**Welcome to TX Child Care Tools**

**HR Management Overview.**

**What we'll be sharing in this video are resources to help strengthen your administrative practices for managing employees**

We’ll review an

Employee Handbook template

Best Practices for Employee Discipline and Termination

And the importance of Performance Appraisals. Let's get started.

As a child care professional, you work with staff, families and children. It is critically important that you have policies and procedures in place that help you manage safety, education, nutrition and many other aspects of running a high quality child care program.

Did you know that it is equally important to have policies and procedures that define expectations for your staff? Written processes, policies and procedures are essential to managing staff fairly and equitably across your program. Let's begin with exploring an Employee Handbook and why that is central to good business operation.

Putting together an Employee handbook can be a challenging and complicated body of work. The ‘Employee Handbook’ template on TX Child Care Toolssimplifies the process and helps you quickly and easily get started.

One child care business spent over $20,000 hiring a consultant to create an employee handbook. They could have saved thousands by customizing the ‘Employee Handbook Template’ on TX Child Care Tools.

A well written employee handbook helps to communicate policies and procedures to employees, reduces confusion or misunderstanding about practices and expectations, and provides helpful guidance for supervisors.

One important note to remember before finalizing your employee handbook, consult an experienced employment attorney to be sure that you are preserving your rights as an employer and that any changes are in line with current federal, state or local regulations. Does this sound like something that could be helpful to you? I thought so. Let's dive into this resource now.

Here we are on TX Child Care Tools, “Employee Handbook” resource page, there are a wealth of resources here for you. If you already have an existing handbook, here are 42 individual policies that you can use if you need to, or you'd like to. Or if you'd like to start from scratch and build your own Employee Handbook, here is a template to help you do so. It's available in English and Spanish to help get you started. Let's take a look at that Employee Handbook now.

It begins with instructions and a recommendation that you seek out employment law council to review your finished template to make sure you're meeting local, state and federal requirements. Next, ‘How to Prepare this Handbook for Distribution.’ Anything highlighted in yellow needs to be responded to and changed. Anything with the words, ‘The Organization’ in green, here is a list of instructions on how to search and replace ‘The Organization’ with your business name. Let's see that in practice.

So here we are. We're going to click and delete because we don't want to add our logo right now. Next, we're going to click and we're going to enter the month and year of January 2022. See how it adopts the formatting and eliminates the yellow highlighting? Simple, easy. One, two, three, and you're done.

The ‘Table of Contents’ was organized in a very meaningful manner with policies that meet federal requirements and as an employer, you'll want to have all of these in writing for your employees. One thing that is normally overlooked is an ‘Acknowledgment and Release Form’ which is very important to completing your handbook. We're going to look at that in just a few moments. But right now, let's look at that policy page. Here's an optional page, which you may choose to keep or delete in its entirety. It's really up to you. Lot of customization available to you. Anything with black text is considered very sound and general operating procedure. You may change it, but it doesn't have to be. Next, you'll see anything in yellow boxes are ‘Notes to Employers’ with recommendations and suggestions. Be sure to read those. And when you're done, simply click on the box and delete it and move on to the next item. Simple as that.

Your Employee handbook should help you strengthen your ability to fairly and equitably enforce company practices and procedures. It can also help you fulfill legal requirements for notifying employees about employment policies, schedules, compensation and absences and employee conduct. And finally, let's take a look at that ‘Acknowledgment and Release Form’ that we spoke about a little bit earlier and let you know why that's so important.

Here is the ‘Acknowledgment and Release Form.’ You'll have both an employer copy and an employee copy. You want to get both of those signed so you can keep one and the employee can retain one. This form helps you to formalize that the employee acknowledgement and receipt of your handbook and that they have read and familiarized themselves with your business policies and procedures. If you need to discipline an employee for tardiness or attendance, for example, this document supports your expectations and allows you to follow up with appropriate disciplinary actions.

“Good fences make good neighbors,” said Robert Frost, one of the most celebrated poets in American literature. Your Employee handbook is similar to a fence because it clearly sets the boundaries for staff regarding their behavior, responsibility and accountability for their actions within your program. It's a best practice that can help your business avoid liability, lawsuits and can be a safety net that ensures all employees are treated fairly.

We've reviewed your employee handbook and now we're going to talk about employee discipline and termination.

Your handbook covered day-to-day policies and practices. But what happens when employee performance fails and issues arise and guiding behavior and expectations isn't working? One of your most challenging responsibilities as a manager is knowing when and how to discipline.

Before we dive into the discipline and termination resources. Let's start with a little Q&A.

When you have an employee that is not performing as expected, do you…

Avoid talking with them and hope it will get better?

Or do you take it personally? Thinking your staff member wouldn't be underperforming if you could provide more training, were more hands on or if you weren't such a perfectionist.

Or do you gather more facts and data before talking with them?

And finally, invite them into your office to explore a goals based, success focused conversation?

The correct answer is: “Invite them into your office to explore goals based, success focused conversation.”

As soon as you realize there is an issue, it's important to have a conversation with that staff member. Invite them into your office to initiate a goals based, success focused conversation. Remember, your first goal is to coach for the behavior you desire.

