

# Contracts with Parents



Do you have contracts with children's parents? Many family child care providers think contracts seem too much like big business. A contract is an agreement, listing what you want parents to do and what you will provide to their child. Contracts can help parents and providers avoid problems.

Contracts do not have to be written in legal terms. However, if you really run into problems, a contract can be used in court if you need to get payment from a parent.

You can begin writing a contract by asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I want to be paid every week, every two weeks, or every month?
  - Will there be a late fee if parents pick up their child after closing time?
  - Do I want to know several days/weeks/a month before a child will be leaving my care?
- What hours, days, months will I care for children?
  - How much will I charge to care for a preschool child (ages 3, 4, 5)?
  - Will I charge the same rate to care for an infant or toddler?
  - Will I care for school-age children?
  - Will I charge less to care for more than one child in the same family?

## SAMPLE CONTRACT

**Name of child:** Karen Jones

**Child's Address:** 153 West Street Anytown, PA 12345

**Parent's Names:** Sue and Bob Jones

- This is an agreement to provide care for Karen Jones.
- Care will be provided Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- If the child is picked up later than 5:30 p.m., parents will pay an overtime charge of: \$10.00 per hour.
- The fee is 100.00 per week, payable on Fridays of the week before care is given. If the fee is not paid by that date, an additional fee of \$5.00 per day will be charged.

**Agreed to:** *By Sue Jones*                      On January 2, 2001  
*By Kathy Smith*                              On January 2, 2001

## CONTRACTS PROTECT CAREGIVERS AND PARENTS

It is best to talk about the contract with the parents and have them sign two copies, one for you and one for them.

You don't have to wait to take in new children to start using a contract with parents. Start now! Tell parents who already have children in your care that you are starting to have parents sign contracts to make the care arrangements clear for both them and you. The contract will not change the type of care you are giving their child.

You can make changes to your contract any time you feel it needs to be done. It's a good idea to read your contract at least once every year to see if changes need to be made. Talk with parents about changes before you make them. Have parents sign a new contract with the changes listed. This shows they know about the changes and they agree with them.

## PARENT HANDBOOKS

There are other things that parents should know about your child care business. Many providers put this information in a handbook. Parents do not always remember everything you talk about during a visit or telephone call. Giving them a written handbook will let them go back over this information at home.

You may want to think about including the following things in a parent handbook:

- **Activities:** What types of activities will you do with the children?
- **Nap and Rest Time:** Where will children rest? How long is rest time? What activities will you have for children who won't sleep or those who take short naps?
- **Discipline:** What rules will you have? How do you handle problem behaviors? Sometimes it helps to let parents know that biting, not sharing, and hitting are common behaviors for young children. Let parents know that you'll work with a child who is doing these things to help her become a kind and loving person.
- **Food:** Will you give children lunch and snacks or will they bring food from home? Will you buy formula for babies?
- **Clothing:** Do you want children dressed for play each day? Should they leave a change of clothes in case the child has an accident? Will you take the children outside to play when it is cold? Who will provide diapers if you're caring for an infant or toddler?
- **Sick Policy:** Will you care for a sick child? How will you handle a child who becomes sick during the day? When will a sick child need to be taken home? Will you charge for days when a child is sick? Will you give a child medicine?
- **Days Off:** Will you charge for days when you are sick or on vacation? Will you charge for days when a child is on vacation?

## START USING CONTRACTS NOW!

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