



October 17, 2025

Dear Provider:

As children across New York return to school and child care this fall, we are reminded of the enormous trust that families place in you each day. Your role in keeping children safe, supported, and supervised is central to their growth and wellbeing. Providing competent supervision to children is the most critical role of any child care provider. Lack of competent supervision can lead to dangerous situations like young children being left alone, sustaining serious injuries, and can result in tragedy. Even when children are located and returned to their parents/programs, the lapse in competent supervision placed them at an imminent risk of harm. It is imperative that we acknowledge the severity of these situations and seize the opportunity to examine and improve supervision practices. Here are some strategies and reminders to all staff and caregivers on this important topic:

Regulatory Standard for Supervision

- 41*.8(a): Children cannot be left without competent supervision at any time. Competent supervision includes awareness of and responsibility for the ongoing activity of each child. It requires that all children be within the caregiver's range of vision and that the caregiver be close enough to respond when redirection or intervention strategies are needed. Competent supervision must take into account the child's age as well as emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Regulations outline staff-to-child ratios and maximum group sizes to protect the safety of the children. Regulations are the *minimum* requirements a program must follow. There may be times when your program needs to increase the number of staff to properly supervise the children in your care.



Supervision Strategies

Supervision is basic to safety, the prevention of injury, and maintaining quality child care. Competent supervision is required when children are both indoors and out; whether playing or at rest. Competent supervision is necessary when children are on a field trip, and when they are being transported in a motor vehicle. Supervision is a constant. Parents trust caregivers and teachers to adequately supervise their children at all times. Competent supervision strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:



Know the children in your care: does a child struggle with transitions? Is one child a risk taker? Do you have a child that likes to hide? Knowing the children in your care helps you anticipate their needs and develop an individualized plan of supervision for those children.

Stand in strategic positions so all children are always in range of vision. Program spaces (indoors and outdoors) should be designed with visibility that allows constant unobstructed adult supervision. Staff should circulate around the area so that their range of vision moves with the children.

Take attendance frequently: Taking attendance is an ongoing process that continues throughout the day; it should not only be recorded upon arrival/departure but used as a tool to maintain active supervision. Attendance should be updated whenever a child enters or leaves the group. There are many ways to record attendance. One option is the [Child Care Attendance Sheet - Seven Days](#), or some programs choose to use digital attendance systems. Child care programs are required to maintain attendance records for each child, but taking attendance frequently in addition to arrival and departure allows for more dynamic tracking of all children.

Name-to-face checks should be done at regular intervals throughout the day, at every transition, and when leaving one area and arriving at another. Name-to-face checks means saying the child's name aloud and then looking at the child's face to confirm. Simply counting heads can result in a mistake, as the same child may be counted twice. Using a reminder tone or musical clock that sounds at timed intervals is a way you could remind staff to take attendance consistently throughout the day.

On the move: Supervision challenges often occur during transition times, especially when the group moves from one area of the program to another. Establish and practice simple safety rules for these transition times. Procedures that are consistent and predictable for all staff help children feel safe and the caregiver to maintain structure. Remind young children of the rules and practice them around transition times. This can include a procedure for lining up to leave or re-enter the program. Assign children a line partner ("a buddy") so they look for their partner when lining up.

Staffing changes: Transitions are not limited to just the group's movement; they also occur when staff change within the room (breaks, change of shift, etc.). Develop a method by which all caregivers discuss attendance *before* taking responsibility for a group of children. **Caregivers must know who is in their care at all times.** Arrival and departure times also can be challenging, as parents and children often require staff attention, and sometimes commotion increases the risk of lapses in supervision. It is critical that staff have a plan to maintain supervision of the children during times of increased activity.

Transportation: Children must never be left unattended in a motor vehicle or other form of transportation. The program must develop and follow procedures that guarantee a child will not be left alone in a vehicle, including a procedure to ensure that all children have departed the vehicle. Children often fall asleep in motor vehicles, so every seat must be checked before leaving the vehicle—every day, every time. Each year, hundreds of children are left unattended in motor vehicles and many die as a result. **While outdoors near traffic or parking areas,** children can dart unexpectedly away from caregivers and toward oncoming traffic, so a heightened awareness, clear instruction, and strategic positioning of staff is critical.

When children are around pools or bodies of water: Drowning can occur in as little as 1-2 inches of water. Children can slip under the surface silently and in seconds. Per regulation, barriers must exist to prevent children from gaining access to any swimming pool, drainage ditches, wells, ponds, or other bodies of open water located on or adjacent to the property where the day care program is located. Such barriers must be of adequate height and appropriately secured to prevent children from gaining access to such areas. It is critical that caregivers provide competent supervision and stay close enough to intervene if needed. Family and group family providers with residential pools electing to use their residential pools for use by day care children must develop, update, and implement a written safety plan. For additional details, see the [Residential Pool Use Guidelines for Family/Group Family Day Care Homes](#). Family and group family providers must comply with applicable provisions of the Fire and Building Code of New York State, or other applicable fire and building code. If you are not aware of these requirements, please contact your local town/city building code office.

Field Trips: Before you travel off site, make a plan, and discuss it with all staff present. The director must approve all plans for field trips, including the type of activity, developmental needs of children, and whether there is the need for additional staff to provide competent supervision. Talk to the children about the field trip and discuss safety rules. On the day of the trip children and staff might wear matching colors so the group is easily identifiable.

to everyone. Never allow children to go into a public restroom alone. **Conduct name-to-face checks every five minutes when you take children in a public setting.** Caregivers must know who is in their group at all times. Children's behavior and the environment can change without warning, despite having a solid plan in place, so be prepared and expect the unexpected.

Have a plan: Programs are required to establish and maintain a supervision plan. The plan should include policies regarding staff refraining from activities that may distract them from maintaining competent supervision. Caregivers are prohibited from personal use of mobile phone while supervising children. Other distractions include personal conversations with other staff, cleaning, administrative tasks, etc. Providers and directors should make a regular practice of checking that staff and caregivers remain focused on and engaged with the children. Programs should frequently review, revise, and train staff on supervision expectations, plans, and policies. If you need assistance, please reach out to your regulator.

If you are unable to locate a child in your care:



CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY! Notify law enforcement that a child cannot be located and provide as many details as possible: an accurate timeframe of when and where the child was last seen; the child's name and age; a description of the child's physical appearance; clothing the child is wearing; etc. There must be no delay in contacting police. Police will conduct a thorough search and investigation while you continue to maintain the health and safety of the children in your care. After getting help to look

for the missing child and securing the safety of all other children, regulations require you to notify the parent and your OCFS regional office. You are a mandated reporter and required by law to also notify the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) at 1-800-635-1522.

Professional Development Opportunities

OCFS has created a new training series for NYS child care providers. [Register today for Active Supervision in Child Care](#), a free virtual training series on creating a culture of safety in your program! This training is broadcast simultaneously in both English and Spanish. **Please see the attached flyer for dates and registration information for the newest webcast in the series, *Supervision in Child Care: The Principles of Environment and Staff Supervision*, debuting November 3rd!**

Also, the OCFS e-Learning training, Supervision of Children, is available 24/7 at no cost, and on-demand on the [Early Childhood Education and Training Program \(ECETP\) website](#).

Thank you for recommitting to this essential work as we begin a new school year. By remaining vigilant and proactive, you help ensure that every child in your care is safe, nurtured and ready to learn. If you need assistance, please reach out to your regulator.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nora Yates".

Nora K. Yates
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Child Care Services