September/ October 2026

Child Development Today



"Children are not things to be molded, but are people to be unfolded." Jess Lair



September and October Focus

September brings seasonal changes as children return to school and child care programs begin a new year of learning. It is National Preparedness Month, making it the perfect time to review emergency plans, update contact information, restock emergency kits, and refresh staff on evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures. Taking these steps helps keep children, families, and staff safe while preparing your program to respond confidently to unexpected emergencies.

October brings cooler weather, colorful fall scenery, and a reminder to focus on fire safety during Fire Prevention Month. Take time to test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, inspect fire extinguishers, and review fire evacuation procedures. Regular fire drills help meet licensing requirements and ensure children and staff are prepared to respond confidently in an emergency, creating a safer environment for everyone.



Thank you for all you do each day to keep children safe!

What's Inside?

Page 1- September and October Focus
Page 2- Provider Advice
Page 3- Provider Advice Continued
Page 4- Provider Corner
Page 4- Bookworm Banter
Page 5- Behavior Expections
Page 6- Eat with the Seasons
Page 7- Agency Calendar
Page 7- Resources
Page 7- Hometown Happenings
Page 8- Spotlight On
Page 8- Training

Providers Offer Advice on Change & Transition

Transitions in childcare are important because they provide predictability, reduce anxiety, and help young children develop self-regulation and independence. Here is the advice providers shared on how they help children deal with change and transitions.

“I offer support and reassurance - which looks different for each child. Sometimes it’s a hug, sometimes a fist bump, sometimes just a quiet space for the child to calm. I offer options for activities or a quick snack as redirection. I find singing or humming quietly is often subconsciously reassuring, and sometimes just the calm presence of an adult is enough, especially for those harder to reach kiddos.”

“Songs, advance notice, read aloud books, speaking directly with children who need extra support, sending articles and speaking with parents.”



“There are a few ways we help deal with change and transition. With transitions within the classroom we are giving as much notice time as possible. For example, we clean up in 10 minutes, 5 minutes, 2 minutes and 1 minute. This helps the kids know what is coming next. For those that we know will have a hard time with any transition in the classroom we try and give them jobs to help with during those transitions.”

“For kids that are experiencing change at home, or elsewhere we try to work with the parents as much as possible. While we don't always have a heads up on all family changes, the ones we do, we try to talk with the child about what will be happening in the future to help them get comfortable with any big change. Having family pictures accessible for a child that may need them can help them as well. If photos are not available then we can try and use a small comfort item or toy, either from home or school.”



Providers Offer Advice on Change & Transition

“Know the children and who might need advance notice or extra support. Connect first. Make it playful whenever possible. Add music or fun. Empathize with the challenge. Offer encouragement or acknowledgment of feelings.”

“We do a 3 day gradual transition into care. The 1st day is a 1.5 hour visit with a parent in the room. The 2nd day is a 3 hour visit usually 9:30-12:30 w/ the parent on call and day 3 is 9:30-3:30. Day 3 is when billing starts. Then after that anytime between 7:30-5:30 attendance.”



“Lots of count downs and notifications of change to come. Routine leading up to transitions. Keeping them well informed and having set transitions. When change happens beyond that then explain the change in their language.”

“Remain very patient, regulated, organized and consistent. Show affection and compassion. Lots of reminders and count downs.”

“Read books on the topic, ask the child how they are feeling. Tell the child change can be hard but it can also be fun and exciting.”

“We support them by maintaining consistent daily routines while preparing them in advance for any changes to the schedule. Staff communicate expectations clearly, provide reminders before transitions, and use positive reinforcement to help children feel confident and secure. Slowly and patiently.”

“Talk about it.”



Provider Corner

In previous newsletters, we explored how children develop self-regulation through play and shared Barb O'Neill's *Songs for Self-Regulation* playlist, which includes The Floor is Lava.

This simple movement game is a great way to help children transition to circle time. Before asking children to sit, invite them to play a quick round of The Floor is Lava to help them release energy, practice following directions, strengthen listening and attention skills, build self-regulation, and foster a sense of community through shared play.

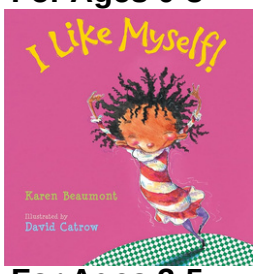


Rather than expecting children to stop moving and sit immediately, this playful transition meets their need for movement first. The result? Children arrive at circle time more regulated, focused, and ready to learn.

