

The "Commander's Intent" Meeting Guide

Moving from "Rules in a Binder" to "Purpose"

Instruction & Implementation

Use this guide to help staff internalize the "Why" behind your policies. While Commander's Intent is your team's greatest asset when things go awry—as they often do in the unpredictability of childcare—it also provides the daily purpose needed to turn a list of rules into a professional standard. When a team member understands the reason behind a policy, they are not only more likely to follow it consistently, but they gain the clarity required to make sound, independent decisions in the heat of the moment.

How to Use This Guide

- **The Rhythm:** Dedicate **5–10 minutes** of your monthly meeting to one high-level policy. In one year, your team will have internalized the 12 most important "Whys" of your center.
- **The Focus:** Prioritize **high-risk** (Supervision/Safety) or **high-friction** (Transitions/Drop-off) policies.
- **The Goal:** Move beyond reading the words. Define the **Intent** so clearly that every staff member knows what "winning" looks like.
- **Application:** Distribute **page 2** of this guide to staff. Together, with staff, go through each of the **3 steps below**. Note: Have staff complete the page during the meeting. Writing helps with retention!

Step 1: The Three Pillars Explained

1. **The Objective (example policy-Proactive Playground Supervision):** What are we actually trying to do? (e.g., *Keep every child safe during playground time.*)
2. **The Stakes:** Why does it matter? (e.g., *Because injuries happen in a split second when we lose focus.*)
3. **The Visual Proof:** What does "Winning" look like in action? (e.g., *Teachers are panning and scanning area. Visual view of each child. Teachers not standing together talking.*)

Step 2: The Reality Check: What Can Go Wrong?

Policies work until a distraction happens. Always discuss a "What could go wrong" scenario.

- **Example:** A child is injured during playground supervision. The **Intent** remains direct supervision (visual line of sight of each child in your care) until you are relieved. You will need to care for the injured child while supervising the other children.
- **Adapt:** Position yourself so you can care for the injured child while still supervising the rest of the group.

Step 3: The Commitment

Close the meeting by asking the team to commit to the *Intent*, not just the rule. "This month, we aren't just following the [Policy Name] rule; we are owning the [Intent Name] mission."

Monthly Policy Intent Sheet

Policy of the Month: _____

Step 1: Define the Intent

Read the policy as a team, then distill it into the three pillars below:

1. The Objective (What are we actually trying to do?)
2. The Stakes (Why does it matter / What is at risk?)
3. Visual Proof (What does "Winning" look like?)

Step 2: The Reality Check Discussion (What Could Go Wrong?)

*Identify what could go wrong and define how to maintain the **Intent** during that distraction.*

Scenario 1: _____

Solution: _____

Scenario 2: _____

Solution: _____

Step 3: Our Commitment

"This month, we are owning the mission of: " _____ " Policy

Additional Notes: