

Friendly Field Trips

~By Maureen Lyons, for Wildwood Child and Adult Care Food Program 2017

Remember the excitement and anticipation you felt as a child when your class went on a field trip to the zoo or another special location. Well, there's no reason you, as a child care provider, need to be stranded at home or the child care center while you're caring for tomorrow's leaders. Not only will field trips allow you get away from the same-old location, but you'll be assisting the children to learn about the world around them. Before you load up the stroller or jump on the bus there are a few important things to consider. After you take care of the basic safety and logistical details, you'll be ready to schedule fun field trips for your crew.



Early Planning & Consideration

Whether you're in your home, child care center, or on an outing, the health and safety of the children in your care is your top priority. Before you start planning for a field trip, consider all the things you normally do in the course of a day to ensure a safe environment in your usual setting. Next, consider all the aspects of safety that would be different while you're away from your usual location on a field trip. This will include things like the weather, safe food and drinking water, proper supervision, available restrooms and hand washing facilities.

In addition, you'll want to make plans for transportation, liability insurance coverage, and arranging for approved assistants to lend a helping-hand with the children in your care. We will go into more detail on these topics in later sections. Although it sounds like a long list, once you have the logistics set up, you can plan regular field trips to make your program stand out and rise above the competition. Both children and adults enjoy exploring the community and the world around them.

Size & Scope of Field Trips

Although you may want to start with a BIG field trip, like a trip to the zoo, starting small will help build your skills and confidence while also allowing the children time to adjust to new and changing surroundings on a smaller scale. As you learn to anticipate what you'll need to bring and how to plan for what could go wrong, you can modify your 'toolbox' of supplies and prepare for anything that comes your way. A 'toolbox' of supplies can be as simple as a satchel or backpack to carry the necessary essentials: diapers, wipes, sunscreen, snacks, emergency supplies, etc.

✓ Sample 'Toolbox' supply kit is included later for your consideration

You may be asking yourself, "What counts as a field trip?" Even a walk, bike/tricycle or stroller/wagon ride around the neighborhood provides a change of scenery to you and the children. Regardless of the type of field trip you're planning, you will want to make sure you have written permission from parents/guardians to leave the care facility or child care home. Simple outings are a great way to get your feet wet and prepare for bigger trips later on. Next you may consider taking a picnic lunch or snack to a local park or playground. Again, this is a chance to improve your field trip skills and allow the children to adjust to a new activity outside their normal routine without being a huge undertaking.

Because children rely heavily on daily routines and structure to feel comfortable, you'll want to talk to them about any outings coming up so that children are not caught by surprise. You will also want to communicate with parents early in the planning process to get their feedback and suggestions; they know their child best and may have valuable input for you about best options for field trip locations and accommodations.

Where to go, whom to include, and when to get there?

Not all field trip destinations are created equal. Some places are better suited for young children while other options are appropriate for older kids. Consider the age group you are leading to find the best fit for outings with age-appropriate

activities for the enjoyment and safety of children attending. Checking out the venue ahead of time, in-person or online, allows you to get a feel for the layout or additional planning that may be necessary. Depending on where you go, some locations have pre-set ratio requirements of children to staff that may be different than licensing numbers. This provides a great opportunity to invite parents and/or grandparents to come along to provide a helping hand. Your program or state may require a background check or additional training for helpers who will have direct contact with children. A good rule of thumb for adult to children ratios is 4-5 children per adult for school-age children and 3-4 children per adult for toddler and pre-school age. Some field trip locations offer discounted or free admission for staff or helpers as an incentive to come to their location.

✓ Field trip ideas and suggestions are provided later for your convenience

Timing for field trips can be very important, especially with mixed-age groups. Where will you be when the baby needs to be fed or have a diaper change? If the field trip will include a meal, snack or nap time, it will take special planning. Longer field trips can be loads of fun, so don't be scared away from ideas that require a meal or snack to be served while you're away from your main location after you've had a few shorter outings. Picnics are fun and offer a unique opportunity to practice manners and social skills in a new place, which promotes confidence and self-esteem for children.

✓ A special section is included later for meals/snacks on the go

Side-Note; use restrooms often when they are available to avoid the need to hustle with children who have an urgent need to 'go'. Having helpers makes it easier to bring children to the bathroom in small groups without having to bring a 'herd' of children into the restroom with you.

Who pays for field trips?

