How to Manage
Before & After School Child Care for K-12 Schools

VANCO

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Introduction

With many parents working throughout the day, there's a demand for your school or district to provide child care before and after school. If you're looking to offer child care for your school or searching for ways to better manage an existing program, you might be a little overwhelmed. But don't worry. We've worked with school districts across the country and have gathered the tips and best practices you need to build an effective program as painlessly as possible.

Program Administration

Having a solid foundation for your before and after school child care program will empower you to offer a high quality of care. Here are a few tips that will help you improve an existing program or start a new one.

1 Consider your core values, mission or objective statement

You don't need to have a mission statement embossed onto a placard within your facility, but you and your staff should be able to explain the value of your before and after school program. Furthermore, you should be able to explain what makes your program unique or excel. Gaining consensus among staff members will help you strive to offer the value you promise.

2 Plan a solid curriculum

Building your before and after school program's curriculum can be challenging, as there are many great activities to choose from, each with its own benefits. That said, any curriculum should include enriching activities such as play, academic support, interest clubs and groups and mentorship.
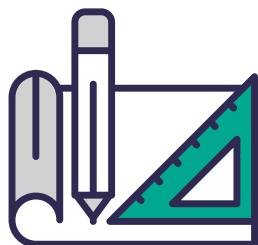
Creating an open, flexible plan, where several activities are happening at once enables students to choose to participate in activities that meet their interests. Here are some core activities to include in your program curriculum.

Tutoring & homework aid: Helping students with homework can be a core aspect of your program. Start by scheduling homework time. Set aside a quiet space or room for homework and have staff members on hand to answer questions and provide guidance. You can also hire bilingual tutors to help students.

Mentorship programs: Students benefit from mentorship programs such as Big Brother, Boy & Girl Scouts or in-house programs. They receive valuable mentorship and build lasting relationships with their mentees.

Physical activities: Play and physical activity are vital aspects of child development. After a long day at school, students may feel rambunctious and full of pent-up energy. Encourage physical activities such as open gym time or playground time to help them release energy.

Family engagement: You can invite families to events that take place after the workday. This can be a great time for students to bond with their families and make connections with other families within the program's community.

3 Establish strong policies and procedures

If you're an existing program you probably have policies and procedures spelled out inside a manual, but when is the last time they were updated or even looked at? Having these policies and procedures written down helps. It gives your teachers and staff uniform guidelines to handle tricky situations with confidence. It also helps new staff members get up to speed faster once they start.

Be proactive when it comes to addressing the potential situations to avoid costly missteps. Make sure all staff is provided with a copy of the afterschool program's policies and procedures. It's essential all staff are aware of these policies, so be sure to hold regular meetings to ensure everyone is on the same page.

4 Provide ongoing training

Child care best practices are consistently evolving. You and your staff need to keep up with new trends and supporting research to ensure you provide the best care. Empower and encourage staff to continue their training and education. Not only does this provide a competitive edge for your afterschool program, but it means you'll be employing experts in the field. Consider offering benefits, such as bonuses for staff who complete training programs.
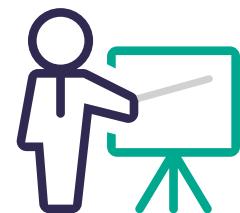
5 Prioritize communication

Communication is the key to success for any collaborative project, and nothing requires a more collaborative effort than providing child care. An afterschool program works in collaboration with a student's school staff, family, coaches and more to provide the best care possible. Keeping the lines of communication open between all parties can ensure the student benefits from consistent care.

6 Set your billing rate carefully

Setting the right rate for your program is critical. The billing rate you choose will have a lasting impact on your success, so you'll have to access your finances and perform research before coming to a final decision. Here are some things that your rate will influence:

- **Competitiveness:** If you are faced with a lot of child care competition in your program's area, the rate you set can make your program more or less attractive.

- **Income:** The income and sustainability of your program will depend on the rate you set in conjunction with other factors such as enrollment and operating expenses.

- **Student enrollment rate:** The number of students you'll need to maintain profitability will be determined by the rate you set. If you set a higher rate, you'll need fewer students. With a lower rate, you'll need more students to stay afloat.

When setting your rate, you'll need to start with your total operating costs. Any costs associated with keeping your program running, including utilities, rent, salaries and more, need to be accounted for and recorded. The finance office within your school or district should be able to help you scale your program's growth and budget in a stable, manageable way.

7 Set your billing policy

Once you've set your rate, it's time to decide how you'll collect. Establishing your billing and payment policy will enable you to collect payments more efficiently. Additionally, you'll be able to regulate your income with timely payments from clients and streamlined payment options. Here are some things to consider when creating your billing and payment policy.

- **Billing frequency:** At what frequency will you bill clients? Many programs bill quarterly with advance payments. However, parents enjoy the flexibility of a tiered payment model or monthly payments.

- **Refunds:** Will you provide refunds? If so, under what circumstances? Refunds can be tricky to navigate. You don't want to lose out on money you've earned, but it's important to be understanding of situations with extenuating circumstances. Setting your refund policy should be done with care. Be sure to note your policy on enrollment contracts.

- **Late payments:** What will your late policy be? Will you offer a grace period? Nobody wants to spend time chasing down payments. Your late payment policy should be clear with enforceable consequences ranging from late fees to un-enrollment. Again, this should be clearly written on enrollment contracts.

- **Accepting payment:** How will you accept payment? Digital payments are becoming increasingly common and more convenient. However, checks and cash payments still have their place. Choosing multiple payment methods makes it easy for families to make payments on-time.

- **Assign late pick-up fees:** How will you handle late pick ups? Protecting your time is important, so set a clear late pick-up fee policy. Assign a consistent fee when families pick up their student past your child care hours.

- **Raising your rates:** It's possible you may have to raise your rates. If you do, you'll need to include the possibility within your enrollment contract. Drafting a form letter detailing the cost increase, when the new rates will take effect and contact information for your office can save time in the future.

8 Pay close attention to staff scheduling

Staff scheduling isn't just a necessary administrative task. It's a duty that offers many benefits to both you and your staff. To maximize these benefits, strategizing your scheduling policies and procedures is essential. Here's a breakdown of the benefits of managing staff scheduling.

- **Managing your budget:** Scheduling can help you manage your program's budget. You can avoid losses by not over-scheduling staff or under scheduling them. Maintaining a strict schedule will also help you meet mandated student-teacher ratios.

- **Maintain a healthy work-life balance:** Both you and your staff benefit from a healthy work-life balance where staff members aren't overworked or under-appreciated. Notifying staff of schedule changes in advance enables them to plan around work and encounter fewer scheduling conflicts.

- **Better Collaboration:** Collaboration is most successful when everyone is on the same page. Whether you're managing a staff of four or forty, staying organized is crucial.

Track staff hours and time-off

If your program employs child care specialists outside of school staff, you'll need to ensure staff members can maintain their full or part-time status, which means tracking their hours and time-off. Generally, to maintain full-time employment status, a person needs to work at least 130-hours in a month or 30 weekly hours on average. For many people, full-time employment isn't just a title. It can affect benefits and other important services. So, you must help them maintain their status via scheduling.

If your program's staff members are working overtime hours, you'll need to track that as well. Your program's budget might not be able to accommodate many workers earning overtime.

Prioritize communication and schedule sharing

Managing child care scheduling requires the lines of communication to stay open between program staff and families. Staff may need to call out of work on short notice, and students may need to be picked up early due to illness. Your program should have solutions in place that support fast and responsive communication for these situations.

Staff and families should have equal access to the schedules that are relevant to them. In addition to providing digital access to schedules, send out paper ones to families and keep a master staff schedule in a centralized location that staff can access. This will prevent headaches.

Establish a strong attendance policy for students and staff

Some schools have policies in place that require students to attend a minimum number of days a week or times a month, especially if you utilize a tiered payment model. Concerning staff scheduling, this can help you avoid over or under scheduling staff members according to wildly fluctuating student attendance rates.

Noticing trends in attendance can also help you recognize peak times and low times so you can adjust staff scheduling. For example, snow and poor weather may require you to have staff stay longer in the winter. You can use this data to your advantage by scheduling according to trends.

9 Track attendance carefully

Attendance tracking is an intricate system that tracks attendance, absences, vacations, early pickups and more. Your attendance tracking system's goal should be to have such accurate records that you can look back on any given day and list who was at your facility, when and for how long.

Here are some of the reasons you'll need your records to be pristine.

- **Planning ahead:** The longer you keep attendance records, the more accurate you'll be when it comes to spotting attendance trends. You can use these trends to be proactive about scheduling staff during peak and low attendance times.

- **Keep students safe:** Keeping accurate attendance records can help ensure classrooms aren't overwhelmed by adhering to a strict student-teacher ratio. Moreover, you'll have a detailed record of who has entered the facility and when.

- **Providing personalized service:** Has a student's attendance dipped? By keeping records, you can provide personalized service by reaching out to their family with your attendance concerns in a timely manner.

- **Records for official purposes:** There are many official entities that you might have to share your attendance records with. For example, students that receive subsidized care may need to provide proof of attendance. You may also need to submit attendance records for licensing purposes.

Top five attendance tracking tips

Now that you know how important attendance tracking is, you can get started on building your own strategy. Don't worry though. If you follow the following tips you can build an accurate attendance tracking system for your program.

