**Welcome to TX Child Care Tools**

**Resources for home providers**

This overview will help familiarize you with resources to strengthen your administrative and programmatic operation of your family child care home.

We'll review

Business Basics and Professionalism,

Classroom and Activities,

Emergency Readiness,

Meals and Nutrition, and

Tax Tips. Let's get started.

Your family child care home is an important part of the early care and education market, you give families a choice to select an intimate and more personal setting for their children. You love what you do, and it shows! Most family child care businesses began because the owner loves caring for children and that is wonderful. You have a passion for what you do. However, in reality, you are running a business that takes time, policies, procedures, recordkeeping and programmatic supports.

We're going to go over a lot of important resources to help strengthen your family child care business with tools available to you on TX Child Care Tools.

As we explore the toolkit, think about it this way.

Much like child development, first you crawl.

Then you walk, and

Before you know it, the child is off running!

As you think about your work and using the Family Child Care Toolkit, you don't need to explore everything all at once. Select a couple of resources and wrap your head around those. Then in another week or so. Look at a couple of more soon you'll be thinking, how can TX Child Care Tools help me today?

Let's take a tour of the family child care tool kit.

After logging into child care tools. You'll land on this page. Right below the feature story, you'll see the box for Family Child Care Toolkit on the right.

First thing you'll notice is the very long list of resources available to you, starting with “Business Basics and Professionalism” to “Emergency Readiness,” “Health and Safety” and “Tax Tips” right at your fingertips. We'll explore a few of these resources today. But let's start with “Business Basics and Professionalism” and see what resources are available to us there.

We're looking at the “Learning and Guidance” page. There's a great set of resources available to help you understand how to put your best foot forward when working with families.

We're going to take a look at a couple of learning courses from Early Educator Central. We'll start with Program Management. Program Management is a wonderful, free training tool that can help you reflect on your program management and its connection to overall program success and quality. Just take a look at the resources available to you here and in the left hand menu. Next, back on the “Learning and Guidance” page, we're going to look at Professionalism and Ethics. Another great learning module from the Virtual Lab. It will help you develop your sense of professionalism and ethical practices.

One of the things we hear from family child care providers is their frustration that families don't respect them as educators. This tool is a first step to help you shift that thinking and guide the conversation. There are other resources we'll look at today that are designed to help you manage that conversation very effectively. And I can't wait to show you them.

Back on the “Learning and Guidance” page, scroll all the way down to the bottom of the page and take a look at this resource on Taxes. This is a really important tool because it helps you better identify your opportunity for net profit. Here are three examples. These numbers are all fictitious, though, of course, they're just for illustrative purposes. But as you can see, an unregulated provider versus a regulated or exempt provider versus a regulated and on the food program provider can vastly affect your net profit. This is an easy read, and I suggest that you take the time to take a look at it, because who doesn't want to earn more money?

Looking at “Recordkeeping Forms and Contracts.” As a business owner, written contracts are helpful in setting expectations which can minimize the risk of problems. We're going to explore a couple of resources here on TX Child Care Tools to support you in this work.

Diving into the “Recordkeeping Forms and Contracts” resource page, you'll notice a wealth of information here. We're going to focus on just one at the moment, the Family Handbook. Clicking on the ‘Family Handbook’ brings you to a set of instructions. This is just a model handbook, so it's not all inclusive. And you need to make modifications to make sure it's in line with your practices. And a recommendation to have this reviewed by local law counsel to be sure it meets local, state and federal regulations, is critically important to this document.

Next, it moves into ‘Preparing this Document for Distribution.’ First, save a copy of this document on your computer. Next, anything and red text or yellow highlighted text needs to be reviewed and modified to reflect your own practices. And a step by step set of instructions will help you search and replace the words ‘early education program’ with the name of your family child care business. Moving down, we'll get into the homepage here, which is basically the cover sheet, you'll notice the yellow I'm clicking on and I'm deleting because I don't want to add a logo right now. And next, let's enter that school year. See how it adopts the formatting and eliminates the highlighting very simple and easy to use.

Moving down. Another important aspect of your Family Handbook is a ‘Welcome Letter’ to create an intimate and personal experience for families. We don't write it for you, but we give you suggestions of what you might want to include. Another great aspect of family engagement is to include this letter.

Next is the table of contents. You'll notice it's a very comprehensive set of contents and topics, but more importantly, you'll notice there aren't a lot of pages. That's because we want families to be able to familiarize themselves with the expectations of your program and make it easy for them to read through. Now we're looking at the actual document. And you see how that yellow highlighted content plays out, along with all of the red text, making changes to reflect your own mission, vision, practices, policies is very important. As we scroll through this document, we're going to come to the ‘Family Acknowledgment.’ This is often overlooked in family handbooks. The reason it is so important is that it forms a binding contract between you and the family member. We highly suggest you include this in your Family Handbook.

Recordkeeping will allow you to manage your finances and to take advantage of every business deduction in order to maximize the revenue you earn each year and who doesn't want to earn more money?

