



# Child Care Center STAFF MANAGEMENT

The key to onboarding, retaining, and  
managing staff

[runsandbox.com](https://runsandbox.com)

# IN THIS ISSUE

---

- 3** Introduction
  - 4** Hiring
    - 4** Finding Quality Employees
    - 5** Interview Process
  - 9** Onboarding & Training
    - 9** The Onboarding Process
    - 10** Staff Training
  - 12** Staff Management
    - 12** Wages and Benefits
    - 15** Promoting Staff
    - 18** Supporting Your Team
    - 21** Dealing With Difficult Staff
  - 23** Firing
    - 23** How to Fire an Employee
    - 25** What to do After Firing Someone
  - 26** Staff Management Software
  - 28** Conclusion
-

# Introduction

The secret to a well-run childcare center is taking good care of your childcare team. Staff management is such a crucial part of the job and as an owner or director, it can be overwhelming at times. The fact is, whether you are a large franchise or a small location, how you onboard, retain, and manage your staff is essential to the success of your child care center.

In this ebook we will cover topics pertaining to hiring and onboarding staff, retaining talent, and general staff management. We will discuss things like how to find quality staff, deciding on staff wages and incentives, creating onboarding checklists to guide you and so much more. Consider this your one-stop guide as you navigate the ups and downs of staff management at your center(s).

**Julia Erman**  
Customer Advocate



# Hiring



The hiring process at any child care center includes several steps: finding quality candidates, conducting interviews, and finally hiring the best candidates. Hiring is the first step in building your staffing team and one of the most important. It is crucial that this process is well thought out and executed.

## Finding Quality Employees

When looking to hire for a job opening, you may find it easy to fill your inbox with resumes, however, it is important that the resumes you are receiving are from quality candidates. Here are five ways to find the best people for your job openings.



### Job Search Websites

Websites like Indeed.com are a great resource when looking to hire. Normally the candidates you find on jobsearch websites like [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) are trained and looking for work, making them higher quality candidates on average. The best part is you can set a budget for how much you want to spend and Indeed will send you resumes depending on your budget.



### Referrals

In the childcare industry I've found word of mouth hires are often the best. Having someone who already knows the person and vouches for their background and work ethic is a huge plus. Ask your team to get involved here and see if they can bring candidates to you!



### Incentivize Staff

Incentives can help motivate word of mouth referrals. Add an incentive for your team such as a \$25 gift card to anyone who refers a candidate that you end up hiring. It's a great way to get your team involved in your search for new staff and they often appreciate the opportunity to work with friends, family, or past colleagues as well.



## Local Colleges

There are two major ways to utilize local colleges for hiring. First, you can simply attend a college job fair in your region. This is a great way to get your name out there and meet some students looking for work after graduation.

Second, you can post ads around your local college(s). Usually these ads are free and, depending on the nearby schools, you can often directly reach students studying ECE, which is a huge bonus. This may not be available at all colleges, but I would definitely reach out and see if this is an opportunity for your centre.



## Social Media

Another great way to find people is to run ads on Facebook, Instagram, or other forms of social media. Better yet, have your current team share the ad or create a post of their own!

Social media is a great way to pass along information and find candidates who might not be found elsewhere. Using social media to find quality staff can become a natural part of the social media strategy for your daycare.

Once you have found a solid number of quality applicants the next step is to interview and hire your best candidates.

# Interview Process

Let's talk about how you can conduct an effective interview at your center. We'll discuss how to vet someone before an in-person interview, when to use zoom, questions to ask in-person, and when to move towards a working interview.

## Pre-Interview:

Before the in-person interview, I suggest conducting a phone interview first. You'd be surprised how much you can learn about someone over the phone. This will save you a ton of time in the long run as well by vetting candidates.

The nice thing about a phone call is it can be short and sweet and there are no promises attached to it. Be sure to take notes on their answers to compare with other candidates or ask followup questions later on in the process.





## Here are a few questions I always ask over the phone:

- Take a minute to tell me a bit about yourself.
- What made you apply for this position?
- What experience do you have that will help you succeed in this role?
- What is your dream position?
- Do you have any questions?

If you like the answers to the first few questions you can ask more in depth questions, but usually these are enough to prompt conversation and see if you want to have them in for an official interview.

If your phone interview goes well, ask if they would like to come in for an in-person interview or zoom meeting depending on local regulations or your preference at the time.

If you like the candidate, be sure to schedule the next step before the end of the phone call. If you don't think it's a good fit you can close with something like, "thanks so much for your time, we will be in contact if we would like to move forward".