1. **Send out a tentative yearly schedule**
   Though it can be difficult to plan a year in advance, putting together a tentative schedule for the year can give both your program and student families a solid foundation to work with. For example, if a family plans a vacation or has a scheduling conflict, they can notify you of those missed days ahead of time. This can help you plan for those absences, including ordering one less meal for a week or reducing staff for that week.

2. **Keep digital records**
   Digitizing records will not only ensure they can be accessed whenever you need them, but it also simplifies organization. With the right software, you can track trends in attendance and save changes to records with ease. You can also view individual attendance records on demand and share them when needed.

Most importantly, you'll have a detailed record of every individual, whether staff, student, family or third-party vendor, who has entered your facility. This is a critical safety measure that can make a big impact if the records are ever needed.

3. **Make signing in and out a breeze**
    Make it easy for families to pick up and drop off their students. Ensure all families understand the sign-in and sign-out process by discussing it during the enrollment period. You don't want long lines and chaos during pickup.

    An efficient system prioritizes speed and accuracy. Consider a contactless sign-in solution that records which student is being signed in or out, the sign-in or sign-out time and who is signing them in. This way, you'll be able to avoid human error, such as signing in the wrong student or recording the wrong time. Your records will be much more accurate.

4. **Send a monthly newsletter**
    Again, this will enable families to plan ahead. If there is a significant change from the tentative yearly schedule you put out, note those changes within your newsletter every month.

    Depending on your system, a newsletter can also help parents be proactive when it comes to their responsibilities. For example, if a student is scheduled to bring snacks for their classroom, if you are planning a party, or if there is a family event, putting that information in the newsletter can serve as a reminder to families.

5. **Have parents sign an attendance policy agreement**
    You want to ensure students are getting the most out of your program. Setting requirements for attendance can regulate students' attendance and ensure those enrolled use the service you're providing.

    When a new student is enrolled, have parents sign an attendance policy. Barring extenuating circumstances or emergencies, students should be consistently meeting the attendance quota.

10 Manage difficult parents

Sometimes, it can be tougher to figure out how to communicate with parents than communicating with their children. That's why strategies that establish best practices regarding communication with, sometimes difficult, parents are essential.

Here are some essential tips on how to effectively communicate with parents and make the most of every conversation.

- **Address your feelings**
  When confronted with a difficult parent, it can be tough to take in what they are saying if you're not aware of how you are feeling. As a result, your response may be less than ideal and hinders the strong, positive relationship you are trying to forge.

  When you are in tune with your internal dialogue, you can apply useful ways to communicate with parents without falling prey to stress or frustration.

- **Listen and avoid the defensive approach**
  With a level-headed approach, you can actively take in what a parent is truly saying. Even if you disagree, try not to jump on the defense when met with a concern or criticism. A parent wants to be heard.

  Do not interrupt them until they've said their piece and try to understand where they are coming from. No matter the circumstances, there's one thing you both have in common: caring for the student. With this common ground, you may be able to continue a challenging conversation more productively.

- **Use "I" statements**
  Sometimes people can forget that even child care providers are human beings, not simply robotic professionals. Using "I" statements in a difficult conversation with a parent helps ground the issue and helps you both find compromise. In practice, this looks like choosing:

  "I feel as if this conversation isn't productive."

  Rather than,

  "You are making this conversation unproductive."

  A simple change in language can make a big difference and prevent the parent from turning defensive.

- **Emphasize that you're on the same team**
  Along with "I" statements, consider a statement such as, *I know we both care about Lisa and that we are concerned about how she handles anger. What I try to do is calm her down in the following ways. What do you think of that?*

  A statement like that can take two opponents and remind them of their common goal. You're on the same team, even if one team member forgets.

- **Ask questions**
  Like the statement above, ending an observation with a question puts the ball back into their court. Asking a question further indicates you care about their opinions and thoughts. It also makes it clear you need their contribution to solve the problem. That makes a parent feel needed and involved, which underscores the notion of being on the same team.

- **Empathize**
  Parents have a heavy emotional investment in their child, as all child care providers know. What may be harder to see is their investment in you. Even when they don't show it, most parents value your good opinion and are easily hurt when they feel they don't have it. Any "negative" comment about their child is heard as a criticism of their parenting.

  Your best bet is to empathize with the parents' dilemma and express loving concern for their child. Highlight ways you know the parent is working on issues and commend their efforts before launching into any concerns.

- **Be specific**
  Acknowledge that this isn't easy for you. Tell the parents you are not being critical, but that you want them to know what you see. If the parents deny what you report, continue to focus on what you have seen. Be ready to cite specific behaviors that illustrate your concerns about the student. Then, if questions arise, you can be specific and avoid vague generalities that can be misinterpreted more easily.

- **Respect their choice**
  At the end of the day, one-hundred tips for communicating concerns with parents cannot prevent an unfavorable outcome. Respect their choice. If, in spite of all your efforts, they make a contrary decision, that is their right. Down the road, they will remember you cared enough to make a difficult recommendation.

