



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. III, No. 2

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ **Support children's health**
- ★ **Provide a safe environment**
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Support Children's Health, Provide a Safe Environment

Maintaining Children's Health and Safety When You Have Pets

We all love our pets. They are considered members of our family. Most children love pets and pets generally love children too. So, it's natural to find pets in many family child care homes. Pets provide opportunities for children to learn about nature, and how to be responsible for the care of Mother Earth's other creatures. Pets, such as dogs and cats, can be good companions, especially to withdrawn children. Children can touch and talk to animals. They can share love and affection. Pets can provide a loyal friend for a child in the family child care setting. However, bringing pets and children together in a family child care home involves some risks as well as these benefits. There are many ways that providers can alleviate the risks so that your pets can be part of your safe and healthy learning environment.

Hawaii's regulations regarding pets for family child care homes are outlined in rule 17-891.1-32 (14) under Environmental Hazards which states "Pets, animals, and fowl shall be maintained in a safe and sanitary manner at all times." Specifics to guide providers on implementing this rule are not provided. However, excellent advice on this topic is available from *Caring for Our Children*, 3rd Edition (CFOC3), standard 3.4.2. CFOC3 is a collection of 686 national standards that represent the best evidence, expertise, and experience in the country on quality health and safety practices and policies that should be followed in today's early care and education settings.

Recommendations are also found in the National Association for Family Child Care's (NAFCC) *Accreditation Standards Resource Manual: Health*, First Edition. Four of the 289 Accreditation Standards (4.96-4.99) of NAFCC relate to having pets in child care.

In this newsletter, we will use the information from CFOC3 and NAFCC standards to focus on risk management in child care with pets and how to keep parents informed. Together, parents and providers can ensure the health and safety of the children in care.



Informing Parents

If you have pets, it is important to tell parents before they enroll their child so they can make an informed decision about whether to place their child in your home. Also, inform them again after their enrollment, if you are considering adding a new pet. Parents may prefer to have their child in a pet-free zone, especially if the child has allergies or asthma. They may fear that their child will be bitten or be exposed to infestations of parasites such as fleas, or worms. See the enclosed resource sheet for suggested statements which can be added to your policies so that parents fully understand their child's level of exposure to pets.

Risks from Germs and Parasites

Like people, pets can carry germs. Some illnesses common among house pets—such as distemper, canine parvovirus, and heartworms—can't be transmitted to the children in care. However, pets can carry bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi that can cause illness, if transmitted to children. Infants and young children are the most vulnerable to animal-borne diseases. Small children are likely to catch infections from pets because they crawl around on the floor with animals, kiss them, share food with them, or put their fingers in the pet's mouth and then in their own mouth afterward. Children can get animal-borne diseases if they have contact with animals'



waste, saliva, or dander, or by touching or mouthing pets' litter boxes, feces, food and toys, or by contact with the animal. Infected dogs and cats can transmit roundworms to children through feces. Infections that may make an adult just mildly sick, can be more serious for children. See the enclosed resource sheet for suggestions on protecting children from these health risks.

The Right Pets for Child Care

The key to having pets and children in a child care setting is choosing a pet that is in good health, disease-free, and friendly toward children. While no pet is perfect, those most suitable for family child care homes include domesticated cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, and some fish. The best dogs for children are those who have been immunized, received proper socialization, humane training, exercise, and attention, and who are given adequate food, water, shelter, and veterinary care; who are sterilized; and who are safely confined. Selecting a friendly, calm, adult animal that has a known history of getting along with young children, may be a better choice than a kitten or puppy which can be fragile and require a lot of attention and care, or be prone to biting and scratching.

Importance of Veterinary Care

Annual vaccination of pets is very important in protecting children in family child care. Although Hawaii is the only state with no reported cases of the life-threatening disease of rabies, immunization against other diseases such as canine distemper or heartworm, which can be fatal for dogs, is critical. You should be able to show your pet's up-to-date veterinary record to children's parents at any time. Heartworms are transmitted by infected mosquitoes. It is recommended that all dogs be given year-round heartworm, flea, and mosquito prevention, which is administered once each month as well as a canine distemper booster shot every 1 to 3 years depending on level of exposure risk.



Maintaining a Child-Healthy Environment with Pets

The following are some ways to increase the chances of keeping both the children in your care and your pets healthy and safe.

- Instruct children on safe procedures to follow when in close proximity to animals.
- All contact between animals and children should be supervised.
- Animal food, bowls, drinking water, etc, should be kept out of reach of children.
- Animals should be kept out of the kitchen, pantry, and eating areas.
- The provider and children should wash their hands after handling animals, or animal food.
- Discard the pet's uneaten food after 15 minutes to eliminate the risk of bacteria growth.
- Keep animal food and cleaning supplies separate.

See the enclosed resource sheet for more suggestions on things you can do to keep your environment with pets safe and healthy for children.



Citations:

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2011). *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs*. 3rd edition. Washington, DC: Also available at <http://nrckids.org>.

Hawaii Department of Human Services, Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division (2002). *Hawaii Administrative Rules*, Title 17, Sub-title 6, Chapter 891.1, *Registration of Family Child Care Homes*. Available on-line, August 23, 2016, http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2013/01/HAR_17-891.1-Family-Child-Care-Home-Rules.pdf.

The National Association for Family Child Care (2006). *The National Association for Family Child Care accreditation standards resource manual: Health standards for NAFCC accreditation*, 1st Edition. Salt Lake City, Utah.



Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

REMINDER: Registered QCC participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of "increased knowledge." Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Any time that you are submitting more than one reflection sheet at the same time, feel free to enclose them in a single envelope. It will save postage costs for our funder and facilitate efficient data entry when they arrive.



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