**Child Day Care Management**

**An Introduction**

Day care is the childcare during the day by a person other than the child's parents or legal guardians, typically someone outside the child's immediate family. Day care centres are known in British English as creches. In Australia, day car e is generally called childcare. Babysitting is the occasional temporary care of a child during the absence of his or her parents. Day care usually refers to ongoing care during specific periods, such as the parents' time at work. Day care tends to take a more formal structure, with education, child development, discipline and even preschool falling into the fold of services. Some day care providers care for children from several families at the same time, in the home of the day care worker or in a specialized day care facility. Some employers provide day care for their employees at or near the place of employment. Day care in the child's own home is traditionally provided by a nanny.

**The Role of the Child Care Worker**

Day-care workers provide direct supervision and care for children, but they also handle administrative tasks to keep the service running properly. Record-keeping is essential to document your procedures, business information, finances and information about the children in your care. Understanding the administrative tasks and handling them efficiently helps your day-care run more smoothly.

**Child Care Workers - What They Do**

Childcare workers nurture, teach, and care for children who have not yet entered kindergarten. They also supervise older children before and after school. These workers play an important role in children's development by caring for them when their parents are at work or are away for other reasons or when the parents place their children in care to help them socialize with children their age. In addition to attending to children's health, safety, and nutrition, childcare workers organize activities and implement curricula that stimulate children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth. They help children explore individual interests, develop talents and independence, build self-esteem, learn how to get along with others, and prepare for more formal schooling.

Child care workers generally are classified into three different groups based on where they work: private household workers, who care for children at the children's homes; family child care providers, who care for children in the providers’ homes; and child care workers who work at child care centres, which include Head Start, Early Head Start, full-day and part-day preschool, and other early childhood programs.

Most childcare workers perform a combination of basic care and teaching duties, but most of their time is spent on caregiving activities. However, there is an increasing focus on preparing children aged 3 to 5 years for school. Workers whose primary responsibility is teaching are classified as preschool teachers. However, many basic care activities also are opportunities for children to learn. For example, a worker who shows a child how to tie a shoelace teaches the child while providing for that child's basic needs.

Childcare workers spend most of their day working with children. However, they do maintain contact with parents or guardians through informal meetings or scheduled conferences to discuss each child's progress and needs. Many childcare workers keep records of each child's progress and suggest ways in which parents can stimulate their child's learning and development at home. Some childcare centres and before- and afterschool programs actively recruit parent volunteers to work with the children and participate in administrative decisions and program planning.

Young children learn mainly through playing, solving problems, questioning, and experimenting. Child care workers recognize that fact and capitalize on children's play and other experiences to further their language development (through storytelling and acting games), improve their social skills (by having them work together to build a neighbourhood in a sandbox), and introduce scientific and mathematical concepts (by balancing and counting blocks when building a bridge or mixing colours when painting). Often, a less structured approach, including small-group lessons; one-on-one instruction; and creative activities such as art, dance, and music, is used to teach young children. Childcare workers play a vital role in preparing children to build the skills they will need in school.

Childcare workers in childcare centres, schools, or family childcare homes greet young children as they arrive, help them with their jackets, and select an activity of interest. When caring for infants, they feed and change them. To ensure a well-balanced program, childcare workers prepare daily and long-term schedules of activities. Each day's activities balance individual and group play, as well as quiet time and time for physical activity. Children are given some freedom to participate in activities they are interested in. As children age, childcare workers may provide more guided learning opportunities, particularly in the areas of math and reading.

Concern over school-aged children being home alone before and after school has spurred many parents to seek alternative ways for their children to spend their time constructively. The purpose of before- and after-school programs is to watch over school-aged children during the gap between school hours and the end of their parents' daily work hours. These programs also may operate during the summer and on weekends. Workers in before- and after-school programs may help students with their homework or engage them in extracurricular activities, including field trips, sports, learning about computers, painting, photography, and other subjects. Some childcare workers are responsible for taking children to school in the morning and picking them up from school in the afternoon. Before- and after-school programs may be operated by public school systems, local community centres, or other private organizations.

Helping to keep children healthy is another important part of the job. Childcare workers serve nutritious meals and snacks and teach good eating habits and personal hygiene. They ensure that children have proper rest periods. They identify children who may not feel well, and they may help parents locate programs that will provide basic health services. Childcare workers also watch for children who show signs of emotional or developmental problems. Upon identifying such a child, they discuss the child’s situation with their supervisor and the child's parents. Early identification of children with special needs—such as those with behavioural, emotional, physical, or learning disabilities—is important in improving their future learning ability. Special education teachers often work with preschool children to provide the individual attention they need.

**Work Environment**
Helping children grow, learn, and gain new skills can be very rewarding. The work is sometimes routine, but new activities and challenges mark each day. Childcare can be physically and emotionally taxing as workers constantly stand, walk, bend, stoop, and lift to attend to each child's interests and problems. These workers experienced a larger than average number of work-related injuries or illnesses.
States regulate childcare facilities, the number of children per childcare worker, the qualifications of the staff, and the health and safety of the children. To ensure that children in childcare centres receive proper supervision, State or local regulations may require a certain ratio of workers to children. The ratio varies with the age of the children. For infants (children under 1 year old), childcare workers may be responsible for 3 or 4 children. For toddler's (children 1 to 2 years old), workers may be responsible for 4 to 10 children, and for preschool-aged children (those between 3 and 5 years old), workers may be responsible for 8 to 25 children. However, these regulations vary greatly from State to State. In before- and after-school programs, workers may be responsible for many school-aged children at a time.

**Other Skills Required (Other qualifications)**
Childcare workers must anticipate and prevent problems, deal with disruptive children, provide fair but firm discipline, and be enthusiastic and constantly alert. They must communicate effectively with the children and their parents, as well as with teachers and other childcare workers. Workers should be mature, patient, understanding, and articulate and have energy and physical stamina. Skills in music, art, drama, and storytelling also are important. Self-employed childcare workers must have business sense and management abilities.

**Financial Record -Keeping**

The financial aspect of day-care centres is a key component of the administrative work. You must track all money that comes into the centre from the parents who pay for your services. You also need an accurate record of what you spend on the business to help when you file your taxes, as these purchases are usually tax-deductible. The expense portion is often more extensive. To make the task easier, open a separate bank account for the day-care service. Keep records of all your purchases, services you pay for like insurance and your mileage for driving related to the day-care. File your past tax returns as part of your financial records.

**Child Files**

Day-care providers also need to keep records on each child. The individual files for the kids include information like allergy and medical information, immunization records, medical releases, parent information, contracts for your services and emergency contacts. These files require administrative work when a new child starts at the day-care. Once a year, review the files to ensure they are still up to date. Ask the parents to review the medical information and emergency contacts at that time to see if any changes are necessary.

**Business Records**

You also must keep information on the business itself. Keep track of agreements with any other businesses for services provided, such as snow removal or a lease if your day-care is in a commercial property. You also must handle licensing or registration requirements as part of your administrative duties. The licensing process takes place when you open your business, but you will likely face inspections at various intervals. You must also ensure that your business follows the regulations for maintaining your licensing, which varies by state. Keep records of your own qualifications, training, degrees or certifications. If you have employees, keep a file on each person with background checks, qualifications and contact information.

**Activity Planning**

Day-care providers also spend administrative time planning out the activities and routine for the children at the day-care. A set schedule helps the kids learn to behave while at day care. To keep the kids interested, plan different activities to fall within that schedule. For example, if you normally have an outdoor play time in your schedule, plan an active group game to play with the kids.