

PROTECTING YOUR CHILDCARE BUSINESS

Risk, Compliance & Regulatory Best Practices

OPERATOR TOOLKIT

Practical tools to identify risk, strengthen accountability, document action and build repeatable compliance systems.

Turn Good Practice Into a Consistent System

Strong compliance is not about being ready when licensing arrives. It is about having systems that help you recognize risk early, respond consistently, document what happened, and show what leadership did next. Use these tools after the Lunch & Learn to review your program, assign responsibility and turn today's learning into everyday practice.

CORE PRINCIPLE If it matters enough to act on, it matters enough to document.

Start with the Monthly Compliance Self-Audit. Choose the highest-priority gaps, then use the Risk Review, Coaching Card and 90-Day Action Plan to assign clear next steps. Revisit the tools monthly so that compliance becomes part of routine leadership rather than a reaction to an incident.

TOOL 1

Monthly Compliance Self-Audit

A quick leadership review to identify gaps before they become larger problems.

Area	What to Review	Status	Action / Owner
Staffing & Records	Staff files current; qualifications documented; required checks current; schedules support ratios.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Attendance & Ratios	Attendance records accurate; ratios verified; transitions and breaks covered.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Active Supervision	Educators positioned effectively; scanning; anticipating risk; supervision consistent indoors/outdoors.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Health & Safety	Medication, illness, cleaning, food safety and emergency procedures followed.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Incidents & Complaints	Reports complete; required notifications made; follow-up documented; patterns reviewed.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Policies in Practice	Written policy matches actual practice; staff know expectations; updates communicated.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Training & Competency	Required training current; competency observed; support or retraining documented.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Corrective Actions	Open concerns tracked; owner assigned; due dates set; completion verified.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Environment & Equipment	Hazards addressed; equipment maintained; repairs tracked; required checks completed.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	
Parent Communication	Key communication documented; concerns responded to; commitments followed through.	☐ Compliant ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Immediate Action	

MONTHLY QUESTION What are we tolerating today that could become tomorrow's incident, complaint or non-compliance?

TOOL 2

Incident & Complaint Response Flow

Use the same disciplined process when something goes wrong.

- 1. IMMEDIATE SAFETY** Protect children and staff. Address urgent hazards or care needs first.
- 2. PRESERVE FACTS** Record what was observed/reported. Separate facts, assumptions and opinions.
- 3. REPORT / NOTIFY** Confirm regulatory, insurance, employer, parent or other reporting obligations.
- 4. INVESTIGATE** Identify who needs to be interviewed, what records need review and what evidence must be preserved.
- 5. DECIDE & ACT** Determine immediate corrective action, staffing changes, retraining, restrictions or other response.
- 6. COMMUNICATE** Provide timely, appropriate updates to required parties without speculation.
- 7. FOLLOW UP** Verify the corrective action occurred and the risk is controlled.
- 8. CLOSE THE LOOP** Document outcome, lessons learned and any system or policy changes required.

REMEMBER Do not let urgency replace process. Serious incidents are exactly when clear systems matter most.

TOOL 3

Leadership Risk Review

Use after a significant incident, complaint, repeated concern or non-compliance.

Leadership Question	Notes / Evidence
What happened? Describe the event or concern factually.	
What did leadership know? What information was available before, during and after the concern?	
When did we know it? Identify dates/times and when escalation should have occurred.	
What did we do? Document immediate action, notifications, coaching, retraining or corrective measures.	
What still needs to happen? Identify unresolved risk, follow-up, monitoring or communication.	
Who owns the next step? Name one accountable person.	
By when? Set a clear deadline.	
How will we verify it worked? Define evidence of improvement or risk control.	

LEADERSHIP LENS A serious issue is not only about what happened. It is also about what leadership knew, how quickly it acted, and whether follow-up was completed.

TOOL 4

Training Gap or Performance Concern?

Use before deciding whether to retrain, coach or move into formal performance management.

