

# Practical aspects of creating Lifeways in-home nursery program

By Kerry Ingram

- Connect with your vision of who you want to become as a caregiver. This is the foundation of your play garden, the heart of your program. What are your inner qualities you would like to enrich and cultivate? Your striving will nourish the children in your care, your home program is a dynamic entity that when enlivened supports the well-being of the children, the families and the teacher.
- Create a clear intention on exactly what you want to provide at your play garden. This is a gift to yourself as well as the families who call you. You will both know if your program is a match for this family when you are clear about what you are offering. Will you offer a community that celebrates festivals, parent education evenings, volunteer projects, handwork projects, how many days per week, hours, number of children, holidays, summer, open house, work days, welcome picnic, aftercare, naps, etc.
- Now write down your vision (in pencil), a blank calendar is nice to "mock schedule" days off, festivals and parent evenings. If you have older children in school, synchronize their calendar with yours.
- Next, find out what other people are charging and their experience and education. What amount feels comfortable?
- With your mock calendar, crunch some numbers to get a very general picture of income. Is this supportive to your needs? Make changes, but none that would compromise your or your family's well-being.
- Connect with a CPA and ask for a print out of tax deductions for home day care providers. You could use a coupon accordion folder with labels that align with your tax deductions, that way your receipts go into their organized place right away.
- Contact your local licensing office and begin the process, it can sometimes take months so leave plenty of time before your first day.
- Purchase insurance. Schedule background checks and fingerprints for everyone in your home as well as assistants. Update your CPR and First Aid.
- You might create an intention of the season to cultivate as part of your inner work. (gesture, uprightness, singing, storytelling etc..)
- Create a listing on the Lifeways directory to become more visible, you can do this before you open and list as a student or graduate at a special rate.
- Connect with families: school newsletters, community boards, parent-child classes, parent-child yoga, music classes and other playgardens.

- Create your rhythm, daily, weekly, seasonally and yearly on your mock calendar. This will change, but it is good to have a general idea.
- You could keep a folder with 4 papers, one for each season, and jot down activities, songs, stories, recipes, verses, etc. appropriate for that season.
- Ask seasoned caregivers if you can look at their paperwork as a model for your agreements/enrollment forms and handbook. A financial agreement is necessary and I advise a non-refundable deposit to secure the child's place.
- Create an enrollment form to give the parents opportunity to share about their family and child. Ask questions that are important and give you a picture of home life; what does your child see you doing at home? What is your rhythm at home? How does your child participate in home activities? Etc.
- Before you go forward with anyone, have friend or colleague look at everything you have planned and created ask her to reflect what she understands you are communicating.
- Focus on your space, get down to children's height and use all of your senses to see your home in a different way. Ask a colleague or friend to give feedback on your space. Keep it simple, warm and home-like.
- Think about the activities in your daily rhythm; if you are sweeping are there child-sized brooms? Can they reach the sink? Child-sized choppers and spoons for cooking? Try to create opportunities for "can-do" participation with appropriate tools.
- Are you doing a story? On your lap, on a tray, with an apron?
- Trail run your rhythm and think about the "hows" before the first day.
- Home visits?
- Work day/Welcome picnic?
- TV tray of muffins and tea for first day in the driveway for parents to visit for 30 minutes. Ask a few to be in charge of tidying up.
- Schedule peer observations through the year and call for help when feeling stuck.
- Connect with other home based caregivers and meet regularly.

### Resources

Child sized everything...[www.forsmallhands.com](http://www.forsmallhands.com)

Outdoor play space ideas... [www.mummymusingsandmayhem.com](http://www.mummymusingsandmayhem.com) § [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)