



Minimum Requirements

STATEWIDE CHILDREN'S CENTERS PROGRAM

New York State Office of Court Administration • Division of Court Operations
Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution & Court Improvement Programs

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The Children's Centers must provide quality drop-in childcare for children who must be in court in connection with matters involving them or their caregivers and provide families with information, referrals and connections to health, education, child care and other community-based services. The Centers must be in separate, safe and enclosed environments in the court or courts to be served. All Children's Centers must comply with the minimum facility, program and staffing requirements set forth below. However, the program may be provided through a variety of different program models depending upon the needs of the locality, the size of the Center and the number of children to be served.

The minimum program requirements, which all programs must meet, are as follows:

Facility Requirements

1. A minimum of 35 square feet of open activity space (**after** subtracting for furniture) per child shall be provided in the Children's Center. The **minimum** amount of **open** square feet for a new Children's Center will be 245 square feet, which can accommodate a maximum of 7 seven children. Larger spaces may accommodate more children. Areas used for administrative and ancillary purposes, such as staff offices, storage spaces, bathrooms and hallways, entryways and kitchen areas must **not** be used in calculating the 35 square foot per child requirement.
2. The provider shall ensure that the Children's Center is maintained in good repair and kept clean. Room temperature must be maintained at a minimum of 68 degrees.
3. The provider shall ensure that the Children's Center, its toys, furnishings and equipment are safe, clean and age-appropriate for children.
4. The Children's Center should be neatly arranged and well organized. Storage for toys, books and materials must be provided and must allow for appropriate access by children. Storage for children's personal belongings must be provided and there must be enough space between individual storage areas so that items do not touch.

5. There will be an area that is designed to be welcoming to older children thru the use of decorating, furniture and the activities offered.
6. An area of the Children's Center shall be designated for infants and toddlers so that they may be separated from older children for safe floor play.
7. Toilet facilities for children should be provided in the Children's Center whenever practicable or must otherwise be close by, as well as quickly and safely accessible.
8. Changing tables must be separate from eating and play areas and should be installed in the Children's Center whenever practicable or must otherwise be accessible in a nearby bathroom.
9. A desk, telephone and list of emergency phone numbers shall be provided for staff.
10. All Centers will have a panic button or similar device that is tied in to the courthouse security.

Program Requirements

A. Operations

1. The program shall provide, at a minimum, a separate, safe, supervised and enclosed environment for children who must be in court in connection with matters involving them or their caregivers.
2. The Children's Center shall serve children from six weeks thru twelve years of age.
3. Staff and volunteers shall treat all children and caregivers with respect.
4. The Children's Center shall be open and staffed by paid employees and volunteers, as needed, when the court is open. There must be a minimum of two staff persons present and able to accommodate children, for the Center to be open.
5. If the children's Center must be closed when Court is open, the provider shall immediately notify UCS Children's Center office and the Chief Clerk of their court(s).
6. The provider shall operate with regard to the established maximum capacity for the Children's Center as defined under Facility Requirements.
7. The provider shall establish procedures for notifying caregivers who have been turned away from a Children's Center that is operating at maximum

capacity, as to when space becomes available.

8. Providers shall implement a program that meets current National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards for developmentally appropriate practice.
9. Television or video viewing is not recommended. In those instances when all other resources have been exhausted, or if an educational video pertinent to the current theme or lesson plan is to be viewed, it must be utilized for no longer than 20 minutes for young children, and no more than 45 minutes for school age children. At no time will children be required to view the program, or to remain seated during this time. Other choices for children will always be available for children concurrently. At no time shall adult shows (including game, talk shows, soap operas, religious shows, etc.) be on when a child is in the Center.
10. The Children's Center must have a sufficient quantity and variety of furniture, toys, books and materials appropriate to the age of the children served. Toys, books and materials must be selected to promote positive images of different ethnic, racial, cultural and gender groups.
11. Suitable arrangements shall be made for children to sleep and rest comfortably. Children shall not be allowed to rest or sleep directly on the floor. Infants must be placed on their backs for sleep unless a medical condition indicates otherwise.
12. The provider shall set forth in writing the responsibilities of caregivers while their children are in the Children's Center. The rules, written at least in English and Spanish (and other languages as appropriate), must be explained verbally to caregivers when they register their children, and a written copy must also be given to each as well. The rules and responsibilities must also be posted conspicuously in the Children's Center.
13. The provider shall obtain from caregivers upon their entering the Children's Center a written signed statement on a form provided by UCS indicating: the caregivers' name, address, telephone number, relationship to the child, location in court, an emergency contact (preferably someone not accompanying the caregiver; they should be in another physical location and ideally within an hour's drive) with **phone number and area code**, and information on the child, including the child's first and last name, gender, age, special needs, allergies and any recent childhood illness/conditions.
14. The provider shall establish written procedures for, as well as implement, an outreach program for the purpose of maximizing center usage. Outreach strategies shall include, at a minimum, ongoing orientation of appropriate court and non-court personnel; quarterly provider-sponsored events; and staff outreach to caregivers in waiting rooms at least twice per day.

