

Marketing is communicating the benefits of your program to prospective clients. Marketing is an on-going process.

- Define your service
- Price your service
- Promote your service

Operating a high-quality child care program is the foundation of all your marketing efforts. Without quality you won't be able to keep clients. A high-quality program means child-centered activities, nutritious meals, individual care and a safe environment run by qualified staff.

Benefits and Features

Features describe what the program offers:

- Licensed child care
- Hours of operation
- Healthy meals

Benefits tell clients how their needs will be met:

- Experienced caregivers
- Promotes development and creativity
- Group size
- Responsive to needs of children
- Open communication with clients
- Safe and healthy environment

Programs should identify and use four key benefits to advertising their program.

Marketing to Prospective Clients

Three most important contact times with prospective clients:

- The visual appeal of your program
- The initial phone call
- The interview

During your first contacts with clients you will want to be able to:

- Identify their needs
- Communicate your program's benefits
- Make them feel comfortable

What clients want to know:

- If your program will meet their needs
- What is special about your program

Three step process for phone calls:

- Find out client's specific needs
- Describe benefits of your program
- Set up an interview

Three goals you should pursue at the interview:

- Determine if it is a good match
- Details of your program
- Enrolling the child/children

If you determine your program is not a good match, tell them you feel it would not be good fit for their child at this time. It does not relay negative feelings and you need not elaborate on your reasons.

Marketing to Current Clients

It's more cost effective to keep current clients happy than to attract new ones. Use a yearly contract update or written evaluation as an opportunity to listen to clients. Disregard negative comments that aren't practical for you to do. Positive comments are useful in advertising.

Low Cost Promotions

Register your business name with the Secretary of State. If you use a tag line for your business, make sure to use it on advertisements. Check copyrights for designs, pictures in books or magazines, and logos. Check zoning ordinances restrictions on business signs. Contact the postal service for guidelines on advertising through the mail.

Paid Advertising

Keep classified ads concise. List your business name and tag line. Specify age groups for which you have openings. Identify any special services you offer. Stress benefits or unique aspects of your program. Don't include aspects state licensing requires of every program.

How Other Organizations Can Help

Take advantage of opportunities to network with organizations and individuals that can help market your business. Find out what the current needs are and what marketing ideas are working.

Ways to cooperate with competitors:

- Mutual referrals if programs complement each other (you're infant care – they are preschool)
- Sharing activities (field trips, celebrations)
- Sharing substitutes
- Tackle local zoning laws
- Lobby on behalf of early childhood issues
- Sponsor events and have media coverage

How to Set Your Rates

Rates should be determined after careful consideration of your program's finances. Clients are more satisfied with rates when:

- You are within an expected price range
- They receive a valuable service
- Your options meet their needs

Talking to parents about rates:

- Give clients notice before raising rates
- Best not to raise rates in April or December
- You can raise your rates for new clients and keep rates steady for current clients (as long as you have justification for the different rate)
- Instead of raising rates charge annual fees for liability insurance, accreditation fees, etc.
- Prepare a brief income/expense chart letting clients know all the expenses you have to run your business.
- Talk about the *value* of your services

Parents are reluctant to change their child care program and more likely to accept an increase than change programs.

Leading the Way for Child Care in North Dakota

Eastern North Dakota 800-941-7003 or 218-299-7026 ~ Western North Dakota 888-223-1510 or 701-223-1510

www.ndchildcare.org