

# The CHAT

## December 2025



Chautauqua  
Care Council  
Child Care Keeps Chautauqua County Working

### DECEMBER IS SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS AWARENESS MONTH.

This month is all about raising awareness of safe toys and gifts for children. Every year, thousands of children are injured by unsafe toys and gifts.



You can ensure the safety of the children in your care, by doing your research, paying attention to age recommendations, and inspecting toys before you buy them. If you have any concerns about a toy, you can always check the Consumer Product Safety Commission Recall website.

<https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>

Here are some more helpful tips regarding safe toys:

Be aware of safety recalls.

Supervise children when they are playing with toys.

Inspect toys for any broken pieces or parts prior to children playing with them.

Follow age recommendations on toys, especially for infants and toddlers.

Maintain sanitary standards for cleaning toys, especially toys that young children put in their mouths.





## Office of Children and Family Services

# Regulations Review

## MATERIALS & PLAY EQUIPMENT

GFDC 416.5(n)(1-5) FDC 417.5(n)(1-5)

- (1) Materials and play equipment used by the children must be sturdy and free from rough edges and sharp corners.
- (2) Play equipment must be in good repair, and be placed in a safe location.
- (3) Play equipment must be used in a safe manner.
- (4) Play equipment must be used specifically for its intended purpose. Such equipment and apparatus may be used only by the children for whom it is developmentally appropriate.
- (5) There must be a cushioned surface under all outside play equipment that present a fall hazard. Surfacing may not include concrete, asphalt, grass or hard compacted dirt.



SACC 414.5(n)(1-5) DCC 418-1.5(n)(1-5)

- (1) Materials and play equipment used by the children must be sturdy and free from rough edges and sharp corners.
- (2) Play equipment must be installed and used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and instructions, be in good repair, and be placed in a safe location.
- (3) Play equipment must be used in a safe manner.
- (4) Play equipment and apparatus may be used only by the children for whom it is developmentally appropriate.
- (5) All programs that substantially modify, or install new, outside play equipment must do so in accordance with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook.

# Professional Development

## Continuing our Attitude of Gratitude ...

We made it to December, everyone!

Let's continue to celebrate our Resilience and our commitment to working with children, who are our future. Your love and kindness pays off in dividends. Be sure to take some time to show Gratitude to yourself for doing all of the amazing work that you do. If you need ideas on how to fill your own cup or would like to chat about the work you do with children, please reach out to Becky Reed, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, [rreed@chautopp.org](mailto:rreed@chautopp.org)

When we build our own strengths, we promote the social emotional needs of children. We are in this together!



From Nefertiti Poyner, Founder & CEO of Mighty Works Education Group

<https://nefertitipoyner.com/mightyworks>

As we close out 2025, I want to leave you with a simple, research-grounded activity to help you reconnect with the heart of your work before the new year begins. Joy in the Work isn't something we stumble into; it's something we cultivate with intention, awareness, and small moments of meaning.

This short reflection is designed for teachers, caregivers, leaders, and anyone who serves children.

*Today I choose joy*



*Find JOY IN THE Journey*

*Three Questions to Close the Year with Joy.*

What drained me the most, and what did it teach me about what I need? Joy doesn't ignore the hard parts. It learns from them. This question helps you name the conditions that make your work heavier and the boundaries or supports you may need next year.

What was one moment this year when I felt fully alive in my work? Think of a moment when you felt present, purposeful, or proud. These moments tell you something about what energizes you

What is one practice I want to protect, start, or return to in 2026 that will nurture my joy? This might be a morning ritual, a moment of quiet before greeting children, a commitment to ask for help, or an intentional pause before responding during stressful moments.

### *Why This Matters*

When we reflect on what fuels us and what drains us, we create a more humane foundation for the work ahead. Joy in the Work isn't a feeling, it's a practice. And this practice helps you stay aligned with your purpose, connected to your strengths, and grounded in what matters most.

Take a few minutes this month to reflect on these questions. You deserve to greet the new year not just with plans and goals, but with clarity, steadiness, and a sense of joy that's rooted in who you are and how you want to show up for the children and families you serve.

# CACFP & Nutrition

Special thanks to our Special Guest Cook Quinn Burke! Quinn helped with a cooking demonstration that was part of the Nutrition Mission workshop held at the Early Childhood Conference in October this year in Mayville, New York. At the end of the workshop, several prizes were awarded to participants which included a Ninja Blender, Slow Cooker, and a Food Dehydrator.



## TIME IS RUNNING OUT!



If you have not taken 1 hour of CACFP training plus civil rights for 2025, you only have until the end of December! Not getting annual training plus civil rights is considered a serious deficiency. Use this link to complete your training for 2025:

<https://www.chautauquaopportunities.com/cacfp/>.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Chris Wigren or Lindsey Burke.

Watch for more in-person CACFP trainings in 2026. We do our best to make them INFORMATIVE and FUN. What's next? The Price is Right in the CACFP. Don't miss it! More information to come.