Outreach is the term used to describe the process of walking through court hallways and waiting areas, verbally encouraging caregivers to utilize the Children's Center and handing out pamphlets to other people in the building. Outreach also encompasses informational sessions provided to various outside agencies and groups. Any pamphlets used must be approved by the Children's Center office.

15. The provider shall establish an **Advisory Committee** for the Children's Center that will be appointed every two years to **provide recommendations on programmatic and fiscal operations and to maximize linkages with available community services and entitlement programs**. The Advisory Committee shall:
 - be co-chaired by a representative of the provider agency and an individual elected by the Committee;
 - be comprised of **at least** one parent from the community, a local lawyer or law guardian, and representatives from the county Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, and Health, the court or courts served by the Children's Center, a court officer or rep. from the appropriate security division, the local Head Start Program or local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency;
 - meet quarterly and provide the Children's Center Program office with a written summary of the meeting within ten (10) business days;
 - assist Center staff in determining how best to provide caregivers with information, referrals and connections to needed services; and
 - be presented with the Agency's annual Children's Center Budget proposal before it is approved by the UCS, so that they may provide recommendations and ideas as to meeting the financial needs of the Center.
 - assist Center staff in implementing special UCS initiatives such as literacy initiatives at the Children's Center.
16. The provider agency may seek to establish a "Friends of the Children's Center" organization that may function separately as a fund-raising unit to benefit the Children's Center.
17. The provider shall establish appropriate written confidentiality procedures, which must be submitted for approval to the Children's Center Program office.
18. All Children's Center records must be kept **confidential** and in a secure cabinet, and retained until notification from the Children's Center office. You may not even disclose whether or not a particular child or caregiver has been in the Center.

19. A child may not be taken out of the Center for any reason or length of time unless the caregiver signs the child out. Therefore attorneys, court appointed child advocates or Department of Social Service employees or any others, may not take a child out of the Center without the caregivers signature, unless they were the caregiver that signed the child in.

B. Safety

1. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that a child is released to the proper caregiver who must be the person who brought the child to the Children's Center unless the caregiver designates another person in writing or there is a written and signed court order directing otherwise. If a child must be released to an emergency contact that was designated in writing by the caregiver upon intake, that named person must show photo ID when picking up the child.
2. The provider shall establish written security procedures with the court to ensure that the Center is immediately notified when there is a court-ordered change in custody, remand or removal. A child shall only be released from a Children's Center to the custodian named in a written and signed court order that is presented to the Children's Center staff.
3. If a removal, remand, or change of custody has been ordered, only the party that has been appointed as having custody of the child, and accompanying court officers, will be allowed into the Center. Any communications or goodbyes between the children and the person that signed them in must take place somewhere other than the Children's Center.
4. Staff shall accompany children to and from toilets located outside the Children's Center. Bathrooms used by children must not be able to be locked from the inside.
5. The provider shall take suitable precautions to eliminate conditions that create safety hazards.
6. The Children's Center must have and maintain a fully-stocked first-aid kit which shall include at a minimum the following: First-Aid guide; battery powered flashlight or lantern; assorted bandages and band-aids (include fingertip and knuckle); gauze squares; roll of 2-inch sterile gauze; adhesive tape; child's thermometer (digital ear, forehead strip or axillary); cold compress; antiseptic solution; first aid cream; tongue depressor; sealable plastic bags; scissors; soap; tweezers; cotton balls and swabs; and disposable medical grade gloves; CPR breath barrier; large plastic garbage bag(s), mylar emergency blanket, sugar packets. These items should be stored in a backpack for ease of access in emergency evacuations.

