Michigan Child Care Matters

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Technology edition of the Michigan Child Care Matters (MCCM) newsletter. This MCCM edition includes articles about the use of technology in your child care, such as renewing your license online, social media, programming, training, and making paperwork easier. Some of the articles are targeted for centers, some for homes and some for both centers and homes. The Editorial Staff of MCCM hope this newsletter is a helpful resource for you in keeping your home and center as safe as it can be for the children in your care. If you have questions about any of the rules or topics covered in this newsletter, please reach out to your licensing consultant for guidance.

Facebook/Social Media and Family Communication Policy

Janeiro Byrd, Licensing Consultant
Wayne County

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Effective communication is critical in every aspect of a person's life. Communication skills influence relationships in families, children, friends and at work. Good communication helps build relationships in good times, and mend relationships in difficult times. These skills include speaking as well as listening and nonverbal communication.

Digital communication in child care has become more accessible to families. Child care providers have become creative in reaching out to current and prospective families. Facebook/social media is an easy and fast way to share information that pertains to your program. It allows child care providers to showcase their business and everything they have to offer. Families who are currently enrolled in child care programs are able to stay in touch with their child's classroom throughout the day using various technology.

Although, there are pros to social media in child care, there are also cons. The pros and cons of utilizing social media in child care programs are mixed. Child care programs use social media to advertise their business for prospective families. They also use social media to connect and communicate with their current families, so families can view what their children are doing while they are away from them. The downside to social media in child care programs is the negative images that people can post. This may be due to disgruntled families or staff who are no longer with the child care program.

Your customers are already talking about you on social media, whether or not you are there to respond. If you and your team are on the ball, you can pick up on important social posts about your program to highlight the positive and address the negative before it turns into a major issue. Is someone saying something about your business that's not true? Be sure to share your side of the story in a polite, professional way. Send plenty of thanks and draw attention to those who are saying positive kind words.

There are now more than 3 billion people using social networks across the globe. Social media is a fast, inexpensive, and effective way to reach almost half the world's population. Offer great value in the chat, rather than being too promotional. Just make sure your website address is included in all of your social media profiles so that people who want to learn more about you can do so with one easy click. Even better, use a pinned post to highlight a landing page on your website that's relevant to the chat.

Social accounts are a critical part of a child care program sales funnel, the process through which a new contact becomes a customer. As the number of people using social media continues to grow and social sales tools evolve, social networks will become increasingly important for product search and ecommerce. Using social media for your business allows child care programs to stay on top of sentiment analysis so they can protect their brand reputation.

As part of most child care programs, employees and families must acknowledge they have received a handbook that outlines their policies. Best practice is for families to give permission to allow their child to appear in social media posts, photos and newsletters. Staff should not be allowed to take pictures or post photos of children to social media. Staff must acknowledge that they will not share and distribute information regarding their employer during or after separation of employment.

Family communication is very important in child care. To save on costs, several child care programs have gone or are going paperless. Parents want their children in a safe learning and nurturing environment. Parents can watch their children on their phones, computers and tablets. There are several types of software that is being utilized in child care programs. The software allows families to stay engaged by providing real-time photos, video, and text updates to parents. Families are also able to view their child's daily reports, which includes their meals, naps, activities and notes regarding their day.

How to renew your license online and what do you need to send to licensing

Thanh Biehl, Child Care Licensing Consultant
Livingston County

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There are three license statuses: Original, regular and provisional. How long is the license valid for and when is a license renewal required?

- Once an original application and all supporting documents have been submitted to the department, an initial inspection is completed in order to determine that the applicant meets the requirements of the rules. The licensing consultant will make a determination in regard to licensure. If the recommendation is to issue a license then an original license is issued. An original license expires six months from the date of issuance. After six months, a renewal inspection will be conducted by your licensing consultant. If the center or home is in compliance with the rules, a regular license will be issued.

- A regular license is valid for two years and expires from when the previous license was issued.

- A provisional license may change the date when a renewal inspection is due. A provisional license may be issued when there are violation(s) of the licensing rules and/or act, the licensee is temporarily unable, but willing, to comply, and an acceptable corrective action plan has been submitted. A provisional license expires exactly six months from the date of issuance. The licensing consultant will complete a renewal inspection. If a regular license is recommended then the status will change from provisional to regular. A renewal inspection will be completed every two years from that date.

