



- Prairie 5 • Child Care Choices
- Heartland Community Action
- Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council

Quality Care and Education
for Every Child

March-June 2010

Midwest Memo

Environment Rating Scale: Improving the Outcomes for Our Children

As many may have already heard, Parent Aware, is Minnesota's new pilot quality rating system. And, although Parent Aware — a voluntary rating system that assists parents in choosing quality programs for their children — is not yet available in this area, child care professionals can take steps to prepare their program for possible future participation in this process.

Yet, where and how does a provider begin? That's where CCR&R comes in. CCR&R staff are currently training in a consultation model. This will enable them partner with child care providers interested in maintaining and improving the environment for the children and their development experiences in their program.

One partnering opportunity includes becoming more familiar with the Environment Rating Scale — a key tool used in the Parent Aware rating process. This is a great tool for assessing your own child care environment.

The Environment Rating Scale, or ERS, is based on three needs children have: relationships with responsive adults, consistently and over time; stimulating learning activities; and the health and safety of every child.

The primary objective of the ERS consultation model is to partner CCR&R staff with child care providers in the development of skills and tools to continually assess and improve the quality of their program. As each program is unique, the consultation model works within a framework that takes into consideration what is currently working in the program. It blends the skills, knowledge and experience — of the provider and CCR&R staff — to build together an individualized design for quality improvement.

The ERS consultation model provides tools designed for assessing the specific child care environment.

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, or ECERS, is a tool designed to assess group/center programs for children of preschool through kindergarten age, 2½ to 5.

The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, or ITERS, is a tool designed to for child care center programs for children from birth to 2½ years of age.

The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, or FCCERS, is a tool designed for family child care programs conducted in a provider's home for children from infancy through school-age.

More information involving the ERS Consultation tools will be made available in the upcoming months, however, please contact CCR&R should you have any questions. We look forward to assisting those who are interested in becoming involved in this great opportunity to improve the life outcomes of our children.

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May 7th marks **Provider Appreciation Day**.

As a child care professional, you are the world's unsung hero. Your profession is one of the most underpaid occupations in the country. It takes a special person to work in this field and the contributions you make to the quality of children's and families' lives too frequently goes unnoticed. Provider Appreciation Day offers a unique opportunity for us to recognize and commend the unselfish dedication, commitment and compassion that child care professionals like you demonstrate every day.

From all of us to all of you
THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO—YOU ARE APPRECIATED!!!!

It's that time of year again.....no, I'm not talking about taxes. It's time to update your child care information!

We are currently working on collecting the Minnesota Child Care Business Update.

We would like to thank everyone who has already sent in their form. The information is very important for many reasons!

- Tracking trends related to child care.

- Plan training and support to meet your program needs.
- Update rate statistics available through the CCR&R agencies.
- Set CCAP reimbursement rates.
- Help parents find child care!

If you haven't already completed the business update by mail or online, please do so now. Call 866-511-2244 or go online before 3/28/2010 www.midwestchildcare.com.

Thank you for your help and your time!

Region 6E (Serving Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties)

NEW! ERS Consultation

We are looking for child care professionals (Centers or Family Child Care) who are interested in going through Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) consultation program.

What's involved? The consultant will help you assess the quality of your child care environment using the highly respected "Child Care Environment Rating Scales." You and the consultant will then set goals to build on your strengths and address areas of need. This is a process that takes place over

several months and is available at no cost to the child care professional. Call Becky at 320-235-0850 or email Becky at beckyk@heartlandcaa.org

Spring is Coming!

And that means more outside time for your children. We have some great books, full of ideas for encouraging children' to explore and learn outdoors.

\$\$\$ Money Matters

During these difficult economic times, keep your business strong.

We have some books to help you manage your business.