- **Find reciprocity**
  Even though parents deny it, usually they have heard about any serious problem again and again from a variety of sources. You may even notice that one parent seems more receptive and aware than the other.

  It can be helpful to have that parent restate the observed behaviors in his or her own words so that the other parent realizes that you are not being critical of them or their child. You are sincerely interested in helping. The more you can highlight how much you value their child and the parents' efforts to do the best for their child, the more likely your point will be heard.

- **Compromise**
  First, ask the parent if they have ideas on how to move forward. Is there a consensus between you two on an aspect of the issue? Are there things both of you could improve upon? Seeking compromise with a parent is easier when you ask them to find it first. Compromise is often the best route in these cases. The results generally favor the child, which is the most important thing.

- **Follow-up after a difficult conversation**
  Reach out to the parent in a timely manner following the conversation or incident. Following up shows you care and have not put the matter to rest. It emphasizes your commitment to their student and to the parent, leaves room for improving the relationship and creates a clear channel of communication.

Promoting Well-Being in Students

Providing quality care for K-12 students is key to the success of your program. There are many ways to offer great care, but before and after school programs should focus on three key areas to promote well-being.

1 Respecting and promoting diversity

The promotion of diversity is an effort to enhance and increase diversity in a given environment.

Diversity offers a range of benefits in any setting. For students, these benefits are a bit more distinct. The benefits of diversity in child care include:

- **Increased creativity and innovation:** In a diverse setting, students can leverage their classmates' different backgrounds and experiences to find creative solutions to problems.

- **Nurturing empathy:** A known empathy gap arises when children meet others outside of those that share fundamental aspects of their identity. Exposing children to diversity enables them to overcome this empathy gap sooner rather than later.

- **Preparation for future diverse settings in adulthood:** Children don't stay young forever. As they grow, they will likely encounter an increased number of people with different backgrounds, especially as they go on to college or enter the workforce. Respecting diversity in child care programs provides students with crucial preparation for the future.

Overall, diversity is essential. Understanding the value of different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences can be challenging for some students. However, it's a critical skill, one that can lead to lifelong friendships and mutual respect. Here are some of the most effective ways to promote diversity in a child care program if you need guidance.

Create an environment that reflects diversity

Child care environments encompass everything from the posters on the wall to art materials used during program activities. All of these materials should be carefully chosen to promote healthy development, learning and diversity.

If you're unsure about whether your environment reflects and promotes diversity, there are many tools available to help. This worksheet provides an excellent questionnaire to help directors and staff determine whether they have made a significant effort to create an environment that promotes diversity.

Choose activities that promote diversity

There are many ways to teach students about diversity. Some of the best (and fun!) ways to teach diversity is by creating activities that help students experience it. While you can't take a class trip to another country, you can make it your mission to promote a curriculum that includes learning about other cultures and peoples. Here are some activities that offer great strategies on how to promote diversity in child care effectively.

Storytime: When choosing which books to make available during before and after care, be sure to include diverse book selections. Start by looking for books with characters from different backgrounds. This website provides a detailed list of culturally diverse children's books and where to find them. Start your search there!

Celebrate student diversity: Work with parents to help students create a presentation of their culture, so students can learn about their peers' different cultures.

Set up a travel station: For some students, the idea of a global world filled with many different cultures and peoples can be difficult to grasp. You can help students understand this better by creating a global travel station where students can "visit" a different country and learn about its culture. Update this station with new countries throughout the year.

Acknowledge and respect cultural diversity

Acknowledging and respecting diversity is an integral aspect of diversity and inclusion efforts, even in your child care program. A person's culture can greatly impact their lives, including how they dress, social interactions, holiday celebrations and various practices. Teaching kids in child care about cultural diversity can help them better understand and respect another person's culture.

Reaching out to families and the local community can help promote cultural diversity in child care. These volunteers can give information about the different cultures represented in the students and staff. With this information, you can work to acknowledge and respect cultural diversity within your program.

2 Promote physical activity

With [18.5% of children and adolescents](#) touched by childhood obesity, the call for physical activity has never been more amplified. That is why healthy play is essential. It aids in intellectual development, social development, emotional development and physical development.

Physical inactivity can also lead to health consequences. Without expending the calories they take in through physical exercise, children are prone to energy imbalance which results in excessive weight gain. The risk of heart disease increases, along with the risk of diabetes, low bone density and cancer. Those are some pretty stark downsides and can be easily avoided by simply incorporating physical activity.

How to promote physical activity in a child care program

Planning regular intervals of unstructured playtime is a good place to start. Students certainly need time and room to climb, jump, skip, run or move around. When scheduling, consider planning two or more blocks for outdoor playtime. The recommended total is 60 minutes of physical activity per day, so if you split those up into shorter blocks, you can spread out the fun.