"Renewal information will be sent three months before the expiration date of your license."

If your license is expiring soon and you're not sure what to do, where to go or what is required for the renewal process, this article will guide you.

Renewal information will be sent three months before the expiration date of your license. There are two ways to renew your child care license. You may choose to submit an online renewal application and fee or complete a paper application and mail it with the fee to the department.

If you choose to renew your license online, go to www.michigan.gov/michildcare. A MiLogin account, Internet Explorer, credit card or a debit card are required to complete the online renewal application. Please note, Discover or American Express Cards are not accepted.

Once you've logged in to the MiLogin, complete the child care application and supplemental application. It is important that you save and print a copy of the application before completing the online application and hitting the submit button. A copy of the child care application, supplemental application and required documents should be sent to your consultant. A list of the required documents is listed below in the Application Materials Checklist section. If you did not save a copy, then a paper copy of the application should be completed and sent to your consultant.

Complete the online renewal application as soon as possible, but **no later than 45 days prior to the expiration date** of your license. Failure to return the application and renewal fee prior to the expiration of your license will result in the closure of your license. However, do not submit an online renewal application until after you receive the renewal information in the mail. If you submit it prior to receiving the renewal information in the mail, your application will not be entered into the licensing database properly and will have to be resubmitted.

"Complete the online renewal application as soon as possible, but no later than 45 days prior to the expiration date."

Online Renewal Application Steps:

Go to www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

Click on Application – Apply or Renew.

Click on the applicable link. (Family and Group Child Care Home Application - Renewal or Child Care Center Application - Renewal)

Create an account/ Log in to MiLogin.

Complete the child care application and supplemental application.

Submit fee.

Save/ Print a copy of the child care application and supplemental application.

Send the child care application, supplemental application and all required documents to your consultant.

If you choose not to renew your license online, a completed paper application, fee and required documents should be mailed to:

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Bureau of Community and Health Systems
P.O. Box 30664
Lansing, MI 48909-88164

The application and required documents should be sent to the department as soon as possible, but **no later than 45 days prior to the expiration date** of your license. If your packet is incomplete, it will hold up the renewal process.

For all renewal applications, you are required to submit additional information as part of your renewal application. Forms not included in the online application packet are available on the licensing website at www.michigan.gov/michildcare-forms.

Family and Group Child Care Homes Application Materials Checklist

The following must be returned to licensing:

- Child Care Application.
- Supplemental Application Information.
- A copy of a valid driver license or valid state or federal government issued identification card for the licensee(s).
- Medical Clearance Request. The medical clearance request form is required for the licensee, any child care staff members and child care assistants. The medical clearance form should be signed by a physician. The Patient Information section must be completed before submitting the form to the physician.
- Proof of a current TB test results for any child care staff members, child care assistants, and any new persons over 14 years of age residing in your home who have not previously submitted documentation.
Proof of valid infant/child/adult CPR and first aid training for you, any child care staff members, and child care assistants. (See **www.michigan.gov/michildcare** for a list of approved organizations for CPR and first aid training.)
- Proof of Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases including immunizations training for any child care staff members and child care assistants, if not previously provided. (Family and Group homes must have this information on file at the facility.)
- Proof of inspection and approval of your heating system (includes wood-burning stoves and any other permanently installed heating devices) **and** fuel-fired water heater. The heating system inspections are due every four years Note: Electric heat does not require an inspection. Furnaces, other flame or heat-producing equipment used to heat the home when children are in care **and** fuel-fired water heaters must be inspected by one of the following entities:
    - ο A licensed heating contractor for a fuel-fired furnace.
    - ο A licensed heating contractor or licensed plumbing contractor for a fuel-fired water heater.
    - ο A mechanical inspector for the local jurisdiction or licensed mechanical inspector for a wood stove or other solid fuel appliance.
    - ο A boiler inspector from Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth or an individual who has both a boiler license and a mechanical contractor for boilers.
    - ο An open- air wood boiler need only one inspection. A copy of the initial installation inspection completed by a mechanical inspector is all that is required. A renewal in-

o   Radon test is due every four years at renewal.
o   The Training Record form and verification of 10 clock hours of training per year by the licensee and 5 clock hours of training per year by each child care staff member and child care assistant. Note: Annual training is assessed by the calendar year. Training for family homes and group homes must be documented on the BCAL-4590 and verification must be available on-site.
o   Online payment of the fee or a check or money order payable to the State of Michigan if submitting a paper renewal application. The renewal fee is $25 for family homes and $50 for group homes.