Centers: *The Child Care Center Management Guide*

Family Child Care: *The Tom Copeland Redleaf Business Series*

Call Becky at (320)235-0850

Region 6W (Serving Big Stone, Chippewa, La Qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties)

The Earthquake in Haiti: Talking with Children about Natural Disasters

By now the children in your care have had many opportunities to hear and/or learn about the recent earthquake tragedy in Haiti. The stories the child hears may prompt worry and questions. Are you prepared to handle these concerns and questions? For tips on how you can help children understand current events and the emotions that they may feel in response to them, visit the following websites: Child Care Aware's® Preparing for Disaster:

The Parent View
http://www.childcareaware.org/en/resources/preparing_for_disaster/
NACCRRRA's Helping Families Cope with Traumatic Events http://www.naccrra.org/for_parents/traumatic-events/parents

Tax Time doesn't have to be Taxing

It's that time of year again! However, 2010 can be the year your tax preparation doesn't have to be so taxing on you and your time. For more information, publications, and business tools that will help you with

questions involving your business or taxes visit www.resourcesforchildcaring.org and follow the Business Resources for Family Child Care Providers links.

For more information regarding the coping techniques or family child care business resources, please contact Deb Spaeth at 320.269.8727 or 800.292.5437 or via email at debsp5@willmarnet.com.

Region 7W (Serving Benton, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright Counties)

Caring for a Lifetime, Child Care Choices Conference is Saturday, March 27, 2010 at the Sauk Rapids Middle School. Go to www.childcarechoices.net for registration information.

Jim Gill's Family Room Tour- Sing, laugh and dance with Jim Gill at a free family concert on March 27, 2010 from 7:00-8:00 pm at the Sauk Rapids Middle School. Come before the concert from 5:30-7:00 pm for fun children's activities. Pizza and beverages will be for sale from 5:30-6:30 pm. Want to help

out our local food shelf? Bring a non perishable food item for donation. For more information contact Child Care Choices at 320-251-5081.

April 9th is the fourth annual Llama Llama Read-a-Rama. This is a special St. Cloud area community event, put on by United Way of Central Minnesota, St. Cloud Times, and many local partners to encourage reading with children, starting at birth. For more information on this event, and the April 8th kickoff event/pajama party at the St. Cloud Public Library, visit www.unitedwayhelps.org.

Empty Bowls Soup Feed Benefit- Would you like to provide support for fighting hunger in our community? This is the event for you! Each Soup Feed attendee pays \$10 (individual) or \$30 (family) to receive a handmade bowl, soup, bread, and a beverage, and enjoys a variety of entertainment. This event is on Sunday, March 21st from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm at the Paramount Arts District. This fundraiser supports the St. Cloud Area Crisis Nursery and Place of Hope. Call Conni at the St. Cloud Area Crisis Nursery for more information (320-654-1090).

Region 8 (Serving Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock Counties)



Does this logo look familiar to you? We hope so! In 2003, twelve communities in MN were selected to participate in the Early Childhood Initiative through the Minnesota Initiative Foundations. Murray County was one of those first twelve participants! Today, seven of the thirteen initiatives in Southwest MN are located in our area: Murray County, Redwood Falls, Worthington, Luverne, Mountain Lake, Windom, and Wabasso. "Love Learn

Thrive... Birth to Five!" These community groups work to increase school readiness for children. A number of young children spend most of their day in child care.

SWCCRR participates in these community initiatives as your child care representative — we are a constant voice at the table for issues impacting child care. We know how very important child care is to children and families. We encourage you to stay involved with the Early Childhood Initiative near you. Many

great projects have come out of these collaborative groups: workshop opportunities, child care provider recognition banquets, children's equipment, and family events. If there is something you need or would like to see in your community, let us know! We are here to help you and count on your input.

Karen DeBoer, Director- kdeboer@smoc.us
Karen Gadda, Resource Coord.-
kgadda@smoc.us
1-800-658-2444 or 507-376-4195

Art: Mess without Stress

Practical Solutions to Practically Every Problem

A mess during art time may mean that children are working hard and having fun. Too much mess, however, results in valuable time being wasted while cleaning up, in ruined equipment, in soiled clothes, and in frustration. The following suggestions will help keep messes to a minimum, while promoting creativity.

Preventing Problems

- Lay newspaper down across the whole table and tape the edges. Roll up the whole mess at the end.
- Keep a trash can next to the art area. Both children and adults are more likely to use it.
- Provide a small size broom and a large dustpan. Many children enjoy sweeping, especially when two can do the activity together—one sweeps while the other holds the dustpan.
- Keep a basin with soapy water and sponges and some towels nearby. Children can help themselves and clean up on their own.

