START THE SCHOOL YEAR RIGHT

WITH CHILDCARE SOFTWARE

iCare
LET'S RAISE AMAZING CHILDREN

www.iCareSoftware.com

A new school year holds a wealth of opportunities. But it can also come with the stress of getting it all done.

Staying organized and using your tools to their fullest will ensure the best school year while minimizing your stress. Don't dread back to school. Prepare for it.

We'll outline several steps you can take to reduce stress, delight families and set the foundation for a successful year ahead. Learn how to use your childcare software to:

- Stay organized during busy times
- Simplify processes
- Support teachers
- Benefit parents
- Gain time back in your day

How to Stay Organized During Busy Times

Most childcare directors and administrators just feel like they are trying to make things work. You pivot constantly and hire help to take some burden off your shoulders. But you still might feel like you aren't getting anywhere.

What you need is to streamline all the daily tasks that you do, including:

- Registration
- Billing
- Scheduling
- Hiring
- Payroll
- Child documentation

Even if you have someone who does part of the billing or hiring, it still falls on you as a member of the leadership team, which means you have to oversee the process. Here's a list of helpful ways to get organized this school year to reduce your burdens and put time back into your day.

Email Organization

Delete/file emails that you have addressed. In your inbox, try to keep as few emails as possible so that it is a better representation of what you need to do. An email should only stay in your inbox if there is something you still need to do.

Use a Central Calendar

Having one calendar where you track all important events will avoid double-booking or the need to reach out to a prospective parent to adjust a tour or meeting. Find a way to put all important meetings and events on one calendar. Maybe it's a paper calendar or a Google calendar. If you use iCare, there is an easy-to-use calendar built-in and you can set events to show to just you, staff or parents to keep everyone informed and on the same page.

Don't Let Paperwork Pile Up

Even with the best software, you likely still deal with paper in some capacity. That means managing an inbox or mailbox where your staff places all that paperwork.

The challenge for directors and other leadership team members is that paperwork can pile up quickly. And most people dread this activity, which means they tend to put it off and allow that paperwork to pile up even more.

If you do a little every day though, you can avoid the massive pile and the dreaded activity hanging over your head. Take the time to file, input or scan the documents as soon as they hit your mailbox. That way, you don't miss important filings for your state licensing or get backlogged with updating a child's important data within your system.

Carve out time in your day to do this. If you can't do it daily, set once or twice a week that you will go through your paper inbox and clean it up to avoid the dreaded pile-up that could take hours or even days to clean up later.

Set Communication Plans

How often do you communicate with your staff? What about parents? Does it only happen when you find the time or are you following a set schedule that ensures frequent and timely communication?

If you set a communication schedule, you can set aside time each week to prepare that communication. That way, the staff knows to watch their email for timely notices from you. And parents can look forward to updates regularly. Everyone will appreciate the routine and you'll ensure you have the time to get the newsletter out.

Build a Task Notebook

Your task notebook can be electronic or digital. You might use Google notes, the notes app on your phone or a notebook where you keep your upcoming and scheduled tasks.

That way, you can keep track of upcoming to-do list items like sending out your monthly newsletter. But you can also remind yourself to check in on billing statements and paperwork for new students.

Making a to-do list reduces the volume of tasks you have to keep in mind, which reduces some mental burdens when running a childcare center.

Set Due Dates

Without a due date, parents might feel like they can get back to you with that paperwork whenever it is convenient for them. And you'll have no way of keeping track of when you should follow up.

Try to keep due dates consistent, such as all paperwork from families being due Friday of each week. Then you can add the follow-up to your to-do list notebook to ensure timely messaging to stay on top of everything. This will also reduce ambiguity and set expectations with parents and staff.

Simplifying Processes

Consider how your software can do things for you and how it can make paperwork disappear entirely. Using a childcare software system like iCare provides the opportunity to move documentation online so that you don't have to print, sort and collect it all.

Moving processes to digital platforms and use cases will save an incredible amount of time. Here are some processes that high-quality software that can simply remove some burden from childcare leadership teams.

Annual Paperwork

Each state's licensing board requires different paperwork for childcare centers. But no matter where you operate, you have to complete annual updates with parents. And if you're doing it on physical paper, it means reprinting those documents and making parents fill them out all over again.

