finally, your action plan might list the kinds of support, resources, and people who need to be involved to help you achieve your goal, for example, one step may be talking to other local providers who have successfully put sick days into their contracts, another may be to engage sympathetic parents who would be willing to talk to other parents.

**4. *Determine the cost for each of your top priorities.***

If a cost is involved, it is important to place a dollar amount on the various goals you have set. Some programs decide how much money they can allocate for program improvement or how much money they are committed to raising in order to make changes. This amount may start small and increase each year (e.g., \$500 the first year, \$1,000 the next year, and \$2,000 by year three). The standard you select to work on should be reflected in your annual budget.

**5. *Document your progress.***

This will help you evaluate, learn from, and adapt your strategies in order to sustain continued efforts. You will also then be in the best position to encourage other providers to create better, more sustainable careers in family child care!

**6. *Celebrate and broadcast your accomplishments.***

Every victory, no matter how large or small, moves you closer to your goal of achieving a better work environment and a more viable family child care business.

# MODEL WORK STANDARDS

*The following standards cover five topic areas. Taken as a whole, they describe a high-quality work environment in a family child care setting. The five areas are: 1) Model Contract and Program Policies; 2) Professional Development; 3) Family Child Care Work Environment; 4) Provider as Employer; and 5) Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care. In assessing your program, you may want to focus on a single area first or look at the whole and then narrow your focus.*

*After each topic section, there is room to add notes on your priorities in this area to facilitate the development of an action plan around one or more of these standards. Note: The term “parent” in this document refers to any family member or court-appointed person serving in a primary parenting role (this includes biological parents as well as foster and adoptive parents, legal guardians, grandparents parenting grandchildren, etc.).*

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## I. MODEL CONTRACT & PROGRAM POLICIES

*The standards in this category address provisions in the contract or agreements with families that impact provider income, benefits, hours of work, and communication with families being served. They do not address all policies and practices regarding the operation of your program that you might include in your information to families enrolling in your program. In some cases, certain standards may not be applicable to your program.*

### **Provider Income**

**1.1** Fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee that all reasonable and customary expenses will be met and that the provider has an income that at minimum is sufficient to meet the cost of living in the provider’s community.

**1.2** Fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee that the provider has health care coverage that fully covers themselves and any dependents not covered under an alternate health care plan (an alternate plan could be a spouse’s health insurance plan).

**1.3** Fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee an annual increase in income for the provider to reflect a “cost of living adjustment” (COLA).

**1.4** Until compensation reaches the level of those holding occupations in the community with comparable expertise based on combined levels of responsibility, experience, and education, fees charged for child care are raised annually an additional amount above the COLA.

1.5 The provider's income is guaranteed by a written provider–parent contract which stipulates that:

- All contracted hours are paid for in full, regardless of a child's attendance; and
- Fees are paid in full when the program has an unexpected closure due to provider illness or family emergency. A maximum number of paid days for such closures may be established in the contract.

1.6 Fee and payment schedules are revised to reflect changes in state reimbursement rates for subsidized child care whenever these occur.

1.7 When the provider achieves a higher level of formal education (i.e., earns a degree or credential in early childhood education) or becomes nationally accredited, they have the flexibility guaranteed in their contract to revise their fee and payment schedule to reward such achievements.

1.8 Financial records, including an operating budget, are used to gauge the program's stability.

1.9 A recordkeeping system is in place to maximize business deductions available to the provider and to assure compliance with tax laws.

1.10 The program is covered by insurance policies, including program liability insurance, homeowners insurance, and vehicle insurance (if the program transports children).

1.11 For the purpose of setting and collecting fees, the provider requests that parents check with their employers about pre-tax child care benefits and/or with local agencies about child care subsidies.

### **Area(s) of Strength:**

### **Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**

## **Provider Benefits**

**1.12** The provider receives a minimum of five paid sick/personal days per year, which can be taken to care for sick family members, as well.

**1.13** The provider receives a minimum of seven holidays per year, which are paid in full by families whose contracted hours fall on these days. When holidays fall on a weekend, the day before or after is taken as the paid holiday.

*Note: Typical paid holidays include New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Alternative holidays based on a provider's religious or cultural traditions may be substituted.*

**1.14** The provider earns a minimum of five vacation days per year in the first two years of operation and 10 days per year in subsequent years, which is paid in full by families enrolled in the program. Additional unpaid vacation leave may be negotiated with parents in the contract.

*Note: Rather than charging parents for care during the provider's vacation, a "vacation fee" may be included in the regular weekly or monthly fee, as long as parents clearly understand the purpose of this additional charge.*

**1.15** The provider receives minimally two paid days per year for their own professional development.

**1.16** In the event that the provider takes leave for the birth or adoption of a child, they may take all accrued sick and vacation time, billing parents for this portion of their leave.

**1.17** The provider sets aside minimally 5 percent of net earnings to support self-sufficiency in retirement.

**1.18** At least annually, the provider assesses their income and benefits and makes necessary adjustments to ensure their ability to continue providing quality care.

## **Area(s) of Strength:**

**Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**



## Hours of Work

**1.19** In calculating hours worked for the purpose of setting fees, the provider includes time for planning, preparation, cleaning, shopping, recordkeeping and other paperwork, and conversing with enrolled or prospective parents.

**1.20** The provider establishes a work schedule that allows them the respite they need to maintain the energy and stamina required to care for children. This work schedule may include:

- A set number of hours worked per day or per week;
- Enrollment patterns that ensure some “down time” during the day;
- The use of qualified assistants or family members onsite during “down times,” such as naptime, to allow for breaks;
- A system of parent volunteers and/or family members to take on or help with certain program tasks, such as grocery shopping, laundry, and equipment repairs;
- Employment of a regular provider assistant or substitute providers as needed;
- Contracting out for certain services, such as catering, cleaning, and facility maintenance; and/or
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ .

## Area(s) of Strength:

## Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

## Provider–Parent Communication

**1.21** The provider and parents sign a contract/agreement that defines:

- Hours of care;
- Fee schedule and payment policies, including late fees for overdue payments, overtime rates for late pick-ups, and fees for non-contracted hours if provided (such as drop-in during unscheduled time and weekend or overnight care);
- Other charges, which may include, but are not limited to: registration or other administrative fees, meal expenses (if not on the Child and Adult Care Food Program), special activity fees, infant supplies, an annual continuing education fund for the provider, fees for returned checks, fees associated with any court or collection agency costs incurred in the collection of overdue payments, and fees associated with seeking emergency medical attention;
- Policies covering absences of both the provider and children, including vacation, holiday, and sick leave;
- A provision for contract updates and renewals, occurring at least annually;
- Provisions for termination of care: Parents who are withdrawing their children are required to minimally provide a two-week notice during which time all fees are paid regardless of attendance (except during an identified initial trial period); providers are required to identify any conditions warranting immediate termination, such as non-payment of fees and conditions specified by licensing regulations; all other reasons for termination are first subject to an identified process of conflict resolution; and
- Parents' responsibility for finding alternate care and/or circumstances under which a provider hires a substitute.