Stay tuned for a poll question about newsletter and training feedback coming your way. Responses will be featured anonymously in the next newsletter.

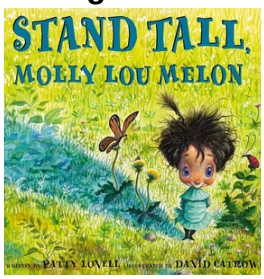
Bookworm Banter

For Ages 0-3



I Like Myself! written by Karen Beaumont and illustrated by David Catrow. *I Like Myself!* is a joyful celebration of self-esteem and individuality. Through playful rhymes and colorful illustrations, a confident young girl embraces everything that makes her unique, encouraging children to love themselves just as they are.

For Ages 3-5



Stand Tall written by Patty Lovell and illustrated by David Catrow. *Stand Tall*, Molly Lou Melon celebrates individuality, confidence, and resilience. When Molly Lou Melon is teased at her new school, she remembers her grandmother's advice to "stand tall" and proudly embraces what makes her unique.

For Ages 5-8



All Are Welcome written by Alexandra Penfold and illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman. *All Are Welcome* celebrates diversity, inclusion, and belonging through a welcoming school community where every child is valued. Rhythmic text and vibrant illustrations encourage empathy, kindness, and respect for differences.

Behavior Expectations

Children benefit from organized classroom environments in which the guidelines are clearly and simply stated. A set of positive expectations can help guide all interactions in the classroom. Expectations are general characteristics or ways you would like children and adults to behave. Rules help define exactly what expectations mean. Behavior expectations and rules are important because children are less likely to engage in challenging behavior when they know what to do, how to do it, and what is expected.

Teaching Behavior Expectations

More often behavioral errors occur because:

- ►Children do not have the appropriate skills.
- ►Children do not know when to use the skills.
- ►Children have not been taught specific classroom procedures and routines.

Once you have developed classroom expectations, it is not enough to just post the words on the walls…

You Must Teach Them!

Once expectations and rules are posted with visuals that are meaningful for all children in the classroom, they must be concretely taught and systematically reinforced. Teach expectations and rules the way you would teach any other concept:

1. Define them with words children will understand.
2. Provide examples and non-examples.
3. Check for understanding.
4. Model, practice, and rehearse (create songs, rhymes, use visual supports, have puppets recite).
5. Use gestures, pictures, or graphics to frequently remind children of classroom rules and expectations.
6. Provide clear expectations for children's behavior during each classroom activity.
7. Acknowledge efforts frequently.
8. Share information regarding expectations and rules with families. Provide ideas about how to apply the concepts at home and in the community.

Expectations



We are safe
We are kind
We are responsible



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Eat With the Seasons:
Local Food and CACFP Menu Ideas

Here is a practical seasonal food list for CACFP menus.
Timing can shift with weather, but this reflects a typical Finger Lakes growing season.

Season	Local Fruits	Local Vegetable	CACFP-friendly menu ideas
Spring (April–June)	Rhubarb; strawberries by June	Asparagus, spinach, lettuce, kale, radishes, peas, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, beets, Swiss chard, green onions	Scrambled eggs with spinach; chicken, peas, and brown rice; yogurt with strawberries; hummus with carrots and snap peas
Summer (July-August)	Strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, peaches, plums, melons 	Green beans, zucchini/summer squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, eggplant, broccoli, beets, carrots, potatoes, leafy greens	Turkey and tomato sandwiches; corn and black bean salad; pasta with zucchini and meat sauce; yogurt with berries; cucumber rounds with hummus
Fall (September-November)	Apples, pears, grapes, late raspberries, plums	Winter squash, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, carrots, beets, turnips, parsnips, onions	Apple-cinnamon oatmeal; roasted squash with chicken; beef stew with carrots and potatoes; turkey chili with peppers; pear slices with cheese
Winter (December-March)	Stored apples and pears; locally preserved/frozen berries 	Storage potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, cabbage, onions, garlic, winter squash, greenhouse greens when available	Baked potato with chili; vegetable soup with whole-grain roll; squash macaroni and cheese, frozen berry yogurt parfait 

Useful CACFP reminders:

- Fruits and vegetables may be fresh, frozen, canned, or dried. Choose canned fruit packed in water, juice, or light syrup when possible; vegetables should be low-sodium or no-salt-added when available.
- Potatoes, corn, and winter squash credit as vegetables—not grains.
- Home canned goods are not creditable in the CACFP.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Agency Calendar

