



Marketing Your Child Care Business

Quality Child Care Impacts Everything

HANDOUT #16



“Marketing” is a term used to describe the ways you can spread the word about your business. Regardless of whether you are the owner of a new child care business or a provider who has been caring for children for years, it is important to have a comprehensive marketing plan to promote your program. Attracting new families is important for your bottom line. If business isn’t booming, it’s time to consider some new strategies. You can market your program more successfully if you develop a plan that identifies your image, your marketing strategies and goals.

Defining Your Services

The first step in marketing your child care is to identify the qualities that make you and your child care program unique. Your special skills and talents make your child care business more attractive to families and help you retain families currently enrolled. Are you close to a

major employer or near public transportation? Do you provide transportation to local schools or offer after-hours care? Are you experienced with art or music activities? Do you have experience or specialized training caring for children with special needs or children of a specific age group (infants, preschool, school-age)? Once you have identified your unique services, develop a brief program statement that describes your business. You can use this statement for voicemails, advertising, written materials and face-to-face meetings. For example: “Mary’s Playhouse specializes in infant and toddler care in a garden setting” or “Learning, sharing, and growing at Kidstown.”

TIP: Child Action can provide you with market data about the child care need in your zip code. Just call (916) 369–0191 for more information. This data is important to consider as you develop your services. You may attract new families if you offer services that other providers in your area do not, such as evening or weekend hours.

Branding Your Business

Once you have carefully defined the services you have to offer, consider developing a brand for your business. Branding helps people identify and remember your business and gives them a better understanding of the qualities or characteristics that make it special. A brand incorporates several elements, including a logo, color scheme and program statement or tagline. Your logo should be consistent and visible on all advertising and written materials. A professional logo is simple and reproduces well in a variety of sizes and formats. Avoid logos that are too detailed because they are hard to reproduce, especially in smaller formats. Consult a graphic designer to help you develop a logo that is usable for websites and print material. Incorporate your program statement or a shorter tagline into your marketing materials, including flyers, stationary and signs.

"Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing."

– John D. Rockefeller



First Impressions

You know the old saying: You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The first contact you have with parents is often over the telephone. Answer in a friendly tone and be prepared with information about your rates, openings and activities. Train everyone who answers the phone to do the same. Politely let the caller know if you are too busy with the children to talk. Take down the caller's name, phone number and email address so you can get back in touch. Also, a friendly voicemail message with basic information about your program demonstrates professionalism. Be sure to respond to voicemail messages promptly.

TIP: When parents contact you for the first time, fill out a contact form with their name(s), address, phone numbers, email, plus their child's name, age and birthday. Use this information to send out birthday cards or mailers for special events. Even if the family chooses another provider, you may come to mind if they need to select a new provider.

Child Care Referrals

Did you know that Child Action's child care referral database is an excellent way to promote your business and connect you to families in need of child care services? Best of all, participation is free. Parents can call or go online and find up-to-date referrals to eligible licensed child care providers in Sacramento County, including you! Call us at (916) 369-0191 and we will update your provider profile or discuss the information needed to add you to our database.

Curb Appeal

Often parents will drive by a facility to check it out. Make sure your "curb appeal" is in order with professional and visible signs and a tidy exterior free of graffiti, garbage and cobwebs. Make sure the windows are clean, the lawn is mowed and the plants are well-maintained. A clean and organized exterior lets families know you care about the environment you provide to children.

Attracting New Business

Who are you trying to reach? You may be looking to fill school-age slots or promote your new preschool program. The strategies you use will be based on the needs of your program. For example, to fill after-school slots, you may choose to advertise in mid-to-late summer in local parent magazines. Develop family-friendly messages to promote these services. Create a budget and a plan for the year that includes the annual costs for advertising, printing, equipment, stationary, promotional items and professional services. The plan should also include marketing goals, including the number of families you want to reach. Track your progress on a monthly basis and refine your strategy as needed.

Advertising

Business cards are an inexpensive way to market your business and can be ordered at minimal cost. Keep them with you at all times and ask friends or family to share them, too. Bring business cards to pediatrician's offices, dental offices, children's clothing stores, laundromats and grocery stores. Make small baggies of homemade play dough with your business card attached and distribute them at community events. You can also copy flyers and distribute them at local community centers, schools and businesses. Other advertising options include ads in local family magazines and newspapers. These options can be effective, but expensive.

Please note: If you distribute written materials or post signs for your program, Community Care Licensing requires you to include your license number on all publications. If you are not yet licensed but have submitted your application, you may advertise with the statement "Pending Licensing approval. Not currently licensed."

Tip: For safety reasons, family child care providers should avoid putting their addresses on publications and business cards. Your phone number and neighborhood on a publication is enough information.

The Internet

A website is a useful tool to market your child care program. Creating a website involves several steps. First, you need to purchase a "domain name" (your web address, such as www.tinastotgarden.com), next select a company to host your site, and finally decide

what information you want on your website. Many web hosting companies provide do-it-yourself tools to help you purchase your domain name, build your site and add information and photos. These companies may also include email addresses with your domain name, such as tina@tinastotgarden.com. You can also work with a web designer to create a website for you. A successful website is kept up to date. If you cannot update your website regularly, opt for general information about you and your program and contact information and avoid posting information that can become out of date quickly.

Marketing isn't just for big businesses. It can help connect your program to families who need your services, build your relationships with other organizations in the community and set a strong foundation for your future. Don't be afraid to try new strategies or contact some of the resources in this handout for more ways to improve your child care business.

Training and Technical Assistance

Child Action

10540 White Rock Road #180,
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670
(916) 369-0191
www.childaction.org

Capital Region Small Business Development Center

Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
One Capitol Mall, Suite 700
(916) 319-4268
www.capitalregionsbdc.com/

Sacramento SCORE - Counselors to America's Small Business

6502 Sylvan Road, Citrus Heights, CA 95610
(916) 635-9085
www.sacramento.score.org

Internet Marketing

www.constantcontact.com
www.mymailout.com

Tip: Child Action's lending library has books and resources on management, marketing, and legal issues in child care business development. Come by to check out these resources, or browse the library online at www.childaction.org.