Discipline is a process, starting with the first step of working towards improving performance.

People make mistakes. We're all human and anyone can have an off day. So be kind, professional, factual and fair while you seek to understand what happened in the context of your staff's workday.

Let's explore coaching just a bit more. You'll want to begin with the facts, for example, this might be how you'd approach a teacher who hasn't completed their work appropriately. First, state the specific deficiency. “Janet, I've noticed that the daily schedule is not completed with enough detail. Help me to understand what is causing this change.” Seeking to understand and then next, what can be done to change the behavior is the first step. A helpful set of resources in TX Child Care Toolsyou might want to check out is the ‘Coaching Your Team for Higher Performance,’ webinar recording and tools.

This is a proven method of coaching staff that can help make difficult conversations easy by allowing the staff member to actively define the goal or expectation, the reality for the gap, options or solutions and a way forward that will address the behavior issue. The ‘GROW
Coaching Workbook’ is a great first step to incorporating the GROW approach into everyday conversations, even when there isn't a performance issue.

Unfortunately, it's not possible for all scenarios to go well and be resolved with coaching.

And engaging in numerous conversations without a change in behavior is not a productive or useful path forward.

Sometimes you'll need to take that conversation to the next level, and that's where the ‘Employee Discipline and Termination’ resources come in handy.

An important note. The time to read this essential resource is before you need it!

Let's take a look at TX Child Care Toolsand explore the resources on “Discipline and Termination,” which are available in the “Becoming an HR Exper” section. There's an ‘Employee Discipline and Termination Guide,’ as well as an ‘Employee Written Warning Notice’ form, both of which are available in English and Spanish. Let's dive into that guide right now.

Discipline can be an intimidating process and there can be difficult and awkward conversations with staff. This guide will help walk you through the corrective action process with great information. It starts talking about the differences between firing and layoff, coaching and corrective action, gives you a list of items that might require corrective action. And finally, it gives you a corrective action process that if you have to go down this road, you need to follow a step-by-step process, which includes counseling, a written warning, maybe a second written warning if things don't change and then finally, termination. Each of these steps are outlined in greater detail on the following pages, as you can see here. And then finally, a great sample ‘Warning Notice Form,’ a template for it is included inside the TX Child Care Toolswebsite as well. It shows performance improvement and the date by which performance must improve. Also, there are tips for successful corrective actions and best practices. Most of all, we want to make sure that you’re kind, fair and direct with staff when corrective action is necessary.

Let's review these tips for successful corrective action.

Before proceeding with any corrective action be sure of the facts surrounding the situation.

If possible, rely on your direct observations about the behavior of the employee who's being corrected.

Create a document trail throughout the process of corrective action reduces the risk of later lawsuits.

Prior to taking any disciplinary action, especially termination, review your policies to ensure that all necessary steps have been followed.

And finally, remember to document everything. Keeping notes and written records as proof of your efforts to help guide the employee to appropriate expectations and behaviors, is very important in this process.

We've covered the importance of an ‘Employee Handbook.’

We've explored how to address discipline issues.

Finally, let's turn our focus to Performance Appraisals.

The performance appraisal is a regular review of an employee's job performance and overall contribution to your business. Let's take a look at TX Child Care Toolsand see what resources are available to us there.

Here we are on TX Child Care Tools, “Performance Appraisals” resource page. It's located in the “Becoming an HR Expert” section all the way down at the bottom of the menu. There are five appraisal templates, all geared towards very specific ECE jobs. Let's take a look at the ‘Teacher Appraisal’ template right now.

One of the things I really like about the appraisal structure is the suggestion that you have the employee provide you with their own self appraisal two to three days before you meet with them. Getting the employee to provide you with their perception of performance can be eye opening and useful to candid conversation about their performance. Next, the structure of this document, you'll notice it starts with, before the performance appraisal, what to do and how to conduct the performance appraisal. And then, as you're going through this, you have those step-by-step suggestions to ease that whole process and make it as fluent as possible. You’ll first start by rating the staff member on core competencies, goals, job responsibilities tied directly to their job descriptions. You'll also have opportunity to identify their strengths, improvement opportunities, training needs and any recommended actions and programs that could be helpful to the staff member. A great tool.

Staff need to know how their performance is measuring up to job expectations. The performance appraisal can be a tremendous motivator when done thoughtfully. Performance appraisals should never be used to bring to light serious problems unless the problem has been previously documented and communicated to the staff member. Providing performance feedback should not be limited to an annual process. Current best practices include periodic, even quarterly, one on one meetings that establish an ongoing dialogue to help staff members perform their best every day.

Let's put it all together. We discussed three essential elements to elevating your HR Management practices. Each element was unique, but together they form a powerful framework for high quality business management practices.

As you approach your job as a manager, you may sometimes feel alone in dealing with some of your day-to-day challenges with staff. The resources on TX Child Care Toolscan be your source of knowledge and guidance to help you navigate the complexities of working with staff, dealing with sticky situations, and strengthening your overall approach to managing HR needs.

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What can TX Child Care Toolsdo for you today?