## Looking for some new recipes to serve to the children in your care?

The USDA's Team Nutrition has put together a CACFP-approved, kid-approved collection of dishes including award-winning Porcupine Sliders. What are porcupine sliders? Use this link to find out:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbook-homes>

Don't forget that cooking with children teaches them many skills including social/emotional, math, science, fine motor and more.

## My Food Program has successfully been launched!

If you have started to use My Food Program and are having any concerns, please let us know.

If you are liking the new program, please let us know that, too! Assistance with My Food Program is available by chat, email or telephone.

The company tells us that using the chat is best because it is usually the fastest way to talk with an assistant. There are also a number of helpful YouTube videos put out by My Food Program that can be found by using this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb-pipK6-A1-3aHgqbmD5Cw>.

know change can be hard, but we hope to make this transition is as easy as possible. Thank you for your patience as we all learn together!



# Business Specialists



The Chautauqua Child Care Council is excited to announce its Specialized Business Coaching Programs! These new programs offer support to FDC/GFDC Providers who seek to enhance and strengthen the business aspects of their childcare programs!

In a joint effort with the Empire State Family Child Care Collaborative, we are offering support and guidance techniques that will help sustain the daily operations of in home family daycare programs. We can help you create a business plan which includes budgeting, time and space allocation, insurance needs, retirement plans, child care management systems and overall business sustainability.

For more information on how you can access these valuable programs, please contact our Business Specialists:

**Meg Rodgers**

**716-661-9430 ext. 2286**

**[mrodgers@chautopp.org](mailto:mrodgers@chautopp.org)**

**Lori Steward**

**716-661-9430 ext. 2260**

**[lsteward@chautopp.org](mailto:lsteward@chautopp.org)**





# Grants

The Healthy Spaces, Safe Places grant for child care providers is to improve health and safety within their programs. Grant funds can be used for items such as first aid supplies, safety equipment, or health-related training.

This grant helps ensure that all children thrive in environments that are both safe and supportive.



*Healthy Spaces,  
Safe Places Grant*

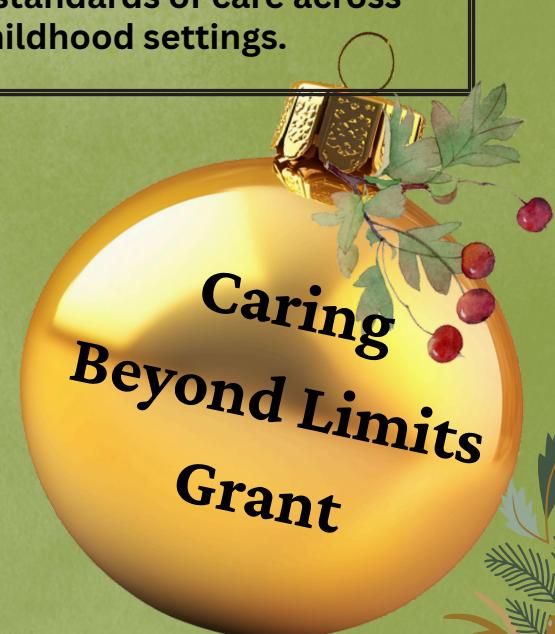


**Quality Care  
Materials  
Grant**

The Quality Care Materials Grant for child care providers is to purchase materials that directly enhance the quality of care in their programs. This may include educational toys, sensory materials, classroom furnishing, or professional resources that support developmentally appropriate practices. The goal is to strengthen learning environments and promote high standards of care across early childhood settings.

We recognize that many providers face challenges in meeting the diverse developmental needs of children due to limited resources and specialized training.

In response, we are launching a shared services model in Chautauqua County that equips early childhood providers with hands-on, developmentally appropriate strategies and materials tailored to your program and the individual needs of the children you serve.



**Caring  
Beyond Limits  
Grant**

**CLICK THIS LINK TO APPLY  
FOR THESE GRANTS!**

**GRANT APPLICATION**



# Child Care Advocacy



**Supporting and Empowering Child Care Business Owners and Early Educators, NCCA serves as a strong voice to ensure they have the resources to advocate, educate, and care for the families they serve—without sacrificing their own well-being.**

**Do you believe every child deserves access to affordable, high-quality care and early education?  
Do you want to help shape sustainable policies that support licensed child care businesses?  
Are you committed to advancing child care through advocacy, professional development, and community engagement?**

To learn more about how you can advocate for the rights of child care providers and the families they serve click this link



## Home

The NCCA is a voice and a resource for licensed child care providers to make sure all children get the care and education that they deserve.

[NCCA /](#)



# Resources



CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES, INC.  
HELPING PEOPLE... CHANGING LIVES



Office of Children  
and Family Services



Early Care &  
Learning Council  
United to Promote Quality

## The Chautauqua Child Care Council

works to foster collaborative relationships in order to build a strong responsive child care support system meeting the needs of all of Chautauqua County's families, child care providers, businesses and communities.

**Share The Chat with your employees and your families!**

**The Chautauqua Child Care Council is a division of  
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.**



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