Checklist and Questions Consumer Education Strategies

This checklist addresses key issues and topic areas to consider when developing and improving consumer education. How do you communicate the information to parents and providers? Keep the following approaches in mind as you review the checklist.

- Consider multiple messengers and how you might work together to achieve consistency across messengers (state websites, child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies, home visiting programs, pediatric societies, subsidy assistance agencies, quality specialists, employers, libraries, media outlets, United Way and other community organizations and others).
  - Utilize multiple delivery systems (resources in multiple languages, social media, print materials, information hotlines).

Part 1: Consumer Education Issues for Parents and Families

Health and Safety Issues for Parents to Consider When Choosing Infant and Toddler Care

- Are there separate areas for diapering, food preparation, and sleeping?
- Are staff trained on infant and toddler health and safety issues? Are infant and toddler toys and equipment regularly washed and disinfected? Does the program have a sick policy for children and staff?
- Does the program regularly practice evacuation procedures and fire drills? Is there a written plan that defines evacuation procedures?
- Has a licensing agency inspected the program in the last 12 months?
- Do the program staff have satisfactory criminal history clearances?
- Do the program staff have access to information on immunizations, tummy time, safe sleep, and safety and injury prevention?

Responsive and Individual Care Issues for Parents to Consider When Choosing Infant and Toddler Care

- Are staff trained in infant and toddler development?
- Do staff allow infants and toddlers to follow their individual schedules, matched to their biological needs and temperament?
- If a mother is breastfeeding, is the caregiver responsive and the environment accommodating?

1 The questions provided in part 1 summarize questions from Child Care Aware and Zero to Three publications (Child Care Aware, 2009; Lally, 2008; Lerner & Dombro, 2000).
Does the caregiver work in partnership with families regarding breastfeeding and formula feeding, allergy prevention, and introduction of solid foods?

What opportunities does the program provide for parent involvement? Do staff provide parents with daily written reports on their children’s sleep, eating, and diapering?

Does the caregiver recognize each child’s personal rhythms and style and tune into these when planning the pace and time for eating, sleeping, and playing?

Continuity of Care Issues for Parents to Consider When Choosing Infant and Toddler Care

Are the caregivers working with young children retained for a long period of time?

Does the program work toward continuity of care; the practice of keeping caregivers and infants and toddlers together in small groups over the first 3 years of the children’s lives?

Do staff receive vacation and medical leave, medical insurance, and continuing education support?

Part 2: Consumer Education Issues for Providers, Parents, and Systems

Consider the following when addressing the role of child care providers and child care systems in consumer education.

High-Quality Child Care Issues for States, Territories, and Tribes to Communicate to Providers and Families Regarding Infant and Toddler Care

Do you make easily understandable information readily available to providers and parents on central components of high-quality infant and toddler care programs, such as the following:

- Relationship-based care;
- A primary care system using small groups;
- Individualized care and continuity of care;
- Inclusive care for infants and toddlers with special needs; and
- Culturally sensitive care.

Do you provide parents with a checklist or sample questions to help them consider the components in the previous bullets and ask informed questions when searching for a child care program?

Do you provide parents with information on the availability and quality of child care programs serving infants and toddlers in their local area?

If a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) exists in your state or territory and it includes infant and toddler care, do you provide parents with clear guidance on how to use the elements of the system to evaluate the quality of programs?

If your state or territory does not have a QRIS but supports quality in programs through other efforts, such as providing infant and toddler credentials for caregivers, do you provide parents with that information or advise them what to ask about when evaluating a child care program?

Consider adding a section on consumer education and community partners.

Have you developed key messages around the importance of high quality infant and toddler care and worked to ensure that your key stakeholders are using the same key messages?
Have you reviewed available state and local child care data to identify potential access, quality and affordability trends and issues that can be address in part or in full through consumer education efforts?

Do you utilize key stakeholders in the dissemination of consumer education including eligibility workers, CCR&Rs, home visitors, Head Start and child care programs, and local National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) affiliates?

Have you reached out to local hospitals and others that offer prenatal services and asked them to provide new parents with child care consumer education materials?

Have you considered ways to reach families in places they regularly visit including doctors’ offices, schools, libraries, and community events including fairs, parades, and festivals?

Have you engaged funders, local early education collaboratives, legislators, employers, and other policy makers with key messages on the importance of high quality infant and toddler care, relevant research, and data?

Do you leverage your quality improvement efforts, such as a QRIS, by making participation required or offering bonus points for QRIS participation, as part of provider grant opportunities? Have you asked other funders to do the same? This helps to raise community and provider awareness and embeds quality across initiatives.

Does your agency maximize media opportunities? For example, does your agency’s communications office talk about the importance of high quality child care, how to locate a high quality provider, and where to find more information, such as through a CCR&R or the state’s website, during interviews? Often the media will highlight negative child care stories, are you using these opportunities to talk about why quality matters and how you can help families find safe child care?

Social and Behavioral Health Issues for States, Territories, and Tribes to Communicate to Providers and Families Regarding Infant and Toddler Care

Do you work to increase knowledge of parents and providers about policies on social-emotional and behavioral health of infants and toddlers, including early childhood mental health services and positive behavioral intervention models?

Do you work to increase knowledge of providers on relationship-based care, expulsion and suspension policies, and appropriate guidance techniques for infants and toddlers?

Do you have a checklist or sample questions that parents can use for guidance when searching for a child care program?

Consumer Engagement Issues: Service Eligibility and Service Integration Issues for States, Territories, and Tribes to Communicate to Parents and Providers Regarding Infant and Toddler Care

Do you provide information on the availability of child care assistance?

Do you provide information on other financial assistance programs during the referral process, for example Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid, and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)?

Do you provide information on the availability of Early Head Start, home visiting, and nurse family partnership programs in your state or territory?

Do you provide information on your state or territory’s early intervention program during the referral process?

Do you use cross-enrollment strategies to coordinate service delivery and allow families to access all relevant benefits?
Do you provide information or make referrals to parent and family support programs and family resource centers that exist in your state or territory?

Do you coordinate communication delivery to ensure consistency of messaging and information, and improvement of availability of information with relevant partners (for example, CCR&R agencies, quality specialists, subsidy assistance agencies and others)?

**Developmental Screening and Child Development Issues for States, Territories, and Tribes to Communicate to Parents and Providers Regarding Infant and Toddler Care**

- Do you provide information on other state or territory resources, such as early and periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment and developmental screening available through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?
- Do you provide a description of how families or providers can use available resources to obtain developmental screenings for children with potential developmental delays?
- Do you provide information to parents and providers on developmental checklists?
- Do you provide information to parents and providers on developmental surveillance and screening training?
- Do you provide information to parents and providers on steps to take after a screening reveals a need for referrals?
- Do you provide information to parents and providers on age-appropriate milestones, immunizations, and the importance of physical activity, safe sleep, and safety and injury prevention?
- Do you provide information to parents and providers on language and literacy development for infants and toddlers?

**Additional Resources**

Child Care Aware offers printable family resources in English and Spanish on a variety of topics; [http://www.childcareaware.org/resources/printable-materials/](http://www.childcareaware.org/resources/printable-materials/)

**References**


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