Conducting phone interviews first helps avoid unnecessary in-person interviews, prepares you for the onsite interview and saves you time scheduling, as you can set up your in-person interview at the end of the phone call.

## In-Person or Zoom Interview:

Once someone has passed the phone interview, set up your in-person interview as soon as possible. This is your standard sit-down meeting usually between the Director of the center and the interviewee. Depending on the current situation or time and travel constraints you could choose to host this part on ZOOM, but in-person is ideal.

This interview is a great way to really see how they handle the stress of the interview and to dive in and get to know them at a deeper level. It is important to ask the right questions and to know what to look for in this meeting to see if they are a great candidate for your job opening.

## Here are a few questions I always ask over the phone:

- Tell me more about yourself. (if already used in phone interview, ask them to expand on something they mentioned then)
- What are some of your strengths?
- How do these strengths show up in the classroom?
- Tell me about your biggest weakness?
- How have you worked to overcome this?
- What aspects of your past employment qualify you for this job?
- Why do you want this job?
- Why are you interested in working for our center?
- What is your five-year plan?
- How could we as a center help you grow professionally?
- Tell me about a time when you didn't get along with a team member and how you handled it.
- Would people say you are easy to work with? Explain.
- What is your ideal job?
- Why should we hire you?
- What questions do you have for me?

## Body Language:

Everyone knows body language is an important part of communication and an interview is no exception. You can tell a lot about an interviewee from their body language. There are several things to look out for as an employer because they generally indicate that an employee is disinterested, lacking confidence in their abilities, not approachable, or even trying to hide something.

### Here are a few of my favorite things to look for:

1. Slumping
2. Wandering Eyes
3. Shrugging
4. Aggressive Body Language

If an interviewee has more than one of these 'tells' they may not be a good candidate for the job, particularly in the childcare industry.

So what do you want to see in an interview? Look for people who are comfortable in their skin and can speak openly about themselves and their experience. And keep in mind that although words and actions can be misleading, experts say that body language tells the truth.

For example, eye contact and an upright position indicates openness and confidence in abilities while a quick smile and positive body language tends to indicate that an individual is approachable, content, and even trustworthy. Learning a few of these 'tells' will help you see if your interviewees character is the right fit for your centre.



## Working Interview

Now that we've covered the phone and in-person interview let's talk about a working interview. A working interview isn't always necessary but can be a great tool to see if your first impression was accurate. Especially if you were limited to a zoom interview I would suggest bringing a candidate in for a working interview before the official hire.

A working interview in the childcare field is a great way to see for yourself how the candidate interacts with children. Children are a great judge of character and can tell us so much more than we give them credit for. This can also give a second chance to people who are great with kids but not great with interviews.

Schedule about 45 mins to an hour for the candidate to be in the classroom, preferably with a teacher whom you trust and the age group they are applying for. This will give you a good look at how they interact with both the staff and the children at your center.

### Here are a few things to look for:

1. Do they initiate play or conversation with the children?
2. When they engage with the children are they down at their level?
3. Do they look comfortable, and are children comfortable with them?
4. Are they interacting with the teachers an appropriate amount? (not too much and not too little?)

Once a working interview is complete you should have a good idea if the candidate is right for your team. This can be an exciting time for both the center and new team members!

**BONUS TIP:** Remember as you go through the process that you are setting a tone throughout. The true onboarding starts at the phone interview. You set the culture and tone from that point on and have all the power to build the team that you desire. Take the time to do just that!

# Onboarding & Training

Effective onboarding and training is about solid processes and planning. Have a plan in place and follow the same process every time. Taking the time to build an effective process and put it into action will allow you to provide a positive experience for the new hires and help set them up for success.

## 1. Offer/Accept

If you like a candidate the first step in the process is to make a job offer for the new team member to accept. Have a clearly written out offer letter that includes information such as job title, start date, and days and hours scheduled to work. Feel free to use a template to help you get started.

When you send the offer letter attach a job description as well. It's important that your new team member gets a description of the job they are signing up for. Have the new hire sign both documents and return them to the office prior to continuing in the process.

## 2. Tour & Initial Introduction

A center tour is a great way to start the onboarding process. Tour your new staff around the center, introduce them to the team, and go out of your way to make them feel comfortable and welcome. This is a great opportunity to introduce the new team member to the culture of your center by purposely pointing out things that reflect your culture as you go along.