7. The provider shall develop an emergency evacuation plan, in writing, with assistance from the court. The emergency evacuation plan (including meeting place) must be both verbally explained and distributed in writing to all caregivers. The plan and the route must also be posted conspicuously in the Children's Center.
8. There must be twice yearly emergency evacuation drills.
9. All Centers must have walking safety ropes with loops or handholds to assist in the evacuation of children. There must be as many ropes as necessary to provide for the maximum number of children that may be accommodated in a Center.
10. All Centers must have a properly maintained battery powered lantern or flashlight in each room.
11. The Children's Center shall have a minimum of one single-line telephone for general use and emergencies. The Center Staff must have the ability to immediately contact the Children's Center office by phone directly from the Children's Center.
12. The provider shall develop and establish written security procedures for the Children's Center with the assistance of court security personnel.
13. The provider shall complete an Incident/Accident Report (*1) on a format provided by UCS for any injury or illness that occurs in the Children's Center that requires First Aid and/or medical attention, or for an incident that requires the involvement or notification of court officers, security personnel or Child Protective Services. The Incident Report shall be sent by fax and by mail **within 24 hours** to UCS. Any serious injury or illness, or the death of a child, must be reported **immediately**, by phone, to the Children's Center office, **and** followed up with the written report. If such an instance occurs, media representatives may not interview Children's Center Staff and/or volunteers until the UCS and Provider Agency grant approval.

(*1) An "Incident" includes any unusual situation or serious conflict or threat in which your court officers are called to respond/assist in person or on the telephone. "Incident" also includes any CPS reports. An "Accident" includes any injury or illness which occurs in the Children's Center and that requires First Aid and/or medical attention
14. If children are napping or sleeping in a separate room, the door must be open at all times as well as doors to any other rooms. If an adult is unable to stay in the room where a child is sleeping, the room must have a functioning and easily heard electronic monitor. Sleeping children must be checked every fifteen minutes.

15. No visitors are allowed in the Center. Only one family at a time will be admitted for intake or sign out.
16. No interviews or questioning of children may take place within the Children's Center.

C. Health

1. The provider shall establish written procedures for obtaining emergency medical care and for promptly notifying caregivers of a medical emergency involving their child.
2. No child shall remain in a high chair over fifteen minutes, unless the child is eating.
3. No child may be left in a crib or playpen for more than 30 minutes unless they are sleeping.
4. Providers are not required to accept a child who is ill with a contagious disease into the Children's Center. However, a child who is accepted into the Children's Center who has, or develops, symptoms of illness shall be provided with a separate place to rest until the child departs from the Children's Center. If a child becomes ill while in the Center, the caregivers may be notified, but they should not be encouraged or required to pick up their child until their court business is finished. However, if a child becomes seriously ill the caregivers will be notified as soon as possible.
5. Child Exclusion/Inclusion criteria:
 - a. A child shall be excluded if their illness results in a greater need for care than the childcare staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children as determined by the childcare provider;
 - b. A child shall be excluded if they have diarrhea that is not contained by the child's ability to use the toilet, or if in diapers, if it cannot be contained within the diaper (not the result of a nursed baby);
 1. Control of Diarrhea: After the ill child leaves, all surfaces and toys that a child came in contact with must be disinfected.
 - c. A child shall be excluded if they have vomited more than twice and have other symptoms of illness, i.e. fever, stomach pain, extreme lethargy;

1. Fever is defined as axillary (armpit) temperatures over 100 degrees.

- d. A child shall be excluded if they have mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider or health department official determines that the child is noninfectious;
- e. A child shall be excluded if they have purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), until after treatment has been initiated.), often with eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye;
- f. A child shall be excluded if they have Chickenpox until all sores have dried and crusted;
- g. A child shall be excluded if they have Scabies, until after treatment has been completed ;
- h. A child shall be excluded if they have Tuberculosis, until a health care provider or health official state that the child is on appropriate therapy and may attend child care;
- i. A child shall be excluded if they have Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated;
- j. Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever;
- k. Pertussis, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment;
- l. Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling;
- m. Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash;
- n. Rubella, until 6 days after onset of rash;
- o. Hepatitis A, until 1 week after onset of illness, jaundice or as directed by the department of health.