Question	Yes / No	Evidence / Notes
Was the expectation clearly explained?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Was strong practice demonstrated?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Was the employee given supported practice?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Was competency observed in a real situation?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Was specific feedback provided?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Has the employee previously demonstrated competency?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Does the employee understand why the expectation matters?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Is the issue repeated after support and clarification?	☐ Yes ☐ No	

IF THE ANSWER IS NO Return to training: explain, demonstrate, practise, observe and reassess.

IF THE ANSWER IS YES If expectations are understood and competency was established, repeated non-compliance may be a performance/accountability concern. Document expectations, timelines and follow-up.

TOOL 5

In-the-Moment Coaching Card

NOTICE → NAME → NEXT STEP → FOLLOW-UP

NOTICE Describe exactly what you observed without judgement.

NAME Explain why it was effective or why it creates risk.

NEXT STEP Clarify what should happen differently next time.

FOLLOW-UP Observe again and confirm the change in practice.

EXAMPLE “You stayed close to the group, but your back was turned while helping one child. That creates a supervision gap. Next time, reposition so you can support the child while still seeing the full group. I’ll watch the next transition with you.”

Use this card for quick coaching that is specific, fair and connected to observable practice. Avoid vague feedback such as “be more careful” or “you need to supervise better.”

TOOL 6

Compliance Responsibility Matrix

Make ownership visible so tasks do not disappear between roles.

Responsibility	Owner	Frequency	Evidence	Backup
Staff file review				
Attendance / ratio checks				
Incident follow-up				
Medication records				
Training / competency records				
Policy updates				
Parent complaint follow-up				
Corrective action tracking				
Environment / equipment checks				
Monthly compliance audit				

OPERATOR TIP If everyone is responsible, no one is responsible. Assign one owner, one frequency and one form of evidence for every critical compliance task.

TOOL 7

90-Day Risk & Compliance Action Plan

Choose three priorities only. Improvement is more likely when ownership and deadlines are clear.

Priority Risk	Desired Standard	Action	Owner	Deadline	How We Will Verify

90-DAY RULE Do not try to fix everything at once. Choose the three risks that create the greatest exposure for children, staff, the license or the business, and finish them well.

TOOL 8

Would Your Documentation Protect You?

A quick documentation self-check for incidents, complaints and staff concerns.

Incident

A child is injured during an outdoor transition. The incident form describes the injury, but not where staff were positioned, who was supervising, what changed afterward or whether leadership followed up.

What is missing?	
What should leadership document now?	
What system would prevent this gap next time?	

Parent Complaint

A parent verbally reports that an educator spoke harshly to their child. The director speaks to the educator but keeps no written record because “it was resolved.”

What is missing?	
What should leadership document now?	
What system would prevent this gap next time?	

Repeated Supervision Concern

A supervisor has verbally reminded an educator several times about positioning during transitions. No coaching notes or competency observations exist. A later incident occurs.

What is missing?	
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What should leadership document now?	
What system would prevent this gap next time?	

DOCUMENTATION TEST Could someone who was not there understand what happened, what leadership knew, what action was taken and what happened next?

AFTER THE SESSION

Your Next 30 Days

Strong compliance is built through repeatable leadership habits. Use this checklist to turn the session into action over the next month.

- ☐ Complete one Monthly Compliance Self-Audit.
- ☐ Assign or confirm ownership for every critical compliance responsibility.
- ☐ Review one recent incident or complaint using the Leadership Risk Review.
- ☐ Observe one high-risk practice area such as active supervision or transitions.
- ☐ Coach one employee using NOTICE → NAME → NEXT STEP → FOLLOW-UP.
- ☐ Choose three priorities for your 90-Day Action Plan.
- ☐ Schedule a date to reassess progress with your leadership team.

FINAL THOUGHT The goal is not to prepare for licensing. The goal is to operate every day in a way that is safe, consistent, compliant and defensible.