Child Care Centers Application Materials Checklist

The following must be returned to licensing:

• Child Care Application.
• Supplemental Information Child Care Center.
• A copy of a valid driver license or valid state or federal government issued identification card for the licensee and/or licensee designee.
• Electronic fingerprint clearance for applicant, each partner, officer, or manager of a child care center using the Licensing Record Clearance if not previously completed for that person.
• Child Care Center Designee, if applicable and if not previously completed.
• Staffing Plan.
• No change in Building Construction Declaration. Note: If you made changes to your building, you cannot use this form. Please contact your licensing consultant for instructions.
• Self-Certification of Transportation Rules, if applicable. Note: This form is not required if transportation is provided in a school bus by a school or public transportation.
• Inspection of fuel-fired furnace by a licensed heating contractor.
• Inspection of fuel-fired water heater by a licensed heating contractor or licensed plumbing contractor.
Inspection of boiler must be inspected by a boiler inspector from LARA or an individual who has both a boiler license and a mechanical contractor license. The inspection is required, but sending the documentation to the consultant is not required.
• Documentation of fire safety.
  o   If your program is located in a school building, complete the School-Building Fire Inspection Certification.
  o   If your program is not located in a school building, you will need to do one of the following:
    ◊   Request a fire safety inspection of your facility if it has been more than four years since the last fire safety inspection by a Qualified Fire Safety Inspectors.
    ◊   Complete the No Change in Building Construction Declaration form if there has not been any new construction, remodeling, additions or renovations made to the center since the most recent fire safety inspection. Note: If there has been any new construction, remodeling, additions or renovations, you must obtain a fire safety inspection.

- Environmental Health Inspection Request. Only if you have any of the following:
  - You have private well water and/or septic system.
  - You provide food service.
- Online payment of the fee or a check or money order payable to the State of Michigan if submitting a paper renewal application. The renewal fees are as follows:

LICENSE CAPACITY	RENEWAL FEE
1 - 20 Children	$75.00
21 - 50 Children	$100.00
51 - 100 Children	$125.00
101+ Children	$150.00

Once all required application materials have been submitted, your licensing consultant will conduct an unannounced inspection of your home or center to assess compliance with the licensing rules. If you still have questions regarding the renewal application process, please contact your child care licensing consultant. If you have specific online application questions, please call the Help Desk (517) 335-0505.

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Internet Safety for Children

Erika Bigelow, Division Director

Using the computer whether for research, playing games or browsing through social media sites, has become a common practice for children. The online experiences for the children can be both productive and fun; however, they can also lead to trouble. There are some safety facts that you can take to help make sure children are making good choices while online.

One safety fact to reinforce with children is that they cannot retract something once they post it. Children should be reminded that once they post a picture on Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook or even through a text, they have no control over what happens to it or who ultimately receives it. Many children enjoy posting "selfies" and need to be reminded that their picture should always be appropriate.

In addition to appropriate pictures posted on the internet, children should also be reminded that what they post in a conversation with others cannot be retracted.

Also, as with pictures, once they post their statement, they have no control over whether that post is forwarded or shared with others. Children should be reminded to always be cautious in their conversations with others. You should also reinforce that they should always know the person with whom they are conversing or who they accept as friends or followers.

Children may use the internet to conduct research for school papers or projects. You can help them brainstorm appropriate websites to browse. Teach them not to click on a link that they do not understand or does not seem appropriate. Children may accidentally click on a link that will take them to adult sites, obscene material or unsafe chat rooms where strangers are waiting to "talk" with the them.

Before children use an electronic device, verify that the privacy settings are turned on. You may also want to install parental controls as another protection. These methods may be helpful in keeping children safe on the internet being present and supervising the children when they are online is another way to help ensure that children are making good, safe choices while online.

