

Before



After



Grandma Sandy's Learning Den offers a unique experience for children. This family provider operates her program in a building separate from her home, allowing her to use the entire space for the children.

*"My passion has always been for caring for children. I have great kids."
- Sandy Miller*

The Environment Makes the Difference

Changing the Environment

Sandy Miller of Grandma Sandy's Learning Den in Princeton, WI determined her goal was to obtain a 4 or 5 Star rating. During the previous rating year (2017) her Technical Consultant (TC), Amanda Schuler, identified two factors which would present barriers in obtaining this goal: family engagement and environment. Amanda suggested that Sandy begin brainstorming ideas to engage with families and connect them to the community during the time between consultation services. Amid her off-year consultation services, they would work together to improve the environment.

Grandma Sandy's program is housed off-site, in a large, open facility. Sandy believes that this makes her program unique and allows her to have this space focused solely on her business. After some discussion between the TC and Sandy, they decided that there were a few factors which needed to be addressed for the program to meet the criteria set forth by the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, (FCCERS). These included: visual barriers, safety concerns, and arrangement of materials.

A Collaborative Effort

The TC helped connect Sandy to an ERS Observer from Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), Sarah Labine, who could complete a practice observation to inform consultation. After this was complete, the results were used by the TC to assist with new room arrangements during an extended consultation visit.

With help from the ERS Observer and another TC, Waukeysha Williams, the environment was totally transformed. The visit was a success and Sandy was instructed as to what materials should be included in each area. Through this experience, Sandy learned that rotating materials, rather than having them all accessible at once, helps children to stay more involved and extend their play.

Safety and supervision concerns were also addressed while changing the environment. The TCs and ERS Observer helped brainstorm ideas with Sandy about how to supervise hard to see areas during routine activities such as meal preparation and diaper changes. An infant/toddler area was created in a space that is easily supervised and out of high traffic areas.

YoungStar Consultants Guide Quality Improvement

Sandy has always had a passion for caring for children and wanted to be a child care provider since she was very young. She found that technical consultation has been very valuable to her over the years. She received help with creating portfolios, understanding the YoungStar Evaluation Criteria, and how to spend her micro-grant on quality materials. Sandy states that she is excited at the prospect of becoming a formally rated program and values continuous quality improvement.

Wisconsin's Stars are Shining

YoungStar informs parents, recognizes quality providers and brings resources and support to programs committed to improving quality. But what it's really all about is helping Wisconsin children shine bright.