## Paperwork

In most businesses paperwork is essential to the hiring process, and child care is no exception. Double-check that you have all the right forms signed and completed before your new hire's first day, especially if you are a licensed center.

## New Hire Checklist

A checklist can be helpful, here is a sample of the paperwork checklist I use.

- Collect application, offer letter, and job description (signed by staff member)
- Create Merit Account (sign up for your state system)
- Get a STARS ID number (get account number for your state system)
- Submit a background check form on the DEL website
- Maintain fingerprints (if applicable)
- Collect TB test, food handlers card, first aid and CPR training (all but TB testing can be done as we go)
- Sign up for initial child development training course (30 hours minimum training required)
- Have new hire read, sign, and turn in the following: staff handbook, parent handbook, staff values, dress code
- Add team member into Sandbox software and assign them a timeclock password (show them how to clock in and use childcare management software)
- Have them download the teacher app and show them how to use it (if applicable)

\*Note: yours may be different based on local requirements and policies.

# Staff Training

Once the paperwork is complete, it's time to jump into training. Break training into chunks and spend enough time in each step so set your new team member up for success in their role. Formal training has been proven to lead to increased productivity, and better staff retention.

## Training Day 1 (Shadow)

For the first day of training the new hire should shadow an existing staff member. Their goal on this day is to watch and learn.

During this day of onboarding assign your new staff member a well-seasoned team member as a trainer. Have the new team member shadow the trainer throughout their whole day. Choose a staff member who is experienced, friendly, and models the culture that you want your team to exhibit.

**TIP: bad and good habits both start early, model the GOOD ones from the start to help your new hire get started on the right track.**

Have your trainer conduct the following classroom walk-through with the new team member on day one. Use this as a checklist to ensure you don't miss anything important.

### Classroom Walk-Through:

Show your new hire each individual classroom and be sure to note the following:

Where all first aid kits are located

- Where all first aid kits are located.
- Where each classroom keeps its curriculum binder(s) (or online tools for curriculum)
- Location of each classroom's emergency phone lists
- Where all the class supplies are located
- The Emergency Exits
- The Bathrooms for both staff and children
- The Kitchen (if applicable)
- Staff Offices
- Check-in Computers/Procedures
- Snack Refrigerator and Snack Cupboard
- Outdoor Play Areas
- Anything else that is site-specific and you deem important

## Training Day 2 (Try it out!)

The purpose of this training is for the new team member to try out what they learned in the previous training session. During this day switch roles by having the trainer (seasoned staff member) shadow the new team member.

This process only works well if the trainer can offer constructive encouragement and criticism to the new team member. When properly carried out it is a great way to train a new team member while demonstrating the concept of peer coaching within your school.

## Training Day 3 (On your Own)

For this training session, let the new staff member teach in their newly assigned position. It is important as a director or manager to check in with them throughout the day. Ask them how day 1 and 2 went and see if they have any questions or concerns.

Also keep an eye out for red flags — If you don't catch bad habits or other issues by day three, chances are the staff member will continue doing it. Do your best to keep a close eye and offer coaching and support as needed. Ask them how the previous training sessions went and see if they have any questions or concerns.

## Week 1 Follow Up

Once the staff member is trained and included in the classroom ratio it is essential to follow up with support and coaching as necessary. Include a new staff follow-up email as part of your follow-up process. This is a great way to check-in and see if any training areas were missed along the way. See my sample email below:

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

*I hope your first week of work went well. To help ensure a positive experience for you and other future team members, please answer a few quick questions below.*

- 1. Did you feel welcomed by staff and students?*
- 2. What is your favorite part of your new job?*
- 3. What is your least favorite part?*
- 4. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your overall training experience?*
- 5. What can we do to better support you in this next week?*

*Thanks so much!*

The big takeaway is to not rush the onboarding and training process. Take the time and do it right the first time! It's important to have other team members help with the process too. If you are a director or owner you do not need to do the whole process nor should you. A great leader enables people on their team to help along the way by **delegating like a pro**.

# Staff Management



Now that you have successfully hired a new employee and finished the training process, next comes the often underestimated task of managing your staffing team. Here we cover important topics such as wage compensation, staff promotions, and more.

Let's find out how you can create an amazing company culture that will empower your staff, increase retention and increase team productivity as a whole.

## Wages and Benefits

Wage and benefits is one of the most common causes of friction between employers and employees. Labour laws, compassion, and practicalities (ie. cost) all play a part in the equation.

