

KIDBIZ NEWSLETTER
February 2012

A Newsletter for Early Childhood & Child Care Professionals

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Hitting the home stretch on my tea party book! Making it really hard to work on anything else, I completely understand why writers go to a cabin or an island to write their books, it would be so great to just immerse in it and not come up for air until it's done! But, there is other work to do. One of those jobs is writing media releases for providers who earn their NAFCC Accreditation. I volunteered to do this about 2 years ago and it's been very rewarding to finally see good stories about hard working providers make it into the paper. Thinking of working on your Accreditation status with NAFCC or NAEYC? This month's article will get you on the right track!

*Hug a kid for me!
Patricia*

Being the Best You Can Be: Earning National Accreditation

When I was new to the field of family child care, I joined a support group that was filled with providers who had joined national organizations and received national accreditation. You would think this would have inspired me to follow suit, but at the time, I just couldn't find a reason to spend so much money on a piece of paper. I knew I was offering high quality care, I didn't feel I needed the validation. I was pretty sure my daycare parents wouldn't even know what it meant, so why bother with all the paper work? I was full, had a pretty decent wage, and felt appreciated by the parents. As a business choice, it didn't appear cost effective.

What I have learned since those early days is that I was making the biggest mistake a provider can make for their business with almost every decision I made: I was thinking short-term. Successful business people know that the difference between them and the companies that fail in the first few years is that they have a plan. Real success comes from making long-term goals and making decisions based on the long-term effect on the business. This is true in child care as well.

When you accept the first parent looking for care based on the short-term need of having an opening, the long-term effect can be a difficult relationship with parents who do not hold the same priorities as you, and possibly a difficult ending to the relationship that results in bad feelings, bad word-of-mouth, and loss of income. When you purchase cheap toys at garage sales consistently because of the short-term need of a tight budget, the long-term effect can be replacing broken toys frequently which ultimately increases your expenses. Not spending time and money on trainings or accreditations due to the perceived lack of immediate benefit, leads to the long-term effect of a program without improvements and loss of a professional image, and possible burn-out.

So, we need to think long-term. Find the parents that you can work with for years. Put that \$10 week for garage sale money in a jar and in a couple months buy a sturdy puppet stand or book display from the school supply store. Attend state and national conferences to get your training, earn an accreditation, and build a professional image that lets you fill openings years in advance and have the income and appreciation you deserve.

Both the National Family Child Care Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children have accreditations. The process is not nearly as daunting as the rumors make it – especially if you know you have been striving for high quality all along. During the process you are given information to use to assess your program, your environment and your credentials. Going through this checklist you will find validation for the areas that you have accomplished high quality, discover areas you had not considered that you can improve in, and come to a full understanding of how being accredited represents that you have the entire package – THAT'S what professionalism is all about. The package. Getting parents to see you as a professional, treat you as one, pay you as one, means letting them know you have not left anything to chance. You have planned for, attained, and continue to improve in every area of your business – the program, the environment, the expertise of the teacher (whether it's just you or an entire staff). Accreditation helps you to be sure you didn't miss something. It's very reassuring, and empowering, to know that you have left no stone unturned and that every corner of your business shines with quality!

The first obstacle for child care business owners tends to be the daunting task of meeting "all those standards!" As I mentioned earlier, if you are already striving to offer quality care (which I'm sure you are!) then the process is actually very validating. When I first went through accreditation with NAFCC, I went through every item in their booklet and found only 3 of their standards that I had missed – putting "real" items in my kitchen area, creating a community resource list for my daycare families, and replacing my torn

sand box cover. My biggest obstacle was in having enough training hours – I was only a couple hours short of their total needed, but since I attend a conference almost every weekend as the speaker, it was very difficult to also be the participant! Most of my hours were as a presenter. Luckily, I was booked at a conference each weekend in the month ahead and managed to get in as a participant between my own sessions and make up the time. I know that for some, the accreditation process can go quickly, and for others it may take a year or more. I am sure that if I had undergone the process in my first years of child care that it would have taken much longer. But instead of looking at it as a long list of changes to make and a hassle, consider this: if you are planning to continue to provide quality care this also means constantly improving and updating, which means you will most likely make these changes anyway on your own! Why not receive recognition for all your work? And why wait? Wouldn't you rather know you are doing all you can to give the children in your care the best foundation possible for their future?