Physical activity can also be incorporated by initiating active games, such as "follow the leader," or a jumping game. Moreover, when initiating such active games, gently encourage all students in your program to participate. However, refrain from forcing them. If reluctant students prefer to watch before joining in, give them the time to do so.

Another idea would be to set up an obstacle course that has different activities allowing each child to compete on their level of ability. This allows for shared enjoyment and a bit less competition.

Physical activities for younger students in child care programs

When thinking of physical activities for your younger groups in before and after care programs, there are countless ideas to incorporate. Here are some examples of easy active play ideas for younger students.

"Row Your Boat" - Named after the classic children's song, "Row, row, row your boat," this indoor exercise requires no equipment. Children will sit with their feet touching those of their partner. Then, they hold hands, leaning forward and backward as they sing "row, row, row your boat."

"Music Detective" - Play music from a phone or another device, but make sure to hide it well. Then, task the students to find the phone by following the sound. This both engages them physically and intellectually.

Speaking of music, musical chairs is another great way to get kids moving. Beware, however, as it tends to get competitive and may raise emotions to a level you did not intend for.

"Animal Time" - A surefire way to get children moving is by asking them what their favorite animal, and then circling up and having everyone act out the animal's behavior.

"Hit the Balloon" - The point of the game is to not let the balloon touch the ground. Children are encouraged to hit the balloon to keep it in the air.

3 Manage illness

When parents drop their students off, the responsibility falls on your shoulders to maintain standards that minimize the chances of spreading any illness, including the novel coronavirus.

Considering you will likely receive questions about your protocol and disinfecting methods, now is the time to perfect your efforts of managing illness and preventing its spread. Here are some ways to do so.

Establish a sick student policy

A sick student policy establishes guidelines for parents and guardians to follow should their student display illness symptoms. Additionally, a sick policy outlines your procedure should a child arrive with or develop symptoms while they are under your care. To be mindful of COVID, you may also want to perform daily temperature checks as students arrive.

Understand when to send students home

At what point do you send a sick student home? These are symptoms to be aware of and respond to by having the child picked up to prevent illness's further spread.

1. **Fever.** If a student presents with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, the student has a fever. The student should stay home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours.

2. **Vomiting or diarrhea.** If a student displays either of these symptoms, sending them home is the right decision. As with fevers, the student should remain home until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours.

3. **Coughing.** If a student is coughing continuously over a period, they should be sent home.

4. **Pink eye.** If a student has red, puffy eyes that are watery and might have yellow-toned discharge, they could have pink eye. Considering the easy spread of the illness, they should be sent home.

5. **Sore throat.** If a student has a sore, red throat that you notice or they bring to your attention, they should be sent home.

6. **Chills or sweating.** Absent hot weather, if a student is sweating profusely or has chills, they should be sent home.

7. **Rash.** If a student has a rash, they should be sent home. Rashes can be contagious.

8. **Runny nose.** A runny nose with discharge that is yellow to green in color is a symptom of illness. The student should be sent home.

9. **Itchy scalp.** If a student is itching their head an abnormal amount or complains of itchiness on the scalp, they should be sent home and checked for head lice.

Sanitizing classroom materials

Children often share and play with the same toys and materials. Sanitizing these items is of the utmost importance to maintain a high standard of cleanliness and minimize the spread of illness. Through sanitizing, you kill 99.9% of germs that live on surfaces.

In addition to materials and supplies, sanitize dishes and bathrooms, including any surfaces that have or had body fluids on it. Tables, chairs, door handles and windows deserve special attention. As you sanitize, keep the following in mind.

1. Wear disposable gloves before you begin your cleaning process.

2. Dirty surfaces should be cleaned with soap ahead of disinfection.

3. Use an EPA-registered household disinfectant, closely reading and following the instructions on the label.

4. Porous surfaces, such as carpeted floors, drapes, rugs and curtains should be laundered if possible. Otherwise, they should be disinfected with EPA-approved products made for porous surfaces.

5. Frequently touched surfaces such as sinks, doorknobs, light switches, desks and tables should be disinfected consistently throughout the day.

6. Collect materials and games as they become dirty. Separate them in containers: one for stuffed and cloth materials, and another for plastic and wood materials. This makes it easier to clean them with the correct product once you begin the sanitation process. Soft materials often can be washed in a washing machine, though check the label each time to be certain. Wood or plastic materials can be washed in a dishwasher, though this may vary. Reading the label is recommended.

Setting parameters for safe return

For singular symptoms, as described in the sick student policy section, a 24-hour symptom-free period should hold before allowing the student to return. However, with the novel coronavirus, there is a cluster of symptoms to be aware of: fever, cough, runny nose, vomiting and diarrhea.