The fact is staff who are respected, rewarded, and given time for refreshment perform better and stick around longer. Even without a huge budget, there are a few simple ways that you can encourage staff to stick around.

## Base Pay

One of the most important aspects of managing staff wages is starting with the right base pay for each and every employee. In my experience there is no perfect formula but there are several things to consider when choosing a starting rate:

- What were they paid in their last job?
- What experience and qualifications do they have?
- What is the normal range in your center for their role?
- Will you have room to give them a raise if they perform well?

When we consider all four of these questions it allows us to find a number that is not only fair for your new employee, but also consistent with the rest of your staff. Making sure that you have a consistent range of pay for each role is very important, and can prevent headaches and division down the road.

For example we paid our lead teachers anywhere from \$16-\$20 per hour, although this rate will vary depending on where you are located. We did have times we went above \$20 as a starting wage for a particularly qualified employee, but we tried to keep within this range as much as possible.

Starting out with the right base pay is the best way to set up your employees for success. One of the biggest mistakes I've made when adding a new team member is paying them too much. It's important to leave room for raises along their journey to reward them for increased skills and experience or when they go above and beyond your expectations.

Sometimes a potential employee isn't the right fit for your center simply because their expectations for pay are too high. Don't make the mistake of giving in because you're desperate to hire, you'll find the employee won't be happy long anyways! Better to start with a lower base pay and reward great work with a raise.

## Pay Raises

Let's be honest, everyone loves getting a raise. I found that giving an annual raise makes sense in most situations. In my experience you should aim to raise tuition by about 5% each year. Normally I would model the staff raises around the tuition increase. When parents asked about the tuition increase I explained that it was for staff raises and they always understood.

### When considering giving a raise bear in mind the following:

- Are they simply doing their job or performing above and beyond?
- Do they have a good attitude and add to a positive team culture?
- Do you want to encourage them to stick around awhile or would you be okay to see them go?
- Did you start them at a base pay that left room for a raise?

If your answer is yes to at least two of these questions you should consider giving them a raise. Raises are a great way to let your staff know that they are valued and that you notice and appreciate the good work they are doing.

If there are staff who don't receive a raise, let them know (one-on-one) that you will be watching them and if you see improvement you are happy to increase their pay. Raises aren't automatic and shouldn't be expected, they are merit and performance-based.

# Employee Benefits

Choosing employee benefits is complicated to say the least, but they are one thing that can really set your center apart from others. Benefits are a huge part of a compensation package and having certain benefits can make or break whether or not an employee accepts a job offer.

Here are some of the benefits we offered at my center:



## Health Insurance

This will depend on the location of your center and how health care is managed. Where my center was located we were required to provide health care for all employees who are full time (30+ hours a week).



## Gym or fitness center privileges

At our center, we really believed in whole-body health; physical, spiritual, and emotional. Because this was a focus at our center we provided membership to a local gym to those who would go 3+ times per week. We also offered to cover a few sessions of counselling with no questions asked.



## PTO, Paid Holidays, and Sick Time

One of the benefits I believe shouldn't be skipped on is PTO. Paid time off and sick time are very important to each employee's mental health and wellness. Consider giving your staff a few weeks per year. At my center, we would give our full-time teachers two weeks of PTO each school year. They had to use the time though or they would lose it. We didn't roll over from one school year to the next because we wanted them to use vacation time every year as part of their whole body health maintenance.



## Child Care Discount

A great perk to add to your package is discounting tuition for your teacher's children. We offered a 50% discount for all staff children which is a great benefit for staff with children.

There are so many benefits to consider adding to your compensation package that it can be hard to choose. The more benefits you offer, the more attractive your center will be to prospective employees, but it all comes at a cost.

We focused on a mix of health and fitness benefits, paid time off, and tuition discounts and found that this kept our staff happy, healthy, and motivated without breaking the bank.

A well paid and cared for staff member isn't cheap in the short run but limiting staff turnover is one of the best ways to cut costs in the long run. When you show your staff you value them by providing quality benefits and yearly merit-based raises they will give back to your center by working harder, taking fewer sick days and being more efficient and productive on a daily basis.



# Promoting Staff

No matter the size of your childcare or daycare center, there are always spots opening up within your center that require different responsibilities and strengths.

Whether you are looking to grow, improve the quality and reputation of your business, or simply reduce your personal workload, you will need to choose candidates carefully for these higher-level roles and responsibilities

## Why Staff Promotions are Important

Although many people will often look to hire for new job openings, in some situations it may be beneficial to promote a team member to fill that spot. The best time to promote from within is when a higher-level position opens up and there are quality candidates within your center that qualify for such a promotion.