**1.22** Written program policies are provided to all parents that specify such things as emergency procedures, discipline and guidance policies, and the daily schedule and also may include:

- Provider's job description, which in addition to the care and education of children includes such tasks as program planning, child assessments, recordkeeping, budgeting, shopping for groceries and program supplies, food preparation, and cleaning and maintaining the child care environment;
- Provider's professional experience, credentials, and/or level of education;
- Statement of how the program is regulated and where parents can get more information on child care regulations and their rights as consumers;
- Statement of the program's quality rating, if participating in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS);

- Statement of program philosophy and goals; and/or
- List of items that parents are expected to provide to the program for their child’s care, if any (such as diapers, formula, clothing, bedding, etc.).

**1.23** Ongoing communication mechanisms ensure that family members are informed about new procedures, policies, and events, etc. This communication can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to bulletin boards, newsletters, and daily activity reports (printed or online), individual child journals, phone conversations, and parent–provider conferences.

**1.24** Family engagement is encouraged through an “open-door” visitation policy, volunteer opportunities, potlucks, and other social activities, fundraising projects, advocacy, and/or sharing information about learning opportunities for children in the communities where they live.

**1.25** Parents are aware of the family child care provider’s plan to ensure the safety and privacy of children and their families in regard to protection from immigration enforcement. Federal guidelines list “known and licensed child care and other early care and education programs as ‘sensitive locations’ where immigration enforcement actions should generally be avoided.”

**1.26** Parents are aware of the family child care budget, particularly the expenses involved in the operation of the program.

### **Area(s) of Strength:**

### **Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**

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## II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*The standards in this section relate to your professional development. Your work environment as a family child care provider is enhanced when you approach your job with confidence in your skills, and with knowledge of child development and small business management. As in all professions, a family child care provider's education deserves to be viewed as a lifelong process, however, family child care providers face unique barriers to accessing professional development. The final section on Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care addresses some of these barriers.*

**2.1** The provider has received education in both child development and small business management, including the special aspects of running a family child care business.

**2.2** The provider has received training in implementing curriculum that meets the developmental needs of a mixed-age group of children.

**2.3** The provider has received training in the use of observation and assessment tools to facilitate curriculum planning.

**2.4** The provider has received training in child care health and safety issues, including those areas that affect their own well-being and receives updated training as needed. Such training may focus on:

- Safe practices for lifting children and heavy objects in order to prevent back and knee injuries;
- Management of infectious diseases and universal precautions for blood-borne pathogens;
- Child/Infant CPR and SIDS prevention;
- Nutrition and safe food-handling practices; and/or
- Stress management and other issues related to the emotional and mental well-being of the provider and children.

**2.5** The provider creates a professional development plan each year in which they set challenging but reachable goals and seek out the resources needed to achieve these goals.

**2.6** The professional development plan incorporates participation in continuing education, which includes but is not limited to: state-mandated training; workshops; college classes; multi-session in-depth learning experiences; discussion groups; professional conferences; observation time in other child care programs; and/or engagement in advocacy activities.

2.7 The provider participates in ongoing equity, inclusion, and diversity training to support their work with both children and adults in a way that is culturally responsive and age appropriate.

2.8 The program budget allocates an annual fund for professional development expenses sufficient to cover the cost of training and related expenses, such as substitute providers.

2.9 Through increased parent fees and/or other available sources of income (such as grant programs, salary supplements, or scaled reimbursement rates from state subsidy programs), the provider is recognized and rewarded for attaining higher levels of formal education and/or achieving accreditation.

2.10 The provider conducts an annual assessment of the quality of their program that includes feedback from families and uses the results of this evaluation to plan professional development activities.

2.11 The provider has peer support through either a formal or informal network of providers in order to reflect on their current practices and deepen their thinking, reduce feelings of isolation, engage in problem solving with colleagues, and benefit from the experiences and encouragement of others.

2.12 The provider participates in a professional association, family child care support group, shared services alliance/family child care network, and/or some other early childhood organization as part of ongoing professional development.

2.13 The provider is aware of community support that enhances professional development, such as family child care mentoring programs or leadership opportunities that may exist in a community.

### **Area(s) of Strength:**

### **Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**

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### III. FAMILY CHILD CARE WORK ENVIRONMENT

*To allow you to do your best work, the physical setting of the child care program must nurture not only the children, but also you as a provider. Because your work environment is also your home, you might assume, when designing and equipping the space for child care, that the space already meets your own needs when in fact it does not. Typically, a child care environment is evaluated from the perspective of the children, not the provider. For this reason, a rationale is provided in italics for some of the standards in this section. In some cases, certain standards may not be directly applicable to your program.*

**3.1** The provider follows applicable state and local regulations regarding the physical space.

**3.2** The arrangement of space, the daily schedule, and the use of materials are balanced to meet the needs of both the child care program and the provider/provider's family.

**3.3** Adult-size chairs and work stations are available in the child care space of the home. The provider has a comfortable place to sit and be with children.

**3.4** Regularly used equipment (such as diapering tables and infant carriers) and storage areas are designed at a height and location that allow the provider to use gestures and postures that are safe and comfortable.

*There are occupational hazards involved in providing child care. Of particular concern is the potential for stress on the provider's back and knees from moving children and equipment.*

**3.5** There is ample and easily accessible storage space.

*Convenient storage minimizes the dangers associated with clutter for both children and the provider, and accessible storage ensures appropriate supervision at all times. Good storage also maximizes the efficient use of space, which is a challenge in many family child care homes.*

**3.6** There is adequate space and enough toys and equipment to meet the developmental needs of all the children enrolled.

*Inadequate space and resources often lead to additional stress for the provider, which can impact the quality of relationships with children.*

**3.7** There is an office or designated area equipped with a telephone and computer, with reliable access to the Internet, for conducting family child care business.

**3.8** There is a place in the home for the provider and parents to meet together.

**3.9** Included in the child care environment are artifacts, photographs, and other objects that reflect the provider’s life and family, as well as the lives of the children in care.