6. Staff Exclusion for illness:

- a. Same as for children, but Child care providers who have herpes cold sores shall 1) Not touch their lesions; 2) Carefully observe hand washing policies; 3) Refrain from kissing or nuzzling infants or children, especially children with dermatitis.

7. Attendance of children with certain disease/illness:

- a. Children who have or develop Fifth disease shall be allowed to attend childcare because they are no longer contagious when signs and symptoms appear.
 - b. Children without fever who have mild symptoms associated with the common cold, sore throat, croup, bronchitis, rhinitis (runny nose), or ear infection shall NOT be denied admission to childcare, sent home from child care, or separated from other children in the facility.
10. Providers shall establish written diapering procedures, including the use of plastic gloves, for diapering children. Procedures should be posted clearly in diaper changing area.
 11. Emergency CPR and choking instructions should be placed above or near cribs and in the kitchen area.
 10. Nutritious snacks shall be provided for children at least at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. All children should be offered snack and beverage. Centers should follow CACFP guidelines regarding snacks. Emergency food should be available for children who must be in the Center thru lunch. Emergency formula and infant food should be available for use with caregiver's permission.
 11. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that all snacks are prepared and stored in a safe and clean manner and that all eating plates, cups and utensils are disposable and safe for children.
 12. Providers shall obtain from caregiver written feeding instructions for infant feedings. All bottles/sippy cups must be labeled with the child's first and last name on removable masking tape.

D. Fire Protection

1. The provider shall take suitable precautions to eliminate conditions that may create a fire hazard and must also provide smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.

E. Cleanliness

1. The provider shall establish and provide Children's Center staff and volunteers with written procedures explaining how, what, and when to clean/sanitize/disinfect to ensure that all rooms, equipment, supplies, toys and furnishings, including cribs and sleeping mats, are kept clean at all times. The provider shall keep the premises free from dampness, odors, vermin and the accumulation of trash.

2. All trash must be disposed of in covered containers that are inaccessible to children.
3. Staff must thoroughly cleanse their hands at the beginning of each day, when they are dirty, after toileting, before and after food handling, after contact with any bodily secretion or fluid and following the changing of any child's diaper.
4. The provider shall be responsible for children's hygiene and toileting needs and shall ensure that children wash their hands when they are dirty, after toileting, before and after food handling, after contact with any bodily secretion or fluid and, for diapered children, after change of diaper.
5. Providers shall keep infants clean and comfortable at all times. Diapers shall be disposed of in a prompt and clean manner and shall be inaccessible to children.
6. The provider shall establish written procedures requiring that universal blood precautions be observed in the Children's Center.

F. Service Connections

1. Providers shall ensure that Centers provide an environment that is information-rich with a ready supply of visible posters, brochures and other information on services and entitlement programs for children and families. Such information must include but not be limited to: WIC, the Food Stamps program, emergency food banks, Head Start, the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, local child care programs, child care subsidies, SSI, Early Intervention, Medicaid and Child Health Plus, etc. Providers shall ensure that Centers have updated contact information on the above services and entitlement programs.
2. Center staff shall identify specific needs of children by reviewing intake information while the caregiver is in court and through observation of children in the Center. Staff must be able to provide caregivers with information and referral information that is current and up-to-date and that directly relates to specific needs of children.
3. Providers shall identify three services or entitlement programs for which staff shall be required to make actual service connections. The service or entitlement programs selected should reflect those areas of greatest need among the children's center population. Staff may choose from but are not limited to: WIC, the Food Stamps program, emergency food banks, Head Start, the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, local child care

programs, child care subsidies, SSI, Early Intervention, Medicaid and Child Health Plus, etc.

4. Children's Center staff may contact caregivers to provide further assistance with services or enrollments if the caregiver has given permission. Staff should also clarify the method, address or phone numbers that shall be used for additional contact. Follow-up should take place within 7-10 days.