Do you have a system that helps you maintain good records?

Are you managing your records regularly, like every day or every week, or do you wait until the end of the year?

You could be missing important business deductions if you wait until the end of the year.

Let's explore a couple of tools to help you maximize your expenses and revenue as it relates to taxes.

This is the ‘Monthly Expense Report Log’ available on TX Child Care Tools. It's an Excel based log. You'll notice that there's an area to insert the month and the year on every page in this spreadsheet. Looking along the bottom, you'll also notice that there is a spreadsheet for each month. Filling them all in, there will be a summary sheet also available to you to calculate all your expenses across the year.

First, make sure you fill in the date.

Next, you'll want to capture how you paid for it, whether you used a check or a credit or debit card or cash.

Next, write down the vendor. And when I say write down, I mean do this on your computer by all means,

Including the purchase amount. Put that in the blue column, but also put that exact amount in whatever category it applies to, whether it was repairs or maintenance or something else. Keeping a running total is going to help you immensely at the end of the year calculate all your total expenses.

The next form. We're looking at is the ‘Family Child Care Provider Time Tracker.’ I'd like to point out the notes at the top that give you helpful explanations. Please take time to read them.

Each day, you should be tracking both the time spent caring for children as well as the time you spend after children leave when you're focused on tasks to prepare for the next day. This is important because it will help you determine the time space percentage--the portion of expenses that are attributed to running your business in your home, and a great support for tax deductions.

You'll notice that this is another spreadsheet. As you enter any data, it will calculate across. It is an Excel-based tool as well. Entering this in, as we're showing you, will allow you to keep electronic records that will be easy to share with your accountant at the end of each year.

Last section, we're going to take a look at in “Business Basics and Professionalism” is “Working with Families.”

Do you find that families refer to you as a babysitter? It's frustrating and disappointing that they don't know that you are qualified and that you do so much more as an early childhood educator. We're exploring some resources that can change that perception first with the ‘Early Learning Professional versus Babysitter.’ This is a handout that is completely editable and it compares the work of an early learning professional to that of a babysitter. And you can see there are marked differences here. This is a great tool to use with families, especially upon enrollment, and you should do so annually.

The next section that we're taking a look at is the ‘How To Earn Respect And Build Professionalism.’ If you approach the operation of your family child care business with professional policies and expectations, your families will understand that you are an early learning professional and that you operate a high quality child care business. As we're looking at this tool, we'll look at the very first item ‘Establishing the Use of a Family Handbook, Daily Reports, Updated Bulletin Board and Regularly Scheduled Newsletters.’ Why is this important? Formalized handbooks reports and newsletters demonstrate to families that you are a professional in the way you approach your work. Emphasize that policies and tools demonstrate your commitment to fairly and equitably providing safe and high-quality care to all the children in your program. Now, you don't need to do all of these, but certainly pick a few that are most important and implement them as time permits.

The next section, we're looking at is “Classroom Activities.” This is a helpful set of resources to support your work in the classroom.

A quick review shows everything to support your work, starting with ‘Learning and Guidance,’ moving on to ‘Resources, Templates and Tools,’ ‘Classroom Tools’ and ‘Developmentally Appropriate Practices.’ I love this section because it helps to address so many different concepts and challenges that you experience with children. Some of these are really great to use as family handouts as well. And if you have to talk with families about challenging behavior, this is a great how to do it too.

Continuing our exploration of ‘Classroom and Activities,’ scroll all the way to the bottom to check out these resources for ‘Literacy.’ We're going to only look at a couple of these tools today, and we're going to start with ‘Books and Tip Sheets.’

As we look at that page, you'll see it's all organized by age and it's connected to various learning skills. What we love about this is that the tip sheets are already developed. We're going to look at the tip sheet for If You Give A Mouse A Cookie. These are skill building book tips and they come from Mind in the Making. It starts with the tip and then it tells you about the type of skill that the child will develop. For example -- have the child predict what will happen each time the mouse asks for something -- and the skill that they're developing is about being curious and understanding cause and effect. Can you think about how you might create your own tip sheets for some of your favorite books?

Looking back on the “Executive Function Resources” page, you'll see a list of those book lists along with the age groups for which they are helpful.

Next, we're going to take a look at ‘Early Literacy Tips and Tools.’ These resources are actually found in the “Teacher Tools” section. We're going to explore teaching letter recognition and activities for teaching alphabet knowledge. This resource comes from the Rollins Center on Literacy, a wonderful tool, and the ‘Activities for Teaching Alphabet Knowledge’ are really engaging. It starts with what kinds of materials you might need and then how you would model the practice. As you can see, a number of sets of activities and games are included here. What a wonderful set of tools for developing alphabet knowledge in young children.

Time for a little Q&A.

What is the best way to be prepared for an emergency?

Create an emergency readiness plan before you need it.