*Providing such objects creates a sense of belonging and community among all who share the space, both children and adults.*

**3.10** Clear policies delineate the conditions under which children are excluded from the family child care program because of illness, and these policies are consistently implemented.

*Such policies promote the physical well-being of the provider as well as the children in care.*

**3.11** Policies describe emergency plans in the event that care cannot be offered due to provider illness or injury or a natural or man-made disaster (for example, what to do and where to go in the event of a fire or how to respond to an active shooting in the area).

**3.12** Copies of reports resulting from inspection of the child care home by building, health, safety, or licensing officials are posted for parents (and employed staff, if any) to see.

*This practice may engage parents and others in helping to maintain a safe and healthy environment.*

**3.13** The provider is aware of community resources that can enhance the family child care home as a safe and healthy work environment (for further information, see Section V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care, p. 22).

## **Area(s) of Strength:**

## **Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**

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## IV. PROVIDER AS EMPLOYER

*Some providers regularly employ others in the child care business for a variety of reasons (e.g., to maintain a consistent group size and age composition, to ensure individual attention for each child every day, or to alleviate the isolation that some providers feel when working alone). Hiring an employee may also allow you to increase group size as a strategy for enhancing your income, but increased income must not come at the expense of an employee's well-being. We suggest that you use the Model Work Standards for Teaching Staff in Center-Based Child Care as a resource in establishing a good work environment for employees. In some cases, certain standards may not be applicable to your program. **Skip this section if it does not apply to you.***

**4.1** Employees are provided a written job description that is accurate and specific. Any changes in the job description are discussed with the employee prior to implementation.

**4.2** Employees are evaluated at least annually on their job performance and have an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their employer in the process. The evaluation procedure is discussed with the employee at the time of hire.

**4.3** The provider offers an orientation to the program before the new employee takes on their responsibilities, including meeting the children and their families; a review of the program's written policies, procedures, and philosophy; any other "house rules" pertaining to the home; health and safety practices; and the employee's legal rights in the workplace.

**4.4** An employment agreement identifies an equitable wage that rewards the employee's education, experience in the profession, and job responsibilities, as reflected in a salary scale that identifies starting salary and provides transparency for wage adjustments.

**4.5** Employees working more than 20 hours per week on a regular basis have the following benefits prorated for the number of hours worked: health care coverage, paid sick and vacation leave, paid holidays, paid planning time, and a professional development fund.

**4.6** The wage and benefit plan is reviewed annually, and employees receive an annual cost of living raise, at a minimum.

**4.7** Employees are encouraged to participate in ongoing educational opportunities.

**4.8** A grievance procedure is included in the employment agreement and is reviewed with the employee at the time of hire.



**4.9** The employment agreement includes policies and procedures related to termination. Employees are not discharged without just cause, and whenever possible, a termination occurs only after the provider and employee have attempted to resolve the conflict.

**4.10** An employee is informed of grounds for immediate dismissal upon employment. These grounds for dismissal are: the display of physical violence to children, adults, or property; a guilty verdict or substantiated state investigation of child abuse or neglect; evidence of alcohol and/or other drug abuse; misuse of funds; falsification of documents; and violation of confidentiality requirements.

**4.11** Work schedules allow for paid breaks: at least 15 minutes for every four hours worked.

**4.12** When a work schedule must be changed, two-weeks advance notice is given to the employee.

**4.13** The provider offers the employee helpful, consistent, and constructive feedback on job performance.

**4.14** The provider and the employee, if working together with children, share observations and plan some activities together. They also keep each other informed of communication with parents/guardians and other family members.

**4.15** Employees are involved in decision making as it directly affects their day-to-day practice and are engaged in setting program goals, measuring progress, and solving problems.

**4.16** The provider accepts responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy working environment for employees.

**4.17** The provider meets all state requirements regarding the hiring of employees, such as staff health reports, criminal records background checks, and documentation of education.

**4.18** The provider assumes all legal responsibilities for the hiring of employees, such as paying the employer's share of social security and worker's compensation, as well as federal and state unemployment taxes. The provider is also aware of applicable state and federal labor laws; for example, by federal law, all hours worked over 40 hours per week must be paid at the overtime rate of time and a half.

**4.19** The family child care program honors, respects, and affirms the culture and traditions of all employees of the program and all families served.

**4.20** Employees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, disability, marital status, political persuasion, national origin or ancestry, physical appearance, income level or source of income, student status, sexual preference, gender expression, union activity, or criminal record (except as required by licensing regulations).

**Area(s) of Strength:**

**Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**

## V. COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR PROMOTING CAREERS IN FAMILY CHILD CARE

*Resources and support within a community can contribute tremendously to promoting careers in family child care. Historically, what communities have to offer varies a great deal in terms of quantity, quality, and accessibility to the provider. Quantity of services may only be one concern: providers working in one community may have fewer community resources, but those that exist are well targeted and useful, while in another community, providers may be surrounded by resources but unaware of them. There is potential to do better in both cases. While you cannot necessarily control what, if any, community support is available to you as a provider, knowledge of the possibilities can influence you as an advocate for careers in family child care. In some cases, certain standards may not be applicable to your program.*

**5.1** Qualified substitute/respite providers are available for the provider to take leave without the child care program closing, when family or personal emergencies arise, or when the provider is engaged in professional activities that take them away from the program.

**5.2** Professional support in the community is available to the provider and may include:

- An organized substitute provider pool that screens and provides training for substitutes;
- Technical assistance and consultation on a range of issues, such as how to become a regulated provider, improve program and business management, improve financial literacy, apply for loans or grants, meet higher quality standards, and design family child care environments;
- A resource and referral program that helps providers maintain their desired enrollment;
- Access to the expertise of other professionals, such as nutritionists, social workers, and health care practitioners;
- Mental health consultants, who can offer support for dealing with children’s challenging behaviors and/or the impacts of trauma; and/or
- Translation services to support communication with families speaking a language that the provider doesn’t speak.

**5.3** The provider has access to appropriate, affordable, and relevant training and education provided by adult educators who are knowledgeable about the family child care profession. Access includes consideration for the time of day, the length of the training session, and the location of the training. Basic to advanced training is available, preferably with college credit.

**5.4** Information is intentionally disseminated to family child care providers in the community concerning:

- Educational opportunities and funding for education;
- Engagement in professional associations, support groups, and advocacy networks; and
- Resources and services for children with special needs, how to make appropriate referrals when necessary, and the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on the provider's enrollment practices.

**5.5** Opportunities exist for a new provider to work with a mentor during the first two years of operation and for an experienced provider to mentor others. Mentoring programs include appropriate training and compensation for providers serving as mentors.