"McGruff Safe Kids" states on their website the following 10 safety tips for children when using the internet:

Here are some safety tips to remember when you are using the internet:

- *Don't give anyone your password, name, address, the name of your school or any information about your family.*
- *Don't talk to strangers on the Internet*
- *Don't agree to meet anyone in person that you've met online*
- *Don't fill in a profile that asks for your name and address*
- *Don't visit a chat room without an adult's / parent's permission*
- *Don't stay online if you see something you think your parents won't like*
- *Don't post pictures of yourself without your parents' permission*
- *Do not download or install anything on your computer without your parents' permission*
- *If you have any questions about something you read, ask your parent or guardian*
- *If you are talking to someone online and they make you uncomfortable, remember you don't have to talk back to them*

The Department of Justice website provides the following internet safety link as a resource:

http://www.connectsafely.org/safety-tips-advice/

Cyberbullying is another concern of children using the internet. It has become more rampant and is occurring more often with teenagers than other age groups. The Internet Safety 101 website defines cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm (i.e., harassing, humiliating, or threatening text or images) inflicted through the Internet, interactive technologies, or mobile phones." Through cyberbullying, the bully can remain anonymous and is able to gossip, harass, threaten, and even stalk someone through post, instant messages or statements in chat room.

It is important to talk to children about cyberbullying and help them recognize the signs of it. Encourage them to talk to their parents, you, or another trusted adult if they believe they are a target of bullying. There are some simple steps children can take if they are being bullied.

- They can block or delete the bully from their social media sites.
- They can change their passwords, email addresses and usernames to their sites if they believe someone hacked their profile or continually sends them messages.
- Teach children not to sdshare their passwords.
- Limit which sites children post personal information.
- Limit who children have as contacts on their sites.
- Report the problem to the service provider.
- Don't respond to the bully.

Computers and the internet can be fun, productive and educational for children. The internet is an amazing resource for children to use. With awareness, simple safety measures, and talking with children, adults may be able to better manage internet risks to children.

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MiRegistry

Robin Zeiter, Professional Development Specialist
Michigan Department of Education

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What is MiRegistry?
MiRegistry is a statewide data system for child care providers, program directors, and other early childhood and out of school time professionals to track and verify employment, credentials, training and educational accomplishments.

What is MiRegistry Membership?
MiRegistry membership involves the review and verification of an individual's training, credential and education information and placement on the career pathway: https://www.miregistry.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Career_Pathway.pdf.

Individuals can create an account, enter information about their employment, credentials, training and education into the system; upload documentation such as copies of:

- Current CPR and First Aid Cards
- CDA , MISAYD or other credentials
- Training certificates for training completed outside of MiRegistry, including documentation of the required health and safety training. If completed in MiRegistry, no additional documentation is needed. (**Note:** Training registered for and completed in MiRegistry shows as verified training immediately on an individual's training page and learning record, once the trainer verifies attendance. No additional documentation is needed.)

MiRegistry staff will review and verify information which will live in an individual's profile as verified staff qualification information. Membership processing usually takes up to six weeks and the timeline begins on the date documentation is received. **Note: MiRegistry is experiencing an extremely large number of membership applications and it is expected that membership processing time will exceed six weeks.** The best way to monitor membership application processing is to visit the website www.miregistry.org. There is an application processing date on the home page.

What if an individual has completed college coursework or a degree?
To add college coursework or a college degree to MiRegistry, an **official transcript** is required. Official transcripts must be mailed or emailed, directly from the college, to MiRegistry. Address and email can be found below.

Where can someone find more information about MiRegistry membership?
Check out the MiRegistry Membership Toolkit for the steps to becoming a member, tips for submitting documentation, and resources to support program directors and organization profile owners. View the MiRegistry Membership Toolkit here: https://www.miregistry.org/membership-toolkit. There is also a video: Becoming a MiRegistry Member that is an excellent resource.

Why is MiRegistry important?

- **Licensing Consultants and Managers have access to MiRegistry**
  Licensing can view staff training and qualifications by license number and/or by individual. New licensing rules specifically indicate verification of professional development can be maintained online in MiRegistry.