A child can return if it has been at least fourteen days since the date of their positive coronavirus test and at least twenty-four hours of no symptoms. For an illness other than coronavirus, twenty-four hours of no symptoms is a safe time frame. Refer to CDC guidelines for the most up-to-date recommendations.

Make sure each student has multiple emergency contacts

Parents and guardians can be busy at work or may not be able to respond as quickly as needed in an emergency circumstance. Given the heightened alertness the pandemic has cast over society, having multiple emergency contacts reduces the odds that you cannot find someone to take care of a sick child, or to take them to a hospital if needed. Request more emergency contacts by reaching out to parents and guardians via email, phone, or in-person when they come to pick up or drop off their student.
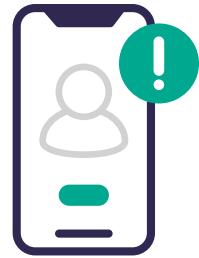
Send out yearly flu-shot notices

Flu season comes around each year, which is why communicating flu-shot information to parents is a good practice to cultivate. Pass along information that leaves no question: where to get them, who offers them for free and statistics related to the deadliness of the flu.

Emphasize regular handwashing

Regular handwashing is an important practice students should get in the habit of doing. Make it a part of your daily routine by having students wash their hands upon entering the building, before eating, after eating, during bathroom breaks and at the end of the day.

Maintain contact with families

If a child has a contagious illness, such as pink eye, strep throat, a viral bug, or something similar, have parents contact you about it. This allows your program to give other parents a heads up and ensure they keep an eye out for symptoms in their students.

Managing health conditions in your program

Some students may have preexisting health conditions that will have to be managed throughout the year. The most common conditions are allergies, diabetes and asthma.

Allergies - Allergies affect about [8% of children](#) in the U.S., meaning that about 1 in 13 children will struggle with them. This high occurrence rate means you will likely encounter students with allergies. Children with food allergies require close monitoring of their food intake and a safe environment for them to learn and play. Familiarize yourself with allergy emergencies and the right steps to take. Having everything on hand will make it easier to handle an allergic reaction.

Diabetes - Diabetics require closer supervision to maintain their treatment and to keep them safe. They might need help taking medication, checking blood sugar levels and require specific dietary provisions. Close contact with parents and the child's doctor is essential.

Asthma - Asthma is often triggered by environmental pollutants, such as tobacco smoke or dust mites. A student with asthma may have specific triggers, of which you should be aware. Thus, a close relationship with the child's caretakers and doctor will allow for cooperation in managing the child's asthma.
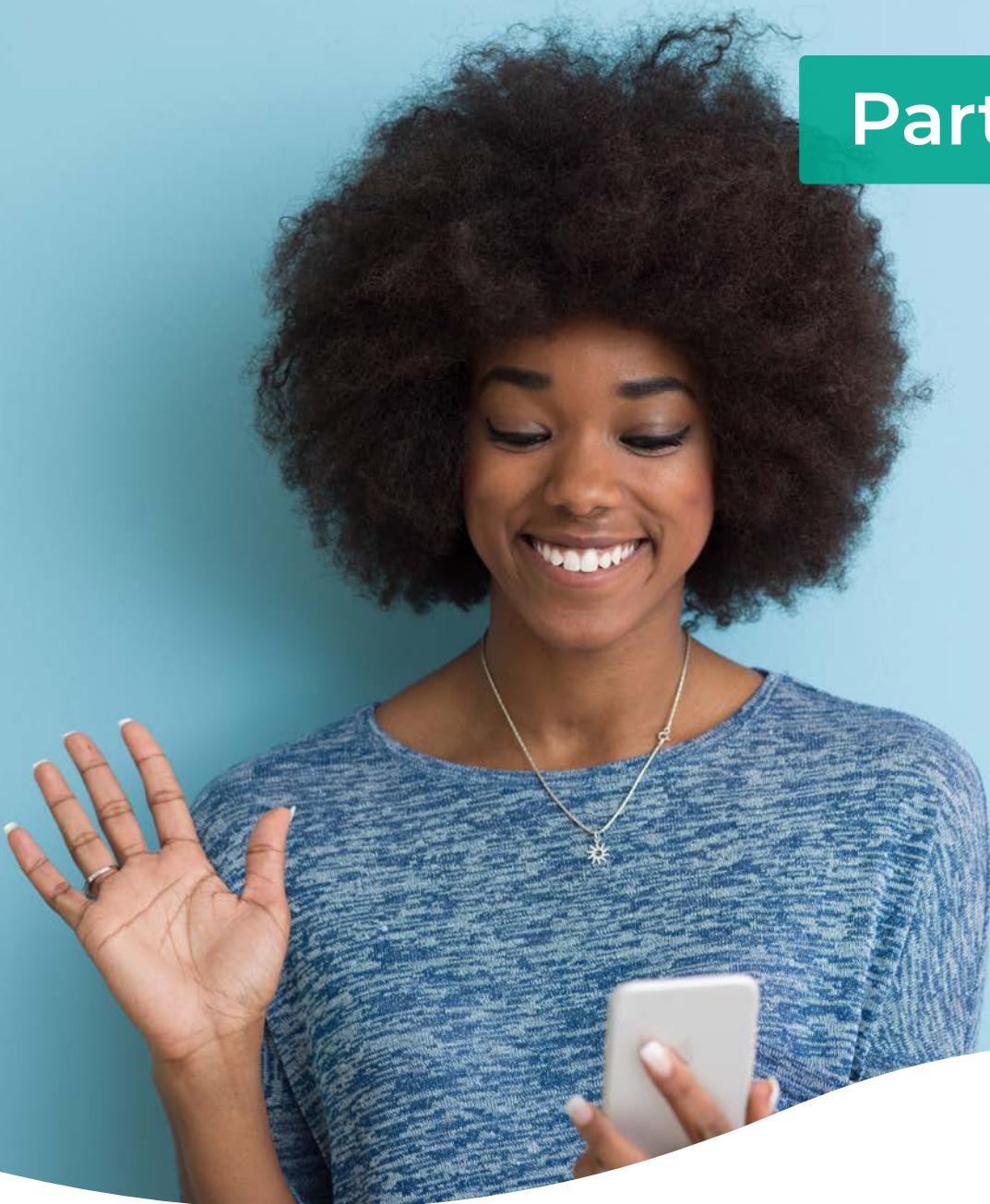
Tools to Streamline Child Care Administration