**5.6** Opportunities exist to network with center-based child care teachers in the community for the purposes of sharing information and resources and to work together on advocacy efforts.

**5.7** Opportunities exist to promote family child care providers as leaders in the community (e.g., as mentors, members of committees, advocates, providers of professional learning, etc.).

**5.8** Resources are available to providers to offset some of the expenses of operating a family child care business. These resources could include but are not limited to:

- A service that lends toys, books, and equipment;
- Resource specialists such as storytellers, dancers, musicians, scientists, and others who share their talents in family child care programs;
- A professional library with books, journals, brochures, videos, and other materials on issues of interest to family child care providers;
- Business management tools and/or recordkeeping services;
- Access to a group health care pool;
- Tax preparation assistance;
- Access to technology, including computers, photocopiers, and email;
- Buying clubs to purchase food and/or other consumable supplies in bulk with other providers;
- Cleaning services;
- Maintenance and repair services;

- Food preparation services;
- Diaper services; and/or
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ .

**5.9** A community-based speakers bureau and/or other public education activities engage providers and other community leaders in improving the image of family child care in their community.

**Area(s) of Strength:**

**Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:**

# PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The Model Work Standards, taken as a whole, are designed to describe a high-quality work environment in a family child care setting. Through a self-assessment process, providers reflect on their program’s particular strengths and determine priorities for making changes. Provider assistants (if you have them), other trusted providers, colleagues, and parents can all be engaged in this process, creating a “team” approach to the program assessment. Using the following assessment sheets as a launching point, providers can develop an action plan that identifies concrete goals, a process of achieving them, and a means to measure progress.

On the following pages, you'll find an assessment sheet for each standard to facilitate your review process. In order to develop a plan for improving the work environment, please rank each standard individually as it applies to your child care program. Ranking is on a five-point scale based on these markers:

*1 - Not Met*

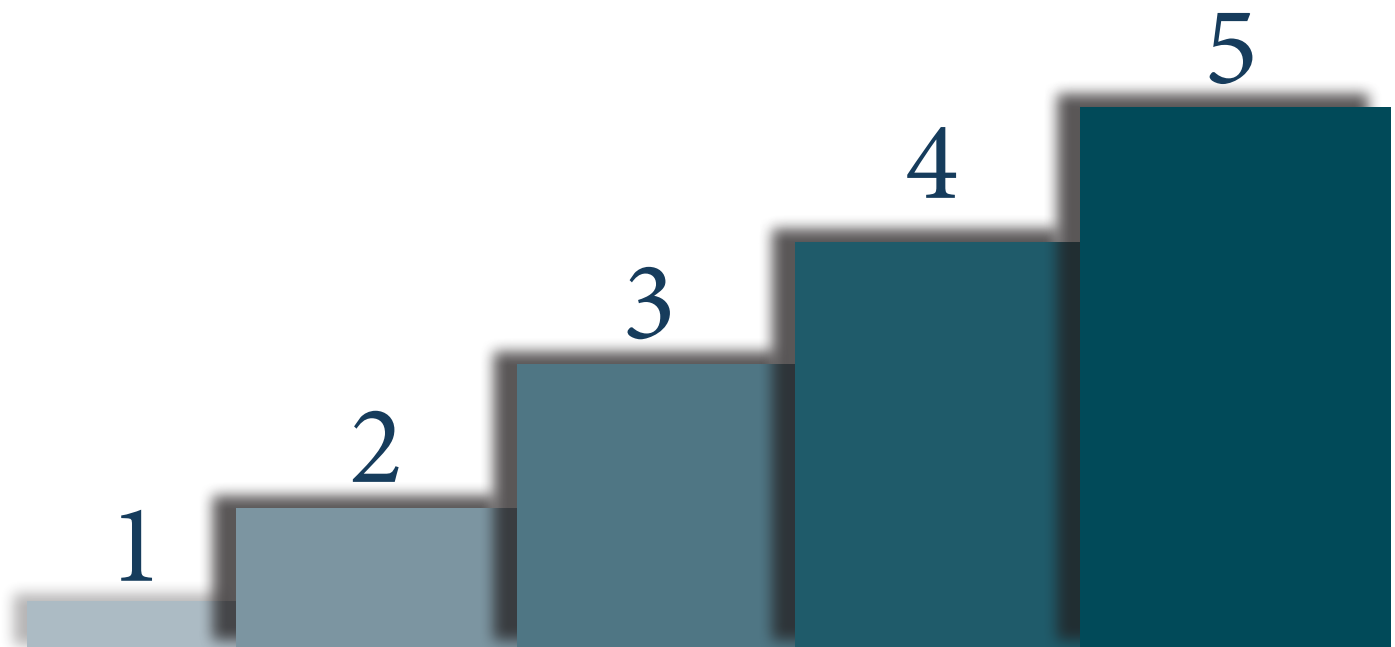
*2 - In Planning Stage*

*3 - In Progress*

*4 - Near Completion*

*5 - Consistently Met*

*N/A - Not Applicable* – In some cases, certain standards may not be applicable to your program. Note such items in your review on the following pages.



# Assessment Worksheet

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies

### Part 1 - Provider Income & Benefits

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p><b>1.1</b> Fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee that all reasonable and customary expenses will be met and that the provider has an income that at minimum is sufficient to meet the cost of living in the provider’s community.</p>	
<p><b>1.2</b> Fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee that the provider has health care coverage that fully covers themselves and any dependents not covered under an alternate health care plan (an alternate plan could be a spouse’s health insurance plan).</p>	
<p><b>1.3</b> Fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee an annual increase in income for the provider to reflect a “cost of living adjustment” (COLA).</p>	
<p><b>1.4</b> Until compensation reaches the level of those holding occupations in the community with comparable expertise based on combined levels of responsibility, experience, and education, fees charged for child care are raised annually an additional amount above the COLA.</p>	
<p><b>1.5</b> The provider’s income is guaranteed by a written provider–parent contract which stipulates that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All contracted hours are paid for in full, regardless of a child’s attendance; and</li> <li>• Fees are paid in full when the program has an unexpected closure due to provider illness or family emergency. A maximum number of paid days for such closures may be established in the contract.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.6</b> Fee and payment schedules are revised to reflect changes in state reimbursement rates for subsidized child care whenever these occur.</p>	
<p><b>1.7</b> When the provider achieves a higher level of formal education (i.e., earns a degree or credential in early childhood education) or becomes nationally accredited, they have the flexibility guaranteed in their contract to revise their fee and payment schedule to reward such achievements.</p>	
<p><b>1.8</b> Financial records, including an operating budget, are used to gauge the program’s stability.</p>	
<p><b>1.9</b> A recordkeeping system is in place to maximize business deductions available to the provider and to assure compliance with tax laws.</p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies

### Part 1 - Provider Income & Benefits, Cont'd.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p><b>1.10</b> The program is covered by insurance policies, including program liability insurance, homeowners insurance, and vehicle insurance (if the program transports children).</p>	
<p><b>1.11</b> For the purpose of setting and collecting fees, the provider requests that parents check with their employers about pre-tax child care benefits and/or with local agencies about child care subsidies.</p>	
<p><b>1.12</b> The provider receives a minimum of five paid sick/personal days per year, which can be taken to care for sick family members, as well.</p>	
<p><b>1.13</b> The provider receives a minimum of seven holidays per year, which are paid in full by families whose contracted hours fall on these days. When holidays fall on a weekend, the day before or after is taken as the paid holiday.</p>	
<p><b>1.14</b> The provider earns a minimum of five vacation days per year in the first two years of operation and 10 days per year in subsequent years, which is paid in full by families enrolled in the program. Additional unpaid vacation leave may be negotiated with parents in the contract.</p>	
<p><b>1.15</b> The provider receives minimally two paid days per year for their own professional development.</p>	
<p><b>1.16</b> In the event that the provider takes leave for the birth or adoption of a child, they may take all accrued sick and vacation time, billing parents for this portion of their leave.</p>	
<p><b>1.17</b> The provider sets aside minimally 5 percent of net earnings to support self-sufficiency in retirement.</p>	
<p><b>1.18</b> At least annually, the provider assesses their income and benefits and makes necessary adjustments to ensure their ability to continue providing quality care.</p>	



# Assessment Worksheet

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies

### Part 1 - Provider Income & Benefits, Cont'd.

Record your scoring and relevant notes below.

#### I. Model Contract & Program Policies - Part 1 - Provider Income & Benefits

Number of Items	1 Not Met	2 In Planning Stage	3 In Progress	4 Near Completion	5 Consistently Met
<b>18</b>					

**Notes on Provider Income & Benefits:**

# Assessment Worksheet

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies

### Part 2 - Hours of Work & Provider–Parent Communication

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p><b>1.19</b> In calculating hours worked for the purpose of setting fees, the provider includes time for planning, preparation, cleaning, shopping, recordkeeping and other paperwork, and conversing with enrolled or prospective parents.</p>	
<p><b>1.20</b> The provider establishes a work schedule that allows them the respite they need to maintain the energy and stamina required to care for children. This work schedule may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A set number of hours worked per day or per week;</li> <li>• Enrollment patterns that ensure some “down time” during the day;</li> <li>• The use of qualified assistants or family members onsite during “down times,” such as naptime, to allow for breaks;</li> <li>• A system of parent volunteers and/or family members to take on or help with certain program tasks, such as grocery shopping, laundry, and equipment repairs;</li> <li>• Employment of a regular provider assistant or substitute providers as needed;</li> <li>• Contracting out for certain services, such as catering, cleaning, and facility maintenance; and/or</li> <li>• Other: _____ .</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.21</b> The provider and parents sign a contract/agreement that defines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hours of care;</li> <li>• Fee schedule and payment policies, including late fees for overdue payments, overtime rates for late pick-ups, and fees for non-contracted hours if provided (such as drop-in during unscheduled time and weekend or overnight care);</li> <li>• Other charges, which may include, but are not limited to: registration or other administrative fees, meal expenses (if not on the Child and Adult Care Food Program), special activity fees, infant supplies, an annual continuing education fund for the provider, fees for returned checks, fees associated with any court or collection agency costs incurred in the collection of overdue payments, and fees associated with seeking emergency medical attention;</li> <li>• Policies covering absences of both the provider and children, including vacation, holiday, and sick leave;</li> <li>• A provision for contract updates and renewals, occurring at least annually;</li> </ul>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies

### Part 2 - Hours of Work & Provider–Parent Communication, Cont’d.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provisions for termination of care: Parents who are withdrawing their children are required to minimally provide a two-week notice during which time all fees are paid regardless of attendance (except during an identified initial trial period); providers are required to identify any conditions warranting immediate termination, such as non-payment of fees and conditions specified by licensing regulations; all other reasons for termination are first subject to an identified process of conflict resolution; and</li> <li>• Parents’ responsibility for finding alternate care and/or circumstances under which a provider hires a substitute.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.22</b> Written program policies are provided to all parents that specify such things as emergency procedures, discipline and guidance policies, and the daily schedule and also may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider’s job description, which in addition to the care and education of children includes such tasks as program planning, child assessments, recordkeeping, budgeting, shopping for groceries and program supplies, food preparation, and cleaning and maintaining the child care environment;</li> <li>• Provider’s professional experience, credentials, and/or level of education;</li> <li>• Statement of how the program is regulated and where parents can get more information on child care regulations and their rights as consumers;</li> <li>• Statement of the program’s quality rating, if participating in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS);</li> <li>• Statement of program philosophy and goals; and/or</li> <li>• List of items that parents are expected to provide to the program for their child’s care, if any (such as diapers, formula, clothing, bedding, etc.).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>1.23</b> Ongoing communication mechanisms ensure that family members are informed about new procedures, policies, and events, etc. This communication can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to bulletin boards, newsletters, and daily activity reports (printed or online), individual child journals, phone conversations, and parent–provider conferences.</p>	
<p><b>1.24</b> Family engagement is encouraged through an “open-door” visitation policy, volunteer opportunities, potlucks, and other social activities, fundraising projects, advocacy, and/or sharing information about learning opportunities for children in the communities where they live.</p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies

### Part 2 - Hours of Work & Provider–Parent Communication, Cont'd.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
1.25 Parents are aware of the family child care provider’s plan to ensure the safety and privacy of children and their families in regard to protection from immigration enforcement. Federal guidelines list “known and licensed child care and other early care and education programs as ‘sensitive locations’ where immigration enforcement actions should generally be avoided.”	
1.26 Parents are aware of the family child care budget, particularly the expenses involved in the operation of the program.	

Record your scoring and relevant notes below.

