

Family child care: Could this be the job for you?



How do you see yourself?

Becoming a professional in family child care can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. Before deciding if this is the job for you, reflect on your vision of starting a family child care program – what are your dreams? If you could offer the best family child care program, what would it include? What are your strengths? For example, maybe you are very organized or have a background in caring for special needs children. What will be unique about your program? For instance, your program may be unique because it offers after school care or has a wonderful outdoor space. Thinking about your vision and dreams gives direction in planning your family child care.

“People considering family child care need to know they don’t need to have it all starting out. I started my daycare while my home was being constructed: I lived in my basement with four people, one on the way, and was still able to serve families effectively in that limited space. Over the years my home and family has grown and because of the extra income we’ve been able to remodel that space (once used as our home) into a great area for my family to enjoy and for a daycare.” – Kelly, Family child care provider

Think about the “The Big Picture”

The following is a chart of three key areas in running a family child care program. Ask yourself whether these areas interest you, and if you can see yourself growing and learning in these areas.

Practical issues Think about...	Building relationships Think about...	Developing as a professional Think about...
Developing a family policy handbook	Having a commitment to families and children	Regularly planning age-appropriate, engaging activities for children
Organizing fees and payment schedules	Understanding that families play a key role in supporting their child	Continuing to learn more about early childhood education by reading, taking classes and going to workshops
Maintaining a safe environment	Connecting with families and children daily	Taking advantage of state resources available for continuing education
Understanding state regulations	Providing opportunities to talk with families about joys and challenges as they arise	Joining a professional organization to learn more about children and family child care
Sharing your home space on a daily basis	Approaching relationships in a professional manner	Developing professional goals as you move forward in your role as a family child care provider

Understand the challenges: Food for thought

Consider the challenges you may face in starting a family child care business. Caring for your own children along with other people's children may be difficult. Developing and setting policies may be challenging, such as a policy for late fees. Is there a community need for child care where you live? How will you meet the unique needs of children and families? What about keeping up with state regulations and licensing requirements? Or risks in running a business? Many challenges can be avoided with good information, proper planning, and thinking ahead.

5 resources for learning more about family child care

- Family Child Care: Get Started (On Demand lesson – search by title)
<http://extension.psu.edu/youth/betterkidcare>
- 101+ Ways to Care for Kids: A Handbook for Child Care Providers
<http://extension.psu.edu/youth/betterkidcare/early-care/our-resources/101-ways-to-care-for-kids/view>
- Helpful Resources for Child Care Practitioners (In PA)
<http://extension.psu.edu/youth/betterkidcare/early-care/our-resources/child-care-regulations-and-certification>
- Helpful Resources: Child Care Ideas (In PA)
<http://extension.psu.edu/youth/betterkidcare/early-care/our-resources/child-care-ideas>
- Caregiver Sensitivity Vodcast
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/gPVF1sAfr0?rel=0>

For more information

Within Pennsylvania, visit:

The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

<http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/>

Pennsylvania Regional Child Development Offices:

Western Region 1-800-222-2149

Central (Harrisburg) 1- 800-222-2117

Northeast (Scranton) 1-800-222-2108

Southeast Region 1-800-346-2929

Outside of Pennsylvania, visit:

The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education

<http://nrckids.org/>

1-800-598-KIDS (5437)