- **Program Director/Administrator Management of Staff Qualifications and Professional Development**
  MiRegistry provides a staff report that allows program administrators to manage staff qualifications and professional development through verified employment with the licensed program/organization. A director can track staff training and view credentials in one place.

Great Start to Quality (GSQ)

MiRegistry **membership** is required for all staff of programs participating in Great Start to Quality. Staff qualification and professional development information that is **verified in MiRegistry** is used to support the GSQ Self-Assessment Survey (SAS).

Professionalism and Workforce Data

Individuals serving children, youth and their families in quality programs are professionals and should be recognized as such. A workforce registry gathers that very important qualification information (formal education, professional development, and credentials), wage, retention, and employment information. This information speaks to the caliber of individual that is part of this workforce and can help inform state level policies to support the workforce.

What else is good to know about MiRegistry?
MiRegistry houses a trainer and training approval system and offers a training calendar that includes over 3200 different professional development opportunities across the state.

How do I contact MiRegistry?
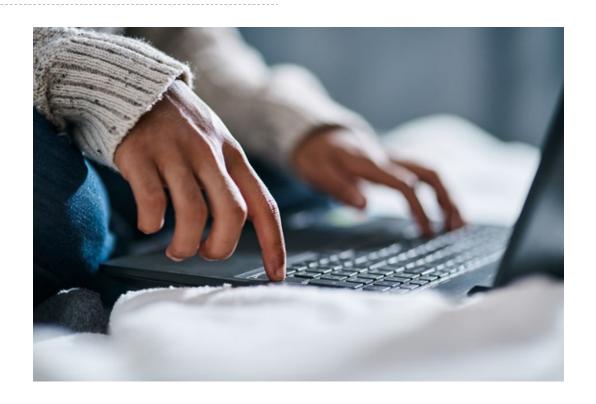Email: support@miregistry.org
Fax: 1-888-825-9995

Mail: MiRegistry
        2908 Marketplace Drive
        Suite 103
         Fitchburg, WI 53719

miregistry

Center Programming – sleeping, resting and supervision

Center programs must be planned to provide a flexible balance of:

Quiet and active experiences.

Children under 3 years of age shall be provided opportunities to rest regardless of the number of hours in care.

Naptime or quiet time must be provided when children under school-age (3 – 5 years) are in attendance 5 or more continuous hours per day.

Young children benefit from scheduled periods of rest. This rest may take the form of actual napping or a quiet time. There is not a specific amount of time required for sleeping or resting.

For children under school age who do not sleep at rest time, quiet activities must be provided such as reading books or putting puzzles together.

While naptime or quiet time is required, not all children will fall asleep. In these situations, quiet activities must be provided such as looking at books, putting together puzzles, etc. It is best practice to have a separate area away from sleeping children where children can engage in quiet activities. Centers may wish to develop a naptime/quiet time policy and share it with parents.

Appropriate supervision of children must occur at all times, whether the children are sleeping or engaging in quiet activities. Appropriate supervision includes remaining in child care staff member to child ratios at all times:

Age	Child care staff member to child ratios	Group Size
Preschoolers, 30 months of age until 3 years of age	1 to 8	16
Preschoolers, 3 years of age until 4 years of age	1 to 10	30
Preschoolers, 4 years of age until school-age	1 to 12	36
School Agers	1 to 18	36

Safe Sleep and Video Surveillance

Video surveillance equipment and baby monitors must <u>not</u> be used in place of appropriate supervision of sleeping infants. Appropriate supervision includes frequently monitoring a sleeping infant's breathing, sleep position, and bedding for possible signs of distress.

Technology and Its Impact on Child Care
Jackie Sharkey, Area Manager
Pontiac Region

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Technology use within child care has become an important part of many programs due to its' everyday use in homes and schools. Child care has had dramatic changes since the introduction of the Block Grant in 2014, which brought increasing law and rule requirements. While the change in requirements are a positive for the care of children, they do mean an increase in workloads for child care licensees and caregivers, including more paperwork. Many licensees are using specialized child care software, which can save significant time, space and costs. They allow parents to sign their children in and out of the program on a computer instead of signing in or out on paper. It provides parents with real-time access to what is happening in their child's classroom through video feeds, as well as through daily reports that can be updated in a parent's account throughout the day. Many documents required by licensing are also kept on the software or on other computer programs, such as the Child Care Background Check (CCBC) system and MiRegistry. This means using less space for the storage of some of the documents, spending less time on these tasks that must be done, and having more time caring for the children.