## I. Model Contract & Program Policies -

### Part 2 - Hours of Work & Provider–Parent Communication

Number of Items	1 Not Met	2 In Planning Stage	3 In Progress	4 Near Completion	5 Consistently Met
<b>8</b>					

### Notes on Hours of Work & Provider–Parent Communication:

# Assessment Worksheet

## II. Professional Development

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p><b>2.1</b> The provider has received education in both child development and small business management, including the special aspects of running a family child care business.</p>	
<p><b>2.2</b> The provider has received training in implementing curriculum that meets the developmental needs of a mixed-age group of children.</p>	
<p><b>2.3</b> The provider has received training in the use of observation and assessment tools to facilitate curriculum planning.</p>	
<p><b>2.4</b> The provider has received training in child care health and safety issues, including those areas which affect their own well-being and receives updated training as needed. Such training may focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe practices for lifting children and heavy objects in order to prevent back and knee injuries;</li> <li>• Management of infectious diseases and universal precautions for blood-borne pathogens;</li> <li>• Child/Infant CPR and SIDS prevention;</li> <li>• Nutrition and safe food-handling practices; and/or</li> <li>• Stress management and other issues related to the emotional and mental well-being of the provider and children.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.5</b> The provider creates a professional development plan each year in which they set challenging but reachable goals and seek out the resources needed to achieve these goals.</p>	
<p><b>2.6</b> The professional development plan incorporates participation in continuing education, which includes but is not limited to: state-mandated training; workshops; college classes; multi-session in-depth learning experiences; discussion groups; professional conferences; observation time in other child care programs; and/or engagement in advocacy activities.</p>	
<p><b>2.7</b> The provider participates in ongoing equity, inclusion, and diversity training to support their work with both children and adults in a way that is culturally responsive and age appropriate.</p>	
<p><b>2.8</b> The program budget allocates an annual fund for professional development expenses sufficient to cover the cost of training and related expenses, such as substitute providers.</p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## II. Professional Development, Cont'd.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p><b>2.9</b> Through increased parent fees and/or other available sources of income (such as grant programs, salary supplements, or scaled reimbursement rates from state subsidy programs), the provider is recognized and rewarded for attaining higher levels of formal education and/or achieving accreditation.</p>	
<p><b>2.10</b> The provider conducts an annual assessment of the quality of their program that includes feedback from families and uses the results of this evaluation to plan professional development activities.</p>	
<p><b>2.11</b> The provider has peer support through either a formal or informal network of providers in order to reflect on their current practices and deepen their thinking, reduce feelings of isolation, engage in problem-solving with colleagues, and benefit from the experiences and encouragement of others.</p>	
<p><b>2.12</b> The provider participates in a professional association, family child care support group, shared services alliance/family child care network, and/or some other early childhood organization as part of ongoing professional development.</p>	
<p><b>2.13</b> The provider is aware of community supports that enhance professional development, such as family child care mentoring programs or leadership opportunities that may exist in a community.</p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## II. Professional Development, Cont'd.

Record your scoring and relevant notes below.

### II. Professional Development

Number of Items	1 Not Met	2 In Planning Stage	3 In Progress	4 Near Completion	5 Consistently Met
13					

Notes on Professional Development:

# Assessment Worksheet

## III. Family Child Care Work Environment

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
3.1 The provider follows applicable state and local regulations regarding the physical space.	
3.2 The arrangement of space, the daily schedule, and the use of materials are balanced to meet the needs of both the child care program and the provider/provider's family.	
3.3 Adult-sized chairs and workstations are available in the child care space of the home. The provider has a comfortable place to sit and be with children.	
3.4 Regularly used equipment (such as diapering tables and infant carriers) and storage areas are designed at a height and location that allow the provider to use gestures and postures that are safe and comfortable.	
3.5 There is ample and easily accessible storage space.	
3.6 There is adequate space and enough toys and equipment to meet the developmental needs of all the children enrolled.	
3.7 There is an office or designated area equipped with a telephone and computer, with reliable access to the Internet, for conducting family child care business.	
3.8 There is a place in the home for the provider and parents to meet together.	
3.9 Included in the child care environment are artifacts, photographs, and other objects that reflect the provider's life and family, as well as the lives of the children in care.	
3.10 Clear policies delineate the conditions under which children are excluded from the family child care program because of illness, and these policies are consistently implemented.	
3.11 Policies describe emergency plans in the event that care cannot be offered due to provider illness or injury or a natural or man-made disaster (for example, what to do and where to go in the event of a fire or how to respond to an active shooting in the area).	
3.12 Copies of reports resulting from inspection of the child care home by building, health, safety, or licensing officials are posted for parents (and employed staff, if any) to see.	
3.13 The provider is aware of community resources that can enhance the family child care home as a safe and healthy work environment. (For further information, see Section V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care, p. 22).	



# Assessment Worksheet

## III. Family Child Care Work Environment, Cont'd.

Record your scoring and relevant notes below.

### III. Family Child Care Work Environment

Number of Items	1 Not Met	2 In Planning Stage	3 In Progress	4 Near Completion	5 Consistently Met
13					

Notes on Family Child Care Work Environment:

# Assessment Worksheet

## IV. Provider as Employer

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

*If this section does not apply to you, please skip to*

*V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care.*

Item	Score
4.1 Employees are provided a written job description that is accurate and specific. Any changes in the job description are discussed with the employee prior to implementation.	
4.2 Employees are evaluated at least annually on their job performance and have an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their employer in the process. The evaluation procedure is discussed with the employee at the time of hire.	
4.3 The provider offers an orientation to the program before the new employee takes on their responsibilities, including meeting the children and their families; a review of the program's written policies, procedures and philosophy; any other "house rules" pertaining to the home; health and safety practices; and the employee's legal rights in the workplace.	
4.4 An employment agreement identifies an equitable wage that rewards the employee's education, experience in the profession, and job responsibilities, as reflected in a salary scale that identifies starting salary and provides transparency for wage adjustments.	
4.5 Employees working more than 20 hours per week on a regular basis have the following benefits prorated for the number of hours worked: health care coverage, paid sick and vacation leave, paid holidays, paid planning time, and a professional development fund.	
4.6 The wage and benefit plan is reviewed annually, and employees receive an annual cost of living raise, at a minimum.	
4.7 Employees are encouraged to participate in ongoing educational opportunities.	
4.8 A grievance procedure is included in the employment agreement and is reviewed with the employee at the time of hire.	
4.9 The employment agreement includes policies and procedures related to termination. Employees are not discharged without just cause, and whenever possible, a termination occurs only after the provider and employee have attempted to resolve the conflict.	
4.10 An employee is informed of grounds for immediate dismissal upon employment. These grounds for dismissal are: the display of physical violence to children, adults, or property; a guilty verdict or substantiated state investigation of child abuse or neglect; evidence of alcohol and/or other drug abuse; misuse of funds; falsification of documents; and violation of confidentiality requirements.	

# Assessment Worksheet

## IV. Provider as Employer, Cont'd.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

*If this section does not apply to you, please skip to*

*V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care.*

Item	Score
4.11 Work schedules allow for paid breaks: at least 15 minutes for every four hours worked.	
4.12 When a work schedule must be changed, two-weeks advance notice is given to the employee.	
4.13 The provider offers the employee helpful, consistent and constructive feedback on job performance.	
4.14 The provider and the employee, if working together with children, share observations and plan some activities together. They also keep each other informed of communication with parents/guardians and other family members.	
4.15 Employees are involved in decision making as it directly affects their day-to-day practice, and are engaged in setting program goals, measuring progress, and solving problems.	
4.16 The provider accepts responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy working environment for employees.	
4.17 The provider meets all state requirements regarding the hiring of employees, such as staff health reports, criminal records, background checks, and documentation of education.	
4.18 The provider assumes all legal responsibilities for the hiring of employees, such as paying the employer's share of social security and worker's compensation, as well as federal and state unemployment taxes. The provider is also aware of applicable state and federal labor laws; for example, by federal law, all hours worked over 40 hours per week must be paid at the overtime rate of time and a half.	
4.19 The family child care program honors, respects, and affirms the culture and traditions of all employees of the program and all families served.	
4.20 Employees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, handicap, marital status, political persuasion, national origin or ancestry, physical appearance, income level or source of income, student status, sexual preference, gender expression, union activity, or criminal record (except as required by licensing regulations).	

# Assessment Worksheet

## IV. Provider as Employer, Cont'd.

Record your scoring and relevant notes below.

### IV. Provider as Employer

Number of Items	1 Not Met	2 In Planning Stage	3 In Progress	4 Near Completion	5 Consistently Met
<b>20</b>					

**Notes on Provider as Employer:**

# Assessment Worksheet

## V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p>5.1 Qualified substitute/respite providers are available for the provider to take leave without the child care program closing, when family or personal emergencies arise, or when the provider is engaged in professional activities that take them away from the program.</p>	
<p>5.2 Professional support in the community is available to the provider and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An organized substitute provider pool that screens and provides training for substitutes;</li> <li>• Technical assistance and consultation on a range of issues, such as how to become a regulated provider, improve program and business management, improve financial literacy, apply for loans or grants, meet higher quality standards, and design family child care environments;</li> <li>• A resource and referral program that helps providers maintain their desired enrollment;</li> <li>• Access to the expertise of other professionals, such as nutritionists, social workers, and health care practitioners;</li> <li>• Mental health consultants, who can offer support for dealing with children’s challenging behaviors and/or the impacts of trauma; and/or</li> <li>• Translation services to support communication with families speaking a language that the provider doesn’t speak.</li> </ul>	
<p>5.3 The provider has access to appropriate, affordable, and relevant training and education provided by adult educators who are knowledgeable about the family child care profession. Access includes consideration for the time of day, the length of the training session, and the location of the training. Basic to advanced training is available, preferably with college credit.</p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care, Cont'd.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<p>5.4 Information is intentionally disseminated to family child care providers in the community concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational opportunities and funding for education;</li> <li>• Engagement in professional associations, support groups, and advocacy networks; and</li> <li>• Resources and services for children with special needs, how to make appropriate referrals when necessary, and the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on the provider's enrollment practices.</li> </ul>	
<p>5.5 Opportunities exist for a new provider to work with a mentor during the first two years of operation and for an experienced provider to mentor others. Mentoring programs include appropriate training and compensation for providers serving as mentors.</p>	
<p>5.6 Opportunities exist to network with center-based child care teachers in the community for the purposes of sharing information and resources and to work together on advocacy efforts.</p>	
<p>5.7 Opportunities exist to promote family child care providers as leaders in the community (e.g., as mentors, members of committees, advocates, providers of professional learning, etc.).</p>	
<p>5.8 Resources are available to providers to offset some of the expenses of operating a family child care business. These resources could include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A service that lends toys, books, and equipment;</li> <li>• Resource specialists such as storytellers, dancers, musicians, scientists, and others who share their talents in family child care programs;</li> <li>• A professional library with books, journals, brochures, videos, and other materials on issues of interest to family child care providers;</li> <li>• Business management tools and/or recordkeeping services;</li> <li>• Access to a group health care pool;</li> <li>• Tax preparation assistance;</li> <li>• Access to technology, including computers, photocopiers, and email;</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>cont'd.</i></p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care, Cont'd.

Rank each standard using the following markers:

*1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met*

Item	Score
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buying clubs to purchase food and/or other consumable supplies in bulk with other providers;</li> <li>• Cleaning services;</li> <li>• Maintenance and repair services;</li> <li>• Food preparation services;</li> <li>• Diaper services; and/or</li> <li>• Other: _____.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.9</b> A community-based speakers bureau and/or other public education activities engage providers and other community leaders in improving the image of family child care in their community.</p>	

# Assessment Worksheet

## V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care, Cont'd.

Record your scoring and relevant notes below.

### V. Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care

Number of Items	1 Not Met	2 In Planning Stage	3 In Progress	4 Near Completion	5 Consistently Met
9					

**Notes on Community Support for Promoting Careers in Family Child Care:**



# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A

### STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES OF THE FAMILY CHILD CARE PROFESSION

Family child care providers are directly involved in all financial aspects of their work. Consequently, they are perhaps even more aware than center-based teachers that on a day-to-day basis, their livelihood depends on the very personal exchange of money from parents' hands to their own. In the absence of a more equitable system of financing early care and education, this personal exchange can be viewed as both a strength and an obstacle in promoting a high-quality work environment for educators in a family child care setting.

Family child care providers are self-employed business people who are able to make their own decisions about their work environment through contracts and program policies, yet they operate in a market that relies heavily on affordability for families. When a provider needs to assert their right to an income that sustains their family, there is no buffer between the provider's needs and the needs of the families served. Because family child care operates on such a small human scale, relationships with families tend to be quite intimate. While this intimacy is a strength of family child care, it becomes a challenge when attempting to charge the true value of one's service.

Because of the small scale and intimate setting of family child care, a single tool in the form of a model contract could never account for all the variability among providers, the families they serve, the economics of the communities they live in, or the community resources that are available locally. These Model Work Standards, then, serve not only as an assessment tool, but also as guidelines for setting fees, modifying contracts, and financial planning. They are a reminder to providers that they can take greater charge over their work environments. As self-employed small business owners, family child care providers may have found other unique ways to manage their financial, professional, family, and health needs that we have not thought of in the development of these standards.

