

PROVIDER CHARACTERISTICS FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

USING THIS INFORMATION

From time to time we've been asked to define the characteristics of a provider who offers quality child care. That is a difficult question. We asked an experienced community college faculty member with years of experience teaching early care and education students, as well as years of observing providers at various levels of education and experience, to help define the characteristics. These suggested characteristics are categorized and detailed in the following sections: physical, mental and health; social; knowledge; emotional; and general.

The resulting list may be used by the following people:

- Persons considering a career in child care and development – to see how well they match the profile, and how committed they are to the ongoing professional study needed to master and practice the knowledge required
- Supervisors who are evaluating job applicants for child care and development positions
- Parents who may be selecting a child care provider
- Job counselors, educators, and trainers who are called upon to counsel persons considering a career in child care

In using the information for these purposes, it is important to distinguish between *knowledge-based characteristics*, which can be changed with training and experience, and *personality or values characteristics*, which are not as likely to change in response to training. Similarly, it is important to evaluate how quickly the most critical deficiencies in knowledge and ability can reasonably be overcome through training and education.



PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

- Maintains good health
- Has a high energy level; is very active
- Does not use alcohol, drugs, or take medication that will affect responsiveness to children
- Can lift children weighing up to 50 pounds
- Can get on the floor with children and get up quickly
- Can run and play with children in active play
- Is attentive and always alert to the children and what they are doing in the environment
- Can work with and supervise children doing different things at the same time
- Is personally clean and appropriately groomed

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Enjoys working with children and their families
- Respects children as individuals
- Respects parents as the primary persons in the lives of their children
- Likes to be in an active, constantly changing environment where the needs of children and their families come first
- Has good communications skills, both verbal and non-verbal. Speaks clearly in English, listens to children and parents, does not use negative words or body language.
- Is courteous, consistent, and positive in interactions with children and parents
- Is considerate of others
- Is alert and sensitive to others' needs and uses this sensitivity to anticipate what might happen in given situations
- Is tolerant and appreciates the differences in others' skills, appearances, interests, cultures, and personalities
- Is honest in both monetary and non-monetary matters
- Has a keen sense of responsibility and personal accountability
- Is intellectually curious
- Enjoys learning and helping others to learn and solve problems



KNOWLEDGE CHARACTERISTICS

- Can read and write English at least on an eighth grade level
- Has broad general knowledge and information
- Has an understanding of child growth and development
- Is well organized and efficient
- Can locate and use resources creatively
- Can plan an age-appropriate program for the children in care
- Can observe and evaluate children's progress and problems
- Can make referrals to appropriate resources as needed
- Understands basic behavioral guidance techniques, e.g., redirection, positive guidance, role-modeling, etc.
- Can assist children with learning acceptable behavior and dealing with the logical consequences of unacceptable behavior
- Understands the principles of program planning
- Understands the need for transitions and how to incorporate them successfully into the day-to-day activities of working with children
- Can plan an environment that stimulates children to be active learners
- Is creative in approaches to problem-solving
- Understands healthy nutrition and the nutritional needs of children
- Knows first aid and rescue breathing or CPR
- Can maintain necessary files and records

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Is emotionally stable
- Is flexible
- Is warm and affectionate
- Is patient
- Is caring and calm, even in trying situations
- Can control temper
- Has healthy self-esteem
- Can objectively evaluate own performance and takes responsibility for improving performance based on feedback and self-appraisal
- Can deal with conflict openly, comfortably and constructively, without becoming upset, vengeful or defensive

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Knows and practices professional ethics
- Keeps information confidential
- Is reliable and available when services are needed and expected and makes arrangements with all necessary parties for time away from responsibilities
- Is interested in ongoing professional development