We are also living in a world where it has become necessary to include screen time as part of children's learning. Schools are using technology more and more for children and parents, and the children need to be prepared for its' use in the future. Exposure to <u>digital technology is being seen as 'essential for child development'.</u> It is critical for their school readiness and success.

Caregivers can support children's use of technology in ways that aid in their learning. An example is the caregiver using her own mobile device to take photos during work time and use them to help children recall their work. They can hold the phone while children swipe the screen to look backward and forward to see the order they followed for their project. Another example includes video recordings made by a caregiver during a field trip, which can help children recall and build on their experiences.

This is not to say that technology should be the focus with children. Computers and other electronic equipment are important, but children's hands-on-learning with manipulatives and direct social interaction should still be included in the majority of activities on the daily schedule. Children will still use other objects to represent these devices during play, such as using a block as a smart phone. Young children enjoy using objects that stand in for the real thing in ways that imitate adult use.

The use of technology for required documentation has become very important to keep up with running a child care business. The use of technology with young children offers many opportunities for early learning. We must keep in mind that children learn best through direct interaction with people and materials, in activities they choose and shape themselves. Keep both as part of learning, but make sure the children have plenty of opportunities for hands-on learning.

Screen Time/Media at a Glance
Catherine Edgar, Licensing Consultant
Genesee County

Child care licensing defines "Media" as the use of electronic devices with a screen, including but not limited to, televisions, computers, tablets, multi-touch screens, interactive white boards, mobile devices, cameras, movie players, e-book readers, and electronic game consoles. Licensing rules for screen media are as follows:

- For home child care providers, screen media is limited to 2 hours per day. This includes all screen time, including television, movies, video games, and electronic devices.
- For child care centers, any media use is prohibited for children under 2 years of age. For children over 2 years of age, non-interactive media is limited to 2 hours *per week.* Non-interactive media is defined as media that is used passively by children. This would include, television, movies, and most video games. Interactive media is defined as any media that is designed to facilitate active and creative use by children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults. For examples of interactive media, you can go to www.healthychildren.org.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends limiting screen time for 2 to 5-year-olds to 1 hour per day of high-quality programming. Children in your care may already be exceeding the screen time guideline before they even arrive at your facility! The AAP also recommends that children under the age of 18 months avoid any use of screen media. The exception to this would be Facetime or Skype with distant relatives, as this has been found to benefit infants and toddlers by strengthening relationships with those who they cannot have face-to-face contact with.

There has been a number of studies done on the effects of media on children. Research has found that overuse of media results in:
- Not enough sleep
- Delays in learning and social skills
- Obesity
- Behavior problems

It is important to remember that these negative outcomes can also be found when media is in the background, such as playing a movie while children are napping or having a television on during active play time.

It is important that child care providers know what high quality media is, as this is the only kind of media recommended by the AAP for children over the age of 2 years. Television shows that meet the definition for high quality will display the E/I symbol on the screen. This stands for Educational and Informational programming and was established in the Children's Television Act (CTA) of 1990. In addition to the E/I symbol, children's programming produced by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and Sesame Workshop are good places to look for high quality programming. Finding high quality apps for a smart device or phone is a little more difficult. Many apps that are listed under the "educational" category show little evidence of improving cognitive, literacy, or social outcomes for children, unfortunately.

High quality educational apps should be age-appropriate and be interactive. Any interaction should consist of more than pushing or swiping. A good source for finding high quality apps for children is the web site www.commonsensemedia.org.

As a child care provider, you have the ability to affect children's lives in substantial and meaningful ways. By limiting screen time and providing high-quality media when media is available, you can make a positive impact on a child's development.   You have the ability to increase social interactions while reducing obesity and behavior problems seen with too much media.

