

# How to Fill Empty Daycare Slots and Increase Enrollment

Running a childcare center with empty slots can feel frustrating and overwhelming. Many owners work incredibly hard, provide excellent care, and still struggle to maintain full enrollment. The truth is, filling a daycare center consistently requires more than just being a great provider. It requires strategy, systems, and understanding of what today's parents are really looking for.

After years of operating a large childcare center, I've learned that enrollment problems are usually not caused by one big issue. They are caused by several smaller issues working together.

The good news? Most of them can be fixed.

## Stop Waiting for the Phone to Ring

One of the biggest mistakes daycare owners make is relying entirely on referrals and hoping new families will simply "find them."

While referrals are incredibly valuable, they should not be your only enrollment strategy.

Successful childcare centers actively market themselves every single week.

That means:

- Following up on every inquiry quickly
- Posting regularly on social media
- Asking current families for reviews
- Maintaining a strong Google Business profile
- Staying visible in the community
- Tracking where inquiries are coming from

Enrollment growth is usually the result of consistent activity, not luck.

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## Your Tours Matter More Than You Think

Many childcare owners unintentionally conduct tours that focus too heavily on features instead of benefits.

Parents do not enroll because you have colorful walls or new toys.

They enroll because they want to feel:

- Safe
- Comfortable
- Confident
- Emotionally connected
- Certain their child will be cared for and loved

A great tour should make parents feel emotional

Instead of simply showing classrooms, explain:

- How teachers interact with children
- How you communicate with parents
- How you help children develop socially and emotionally
- What makes your culture different

Most importantly, ask questions.

Parents want to feel heard, not sold.

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## **Speed Wins Enrollments**

In today's world, parents often contact multiple childcare centers at once.

If you take two days to return a phone call or email, there is a good chance the family has already scheduled tours elsewhere.

Fast response times dramatically increase enrollment conversions.

Best practices include:

- Returning calls within minutes whenever possible
- Responding to online inquiries immediately
- Using text messaging for faster communication
- Following up multiple times after tours

Many centers lose enrollments simply because they fail to follow up consistently.

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Sometimes enrollment issues are not actually marketing problems.

They are scheduling problems.

## **Empty Slots Often Reveal Scheduling Problems**

For example:

- Too many openings in one age group
- Poor classroom balancing
- Inefficient staffing patterns
- Holding slots too long without deposits
- Lack of part-time flexibility

Understanding your capacity by the classroom and age group is critical.

A center can appear “almost full” while still losing significant revenue due to poorly managed capacity.

Every empty slot represents lost income that can never be recovered.

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## **Your Online Presence Is Your First Impression**

Before parents ever call your center, they usually search online.

Ask yourself:

- Are your Google reviews strong?
- Does your website look professional?
- Are your photos current?
- Does your Facebook page appear active?
- Do parents clearly understand what makes your center different?

Many childcare websites fail because they only provide information.

Great websites build trust.

Parents should quickly understand:

- Why families choose you
- What makes your culture unique
- How to schedule a tour
- What age groups you serve
- How to contact you immediately

And most importantly:

Your phone number and tour button should be impossible to miss.

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## **Retention Is Just as Important as Enrollment**

Filling empty slots is important.

Keeping a family is even more important.

Many centers focus heavily on getting new enrollments while ignoring the families they already have.

High retention comes from:

- Strong communication
- Great staff culture
- Consistency
- Parent engagement
- Clean, organized classrooms
- Professional leadership

Happy families become your best marketing tool.

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## **The Best Centers Measure Their Numbers**

Many childcare owners operate based on feelings instead of metrics.

But numbers tell the real story.

You should track:

- Tour-to-enrollment conversion rates
- Inquiry sources
- Weekly occupancy percentage
- Revenue per classroom
- Labor percentage
- Average length of enrollment
- Waitlist activity

When you track the right metrics, problems become easier to identify and fix.

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## **Final Thoughts**

Empty daycare slots are not just an enrollment issue. They are usually the result of systems, communication, leadership, marketing, and operations all working together.

The good news is that most centers already have tremendous potential.

Sometimes a few strategic changes can dramatically improve enrollment and profitability.

If you are struggling with enrollment, profitability, staffing, or operations, you are not alone. Many childcare owners work incredibly hard but simply do not have the time to step back and evaluate the business strategically.

That is where outside perspective can make a major difference.

### **Ready to Grow Your Enrollment?**

If you would like help identifying opportunities to improve occupancy, operations, and profitability in your childcare business, schedule a free strategy call today.