

# Family Child Care Marketing Plan

By Beth Mork, [bethmork@comcast.net](mailto:bethmork@comcast.net)

Many businesses develop a short and a long range marketing plan to ensure success and growth. Family child care providers are getting better and better at understanding that they are truly “small business owners” and conducting their programs like business owners. Below you will find a suggested calendar year marketing plan.

**Remember: Marketing is about public relations and recognition that grow your reputation as a professional and someone that others want to do business with, as well as someone whose product is identified as worth the cost and desired enough by the target market that people will be willing to pay the price for your services.**

**Economic times are difficult. Many providers are having a more difficult time getting placements than ever before because more people are out of work. Providers may need to be competitive to survive in many locations. Below are some suggestions for getting the word out about you and your program and helping to build the reputation that will keep your child care program full and successful.**

## **January:**

The IRS regulations state that if a parent provides you with a W-10, you are required to provide them with your Tax ID number and information so that they can use that information on their Income Tax Forms when claiming a child care expense. A “Professional” provider could demonstrate her recordkeeping and organizational skills by providing parents with two completed copies of a completed W-10 also stating the amount the parent actually paid for child care services for the previous tax year. Have the parent sign one copy and retain it for your records. It is likely to assure that parents who may be less organized and who may be less skilled at keeping good records, will accurately claim the amount the parent actually paid for child care services. Accompany your W-10 information with a sincere thank you for their business of the past year, a couple of your business cards and a suggestion that if they are happy with the service you provide, that they share your business information with any other friends or business acquaintances that may be needing child care now or in the future.

## **February:**

Make Valentine’s Day Cards or crafts such as a picture frame. You could take a picture of the child making the valentine for her parents and put that picture into the frame. Secure an address stamp or make stickers with your business name, address and phone number. If you make Valentine crafts with your children, stamp the back or bottom with your business information. Friends, family or business acquaintances who notice the Valentine, will also know the child made it in child care vs. a Sunday School Program or Preschool class.

## **March:**

March is National Nutrition Month. Preplan a menu for a week or a month. Attach your business information sticker or stamp your business information on the calendar. Copy one for each parent to take to work. Parents will know what the child had for lunch and

be less likely to prepare the same dinner. It gives you the opportunity to show the nice variety of meals and snacks you serve. If you add school days off, Holidays, any activities you do with the children during the month, it also shows your organization, professionalism and what your program offers to children. Parents do talk about their child care and it makes a parent proud to have something that shows the quality of care their child receives.

**April:**

Earth Day or Arbor Day: Plan something within your community. Do a Park Clean Up, or just start by doing a child care clean up and plant a tree in your yard with the children. Actually do this a week or so before Earth Day and take pictures of the children doing it. Get permission from your parents to use their child's picture and submit a short article to your local paper showing how you are teaching children how to care for the environment and encouraging others to do the same.

**May:**

Mothers' Day: Make a Mothers' Day Gift for each mom. On the back be sure to imprint your business information so now or years from now, a parent will remember where the child was when they made this special keepsake. Always date keepsakes.

Send something to work with mom on the last Friday before Mothers' Day – homemade muffin, roll, whatever, to have with her morning coffee. Include a thank you card for sharing her most precious gift with you and for choosing you for her child care provider. Send your moms flowers at work, if you can afford to do so.

Let providers in your local association or parents in your child care know if you will have openings this summer – whether for the whole summer or for specific weeks and that you would be willing to provide back up care for providers on vacation or who close for the summer. Have business cards or flyers ready to give them when you announce it.

**June:**

School is out. Ask your parents if all of their co-workers have child care arrangements made for the summer. Ask them to refer parents to you if they do not. Let parents know if there are weeks during the summer that you will have some of your children gone from child care and offer to do back up care for parents whose providers are taking time off this summer.

**July:**

Are you taking a summer vacation? Give parents at least a month's notice. Some really professional providers let parents know on a calendar once a year all of the days they will be closed or taking vacation, so parents have the option to plan ahead. Some parents need to sign up for their vacation at the beginning of the year. Ask your parents how their vacation policy works at their place of employment and work to accommodate the amount of notice they must give.

**August:**

Many parents plan to go to work in September. They may do so because one or more of their children start school making child care more affordable. Many providers lose children at the start of a school year because children they care for are in a different school district than the provider is. August is a great time to let Resource and Referrals know that you will anticipate openings at the start of the school year – ages and

numbers of openings. You should update your resource and referral every time the openings in your child care change.

**September:**

Offer parents an incentive for giving you a referral. One week or one day of free child care collectable after a referral has paid for one month or one week of child care.

Grandparents' Day is in September. It is traditionally the Sunday after Labor Day. Make Grandparents a card. Take a picture of the child working on the card and enclose it in the card for the grandparent. Get Grandparents' addresses from the parents and let the children actually mail the card from the child care to Grandma or Grandpa. Grandparents who live in your area may pass on the generous gift to other grandparents or their other children and providers have been known to get referrals this way. Parents brag at work when special things like this happen in their child care homes.

**October:**

Halloween/Fire Safety: Pass out safety information that you may get from classes, newspapers, or on-line in the form of a handout to parents. Include your business information from your business stamp or sticker on it so if it is reproduced for co-workers, friends, etc. everyone knows the source of the safety information. Getting your name out there is what marketing is all about. Parents choose child cares often by word of mouth referrals. Make yourself the kind of professional that parents want to share information about.

**November:**

What are you thankful for? Parents who are consistent, pay on time, respect your policies? Let them know. Send a special "I am Thankful for you!" card or letter to your parents. If you have openings, let them know that you value clients like them and would appreciate any referrals they can give, because you value word of mouth referrals also. You want clients with the same values and attributes they have. If parents do give you a referral, always send a thank you and if you can, a small gift to show your appreciation.

**December:**

Send out a newsletter highlighting all of the special moments you had this past year. Your newsletter should have your business logo, mission statement or philosophy and location information on it – in other words develop a business letterhead if you have not already done so and have it on everything you print and distribute to parents.

Some providers make a small album for each child with pictures or samples of crafts or drawings and notes about what they did during the year. Your album could have your business information on it also, so as it is proudly shared, your program gets credit for the great job you are doing with children.

Some providers have an end of the year party in December or even in January where parents can get together and meet the parents of the children their children are with every day. It is a special time to thank your customers. Send out invitations on your business stationery.