Trading Ink and Paper for Digital Solutions: What You Need to Know

Candice Case-French, Area Manager
Northwest Michigan

Paperwork and child care…oh my! One of the common complaints from providers is the amount of paperwork. Whether you're a licensed child care home or a program director, the paperwork seems to never end. It might feel as though you're adding another filing cabinet to your office space every twelve months and you might be struggling to organize it all. Maybe it's time to trade in your ink and paper for a digital solution. From electronic attendance records to multifunctional management systems, here's a closer look into the endless possibilities in the digital era.

Storing Documents Electronically

One of most common digital records stored by child care providers are their policies and staff files. Many home providers and small private centers simply have documents stored on a computer. This is a simple and easy way to store documents, but computers eventually die. When the only copy of your program's volunteer policy is stored on a single computer, that data could potentially be lost forever. There are several different services that allow you to store and share electronic files. If you're interested in storing documents electronically, consider using an online storage service such as Google Drive or Dropbox. If you are part of a larger organization, you can create file sharing on your organization's server.

Online storage services allow you to access the information from any computer or phone using a secure login. In addition, most online storage services allow you to share the documents with other individuals. You can create folders for each child care personnel, one for policies, and one for additional paperwork. With a click of a button, you can share that information with your licensing consultant, parents, or other individuals. Online storage services allow you to choose who has access and what information each individual can see. A great example is MiRegistry for professional development; the organization can have a profile, each staff personnel can have a profile, and all this is viewable by your licensing consultant.

(Digital Solutions cont.)

With electronic document sharing, you can even set up a password for files. The password for a file can be shared with the individuals that need to have access. For example, electronic copies of the Consent and Disclosure forms can be shared in a folder and you can share the password to that folder with your licensing consultant. If you're not onsite during an inspection or investigation, the personnel on site can show the licensing consultant where the file is stored on the computer. The licensing consultant can use the password to view the documents and close the file. The child care personnel will be able to see the folder but will be unable to open it without the password. This is a great way to keep confidential information accessible and safe.

Electronic Attendance Records

Electronic attendance records are becoming increasingly popular in child care facilities. It's important to keep accurate records of when children are arriving and leaving. There are hundreds of applications for computers, tablets, and smart phones that allow you to track the attendance of the children in your care. Some child care facilities even have computers or tablets set up where parents electronically check children in and out. The important thing to remember when looking at attendance apps is the ability to save, download, and view the attendance records over time. You'll need to be able to go back and view attendance records for billing and your consultant will need access for inspections and special investigations.

Electronic Billing

Parents forget to bring payment, you're constantly running to the bank to deposit checks, you're scrambling at tax time to compile your records, and you're never paid on time. Does this sound familiar? If so, electronic payments might be for you. Electronic payments can be as simple as setting up a PayPal account and sending an invoice to parents or as complex as having a credit card reader attached to your smart phone. Younger generations are used to paying everything electronically; their child care bill is no different. Services like PayPal and credit card readers do charge a small fee for their services, but sometime the benefits of being paid on time and the convenience are worth it. There are also software systems like QuickBooks that providers can utilize. Electronic billing not only makes it easier to get paid on time, it also helps you create a record for tax season.

Tracking Events and Dates

One of the biggest struggles for child care providers is keeping track of when things are due. From updating your CPR and first aid to keeping track of when a child's physical needs to be updated, it can be difficult to stay on top of due dates. Using an electronic calendar like Google Calendar or Outlook makes tracking important dates easy. Most electronic calendars can be accessed on multiple electronics and they can be shared with other users. Imagine having all your dates on your phone, tablet, and computer at any time.

Electronic calendars can help you stay on track and help ease the burden of trying to remember when things are due. Let's take a look at CPR and first aid as an example. With an online calendar you can set yourself two reminders; one date to schedule a class three months before your card expires and another date to remind you that your card has expired. The key to effectively using an electronic calendar is consistency. You need to intentionally and purposefully put everything on the calendar. The tool will not work if you don't use it.

Electronic Communication

From quick updates to daily sheets for parents, it's important for child care providers to actively bridge the communication gap between child care and home. Drop off and pick up times can be hectic and there isn't always time for updates on the day's events, paperwork that needs to be submitted, payments that are due, and other day to day communications. There are many quick and easy ways to electronically communicate with parents. Text messages and Facebook pages are two of the most common communication tools used by child care providers.