The next obstacle is often the cost. It can be expensive, even if your only cost is the accreditation itself. But if there are many changes to make, depending on their cost, or how many hours of training you need to start obtaining, these can all add up. Will it be worth it in the end? The answer is: yes!

Again, we need to look at this as a long-term investment in your business. By reaching these standards of quality early on, you will be establishing your business in the community as a leader in the child care field. Our business is one that very much can be a “get what you pay for” thing. When you offer high standards – you will be able to raise your fees to reflect this. Parents DO appreciate high quality and are willing to pay more to get it. With the rising state standards for subsidized care it is quickly becoming imperative that businesses achieve accreditation in order to qualify for reimbursements and be able to serve this part of the parent population. Many states have a QRIS that also supports accreditation as a higher level in the rating system. When you have the reputation for being high quality, your business will flourish. Parents will be coming to you rather than you having to advertise to find them. Accreditation ensures that you are practicing what you are advertising – and this is what seals the deal for getting great word of mouth advertising from parents (aka: “pure gold” in our business!)

I often discuss “educating parents.” In receiving an accreditation this is vital to its success. Let the parents know the moment you are beginning the process, what it entails and when it will be completed. Help them to understand its importance and what it represents. Let them know the changes you will be making and why. And in the end – include them in the celebration! Parents who fully understand the honor of accreditation will also understand that it deserves to be reflected in your fees and benefits package. It takes money to buy equipment and training and since you will be showing the parents that by paying more they will also be getting more it will not be a difficult transition. While accreditation can give you the right to raise rates – it's more than about the money. Even if you don't raise rates, it will help your business in other ways. Most of all, it will establish your reputation as a professional in the field. This level of respect not only brings families to your door and keeps openings a distant worry, but helps build a foundation for lasting, successful, relationships with parents. The more respect they

have for what you do when they first meet you, the higher the level can rise as they get to experience working with you. This type of respect and appreciation can make the difference between being open a few years, and eluding burn-out altogether.

Start thinking long-term. You want the reputation of providing high quality care for years to come, not just this year. Establish your solid reputation through accreditation! Forget the excuses; here are five great reasons to call today to get started:

1. Increase the quality of care you provide and the positive impact you have on a child's future.
2. Build your reputation, bringing parents to your door.
3. Qualify for higher levels of reimbursements or grants from your state.
4. Increase the level of respect from parents and improve these relationships.
5. Increase your income through higher rates that reflect the new quality level, more consistency with filling openings, and longer lasting relationships with enrolled families.

And if that's not enough, here's what I think is the most important reason:

-Raise your self esteem. You'll be proud to have earned this accomplishment.

Become a part of something bigger. Join the ranks of child care businesses that have become the leaders of the field and earn your accreditation this year.

For more information on getting your business nationally accredited contact:
www.nfcca.org or www.naeyc.org today!

If you are working towards your accreditation and find yourself short on training hours, check out my teleseminar workshops! You get a CD recording of a one hour workshop with handouts and a training certificate. Check out KIDBIZ Teleseminars on my website at www.patriciadischler.com.

Tips and Tricks

Things to do with a stick:

-Find sticks that vary in length, from about 6 inches long, to a couple of feet, but small in diameter (1/2 – 1 inch). Stick the sticks into the ground, about a foot apart, in either a straight line or in a circle large enough for a few children to get inside of. Give the children paints and allow them to paint designs on the sticks. This strengthens their sense of creativity by teaching functional freedom – using objects in non-tradition ways. The result is a beautiful standing art display that can become interactive – a fort, a fence for pretend animals, etc.

-Fishing Poles – find sticks that are at least 4 feet long, tie a string on the end that is 4-6 feet long. Tie a bean bag fish to the end of the line. Have children pretend to go fishing off their slide or play structure. Or – tie a magnet wand to the end. Make paper fish, cover with clear Contact paper, and stick a magnet strip onto it. Scatter the fish in a kiddie pool and let the kids go fishing!

-Walking stick – Find a sturdy stick about the same size as the child. Give the child paints to decorate the stick, strings to tie onto one end and other items to decorate it as their own. Take with you on your next hike!