Managing child care for a school or district is a lot of work. That's why it's important to have the right tool to empower you and your staff to provide the best care. Child care management software is what most schools across the country will lean on for support. Here are the four key advantages of this software.

Simplifies administrative tasks

Your staff is busy, which means they don't have a lot of time for manual record keeping. One of the advantages of child care management software is that it streamlines many time-consuming tasks.

Child care management software is designed to address all the administrative work required to run a program successfully. So, whether it's penning a quick note for a parent or tracking attendance, the right management software will ensure the task is handled fast, easily and efficiently. The result is more time and attention spent on the students.

Enhances organization

In today's digital age, utilizing different software and systems to get a single job done is the pinnacle of inefficiency. With advances in smart technology, we have come to value comprehensive solutions. That's why a comprehensive child care management software solution is critical to the success of your program.
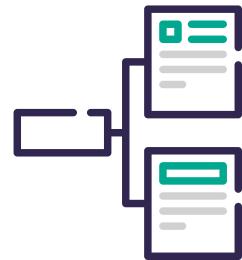
Not only will all vital records be stored in one secure digital location, but you'll save time and headaches by avoiding the use of multiple software systems. Additionally, a comprehensive software solution requires only one onboarding process and makes it easier for new staff to become acclimated to your program's internal operations.

Improves communication

Communication is vital to the success of a program. In a single day, it may be necessary to communicate with a student's family to organize a sick student's pick up. A family may need to contact you about updating their billing information. You may have to contact your staff members about schedule changes.

There are endless situations that require quick and efficient communication, both externally and internally. A top-notch child care software system will have features that support communication. Child care software will ensure you can receive and send information without trouble.

Provides educators with valuable tools

It's critical for educators to be equipped with the proper tools to get their jobs done. As educators and child care professionals handle a wide variety of on the job duties, child care management software is designed to help provide them with the right tools to support their efforts. Whether the job is guiding students through an outlined curriculum or maintaining the right student-teacher ratio, child care management software can handle it.
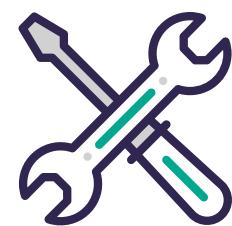
By ensuring the proper handling of essential details, educators can utilize child care management software to enhance their learning environment. With features like inventory tracking, advanced scheduling, and attendance tracking in child care management software, educators are given the tools to lay a strong foundation for an efficient and effective classroom environment.

What to look for in child care management software

Running any child care program requires the support of a powerful software system. However, high-quality child care management software isn't easy to find among the sea of competition. The software that works best for you and your program depends on your unique circumstance. You'll need to determine the goals and needs of your program. Once you've done that, you can compare different child care management software options to find the one that works best for your program.

Here's a breakdown of the top nine essential features of child care management software.

Recordkeeping

Child care facilities handle tons of records. A top-notch child care management software should contain features that enable you to keep and manage records and data easily. Emphasis on easily. Don't waste time manually entering tons of data at once. The software you choose should have features that streamline the record-keeping process and provide access to each record from wherever you are, whenever you want them.