Not only is this process a pain for parents who won't appreciate having to start all over again with the same paperwork they filled out last year, but it makes for more work for you.

Using iCare, you can capture parent signatures digitally and send digital versions of your state's licensing paperwork to update each year. That way, parents can go off of what they did last year and make minor updates instead of filling everything out all over again.

And for medical information, they can go to their doctor's patient portal to download their child's records and upload them directly to your childcare software. Or, doctors can send the paperwork digitally to reduce your burden to update your physical paperwork regularly.

Set Automated Reminders

Following up with parents might be the most time-consuming thing that you do. And it puts a great deal of mental strain on you. Instead, set automated reminders through your childcare software about what is missing.

If a parent hasn't turned in their child's vaccination records and is set to start school in a few days, the system can automatically remind parents that this information is required for the child to attend their first day.

Within the system, set due dates for important documents or activities and allow the software to do the work for you in getting parents to complete important activities. If you still need to do some manual reminders, you can run a quick report to show which documents are missing for which child so you can contact parents directly. It's a huge time saver and will remove another item from your to-do list.

Automate Billing

Billing can be the most complex thing that you do. And most childcare owners are not accountants despite having years of experience using billing systems.

Use childcare software that allows you to set rules-based billing. iCare's flexible rate modeler allows you to set your rates based on daily, hourly or weekly rates. You're in complete control of your rates but once you input the information, the system will automatically bill parents based on their child's attendance.

Using a good system also allows you to project your income to see how changes in enrollment will impact your bottom line. This gives you time to fill that spot before it becomes a large gap in your income or causes financial woes.

Give parents options for how they want to pay tuition. This will lead to greater customer satisfaction but also ensures you get timeline payments. When using iCare, parents can pay by check, credit card or paper checks.

Set reminders so that parents get pinged when you haven't gotten tuition or if it becomes overdue. Inform parents when a late fee is added to their bill. And this will be automated so you don't have to do it manually.

Automating your billing will also help you reduce losses in unrealized revenue, which further supports your bottom line.

Simplify Payroll

Tie payroll to staffing to reduce manual work. Staff members can clock in and out using the staff app. And the great part is, the app uses geolocation to only allow staff members to check in and out when they are within a certain radius of your center, which means no more checking in from the drive-thru line down the street to avoid getting docked for being late.

For administrators, it means all you have to do is review payroll quickly or approve overtime before running payroll. And staff members get their paychecks direct deposited into their account, which they appreciate.

Manage Staffing

Staffing can be an extremely stressful aspect of managing a childcare center. That's because having one teacher out sick could throw off student-teacher ratios and take you out of compliance with your state's licensing requirements.

And while you could manage it with a paper sheet showing in half-hour increments expected child attendance, it's far easier to do this all digitally. iCare offers the granular details you need to manage staffing. You'll experience the following benefits when using the system to manage staffing.

- Real-time teacher-child ratio tracking (who is there at any time and on any day in the future).
- Visualize a whole week at one time. You don't have to scroll through tons of screens. You can see it all at once and can see what your staff and needs will be.
- Allows you to schedule based on combining rooms. Helps with managing staffing for safe ratios but also minimizing expenses.
- Drag and drop makes it easy to move things around. This isn't Excel where one small change can throw everything off. The system is easy to use and visually attractive. You won't get overwhelmed and want to avoid the task.

Attendance

Know who is on-site at all times and document when a child leaves the building. You can also set up notifications for when a child doesn't arrive for the day but was scheduled to be at your center. This way, you can check in with parents who did not call or let you know that the child would not be in attendance.

This is a great feature because you get the information without having to bother teachers or interrupt their school day. You'll have information at your fingertips when you need it to take appropriate action.

Supporting Teachers

Teachers work for your center because they love interacting with children. And that's right where you want them. You want them on the floor and engaged with children. You want their supervision to be impeccable. If they are trying to do too much paperwork at once, it's taking away from the quality of care and classroom safety.

Teachers can have laptops, tablets, and desktops to access the system to see info for the child in their classroom. They can't see the whole school. Here are some iCare features that help teachers engage with students while documenting important information.

Daily Notes

Teachers can write notes about their class and personalize them for each child that is in attendance that day. This way, you have information along with attendance logs and can quickly send information to the parent about what a child did that day. You don't have to worry about the messages being illegible or messy. And you don't have to print them off. You know the messages are reaching parents directly. Children with multiple caregivers also don't have to share these messages. They go out to all caregivers who have access to the app.

