

Using Google Forms for Productivity and Communication

BY LESLIE LAYMAN

Think of all the information that early childhood program administrators need to track each year: family and employee applications, assessments, feedback from staff and families, and advisory board information. You can likely think of several more pieces of data to track. It can be overwhelming to think about creating a system for collecting, storing, and accessing information over time and how to use it year over year for program improvement and management. Purchasing data management software or a suite of software tools can be cost-prohibitive, and many software programs are not tailored to the unique needs of a center-based early childhood program or family child care program. You may be growing your program and feel reluctant to purchase expensive software without more information about how you might use it.

Google Workspace offers a variety of free products that can be tied directly to your free Google account. While they offer many powerful products, one that can be especially helpful for program administration is Google Forms. Google Forms allows you to easily build specialized online fillable forms that can be shared quickly and automatically store information in an editable database in your Google Cloud account.

You could use Google Forms to create and personalize:

- *applications for families,*
- *applications for employment,*
- *environmental, program, and teaching assessments,*
- *daily checklists for health, safety, and attendance,*
- *and quick ways to check in with families.*

The forms can be easily shared with unique web links or QR codes and quickly texted and emailed.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST VALUABLE FEATURES OF GOOGLE FORMS:

- **The application can use decision logic**

This enables people who fill out the forms to see only the questions they need to see. For example, if you created a daily health check form for staff, you could use decision logic to show specific questions for each classroom or age group.

- **Automatic saving of form responses**

Google forms are easily converted into worksheets that automatically update every time someone fills out the form. You can then see, sort, and edit the form data as needed. For instance, you could create an intake form for families applying to your program, save that data to a workbook, and update that workbook to include the date of the family's scheduled intake meeting.

- **The ability to edit the form even when it is “live”**

Google forms can be edited in real-time. For example, perhaps you created an attendance form and wanted to add a new child's name. You can edit the form while it is available to your staff so they see the new child's name in real-time. You can also lock the form to stop accepting responses with a personalized message.

You can [get started here](#) if you want to create a free Google account and try some of their products.

In our upcoming technology training, [Using Google Forms for Productivity and Communication](#), we will review the features and functions of Google Forms, ways to use them for childcare program administration, and how to store and access data collected with Google Forms. We will offer hands-on practice, so you leave feeling confident about your ability to implement new processes in your program.

[Register here to join this free Webinar](#)—we'll help you make better use of your program data and your time.

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