

TOP 10 MINIMUM STANDARD DEFICIENCIES

Below is a list of the top ten reasons centers are cited for deficiencies in their programs. What changes can you make to eradicate these deficiencies in your program?

1. 746.3701 - All areas accessible to a child must be free from hazards. Supervision alone cannot prevent all accidents and injuries. Buildings, grounds and/or equipment in a state of disrepair threaten the health and safety of children. Consider bartering child care for handy-man services.

2. 746.1203(4) - Supervise children at all times, adjusting appropriately for different ages and abilities of children. Simply put, teachers should never leave their children for any reason even if a co-teacher is in the room with them, not even to step into a hallway, run to get needed supplies or take a quick bathroom break. Also, there are differences in the way a group of 2 year olds are properly supervised and the way a group of 5 year olds are properly supervised. Does your staff know the difference? Climbing abilities and upper body strength are perfect examples. Two year olds and five year olds are all great climbers, but the five year olds are better at getting down safely.

3. 746.1201(1) - Demonstrate competency, good judgment and self-control in the presence of children and when performing assigned responsibilities. Allowing children to play a running game inside an area not large enough to safely accommodate the activity, or positioning a stretchy headband to hold a pacifier more securely in a baby's mouth are common examples of poor judgment.

4. 746.1601 - Classroom ratio. If you operate your center in a way that makes it difficult for you to comply with this standard, you must re-think your situation. The potential risks far outweigh the benefits. If the issue is an everyday thing, you may need to hire more caregivers. But first look closely at the routes of your bus/van drivers, are they leaving too early to go on bus runs? Do you revamp your bus runs at least quarterly as children drop from your before & after school program? Are you sending out three buses every morning when in fact you now only need two? Is the cook taking too much time to clean the kitchen when she could be helping out in a nap room thus allowing a teacher to take a longer lunch break and then work 30 minutes later each evening without incurring overtime? Do you perform hourly attendance counts? Perhaps the teacher who comes on duty early and leaves early is not actually needed until a little later in the morning thus allowing her to stay later in the evening, too.

5. 745.625 - Submitting requests for background checks. You are so busy running your school that it is easy to place this in an in-box or To-Do list and the next thing you know too much time has gone by and you are out of compliance. We suggest using this chore as a time to bond with your new employee! While the new staff member is sitting in your office, go online and complete the request for background check. As you ask her for the required info, small exchanges of conversation will take place, too.

6. 746.1315(a) - One caregiver per group of children must have current training in first aid with rescue breathing and choking. The easiest way to prevent overlooking this is to color code the names of new employees on your daily staffing schedules until they have received all the training required for their position. You can also put the monkey on her back and instruct her to speak up and remind you if you schedule her to be alone in a classroom before she obtains the required training. It is also a good idea to schedule the required training as soon as possible and document the date you scheduled the class and on what date it will occur and file the info in the employees' staff files.

7. 746.3407 - You must clean, repair, and maintain the building, grounds, and equipment to protect the health of the children. Broken toilets, failing to wash toys before different children place them in their mouths, sharing of cribs or nap blankets and sheets, storing cleaning supplies on the same shelves as food and juice concentrate; allowing children to place their food (especially snacks) directly on the table rather than on a napkin or plate; allowing children to wash hands while serving bowls of food or prepared plates of food are sitting on the sink countertop are recurring examples of deficiencies regarding this standard.

8. 746.603(a)(3) - Statement of the child's health from a health-care professional. Make a rule regarding new enrollees' paperwork and enforce it. If your policies state that ALL paperwork must be complete before the child's first day of attendance or within three days - enforce it! It's silly to undergo an investigation because a child sustained a boo-boo at your facility, be cleared of any wrongdoing, but be cited because his file was incomplete!

9. 746.3401(a) - Your child-care center must have a sanitation inspection at least once every 12 months. Make a copy of the form or checklist used during a previous health inspection and perform your own monthly quick inspections to ensure year-round compliance. You can file a reminder to yourself 30 days prior to the next expected inspection in order to perform a thorough pre-inspection self-check. Make sure that your cook, housekeeping/janitorial staff and classroom teachers are aware of what is expected in order to stay in compliance, too. If the annual inspection falls off the health department's radar, don't breathe a sigh of relief because it will only come back to bite you later. Do the right thing and call them to remind them that your center is overdue and document on what date you called, the number you called, who you spoke with and what was said. File this documentation in the file with previous health inspections so that when licensing comes looking for the report, they easily find that you are on top of things.

10. 746.5101(a) - Your child-care center must have a fire inspection at least once every 12 months. Exactly the same information holds true for fire inspections as health inspections (see above.) And if you are fudging the info on the required record for monthly fire drills, shame on you. Do the monthly drills and use the real alarm when you do so that children and staff are less likely to panic in the event of a real emergency. Create a "cheat sheet" as to what number to call in order to put your alarm system on test, what number to call to let the local fire department dispatcher know that you are having a drill, how to reset your system, etc. and post it right on your alarm box. Actually performing these drills is the only way the teachers and staff will learn what to do in the event of an actual emergency, and muscle memory can be a life saver during a genuine emergency!