Cloud backup support

There's a lot of debate about cloud-integration. Child care facilities have to handle records that span from vaccinations to tax records. Losing any of these essential documents can lead to headaches for families and staff. That's why it's crucial to have a fail-safe to ensure all your records are safe.

Any platform you're seriously considering should support cloud backup, which ensures your data stays safe, even in the event of a natural disaster, system failure or outage.

Advanced scheduling

A before and after school care program's schedule is its backbone. From scheduling different groups of students to coordinating pick-up times, the schedule ensures everything runs smoothly. However, that's not to say the schedule is ironclad. Sometimes hours need to be adjusted for holidays or special circumstances. Other times, circumstances change, and schedules needs to be amended quickly. Moreover, multiple schedules need to be maintained, including inventory checks, food delivery, staff vacations, school district schedules and more.

In short, your software needs to have powerful scheduling capabilities that can handle the schedule changes your program needs. Consider a platform that includes support for multiple calendars, Google or Apple calendar integration and reliable syncing. You should also look for a software that offers flexible scheduling to support your program. The added flexibility allows your staff and families to find the model that works for them.

Billing and payment capabilities

Whether it's splitting a bill with friends at dinner or contactless payments at the grocery store, mobile payments are becoming increasingly common. Within the current pandemic, mobile payments are also becoming increasingly necessary as a safety precaution. If your program has adopted new procedures that emphasize safety and limiting the spread of the novel virus, then mobile billing and payment should be a part of your strategy.

Many software systems offer some form of online bill pay. Not only is this more convenient for parents, but it also helps maximize on-time payments by sending pre-scheduled reminders and late payment warnings. A software that includes automated invoicing is a huge plus! Automating invoicing and payments saves staff hours of tedious work – no more manual reconciliation – and makes it easier to auto-assign late pick-up or drop-off fees.

A smartphone application

Over 81% of the American adult population owns a smartphone, according to recent data. When it comes to communication, cell phones are often the best way to reach people. This is true for the families of your students and staff members. Having a smartphone application that enables families and staff to access pertinent information is crucial.

More importantly, a smartphone application for your child care program is practical and convenient. Families can pay bills on the go, get reminders about upcoming payments, view their account information and even check attendance records. An application that supports cloud integration can give families access to real-time information to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Communication tools

Having a reliable line of communication with families is vital to both safety and efficiency. Typically, email or phone calls are used as the primary method of communication. However, many parents can't take a phone call during work hours and emails can get lost in a cluttered inbox.

The management software you choose should be able to support multiple modes of communication. This enables parents to choose their preferred method of communication, making it more likely that they'll receive and respond to any messages. SMS messaging, in-app chat and push notifications are most common.

Excellent customer support

The advantage of technology's ever-evolving nature is that there are always new features and upgrades being added to software platforms, so they're rarely out of date. Unfortunately, there are times when these upgrades can lead to technical difficulties, which means you'll need to get in touch with customer service reps.

Running a child care program means always being on the go and ready to jump in when needed. It's impossible to do that if you're spending hours on the phone trying to get in touch with customer support to troubleshoot issues. Be sure to research a software system's customer service offerings. Check reviews and be wary of any platform with multiple reports of poor customer service.

Cost-effectiveness

The child care software you choose should be multi-functional, but it should also be cost-effective. Before making a final decision, it's crucial to research the software's pricing model, and whether it will work with your budget. Many child care software programs operate on a tiered per-user pricing model. Generally, you pay for each user that will have an account. The cost may be collected at a discounted rate for a one-time annual purchase or paid monthly at a higher rate.

Additionally, you'll need to consider child care management software packages. Some software is priced by tiered packages, from a basic package offering limited features at the lowest price to an ultimate package with all features available at the highest price. When creating a list of child care software contenders, you'll need to consider:

1. Upfront and monthly cost.
2. Package options.
3. How many users profiles you'll need.

Offers a way to collect all school fees in one place

There are many fees families need to pay for school, from child care payments to lunch money. Collecting those payments is often done with different software depending on the fee, which is confusing for parents and nightmare for the finance team.

One way to alleviate this chaos is by bringing all student payments under one roof. You can start by choosing a software that offers you the child care management you need in addition to consolidated payments for all school fees. By opting for a software that benefits your entire school district, you can save your district countless hours and provide a lot of relief for busy families.

Manage Child Care & Simplify Payments with Vanco

Vanco offers premiere child care management and a payment software that simplifies before and after school programs and makes payments easier for staff and parents. With Vanco, all fees are collected within one system that's easy to use and takes little time to set up.

Take the three easy steps to save hours of work and reduce headaches for parents.

1. **Request a demo and receive our free consultation.**
2. **Let us customize our system to fit your unique needs.**
3. **Enjoy time-savings and simplicity.**

Schedule Your Demo

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