-Fairy Gardens – collect tiny sticks, about the size of a birthday candle. Have the children stick them into the ground very close together in straight lines to create a square – a “fence” for the garden. Then have the child collect other small items from nature to put in the garden such as small nuts, flowers, leaves, or even smaller sticks. Have them line up the items in to rows. They now have their own Fairy Garden!

For more great tips, check out my booklet: “101 Tips & Tricks: Ideas to make your job easier, save you money and save you time in your child care business! At: www.patriciadischler.com/books.htm.

If you have some great tips to share, send them to: contact@patriciadischler.com to be included in the next newsletter!

IN THE NEWS

Kauai Child Care Conference 2012 – Don’t miss this opportunity to combine a fantastic vacation with some quality training! Plan now to attend August 9-11 at the beautiful Kauai Beach Resort in Lihue, Hawaii. My good friend Marva Lyons organizes this amazing conference each year, to learn more contact her at 510-521-3997 or happymarva57@yahoo.com.

Start now to plan to attend the 2012 NAFCC Conference –

Join me in Atlanta, Georgia! Easy layaway plan available, check it out at: www.nafcc.org. We just booked a FABULOUS keynoter you won’t want to miss – Jason Kotecki who will cure every attendee of their “Adultitis” and get you re-energized to continue the important work you do. Check him out now here, www.KimandJason.com, read of his books, and I’ll see you in Atlanta!

THIS MONTH’S SALE ITEMS

March Sale Item: KIDBIZ Teleseminar Series – 40% Off!

Over 7 hours of training in one set! This audio CD set includes one hour trainings, along with the handouts and training certificate for the following topics: Marketing & Interviews, Professional Image, Holiday Tips & Tricks, Parents Can't Hear Me, From Braggers to Biters, Your Space/Their Space, and Creating a Parent Handbook. Get your training in the comfort of your home for about \$10 per hour!

Regular Price: \$120 Sale Price: \$72

April Sale Item: No Regrets Pregnancy Counseling Booklet Packs – 20% Off

This booklet is an excerpt from my adoption book, *Because I Loved You*, including the chapters on how to make a decision in an unplanned pregnancy you can live with without regrets. It's a low cost way to get the information in the book into the hands of everyone who comes to your agency. Stock up now, these only go on sale once a year!

Regular Price: \$40 for a set of 10 Sale Price: \$32 for a set of 10

Order yours today at: www.patriciadischler.com or www.KIDBIZResources.com!

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 13-14, 2012

Anchorage, Alaska

Alaska Family Child Care Association State Conference

2 Lunch Keynotes: Teaching Outside the Box

4 Workshops each day: To be announced

For more information visit: www.alaskafcca.org

April 21, 2012

Springfield, Illinois

Provider Appreciation Brunch

Keynote: Teaching Outside the Box

For more information visit: www.cccconnect.org

April 28, 2012

Oshkosh, Wisconsin

CCR&R Provider Training

Full Day Training, topics:

Creating an Inspirational Child Care Environment

Professionalism

NAFCC Accreditation

For more information contact Lisa Smith, 920-886-1211.

May 4 & 5th, 2012

Family Child Care Professionals of South Dakota State Conference

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Keynotes: *Teaching Outside the Box*, *Professionalism*

Workshops: *Teaching the 3 Cs, Controlling the Crazyies, Crazy for Kids*
For more information visit: www.sdchildcare.org

May 10-12, 2012

Wisconsin Family Child Care Association State Conference
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Preconference Day Training: *NAFCC Accreditation*

Workshops: *Marketing & Interviews, Teaching the 3 Cs, The Parents Can't Hear Me!*

For more information visit: www.wisconsinfamilychildcare.org

May 19, 2012

Providers Empowering Providers (PEP) Conference
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Keynote: *Crazy for Kids*

Workshops: *Filling Openings vs. Finding Partners, Creating a Parent Handbook, The Parents Can't Hear Me!*

- NEW! I've been doing school bookings for awhile, but getting more organized with it because it's something I love to do! To learn more about bringing me to your child's school to inspire the emerging writers there check out www.patriciadischler.com/school.htm
- If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.htm.

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Patricia Dischler

Author, *Teaching the 3 Cs, From Babysitter to Business Owner, Because I Loved You, Tips and Tricks*
and *The Patty Cake Kids & The Lost Imagination Cap*.

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