



Lekotek Minimum Standards of Operation

Lekotek affiliated sites must operate their site according to, but not necessarily limited to the following:

1. CLIENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

There is no typical Lekotek family. The ages of children receiving Lekotek services range from newborn infants to eight years. Lekotek welcomes children with a wide range of **special needs and their families***. Special needs may include a chronic illness or a physical, mental, behavioral or sensory disability such as cancer, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or blindness. Some children receiving Lekotek services do not have a diagnosed disability but are at risk for developmental problems because of environmental circumstances. The families of a teenage parent or of a parent with a disability may also be eligible for Lekotek services. Lekotek Centers will make it a priority to provide 70% of their services for children exhibiting symptoms of a disability or with a diagnosed disability. However, formal diagnosis of a disability is not required. Children coming to Lekotek do not need a medical referral to participate.

** Note: A family is not limited to parents and may include grandparents, siblings, foster parents and guardians (see #3).*

2. PLAY SESSIONS

Lekotek programs must provide individual family play sessions. Lekotek family play sessions, which can be conducted at a Lekotek site or at a home visit, usually last one hour and are typically held monthly. At the discretion of the Lekotek Leader, play sessions may occur more frequently depending on family/child needs. Home visits need to be offered to those families who either have children who are chronically ill, or who are unable to reach the center because of traveling restrictions. (Centers unable to offer home visits, must submit an explanation to the National Lekotek Center (NLC) indicating why home visits are not offered to families). Each Lekotek Program must develop its own guidelines for home visits.

Certified Lekotek Leaders, trained by the NLC or by authorized Lekotek off-site programs, focus on facilitating family interactions through **play**. The sessions are based on the needs and interests of the child and family. Toys and computer software are carefully selected for each child and his/her family members. The play session is designed to emphasize the creative use of toys, play materials and assistive technology, while promoting interactive play among all members of the family. Play sessions are made by appointment and, while typically held during the weekdays, may also be conducted in the evenings and on Saturdays to accommodate families' schedules and staff availability at the center.

The Lekotek Leader ensures that the play session:

- Incorporates consideration of the needs and interests of the child and the goals of the family
- Provides opportunities for the child to lead or guide play activities.
- Provides opportunities to for the child to explore different developmental domains (physical, cognitive, social/emotional, communicative and sensory).
- Provides opportunities for failure-free play and spontaneity.
- Provides a fun and safe environment for the child and family as a whole.
- Provides parental support and materials for educational and support purposes.

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Lekotek Minimum Standards of Operation...*(continued)*

3. PROGRAM

Lekotek programs must be family centered as well as play focused. Parents are encouraged to bring anyone who is involved in the child's life, which may include: siblings, grandparents and neighborhood children. Services are offered with the entire family in mind. Lekotek programs need to be community based with at least 25% of the families coming from the community and the remaining coming from internal referrals or services within an agency/organization.

4. THE LEKOTEK LIBRARY

Toy lending is a service that Lekotek provides to families; however, exceptions may be made for individual families not to loan out toys. Lekotek centers should have an extensive library of various types including specially adapted toys and off-the-shelf toys for children of different ages with which to facilitate play. All Lekoteks need to have some adaptive toys in their library such as switch-operated sensory toys. Lekoteks also should provide resources on a variety of topics including disability, parenting and play. In some cases there may be small resource library to offer books, periodicals, brochures, videos and other materials.

As the computer has a significant role in today's society, every Lekotek must have a computer for families to use in play sessions. The computer is to be used like any other toy during sessions. Lekoteks will make every effort to adapt their computers with a switch-adapted trackballs, touch windows and/or other items that meet the needs of the families served.

5. STAFF QUALITIES AND EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A Lekotek Leader has both specialized training and an abiding commitment to the welfare of children with special needs. Styles may vary, but underneath, some very specific attributes must be present in a candidate to ensure success. Lekotek Leaders form a partnership with the family and other people who provide resources to the child and family. This role demands enthusiasm and compassion. Children with special needs often do not engage in spontaneous play. Yet, if these children are to develop to their full potential, they must be stimulated, lured and coaxed into the world around them. The Lekotek Leader must draw upon every creative resource. The efforts are considerable, but the rewards of performing meaningful work are incomparable.

The optimal Lekotek Leader will have the following educational, professional and philosophical background including:

- A Bachelor's degree in special education or a therapeutic discipline (Occupational, Recreational, Music, Art, Physical Therapy, and/or Speech Language Pathology).
- One year direct-service with infants and children with special needs ages 0-13.
- An academic understanding of child development.
- An appreciation of the value of play for children with special needs.
- An awareness of disabilities.
- An interest in using computers with children with special needs.

All Lekotek Leaders must be certified by the NLC. To become certified each Lekotek Leader must complete Lekotek Leader training. Those who do not meet the "optimal" qualifications listed above but who have other exceptional qualities must complete the Lekotek Leader Training Pre-Approval form. The applicant will be reviewed by NLC to determine training status.

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Lekotek Minimum Standards of Operation...*(continued)*

Note: The certification of Lekotek Leaders trained and certified before July 1, 2004 is guaranteed and there is no need to complete the Lekotek Leader Training Pre-Approval form.

6. RECORD KEEPING

Lekotek staff must maintain accurate and up-to-date records on their clients and families. Proper adherence to confidentiality guidelines indicated in HIPPA laws passed in 2003 is imperative. Client records should be maintained for a minimum of five years and then properly destroyed after that time.

A client file will include the following:

- a. **An initial intake form.** This includes an assessment of the client's play skills. The physical, psychological, social status and play skills of the child and the family must be considered in order to determine the type of care and services to be provided.
- b. **Family records.** Maintaining accurate family records ensures that the history of the family remains intact even if staff changes occur, and helps in developing a warm rapport with the family. This information is to be stored in a confidential place.
- c. **Toy records.** An accurate toy inventory is essential to maintaining an organized and efficient toy lending library and effective toy management. These statistics may also be used for Lekotek annual reports
- d. **Play session summaries.** After each individual family session, the Lekotek Leader must complete a summary of the session, which may include toys selected, family interactions and suggestions for the next play session. Play session summaries for play groups are helpful, although not required.
- e. **Reassessment.** When a significant change occurs in the family and/or child, a developmental update or the initial assessment must be revisited and updated.

7. TOY TRACKING SYSTEM

- Toys must be inventoried with information that includes toy name, manufacturer, date and place of purchase, description and price.
- Toys must be continually assessed for safety, quality and availability.
- Toys must be evaluated regularly. Repair broken toys or remove any toys from the inventory that cannot be repaired.
- The toy tracking system should be at minimum on a card or paper system. A computer inventory system is preferable.
- Toys must be stored properly with utmost concern for safety, neatness and order.

8. TOY HYGIENE

- Toys must be cleaned and sanitized after each use for the safety of families and staff.

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- Lekotek bags and any other play materials must be cleaned and sanitized after each use for the safety of families and staff.

9. **EXTRA SERVICES**

Lekotek sites may offer other complementary services, although these are not required. Examples include:

- Playgroups
- Support groups
- Computer programs
- Parent resource centers