Looking at the “Emergency Readiness” resource page on TX Child Care Tools, emergency plans are an important tool so you will know what to do in the event an emergency happens while children are in your care. When you develop an emergency plan for your family child care home, you'll find that you really need to think through how to respond in different situations. The resources on this page are organized with ‘Learning and Guidance” and then ‘Resources, Templates and Tools’ which are quite comprehensive.

My first recommendation is that you review ‘Preparing for Emergencies,’ a course from the Early Educator Virtual Lab. This walks you through a variety of scenarios that can occur depending on your location, and it will provide you with some ideas for creating your own emergency plan. All in all, this is a comprehensive learning tool. And I highly recommend that you take the time to look through this before you actually need it.

Looking back on TX Child Care Tools again, exploring the ‘Resources, Templates and Tools’ section. We're going to look at the checklists and the templates available to you here.

This Disaster Checklist is organized and gets your thinking all put together in one place. First, making a plan, what it should include, having a communication strategy. The next section is actually the plan. And in our usual m.o., you're looking at all of this yellow highlighted text that needs to be changed, along with a great table of contents, very comprehensive. And it will really get you thinking through your response, your needs and your procedures. A wonderful set of tools to help you with emergency planning.

One of the most challenging tasks as a family child care home provider is managing meals and nutrition. The resources available include a variety of ‘Learning and Guidance’ tools, starting with the learning course, ‘Staying Healthy; Nutrition, Feeding and Physical Activity.’ It's from the Virtual Lab at Early Educator Central. This course walks you through a variety of topics, including meal components and patterns, food choking hazards, portion control, bottle preparation and bottle feeding techniques and so much more. It's a supportive resource to strengthen your meals and nutrition practices.

Also on this page, you'll take a look at the ‘Cookbooks and Recipes for Family Child Care.’ As you click through this link, it will bring you to “Healthy Menus.” There's a number of great nutrition resources available to you here.

We're going to click through to the ‘Child Nutrition Recipe Box,’ where you'll find a bunch of different recipes that meet CACFP criteria and are designed specifically to yield six servings. Looking at this page in ‘Child Nutrition,’ if you're looking for a particular type of dish, you can filter the results using the categories in the side menu, or you can simply browse page by page.

We're going to click on the Arroz Con Pollo recipe. You'll find the crediting information here and details such as prep time, cook time, ingredients and instructions. You can even create yourself an account to save your favorite recipes, or you can simply print out any of the recipes on demand. This is a wonderful support for family child care homes.

Also back on the “Healthy Menus” page, there's a resource from ‘Team Nutrition Recipes’ put together by the USDA-What's Cooking Mixing Bowl. As you can see here, all of these are organized by type of dish, or take a look at the related content to explore the Multicultural Child Care Recipes or the Recipes For Healthy Kids Cookbooks for homes.

Let's take a look at one side dish. Clicking through, we're going to select baked beans. This is a simple one-page recipe, complete with CACFP crediting information, prep and cooking times, followed by the list of ingredients and directions. I think I'll try some of these with my family, too. How about you?

Moving on to “Tax Tips,” I'd like to start with a few important concepts.

Being Prepared - by having a system to support your recordkeeping needs is job one!

Understanding Basic Deductions and which common business expenses qualify for tax benefits, equally important.

Regular Management - requiring frequently documenting revenue and expenses ensures that you won't lose receipts and miss opportunities for tax benefits.

And finally, Seeking Guidance and Support - TX Child Care Tools provides a number of resources to support you here.

But you should also seek guidance from respected experts and qualified local accountants who specialize in taxes and recordkeeping for family child care homes.

Let's take a look at the resources available to you on TX Child Care Tools. Here we are on the “Tax Tips” page. You'll notice there is a substantial number of items under ‘Learning and Guidance.’ Please take the time to read through some of these. They will really help strengthen your efforts.

Next, the ‘Resources, Templates and Tools.’ We have gone through some of these resources already, so we won't take a lot of time here. But I did want to call out your attention to just a couple of things. First, Tom Copeland's - Family Child Care Record Keeping Guide provides thousands of deductions for family child care providers that you can take as eligible business expenses are really vitally important read. Moving down to the bottom, you'll notice the Monthly Expense Log, The Monthly Attendance, Fees, and Meals Log, and The Monthly Family Child Care Provider Time Tracker. These are important tools that will help you document expenses and other activities so that at the end of the year you'll be organized and structured and all of the information will be ready when you need it.

These are set of great tools to help with your record keeping. I hope you'll take the time to explore them in greater detail.

Putting it all together.

We've looked at a multitude of resources, including Business Basics and Professionalism, Classroom and Activities, Emergency Readiness, Meals and Nutrition and Tax Tips. There are so many more tools available on TX Child Care Tools to help you manage and operate your family child care home. Remember, the resources on TX Child Care Tools can be your source of knowledge and guidance to help you with business challenges like recordkeeping and working with families or freshening up programmatic activities in the classroom. The ideas and resources are endless.

TX Child Care Tools, the essential source for your family, child care, operational and programmatic needs.

What can TX Child Care Tools do for you today?