

How to Get Organized

In Your Child Care Business in Five Easy Steps



By Andrea Dickerson, Founder of "I Own A Daycare"

There is no denying that as independent child care business owners and directors we are constantly busy with the day-to-day operations and varied responsibilities that can sometimes seem overwhelming. With all the tasks we have to perform, many of us just dive in head first and tackle issues on a first-come, first-served basis.

In today's fast-growing childcare business, it is very important that you have systems in place to manage operations so you are free to focus on important tasks, such as increasing enrollment, adding more value to your business, expanding, or just nestling in to an effective childcare operation.

Every child care business owner or director has their own unique way of managing their time, staff and operations. Now is the perfect time to consider your current systems and apply these five tips to help you get more done.

1. Identify an Effective Time-Management System. An effective time-management system isn't about making time on your calendar to get things done; it is about making changes to the way you spend your time. Our first step is to analyze how you actually spend your time from the moment you open or arrive at the child care business to the moment you leave. Make a list of everything that you are currently doing. If you have an assistant, ask him or her to assist you by writing down what they observe you doing as well. Small tasks such as an unexpected phone call, printing forms that should have been printed yesterday, looking for a missing report that should be on your desk, dealing with children's behavior, and staffing issues are all tasks that keep you in a crisis mode. For most independent child care business owners, these are the tasks that drain energy and interfere with productivity. You will be shocked to learn what tasks are important but are wasting your time as well.

2. Create a Calendar of Duties. Creating a calendar of duties is an effective way of blocking your time to schedule your recurring tasks. It will empower you to work with fewer interruptions, focus your energies on what's important, and stay in control of accomplishing what is needed. The first step is to create a foundation for your week. Select a task trigger for each day of the week; for example, my Mondays are accounts receivable and accounts payable days. I

focus on the financial health of my organization. After you determine your foundation, list every duty in your child care program that has to be completed by a certain date and time on the calendar. Repeat on the calendar as many times as the task needs to be completed. Review job descriptions of your staff to find tasks that require your leadership and list those duties on the calendar. Once completed, review the calendar for accuracy and discuss it with staff to be sure that everyone understands the calendar.

3. Create Business Development Only days. While you are creating your calendar of duties list, go another step to maximize your effectiveness and efficiency by creating business development only days. The more you plan and set aside time to focus on growing your child care business, the more you will accomplish and the more ideas will come to you to help you take massive action in your business.

4. Delegate Recurring Tasks. Several recurring tasks are common in the child care business. The first step is to clear your task list of things that a CEO would not handle. To successfully delegate each task, the owner/director/administrator should create the framework for systemizing and orientating the individual responsible for the task. This person should be provided with written documents to ensure accuracy.

5. Create an Internal Binder System. The binder system is a proven method that child care corporations of all levels use to guide their operations, and it works as a quick reference guide for employees. Creating an internal binder system equips you and your staff with the tools, materials and forms to accelerate classroom organization, new staff training, customer service, and recurring tasks. A binder system will hold separate policies, procedures, and checklists for processes that staff members need to complete.

Andrea Dickerson has been in the child care industry for more than ten years, working her way up from provider to a successful business owner. A Certified Program Administrator and Certified Child Development Specialist, Dickerson knows firsthand the challenges child care owners face and has developed comprehensive training materials to provide proven management solutions. Her website is www.IOwnADaycare.com.