Closings:
September 7th- Labor Day
October 12th- Indigenous Peoples Day

Meetings:
Center Directors- October 6th 10-11am
SACC Directors- October 6th 10-11:30am

FDC/GFDC Roundtable in person - Saturday, September 19th from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Child Development Council - Ithaca office

FDC/GFDC Roundtable in person - Tuesday, September 22th from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.at the Child Development Council - Cortland office

Resources

Child Care Aware Resources
https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/crisis-and-disaster-resources/tools-publications-and-resources/

GO VS. NO-GO Preparing to Evacuate or Shelter-in-Place
https://www.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Govsnogo.pdf

Behavior Expectations Strategies
https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Emergency%20Supply%20Kit%20For%20Child%20Care%20Providers_Mar2024%20(1).pdf

Creating a Comfort Care Kit for Kids
https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Comfort%20Care%20Kit_Updated.pdf

Making Child Care Strong: The Role of Child Care Resource & Referral Organizations
https://info.childcareaware.org/hubfs/Making-Child-Care-Strong--the-Role-of-CCRRs.pdf

Hometown Happenings

Here's your round-up of free, fun, and family friendly events happening across Tompkins and Cortland Counties.
Mark your calendars and share with families!

2026 Health Resource Fair

The Health Resource Fair is an initiative to meet people where they are, offering a welcoming space to connect and share health resources that uplift our community.
The Council will be tabling at this event.

When: Sept. 2nd 5-7pm
Where: GIAC, 301 W. Court St., Ithaca

Hupstate Circus Festival 2026

Multi-day performance festival dedicated to the circus arts. Produced by Hupstate Circus Inc.

https://www.hupstatecircus.org/

Some of the events have a cost, some are free.

When: Sept. 4th- Sept. 7th
Where: Various places around Ithaca

Lansing Community Celebration

3-day fair with rides, parade, local booths, fireworks, music, and food. The Council will have a booth on Saturday the 12th.

Free admission. Rides and food may require a fee.

When: Sept. 10th- Sept. 12th
Where: Lansing Fire Department

3rd Annual Health and Wellness Fair

The event is free and designed to provide health and wellness information for everyone, focusing on resources and programs individuals may not know are available. The Council will be tabling at this event.

When: Sept. 12th 9am-12pm
Where: The Grange, 100 Grange Place, Cortland

GIAC's Ithaca Soulfest

GIAC's Ithaca Soul Fest is a live music and cultural event celebrating Black and diasporic artists while fostering community connection in downtown Ithaca.

When: Sept. 19th 11am-10pm
Where: 300 Block of West Court Street, Ithaca

The Great Cortland Pumpkinfest

Celebration of the bounties of the harvest season. This event is held the first weekend of October every year. There is food, hay rides, vendors, and pumpkins.

When: Oct. 3rd - Oct. 4th
Where: Downtown Cortland Courthouse Park, Church Street, Cortland

Spotlight On...

Child Care Resource and Referral

The Child Development Council is a Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agency. Dedicated to strengthening families, supporting child care providers and programs, and building stronger communities while expanding access to quality child care.

For Families: We help parents find quality child care, understand state licensing requirements, and access financial assistance or subsidies.

For Providers and Programs: We offer training, coaching, technical assistance, and business support to help child care programs open, grow, and maintain and enhance quality.

For Communities: We collect and analyze real-time child care supply and demand data to identify gaps and support local solutions that expand access to quality child care.

Support and resources from CCR&R's promotes stronger families, a stronger workforce, and stronger communities by ensuring that children have access to safe, affordable, and high quality early care and education.

New and exciting training opportunities are coming for providers who work with infants and toddlers!

The Child Development Council is happy to offer convenient on-site training for child care programs. Our team is available to travel to your program, or provide virtual sessions of our many training workshops. Email or call for a training catalog and applicable fees.

To register for training: call (607) 273-0259 or email training@childdevelopmentcouncil.org

Current Child Development Council Team

Administration:
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Melissa Perry
Michelle Wright

Community Services:
Amy Riotto
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Erika Coville
Jasmine Hill
Jessi Soto-Moyer
Iyana Lykhvar
Malinda Rees

Family Services:
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Ashantia Rhody
Elizabeth Wolff
Ken Cassano
Lisa Bowman
Lisa Drake
Michael Hoit

Child Care Services:
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Barb Mechalke
Delaney Smith
Hannah Behrens
Lisa Potter
Ruth Williams
Sara Sandritter
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