But why should you promote from within rather than sort through a pile of resumes from qualified candidates? If you've ever sorted through a pile of resumes you may already have your answer.

If not, here is another reason — a new study published in the Wall Street Journal shows another benefit of internal promotion. Research shows that external hires often **make 18% more money, while being 61% more likely to be fired** from their new role than internally promoted employees.

Over the years I have tried hiring new employees and promoting from within many times. I have made some good and some bad choices. However, I have found that promoting from within is ideal if you have a good candidate available for your current opening.

Here are some of the common promotion opportunities within your childcare center:

- Lead teacher
- Administrator
- Assistant director
- Age group lead
- School-age director or assistant
- New Center Director or Supervisor

Since promotions avoid orientation and training it makes it easier to maintain the culture and quality care you have fostered at your childcare center.

Knowing when someone is ready to be promoted and take on more responsibility is the key to success here, and leveraging the advantage of being able to get to know your employees before choosing them for a role is a real advantage.

## What to Look for When Promoting Staff

### ✓ Upholds High Standards

They have proven that they can do their current job and carry out their responsibilities to the highest standard. It's important to see that the staff member can do lesser roles well before you decide to move them up the ladder.

If they can't manage the stress of their current role or misuse the power or privileges in the role they have, these issues will likely only increase in a higher role.

### ✓ Encompasses Company DNA

Are they fully in tune with the culture, mindset and goals that you have built your center's reputation around? The best thing about promoting from within is that you already have an idea who the person is and what they stand for.

It's important to protect the culture and makeup of your center to allow for continuity. Make sure that any staff you promote is a stellar example of the team culture you're trying to build to avoid sending mixed messages to the rest of your staff and your clients.

### ✓ Succeeds With Additional Responsibility

If a team member often takes care of their role without requiring help and is willing to take on more than their current role this is a sure sign of potential promotion material. A great way to see if they would be a good fit is to purposely give them additional responsibilities which they would use in their new role, and see how they handle them.

Do they handle the additional responsibilities with ease or do they complain when they have to do something slightly above their current role? If they are willing to pick up more responsibility successfully without complaining you know they are not only a team player but are a great option for promotion.

### ✓ Team Player

At my child care center I encouraged all my employees to be both team players and leaders. It was very important to me that anyone who I promoted worked well with others. Anyone in leadership needs to not only be able to have authority over others and take on responsibility, but also be someone who is looking out for the best of the team and the center as a whole.

They need to think beyond their own career or even just their responsibilities within their current role. Staff who are ready for promotion should show that they are willing to take on whatever is necessary for the benefit of the centre, and are willing to help out others while still successfully accomplishing their own tasks.

## Likable Person

This may sound like a frill, but likeability is an important trait in childcare. When I say 'likeable' I mean are they friendly with children and parents? Can they get along with the majority of the current staff and families at your child care center?

We all have different personalities and will not always be best friends with everyone, however, if a significant number of people in your center have issues with an individual that may be a red flag. If a staff member is capable and hardworking but struggles to get along with people, it may be best to keep them in their current role because child care is a very social business.

You don't need to be an extrovert or popular to be a good leader, but many traits that lead to likeability are assets in any management role. Choosing the wrong person in management can be worse than not promoting at all, so be careful to promote a strong candidate or you may see staff and enrollment turnover down the road.

## What to Avoid for When Promoting Staff

1. Promoting a staff member because you like their personality or are friends with them. Consider getting a second pair of eyes to help you make staffing choices to avoid this common mistake.
2. Choosing someone who is qualified but has a poor attitude. A bad attitude can be contagious and will lead to more headaches down the road.
3. Placing a staff member who is ready for promotion into a position that doesn't fit their skills or personality. It's better to wait until a different position opens up that is the perfect fit - but be sure to tell them this is what you intend to do.
4. Promoting somebody without clear expectations about what the new role entails. Be upfront about responsibilities, hours, training requirements and more. Providing a detailed job description, promotion policy, and signed offer letter is the best way to set your staff members up for success in their new role.

I've mentioned a number of benefits to promoting from within your childcare center(s) as you open new classrooms or fill new positions. If you avoid the most common pitfalls it can be a great way to maintain your staff culture while limiting time spent training and onboarding new employees into higher-level positions.