Dealing with Existing Problems

Drippy Paint

- Mix powdered tempera with nontoxic liquid cornstarch to keep it thick.

(This causes less dripping and makes paintings more satisfying to children by giving them more control over the paint.)

- Give the children specific directions, individually at the easel, on wiping both sides of the brush on the edge of the container before painting with it. (Many reminders will be needed.)

Paint Spills and Waste

- Paint containers that are short and wide are less likely to tip over. Use frozen juice containers that you have cut down, half-pint milk cartons, and commercially produced plastic no-spill containers.
- Use paint brushes with short handles (about 6 inches). This gives children more control over the brush and eliminates the problem of the brush flipping out of the container or tipping it over. To eliminate the danger of one poking a child in the eye, consider cutting off the ends of the brush handles if they are pointy.
- To avoid wasting paint due to drying up, pour unused paint back into a storage jar or cover the individual containers at the end of each day. Wash brushes thoroughly each day to make them last.

Gluing White glue squeezed from a bottle is often a cause of conflict between providers and children. Providers encourage children to “just use a little” and children feel frustrated because either nothing comes out or too much does. Too often there are not enough bottles for each child to have one, the tops glue shut, and children become too involved in the fun of pouring, squirting, and smearing. (Pouring, squeezing, and smearing are very important physical needs that young children have, but they can be better and more cheaply met through water or sand play.

- As an alternative to the squeeze bottle, put a small amount of glue in a cup for each child and provide and popsicle stick, small brush, or plastic eyedropper (with the hole widened) as an applicator. To save money, purchase the glue in a large, gallon size.
- An alternative to white glue is paste, which is less messy but will not work as well with certain materials such as wood. A few small containers of paste could be passed around or children can have individual squares of paper with some paste on them. Each child can use a stick, brush, or their fingers to apply the paste.

New Name

help me



Same Great Services

Minnesota’s Help Me Grow: Infant and Toddler Intervention services (Interagency Early Intervention Committee - IEIC) are provided for eligible children birth to three years of age who may be experiencing delays in their development for several reasons, including special health conditions. These services are designed to meet the unique developmental needs of each child and their family and are offered at no additional cost to families.

Accessing these services as early as possible will ensure the best developmental outcomes for the child.

Do you have concerns about:

- Learning
- Talking
- Moving
- Behavior
- Health
- Vision
- Hearing

Or has a child in your care been diagnosed with any condition that may affect their development such as Down Syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, etc?

If so call Help Me Grow to discuss your concerns with an early childhood specialist who can help figure out if an evaluation may be helpful for a child you are caring for.

Call Help Me Grow at 866-693-4769 or visit the website www.MNParentsKnow.info.



P.O. Box 159
Montevideo, MN 56265
Phone: 800-292-5437
www.midwestchildcare.com



Region 8
Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council



Week of the Young Child ~ April 11-17, 2010

The Week of the Young Child was first celebrated nationwide in 1971. It is sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the country's largest organization of early childhood professionals. This week is dedicated to focus attention on young children, their families, and the early childhood programs who serve them.

"The Week of the Young Child is a time to recognize that children's opportunities are our responsibilities, and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that each and every child experiences the type of early environment — at home, at child care, at school, and in the community — that will promote their early learning." naeyc.org

The theme for this year's Week of the Young Child is **Early Years are**

Learning Years®. Quality early childhood programs are an integral part of our society! Children's lives are shaped by their learning and development. What we do DOES make a difference!

Week of the Young Child is an opportunity to celebrate all of the places where children spend their time. Regardless of the name of the program, there are many opportunities for children to receive important educational and nurturing experiences.

Join us in celebrating the programs that provide warm learning environments — helping children succeed in school and life!

Get involved in activities and events happening in your area! To find out more about local Week of the Young

Child events, contact your local CCR&R office.

For more information about the Week of the Young Child, visit the website at www.naeyc.org/woyc

**Week of the
Young Child**

April 11-17, 2010

WOYC