G. Staffing Requirements

1. The provider shall establish written personnel policies to ensure that all staff, which shall include both paid employees and volunteers, when hired and during association with the Children's Center, are responsible, in good physical and mental health, of good character and possess suitable personal qualifications for the care of children. Hiring procedures shall include requiring that:
 - a. The applicant authorizes the provider to have access to any records regarding the applicant contained in the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment in accordance with any applicable provisions of law;
 - b. The applicant provide the names, addresses and day-time phone numbers of at least three references, other than relatives, who can attest to the applicant's character, habits and personal qualifications; and
 - c. The applicant provide a sworn statement indicating whether he or she has ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony in New York State or any other jurisdiction. The results of these inquiries must be considered in determining whether to hire an applicant or use an applicant as a volunteer. If the provider has not received a response from the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment to the provider's request for information regarding the applicant, the applicant may be hired or used as a volunteer on an interim basis pending the receipt of a response from the Statewide Central Register. However, no person may be a staff member or volunteer who has been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony against children.
2. A minimum of two **staff** persons shall be on-site at the Children's Center at all times when the Children's Center is open.
 - a. Definition of "Staff": A volunteer may be utilized as a "second staff" person only if he/she has been properly trained and knows and will follow our Policies and Procedures which includes the Minimum Requirements as well as all Center Policies and Emergency Procedures. This volunteer must be able to complete both intake and sign out process, complete and send Incident/Accident Reports, and answer the door and phone. They must be able to perform the same

primary job requirements as a paid assistant teacher; such as cleaning, assisting with general care and activities for children, change diapers, take children to the bathroom and assist regular staff as needed. It is imperative the use of any person to fulfill the “second person” requirement will not negatively impact the number of children that the Center would have been able to accommodate if the regular, paid staff person were present.

3. Competent, sufficient and direct supervision of children in the Children's Center must be provided at all times by persons 18 years of age or older.
4. At least one full-time staff person at the Children’s Center must have a minimum of two years of training and/or experience in early childhood development.
5. Children’s Center staff must be supervised on a regular and ongoing basis by the provider organization. This shall include at a minimum, monthly on-site visits and weekly telephone contacts.
6. The provider shall establish and provide to UCS for approval a comprehensive staffing plan that shall include provisions regarding paid employees, vacation and sick day coverage, volunteers, substitute care and description of ongoing supervision. Any changes in staff or supervisory positions will be reported to the UCS when they occur.
7. The provider shall prohibit smoking and the consumption of alcohol or controlled substances in the Children's Center.
8. A schedule of both required and supplemental staff trainings shall be submitted to the Children’s Center Program office annually. The provider shall establish personnel policies to ensure that staff are adequately trained and supervised. Staff training shall kept current and up-to-date and must include:
 - a. Principles of early childhood development
 - b. The Children's Center policies and procedures
 - c. Child abuse and maltreatment identification and prevention
 - d. First Aid and CPR
 - e. The judicial process
 - f. Annual training provided by UCS
 - g. Training on community resources, services and entitlements for children and families.

9. The provider shall prohibit the use of corporal punishment and shall implement personnel policies that prevent the abuse or maltreatment of children.
10. The provider shall establish written procedures to ensure that any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment are reported to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Any such report requires an incident report to be completed and faxed to the PJCJC Children's Center Program office the same day.
11. The provider shall establish a mechanism by which judges and court personnel can have ongoing communication with the provider regarding Children's Center operations.
12. The provider shall establish a written policy for substitute care in the event of staff illness or emergency.
13. The provider will furnish emergency phone numbers so that appropriate provider agency representatives may be able to be reached when the Children's Center is open, but other agency programs are closed.
14. All staff, including volunteers must be courteous and respectful of caregivers and children at all times.
15. All staff that interacts with children will maintain clean and professional length fingernails to protect children's health and safety.
16. Children's Center staff and their clothing must be clean and free of body odors.
17. Children's Center Staff and volunteers must wear clothing that projects a professional manner and the decorum of the courthouse environment. Jeans, sweatpants, sweatshirts, jogging/running suits, and overly casual t-shirts are not acceptable.