While some locations and outings are free to attend, like the library and school or community parks, other destinations have a cost or ticket price involved. As you explore field trip options, you can determine the best way to handle the cost associated with those places that charge admission. Some child care programs include field trip expenses in the regular fee/tuition paid by parents. Some programs charge for field trips on a per/event basis to allow parents to pick-and-choose which field trips they want their child to participate in. When there is a cost involved for a specific field trip, it is important to communicate the cost to parents well ahead of time if they are expected to contribute to the price of admission. Creating a generic field trip permission slip (that can be quickly modified with date, location, and cost) will make it easy to share details with parents.

✓ Sample field trip permission slips are included later for your convenience

Cover your bases and your bottom line

When caring for children, you or your facility, are legally responsible for the safety and well-being of those children. Having a liability insurance policy is a smart idea in case a child is injured while in your care. Many insurance companies offer a low cost policy as an “add-on” to your homeowners, automobile, or facility insurance to cover the children in care while off premises. The cost for insurance is part of doing business and should be included in your usual annual budget and expenses. Requirements for liability insurance vary by state, so please check with your licensing agency to be sure you are covered to the limits necessary for your location and type of care facility.

Wagons, Trains, Busses, oh my!

Walking field trips in your neighborhood are relatively easy to plan. Other outings will require you to take public or private transportation to get where you're going. Public transportation does not require the use of child safety seats. When utilizing private passenger vehicles (cars, vans, etc.), proper child safety restraints (car seats) are essential. It is recommended (required by some states) that anyone transporting children in a personal vehicle take a NTSB (National Traffic Safety Board) child seat safety course to ensure that seats are correctly sized and installed. Not all car seats fit properly in all vehicles, so take special care to read directions and install child seats according to the manufactures directions.

*If you are using personal vehicles make sure they are filled with gas before the field trip. Never bring children along to re-fuel a vehicle.

In case of Emergency!

Safety starts in the planning stage and continues throughout any activity. As the responsible party, you will need to be aware of your surroundings and watchful of risks that may harm the children. This includes protecting them from the weather with sunscreen and a compact umbrella, as well as keeping them within your sight or that of another adult care giver.

Always bring a small first aid kit with you when you leave the child care home or center. Often a child with a scraped knee can be easily soothed when bandages are readily available. This kit should be a miniature version of the one kept on-site to meet licensing requirements, which vary by state.

Emergency cards should be carried for each child in attendance for a field trip. This recipe-style index card includes a photo of the child, parents' names and contact information along with any allergies or special information that may be helpful in an emergency. If a child becomes lost, having a photo puts the odds in your favor to find them quickly.

✓ Sample emergency card template in included later for your convenience

Each child should wear a small name tag attached to their clothing for identification purposes. Consider, for example, that you are injured or killed in a car accident. These tags allow emergency responders to identify children and contact their family quickly and easily. Size of tags can vary, but 1 inch by 3 inch laminated paper is sufficient. This information needs to be kept up-to-date with child's name, date of birth, and parent contact information.

Did someone say PICNIC? Meal & Snacks on the Go

In addition to having a water bottle labeled for each child, outings may coincide with meal or snack time, in which case, quick kid-friendly food options will make your job easier. (Keep in mind that cold foods need to be kept cold to protect against foodborne illness.) A table cloth or blanket can serve as a make-shift picnic area for kids to sit on or cover up a dirty public picnic table. Hand sanitizer or wet wipes are a great way to 'wash up' before and after eating. Consider easy foods that travel well for your picnic: a tightly-sealed container of milk, sandwiches, and raw, cut-up fruit & veggies, make a balanced meal that is inexpensive and also reimbursable by your food program sponsor. (Grapes, apple wedges, orange sections, baby carrots, snap peas, and cherry tomatoes are great options) When paired with small paper plates and plastic cups, you have the ingredients for a fun-filled meal for your kiddos on the go.

On-the-go snacks are easy to create. Individual baggies with mixed cereal, dried fruit, pretzels, or crackers along with a 100% Real juice-box make a special treat during field trips. Remembering to wash hands before and after eating is the toughest part, since kids are excited for the picnic adventure.

One key to successful picnics with kids is to bring only as much food as the children will likely eat, usually a half-sandwich for each kiddo, depending on their age of course, is enough. Any perishable extras should be discarded after the meal, since they cannot be quickly refrigerated.

Helpful picnic hints:

- ✓ Freeze juice boxes to keep the food items in a cooler chilled until lunch.
- ✓ A small cooler in the back of a wagon makes a great back-rest for a toddler.
- ✓ A picnic blanket doubles as a soft-layer in the wagon while on the go.
- ✓ A wet washcloth in a zip-top bag is handy to clean up any sticky messes after the meal is finished.
- ✓ There is a learning curve involved with picnicking, so be patient with children as they learn that the wind can quickly topple a paper plate that is nearly empty.