Photo Sharing

Seeing photos of their child can help parents feel better about the day their child is having. Photos are especially helpful if a child is having a hard time adjusting or joining a new classroom. This is a way to show parents that the child is doing well.

And when you share photos through childcare software, you don't have to worry about photos of children being on staff phones.

Sharing photos is fast and easy, which removes barriers to this important communication method.

Documentation

Throughout the day, teachers can log information about their students. This includes progress that a child has made or concerns that the teacher might have.

When it comes time for evaluations, teachers can review their daily notes and compile them easily for these meetings. This simplifies the process immensely so teachers aren't digging through paper notes or doing last-minute assessments to see what a child knows right before an assessment.

Lesson Plans

Allow teachers to complete lesson planning through your childcare software and submit them to you for review. You can personalize the lesson planning aspect of the software to meet your unique needs.

And if you can't figure out how to make the adaptations, iCare's IT team can make the customizations for you. The software adapts to meet your unique philosophies.

Stay Connected with Families

Parents are leaving their most treasured possession with you. As they walk away, they might feel disconnected from their child and their child's education.

But communication tools help you build relationships with parents by sharing details throughout the day. Regular communication also builds confidence that the parent has chosen the right place for their child. They can stay up to date on how their child is growing and developing to feel more involved.

Parent Benefits

Childcare software truly benefits everyone: the administrator, teacher, parents and students. Parents will appreciate the tools and regular communication they get once you have a modern childcare software. Here are some ways that parents benefit from these systems.

Personalized Information

As teachers log information about a child's day, parents can view that data. They'll see how their child slept, what they ate and remarks about activities. Before parents pick up their child they can review this information to get ready for conversations with their child or questions for the teacher.

It also comes with reminders for parents about supplies they need to bring or paperwork that is due. And if multiple parents are managing the drop-off and pick-up, the system will keep everyone up to date to make coordinating care easier. Teachers won't have to worry about whether paperwork is reaching the right parent at the right time.

Review Classroom Experiences

Parents can see how their child is interacting in the classroom and see what activities they took part in that day. If a child opted out of a certain activity, parents will know and can see trends or talk to the child about it.

This also helps with parents asking informed questions to hear more about a child's day. If you leave it open-ended with a child by simply asking "how was your day," they will likely respond "good" without elaborating. But if you ask about an art project or new song that they learned, they can share more details.

Receiving Schoolwide Information

Staff can easily share schoolwide information with parents with the click of a button. This is great to share data about billing, illnesses, reminders, scheduling, accounting information, extra charges and more.

Parents can receive these messages via email, SMS or chat. Parents can have it their way to make it easier for them to get information in the way that works best for their needs.

The Bulletin board feature makes it easier for broader information to get out. And you can send parents lobby messages so that when a parent logs in, they see that information, which makes communication timely.

Parents can set their alerts for billing or paperwork reminders. It comes to their phone or on their system or tablet or laptop so that they get a reminder.

Gain Time Back in Your Day

All these features offer efficiency, which puts more time back in your day. So why are systems important? When you have good systems you are:

- More efficient
- More productive
- More organized
- More successful with parents and staff
- Better at communicating
- More routine and predictable

New habits require 50-60 days. So don't start with a new system and abandon it after a week. You can make tweaks and adjustments to meet your needs, but don't abandon anything until you've tried it for two months.

You should plan to review your processes at least annually and make adjustments to ensure for greatest productivity. But putting your processes into a system that you can access from a phone, tablet or computer builds the greatest efficiency. That way, if you have to go to a classroom to cover naptime, you can still use that time wisely.

And the more time you save, the more time you can reinvest in building enrollment, holding more tours, going into the classroom and enjoying educating children. You can focus on the people side of the business instead of the paperwork.

SCHEDULE A DEMO

iCare Software is a leading childcare software with an integrated door lock to secure your center and your data. To take the next step in improving your center's security, schedule a free demo to see our software in action.

To learn more about iCare Software and how it can help you put more time back into your day, schedule a free demo now.

Call to schedule your demo at 978-266-0224

Or visit our website to book your demo at iCareSoftware.com

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