

## **Child Care Health and Safety National Standards Revised** *Caring for Our Children -- 2nd Edition*

**Now Available**

Do you use Caring for Our Children? A few years ago many child care providers and others in Wyoming received the First Edition. It contains the national health and safety standards for out-of-home child care centers and is now frequently used as a guideline by program directors and advocates to improve programs and increase quality. There is now a revised and improved edition, Caring for Our Children, 2nd Edition. Those of you who have used the first edition will be pleasantly surprised by the improvements made. It is much more reader friendly, better organized, includes an excellent appendix, and has merged and revised many of the standards reducing the total number by 274.

To give you a background of the original standards, the American Public Health Association (APHA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) jointly published Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of Home Child Care Programs in 1992. The publication was the product of a 5-year national project funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Health Resources and Services Administration. This comprehensive set of health and safety standards was a response to many years of effort by advocates for quality child care and an attempt at uniform national standards.

The continuing requests for the hard copy version and documented use of the electronic version of this first edition showed considerable interest for health and safety standards by both a national and an international audience. Caring for Our Children had become a yardstick for measuring what has been done and what still needs to be done, as well as a technical manual on how to do it.

Since 1992 when the first edition was published, the interest in and the enrollment of young children in early childhood education programs has increased not only in the United States but also in other nations in the world. The first edition anticipated this new revised edition when it noted (that) "as new knowledge and innovative practices evolve, the standards themselves should be modified or updated."

The revision of the standards for the second edition of Caring for Our Children was an extensive process. Ten technical panels focused on their particular subject matter areas, after which time their recommendations were merged into a single set of recommended standards and widely reviewed by representatives of all stakeholders with an interest in child care, including parents. The final document represents a consensus of the various

disciplines involved with child care, with the largest contribution of factual content coming from experts in health and safety.

The second edition contains eight chapters of 659 standards and a ninth chapter of 48 recommendations for licensing and community agencies and organizations. Changes include:

- S New and revised standards in all areas, such as sleep position of infants related to SIDS studies and playground equipment specifications;
- S Integration of standards that are relevant to children with special needs, as well as to all children, throughout the document to promote inclusion;
- S A two-column format to increase readability and eliminate empty space;
- S Merged and consolidated standards (from 981 standards and recommendations to 707 standards and recommendations);
- S Updated references;
- S Incorporation of former appendices into appropriate standards;
- S A more activist posture in standards pertaining to training requirements (for providers), health education activities (for providers, children, and parents), and management of acute illness (such as respiratory infections) and chronic illness (such as asthma).
- S Expanded to include standards for small family child care homes, large family child care homes and child care centers.

The new edition also includes a section of definitions, the standards, the recommendations, an extremely useful appendix including an extensive list of contact information of various organizations and resources, a glossary, and conversion tables to the former edition.

This second edition complements other child care requirements and recommendations such as the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start Performance Standards, Child Welfare League of America, and others. Health involves more than the absence of illness and injury. According to the new edition, "To stay healthy, children depend on adults to make healthy choices for them and to teach them to make such choices for themselves over the course of a lifetime. Child development addresses physical growth and the development in many areas: gross and fine motor skills, language, emotional balance, cognitive capacity and person-social skills. Thus health and safety issues overlap with those considered part of early childhood education and mental health, such overlap is inevitable and desirable."

As standards are never static due to the increased knowledge base, new scientific studies, and arising new areas of concern and interest, the standards will continually be improved. This new edition is just one way that the needs of children are continuing to be met. To quote the 2nd edition, "possibly the most important use of these standards will be to raise the level of understanding among the general public about what those needs are, and to contribute to a greater willingness to commit more resources to achieve quality child care where children can grow and develop in a healthy and safe environment." A worthwhile goal, indeed.

**This is a "must have" for child care and early childhood programs.**

An electronic copy can also be downloaded free from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>

The new standards are now also available for \$34.95 plus shipping and handling in print format!!

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