Additional Resources:

Any of the following topics can be searched online to find more templates or suggestions for your local area.

Sample Field Trip Toolbox/Supply List

Small First Aid Kit	Emergency Cards for each child
Diapers	Sunscreen
Baby wipes	Insect repellent
Compact umbrella	Clean wash cloth in a zip top bag

Unopened water bottle for washing scrapes

Carry a fully-charged cellular phone to communicate with parents to report any incidents or schedule changes as the field trip is in progress.

Matching t-shirts or tank tops to easily spot your crew (These can be printed with your day care name and logo)

Generic Field Trip Permission Slip:

I give my permission for _____ to participate in field trips and outings away from the child care setting on a recurring basis.

Signature of parent or guardian

Date signed

Specific Field Trip Permission Slip:

Dear Parent/Guardian,

On _____ the child care will take a field trip to

_____.

The cost to participate for this event is _____ per person. Please return the permission slip below with your payment if you would like your child to be included in this outing. Parents/guardians with a background check on file are welcome to join us to help supervise a small group of children.

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I hereby give my permission for _____ (child) to participate in the field trip to _____ (place) on _____ (date).

_____ I would like to assist with supervision of children on this outing from the child care setting.

_____ I have included payment for my child to participate in this field trip.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date signed

Emergency Information Card (3 inch x 5 inch)

Photo of child	Child's Full Name (Date of Birth)
	Parents Names
	Home Address
	Parent contact phone, cellular, home, work
	Any allergies, special needs, other helpful details

Name tag template for each child

Child's Full Name (date of birth)
Parents Names
Home Address
Parent Contact Phone: cellular, home, work
Any allergies, special needs, etc.

Easy Picnic Checklist:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Blanket or table cloth | Cooler for food |
| Small paper plates | Plastic cups |
| Napkins | Baby wipes |
| Wet washcloth in a zip top bag | Unopened bottle of water |
| Tight seal pitcher of milk | Sandwiches or Cold Pasta Salad |
| Cut up or seasonal or easy peel fruit | Special treat for dessert |
| Cut up veggies (carrots, celery, sweet peas) | |

Snack: Baggies of dry crackers and fruit and a 100% Real juice box

Field Trip Ideas & Suggestions for each Month

January

Visit an Eye Doctor
See a play/children's theater
Home improvement store

February

Visit a dental office
Tour public library
Go sledding

March

Tour a bakery or restaurant
Visit a flower shop or nature center
Go to indoor recreation center

April

Visit a garden center
Tour a food bank
Go bowling

May

Go to the Zoo
Visit an art center/museum
Go to a neighborhood park
Visit a bike shop

June

Dairy Queen
Go to an amusement park
Help at a community garden

July

Go to the County Fair
Visit a waterpark or Aquarium
Visit a museum

August

Go to the beach – picnic
Tour Subway Restaurant
Visit an Arboretum

September

Go to an orchard
Go to a parade
Walk to the park - picnic

October

Go to a pumpkin patch
Fire station tour
Roller skating or laser tag

November

Tour a grocery store
Eat at a restaurant
Visit a nursing home
Jump/trampoline place

December

Collect Toys for Tots
Visit a pet store or shelter
Go to a science museum

Friendly Field Trips Quiz

1. Not all locations are appropriate for children of all ages. T/F
2. Never tell the children about a field trip ahead of time. T/F
3. Field trips can be simple (a walk around the neighborhood). T/F
4. Parents do not need to know about field trips. T/F
5. Safety is your responsibility while on a field trip. T/F
6. Field trips require planning for and anticipating of what might go wrong. T/F
7. Car seats are not required for children when using public transportation. T/F
8. Liability insurance protects your program if a child is injured. T/F
9. Helpers may require background checks and additional training if required by your state licensing agency. T/F
10. Some field trip locations have adult/child ratio requirements that may be different than licensing. T/F
11. You do not need to offer water to children on field trips. T/F
12. Some places offer free or reduced admission for adults. T/F
13. Meals and snacks should never be served on field trips. T/F
14. You should plan for weather while on a field trip. T/F
15. Picnics are a good way for children to practice manners. T/F
16. Always bring lots of extra perishable food on picnics. T/F
17. Picnics can be reimbursable through your food program. T/F
18. Permission slips are not necessary for field trips. T/F
19. 100% Real juice boxes can be frozen to keep other food cool for short period of time. T/F
20. Always bring a first aid kit with you when you leave the child care location. T/F



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click [HERE](#) to take the test.

(or you can type this address into your browser:

<https://goo.gl/forms/RE3QVBJEFBQa452H2>

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