# Supporting Your Team

As a director of an early childhood center, it is crucial to know how to support your staffing team. The key is to support them from the start, before they hit their breaking point. Here are a few easy ways that you can support your staffing team in order to increase staff motivation and boost employee retention at your center.

## ✓ Encourage Breaks

Working with young children can be exhausting, especially in full-time centers where children are there for 8-10 hours. Sufficient breaks are KEY for happy teachers! When I say breaks I mean two things. First, provide reasonable breaks during the day for lunch time and (legitimate) bathroom breaks or breathers.

In addition, encourage regular vacation breaks away from work. Be sure you are allowing at least the daily and vacation breaks that are legally required, then see if you can find ways to work in additional breaks as needed by getting creative with your daily schedule

## ✓ Give Teachers a 'Timeout'

A big part of growing up is learning coping skills. We spend all day teaching children how to use their words or employ other coping strategies when they get overwhelmed. As teachers and Directors we need to model this as well. If you notice a teacher is getting frazzled or having a hard time with a student, encourage them to step out of the room.

Even if they just go to the bathroom, that 3-5 minutes out of the classroom can bring them back to a place of more grace and love. By “practicing what we preach” we can reduce stress while modeling coping mechanisms to our children, double points here!

## ✓ Words of Encouragement

I cannot say it enough, encourage your team! Never underestimate the power of a smile, high five, or well-placed word of encouragement. People want to know when they are doing something well, not just when they make a mistake. This is especially important with your team members who struggle.

Always keep an eye out so that when they do something well you can make a point of letting them know. This is a great way to encourage changed behavior, while making every member of your team feel valued. If you want to take it to the next level, boost intrinsic motivation by starting an award program or using other creative means to recognize and motivate your staff!

## ✓ Gift Cards

If you're not all-in for an awards program, at least try this old trick I learned from a co-worker (thanks Madelyn!) Keep a few \$5 Starbucks (or local coffee shop) gift cards in your back pocket. When you see a team member do something that models staff values or culture you are working to create, give them one!

Make it loud and proud so other people notice too, "thanks for walking that parent back to the bathroom, love that customer service!" This is another great way to encourage culture change and reward staff who are going the extra mile without being asked.

## ✓ Coaching

Every great employee wants to get better. People who want to improve always desire (and need) coaching. That means you need to meet with your team leads regularly and coach them!

Being a good coach doesn't mean showing you can do it better than they can, it means using your perspective to see their blind spots and stepping in with timely, specific, and upbuilding feedback to bring out the best in them.

One of the worst Preschool experiences I had was working with a Director who refused to step foot in the classroom and coach me! All I wanted was to be taught how to run an effective classroom, but I needed someone to show me. Hire people who are coachable. Then coach them often and coach them well!!!

## ✓ Professional Development

Coachable employees also desire to grow in their roles, so be sure to offer opportunities for your team whenever possible. Many of our centers have licensing regulations that require this sort of development, but don't do it because you have to, do it because you want the best for your team.

Constantly seek out opportunities for them to learn and grow, and share them with passion and enthusiasm! Encourage staff to seek out their own professional development as well and support them along the way. Often library systems have free classes that even count towards licensing hours so that's a great place to start!

## ✓ Be There

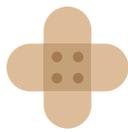
The best way to support your team is to be there for them! I know this sounds obvious, but most teachers know what it is like to have an absent leader. Be in the classrooms, be in the lunchroom, be there at pick up and drop off times, just be there!

Your team and families want to know you care and are available to them and besides, there's no better way to model the care and customer service that you expect from them.

This is not only the best way to support your center it's also pretty simple isn't it? Of course, it does require some of your valuable time. If you feel that you don't have time to be there for your staff and clients, reevaluate your daily schedule, rearrange your priorities, or find software that automates your daily tasks so that you can get out of the office and back to growing your business!

When we are intentional about supporting our teams and take the necessary steps to support them, we not only set them up for success, but boost staff retention and customer service as well! Great leaders find success by seeking to make the people around them shine, rather than themselves.





# Dealing With Difficult Staff

In my time as a child care director, I faced many difficult situations with my staffing team. A minor situation would go from 0-100 in a moment's notice and often I would be caught in the crossfire. Here are six things to remember when dealing with difficult staff situations at your center.



## Clearly State Policies

It is very important that your policies are stated in writing and that you have staff signatures documenting that they understand and agree to the policy. This was always my number one thing to go back to when I completed staff write ups.

I ALWAYS pointed back to the policy. A good policy with staff signature prevents you from being liable for someone else's mistake or misbehaviour.