The Model Work Standards are a tool to help providers improve upon what they already have. They are also a recognition that family child care providers cannot make all the needed changes on their own. These standards can help amplify our call for greater investments in family child care.

## APPENDIX B

### A GUIDE FOR USING THE MODEL WORK STANDARDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

These Model Work Standards have multiple uses and are intended to serve multiple audiences. They can be used as:

- A **self-assessment tool** for evaluating the workplace, as described in the introduction;
- A **planning tool** for reflecting on the current work environment, setting goals for improvement, and measuring success;
- An **educational tool** to articulate what family child care providers need to ensure their well-being and help them better serve children and families; and
- An **organizing and advocacy tool** for enlisting wider support for the resources needed to make lasting change.

When these standards were originally created, we tapped into the knowledge and experience of family child care providers in their design. We also looked to them to lead the change. It was a time in our history when the child care workforce was discovering its own sense of empowerment and embracing new opportunities. Over time, we have learned that achieving the changes we envision is a complex task, one that will take leadership from multiple sources and a willingness to work collaboratively.

A family child care program may have achieved many of these standards already, and others may seem within its grasp. Some standards, however, are likely to be unattainable within the current scope of a provider's budget, and others will depend on community support. These standards, especially those that require greater resources, are not included to frustrate, but to help us all hold fast to a vision of and commitment to social and economic justice for the family child care workforce and the need for greater public investment in the early education and care of our children.

Model Work Standards can help family child care programs gain community-wide recognition for offering a high-quality work environment. They can also offer families and the broader community another way to gauge a program's quality. We therefore recommend using these standards with resource and referral agencies, college faculty, trainers and consultants, advocacy groups, professional associations, provider support groups, the local business community, social and economic justice organizations, policymakers, and funders so that together we can:

- Support providers who are engaged in creating careers in family child care by immediately beginning to improve their working conditions;
- Inform all providers — those just entering the field as well as seasoned professionals — that these standards exist and can be useful in making decisions about future professional growth;

- Identify potential resources and funding opportunities for improving the family child care work environment;
- Promote careers in family child care that value a quality work environment and educate consumers about quality family child care;
- Broadcast the successes of family child care programs and showcase model work sites;
- Engage in community-wide action to address some of the most difficult standards to achieve, such as affordable health care coverage and provider substitute pools; and
- Strengthen partnerships among all stakeholders.

While there are many stakeholder involved in improving the work environments of family child care providers, we note specifically the role of parents, higher education faculty, and professional development practitioners.

## **Using the Model Work Standards: A Note for Parents**

Creating a high-quality learning environment for young children and a high-quality work environment for family child care providers can be an expensive endeavor. The cost of a high-quality program is more than most parents can afford to pay, and they shouldn't have to shoulder this expense alone if we agree that there is a public benefit. Currently, when we set fees based on what we believe parents can afford to pay, we too often sacrifice the well-being of the provider.

Family child care providers are most likely to continue in the profession, building their careers in early childhood education, if they have a supportive work environment and can earn a decent living for themselves and their families. This is why your engagement in improving early care and education is important. Working with your child care provider to improve their conditions will give you a deeper understanding of the true value of early care and education. Joining with child care advocates to secure the public and private resources they need is also an excellent way to strengthen your partnership.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Provide feedback and input into the Model Work Standards “action plan,” if requested by your provider.
- Agree to serve on a committee, participate in fundraising efforts, or respond to other requests for involvement.
- Consider your own workplace and/or community groups that you are involved in. Do you have access to any resources that could be useful in improving the provider's work environment?
- Talk to your employer about child care issues and what your workplace could offer.

- Advocate for increased public investment in the child care workforce and discuss the importance of public investment in early care and education with your local legislators and public officials.

## **Using the Model Work Standards: A Note for Higher Education Faculty and Professional Development Practitioners**

In the process of teaching and mentoring students, early childhood faculty have the opportunity to make the connection between the quality of the adult work environment and the ability of early educators to create and implement the best teaching and learning environments for young children. The Model Work Standards are a useful tool for describing a quality work environment and a guide for job-seeking educators to include family child care among their options for pursuing a career in early education. It is your responsibility to be knowledgeable about family child care to help all students understand and appreciate the variety of ways that a developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum can be implemented.

The Model Work Standards also create an opportunity to guide students in developing advocacy and leadership skills. Among other skills, students can develop an understanding of how systems and institutions impact the practices and programs where they work. By using the Model Work Standards in the ways described, both new and seasoned early educators can strengthen their abilities to speak up and take a stand for working conditions that impact their well-being as well as that of the children in their care. They can learn and practice the leadership skills involved in communicating their knowledge and experiences for the purpose of improving early childhood work environments.

## APPENDIX C

### ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

*Make a copy of this worksheet for each standard you address.*

**The standard you are working to improve:**

**What you have now:**

**Your goal:**

*Note: The goal may be to meet the standard fully or to simply achieve a step in the direction of meeting the standard.*

**Estimated time:** *(Anticipated date of completion of this goal)* \_\_\_\_\_

**Estimated cost, if any:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: While some standards may require minimal (if any) additional resources, others may demand significant financial investment. In the latter case, action steps in your plan will include financing strategies.*



## Evaluation

Do you believe you succeeded in reaching your goal? Circle one: Yes Partially No

If yes (or partially), how can you celebrate and broadcast the news?

If no (or partially), what barriers still stand in your way?

Through this process, what did you learn?

- About yourself as a participant in this process
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- About your program

Was the time and expense involved what you expected? Yes No

Why or why not?

How do you feel about this process? Include suggestions for improvement.

What would you like to take on next?

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# ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Established in 1999, the **Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE)** is focused on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts research and policy analysis about the characteristics of those who care for and educate young children and examines policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards these early educators to ensure young children’s optimal development. CSCCE provides research and expert analysis on topics that include compensation and economic insecurity among early educators, early childhood teacher preparation and access to educational opportunities, work environments, and early childhood workforce data sources and systems. CSCCE also works directly with policymakers and a range of national, state, and local organizations to assess policy proposals and provide technical assistance on implementing sound early care and education workforce policy.

For more information on CSCCE’s work, mission, and workforce resources, please visit:  
[cscce.berkeley.edu](http://cscce.berkeley.edu)

The **American Federation of Teachers (AFT)** is a union of professionals under the AFL-CIO that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, health care, and public services for our students, their families, and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work of our members. In 2002, AFT became the home of the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW), the authoring organization of the original Model Work Standards.

For more information on AFT’s mission and early childhood resources, please visit:  
[aft.org/earlychildhood](http://aft.org/earlychildhood)