There are also lots of apps on the market that allow you and your child care personnel to communicate quickly and easily with parents. Some of the apps allow you to track information for daily sheets such as infant feeds and sleep patterns; at the end of the day the app sends an electronic daily sheet to the family.

Social media and websites can be a great way to advertise and to communicate. However, it's important to make sure parents are comfortable with you sending electronic communications regarding their child. It is best practice to have parents sign a permission slip when posting information or images of their child on social media and websites.

Electronic communication can have some drawbacks. When using electronic communication, it's important to remember that once the message is out there, you cannot take it back. It's easy for electronic communication to be misinterpreted. For sensitive discussions a phone call or face-to-face communication is best. In addition, it's important to make sure parents are comfortable with you sending electronic communications regarding their child.

Multi-Functional Management Apps

There are many ways for child care providers to go digital and multi-functional child care management applications are the all-in-one solution. Applications such as Brightwheel, Child-Watch, KidKare, and ProCare offer providers online management systems that have multiple functions. These apps allow you a way to track attendance, electronically bill, communicate with parents, track meals, set up classrooms, run reports, and more. Each app comes with its own unique features and many of the apps have a free or small fee trial period.

The multi-functional apps allow child care providers, center directors, and child care personnel to have an instant and easy way to track everything in one place. Using tablets or smart phones, all child care personnel can easily track events as they are happening. A staff member can be tracking a diaper change in the infant room, another staff member can be recording a video of a pre-schooler reading his first words, a third staff member can be signing a school-age child in after school, and a parent can be paying the child care bill. All this data can be captured in one place in real time. The licensee or program director has access to all of this information as it's happening. Multi-functional apps have the ability to help you manage many of the day-to-day operations in one place.

Reflection Questions before Going Digital

Going digital can help you stay organized and save time. However, it's important to do your homework before tossing the paper and ink in the trash. Digital records aren't for everyone. Below are some simple questions to guide your thinking before you jump into the digital world of child care management.

- Why do I want to go digital? What do I hope to gain from going digital?
- Do I feel comfortable with digital records and applications? Do I need more training?
- Do I have the technology (tablet, smart phone, etc.) to make this happen?
- Do I have reliable internet or cell phone coverage in my area?
- Does the software, application, or online storage system have a fee? A trial period?
- How easy is the technology to use?
- Will this save me time and/or money in the long run?
- Can I download and print information when I need it?
- Will I have access to the information instantly when I need it?

Final Thoughts

Digital records and paperwork are a tool available to help a program succeed. They need to be accessible to licensing during inspections and special investigations. They also need to be accessible to personnel that need the information to complete their job duties. For example, at least one personnel with access to the digital attendance records would always need to be onsite at all times. Digital solutions are not a substitution for your administrative duties. With that being said, going digital can be a huge stress reliever for providers. The key is to do your research and find the digital solutions that meet your program's needs; there is no one size fits all. Before you take the digital jump, take some time to explore the different options. If you're unsure if a specific digital system will meet the licensing requirements, reach out to your consultant.

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Information to Know

Child care licensing bureau: www.michigan.gov/cclb or www.michigan.gov/michildcare

Child Care Background Check Unit: 844-765-2247

Child Development and Care: www.michigan.gov/childcare

Complaint hotline: 866-856-0126

Consumer Product Safety Commission Infant/Child Product Recalls (not including toys)

- A link to recalls specific to child care licensing will be available under the Michigan Child Care Matters website at www.michigan.gov/mccmatters.

- Details on these product recalls may be obtained on the CPSC's website (www.cpsc.gov). Post this page in your facility to be in compliance with the Children's Product Safety Act (2000 PA 219).

Online Applications for Child Care Licensing

To complete an online application, go to www.michigan.gov/adultchildcareapply. For questions related to child care licensing, contact your licensing consultant or 517-284-9730 .

For online applications, you must create a MiLogin account. For help with MiLogin contact the MiLogin Customer Service Center at 1-877-932-6424.

To complete an online application, only up-to-date browsers are compatible. Such browsers are Internet Explorer, FireFox, and Chrome. If you are using Internet Explorer, you may be required to add "Michigan.gov" to your compatibility view settings in order for the application to be successful.