## Document Everything

This is super important even with small situations. You never know when the situation is going to turn from a small conversation to a termination. It is important for legal reasons to have everything in writing, documented with dates and details about the conversations or warnings that have already taken place.



## Maintain a Healthy Distance

What I am talking about here is your relationships with your staffing team. They say it's lonely at the top and that's because if you allow yourself to get too close to your staff personally it will bite you in the butt at some point in your career.

I am not saying that as director, owner, or leader you should not be friendly with your staff and get to know them well inside and outside the classroom but what I am saying is that when you are in leadership there is a clear boundary that needs to be maintained between yourself and your staff.



## Always Review Major Decisions

When it comes to leadership in general it is important to always have a second set of eyes along your journey. This may be somebody in your center that works at your leadership level or higher or somebody outside the center that is your mentor and someone you trust.

When dealing with big issues it's always best to have a second set of eyes and ears to bounce ideas off, especially when someone's livelihood is in question.

## ✓ Document All Meetings With Email

As I mentioned above, documenting all important conversations is a great way of protecting yourself, and the second part to this is following the conversation or reprimand up with an email explaining the issue. **WARNING:** be careful how you state things in writing because it is easy to sound condescending, insulting, or rude in an email and that can also come back to bite you

- A few important things that should be included in a confirmation email:
- that you met with the staff member(s) to discuss an issue
- the date (and time) your conversation took place
- what the issue is in plain terms
- what the working solution is

Email is a great way to document the fact that a verbal conversation occurred as the email itself is dated and if needed you can see that the staff member received the communication as well. It also provides opportunity to clarify the verbal conversation, acts as a second conversation, and is in writing for both parties so it avoids the 'he said, she said' arguments down the road.

Full disclosure, sometimes I would not send a follow up email to a staff member if I was concerned about them having a copy of the follow up or escalating things online. Also you want to make sure to have a write-up of the conversation that is in more detail placed in their staff file. Use discretion on this please, as this can be controversial if not dealt with discreetly.

## ✓ Put Staff on Leave

In some situations, offering paid leave (even long-term) will cause you fewer headaches than having a staff member stick around working in the classroom with the rest of your teaching staff. It's a good way to minimize further friction without running afoul of labour laws. Of course paid employee leave is not ideal for every circumstance but I recommend it for serious situations such as when drugs are involved, you do not trust the staff member around other staff, or you can't trust them around children for any reason.

Paid leave can give you and the staff member involved a chance to review the findings and see if continued employment makes the best sense for either of you and although it's not the cheapest option it may save you time, money and even litigation down the road.

Like I have said before being a director of a childcare company can be super complex and there is no single right way to handle every situation. It's my hope that each of the tips above helps you put a plan in place to deal with difficult situations.

The key is knowing what steps you'll take and following them each time a difficult situation arises. It's hard to know when a particular issue will become a huge problem so always follow the same documentation steps to protect yourself and your center from the fallout that all too often comes from navigating difficult situations with your staff.

# Firing Employees



## How to Fire an Employee



## Write Up Warning(s)

Very rarely is it ever acceptable to fire someone without any warning. There should be conversation(s) that occur about the issue(s) and a formal write-up done well before the decision is made to fire an employee.

I suggest at least one verbal conversation and 2 write-ups before having any conversations around letting an employee go. Give opportunity for them to improve or leave on their own, then have a termination process in place and follow it consistently to avoid issues.



## Don't Go Alone

When it comes time to let an employee go, always give the news with someone you trust present. You never know what someone will do at such an emotional and difficult time. I have seen people act very irrationally after getting let go, so having a second set of eyes and ears is a must to prevent unnecessary escalation from either you or the employee.



## Immediately Remove All Access

When you let an employee go, immediately remove all access to their work email, the building, and any staff communication channels. You can never guess when a staff member will become hostile and try to take you, your brand, or anyone else down with them.

My advice is to have someone working on this while you are breaking the news to your employee. Obviously this depends on the circumstance and your relationship, but I would cut off all formal communication with clients and staff after they are let go.

PLEASE NOTE: Make sure that your actions are legal. For more information seek out the employment standards in your area, contact a lawyer, or call a free advice hotline.

# What to Do After Firing Someone

Letting someone go is never easy. It can cause tension among your team members and even cause families to leave your center. When it is necessary to transition an employee it must be done with thought, respect, and care. Here are four things to do after you fire an employee at your child care center.

## ✓ Limit Their Communication

As mentioned above, after you let an employee go remove their access to communication with both the staff and families in the center. This might seem harsh, but you don't want them sending a mass email to either group and saying anything that may affect your reputation as a center or put anyone else at risk.

## ✓ Communicate With Your Team

The next thing to do is communicate with your team about the transition. Avoid mentioning specifics or making excuses and keep it to letting the team know that we have decided to transition the employee and we feel that is the best fit for the center. Make sure you are the first to communicate this with your team. You want them to get all the information and any facts you are willing to share straight from you first and have the opportunity to ask questions if desired.

## ✓ Communicate With Your Families

I recommend communicating with just the families from the individual's classroom unless the staff member worked with all the families directly.

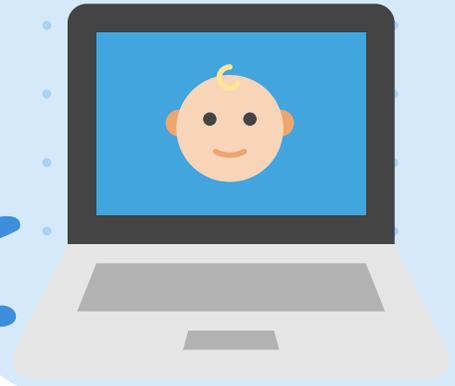
Keep your communication direct and include your staffing plan to replace the employee as this is the first question on a parent's mind. That means you need to have a plan in place before you let the employee go so you can notify the parents about the details right away.

## ✓ Adjust Job Duties

When a staff member transitions there are usually other duties that need to be distributed on top of their classroom assignments. Have a list of all the things they did and assign those tasks to other members of your team asap until you can bring in a new team member.

Letting an employee go is never fun for anyone. To make it easier, give plenty of warning and create a plan to make them better with the understanding that if they don't improve then they will be let go. If the firing comes as a shock you will not only lose the opportunity to improve your staff, but could be faced with an emotional outburst or even legal action.

# Staff Management Software



Now that we've discussed the major child care staff management opportunities and challenges, it's worth looking at how childcare software can help you streamline staff management. It's no secret that staff management is time consuming, and more time in the office means less time spent growing your business or in the classroom.

Let's finish then by taking a look at how childcare management software can save you time and make life easier!

## Communication Access

Communication is such an important part of leading a team of people so open communication was a big focus for me. The ability to send a quick email, text or picture update to both your staff and the families in your center is essential.

Sandbox helped me to keep open lines of communication with my staff and parents to head off any minor hiccups before they became major issues.



# Certification Tracking

Certification tracking was never easier than with Sandbox Software. In the Staff Tracking section, you can tell the system what you would like to track (example CPR certification) and when the certification or training is coming due (example May 2021).

When a certification is coming due the system will alert you on the home screen and allow you to send a quick email to the team member right from there. With all of the certifications needed by your staffing team, this type of function is non-negotiable and saves you time and headspace.

# Payroll Management

In Sandbox Software, you have access to tracking all of your staffing hours, print detailed reports, and make any notes necessary. This function makes running monthly payroll easy. Each report can be customized to fit your payroll dates and add whatever information you would like it to include.

# Teacher App

The teacher app in Sandbox allows your team to communicate and update families throughout the day. You and your staff can track attendance, have quick access to important child specific information, post photos and updates throughout the day, and even message parents on a secure messaging system.

Having a teacher app for your staff takes your communication to the next level and is a favourite of parents and teachers alike!

Staff Tracking		
Immunizations		
Type	Last Completed	Next Due
Flu Shot		
Tetanus		
Certifications		
Type	Last Completed	Next Due
FBI Clearance		
Police Check		
Training		
Type	Last Completed	Next Due
CPR and First Aid		



# Conclusion

If you want to be an industry leader you have to marry innovation with knowledge and experience. That means seeking out the best way to do things while using industry specific technology and other resources to make you a top performer.

Your child care team is your most important asset so managing them effectively will simultaneously lower your costs while boosting your reputation. It's my hope that this e-book helps you onboard, retain, and manage staff effectively to provide the essential service of childcare for all who need it.





## Grow your business with Sandbox

To stay up to date with the latest child care business tips and news, subscribe to our blog. It is our desire to come alongside and help you navigate the craziness of the child care world.”

“Child care centers help provide an amazing service to their communities and its considered an essential service in today’s world. We wish you all the best as you continue to develop and grow your childcare business!

[GET STARTED FOR FREE!](#)

Connect with us on social

