



Child Care Licensing (CCL)

Child Care licensing



Responsibilities

- ◆ Regulate all child-care facilities and child-placing agencies to protect the health, safety and well-being of children in care by reducing the risk of injury, abuse and communicable disease.
- ◆ Inform parents and the public about child care in general and minimum standards compliance histories on specific facilities or homes.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to providers in areas covered in the minimum standards of care.

Advances

In 2002, CCL enhanced its Child-care Licensing Automation Support System (CLASS) to speed up the process for conducting background checks and increase the amount of child-care information accessible to the public through the agency's website. The system helps staff inspect and investigate child-care facilities and homes by keeping all records in one easily accessible system. The system is also tied into www.txchildcaresearch.org so the public can search for child-care centers and homes in their area. During the year, the website was improved to include inspection and compliance histories of child-care providers, map and driving instructions, and more robust searching capabilities. To promote the improved web site, PRS conducted a statewide public awareness campaign. As required by the Department of Information Resources, CCL and PRS Information Technology staff completed the Post Implementation Evaluation Review of CLASS.

CCL staff worked with Early Childhood Intervention, Healthy Child Care Texas, the Texas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Workforce Commission, and other organizations to produce Child Care Solutions, an interactive informational CD-ROM. Distributed to the more than 23,000 child-care providers across Texas, the CD includes provider resources such as parenting information, training materials, posters, sample forms, and links to helpful web sites.

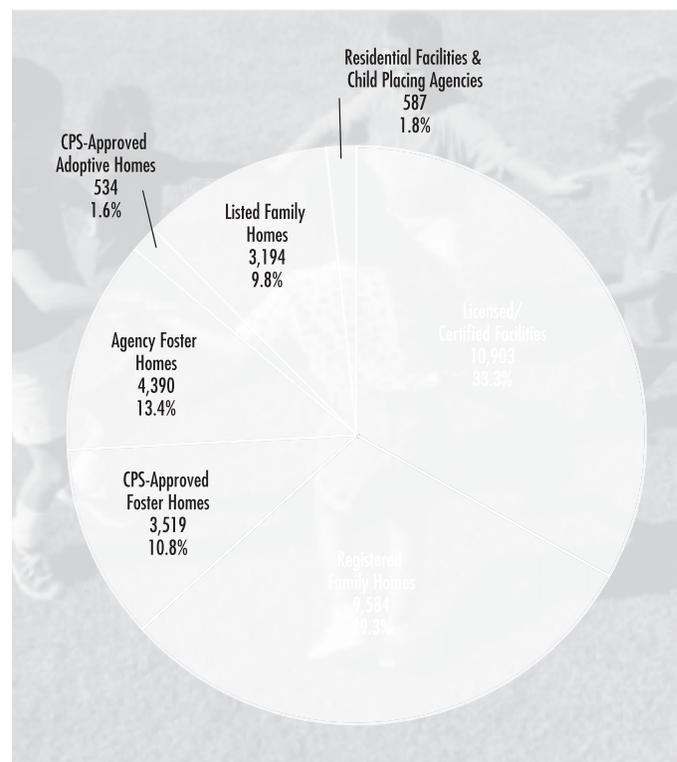
CCL staff in the Austin, Dallas, and Houston areas increased their outreach to the growing Vietnamese populations in their communities. Efforts included

creation of support groups for Vietnamese child-care providers and translations into Vietnamese of brochures about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, brain development, and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Response to Legislation

The 77th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 664, which changed the definitions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation in child-care facilities. In response, CCL staff developed policies and conducted training to implement the new definitions. The law mirrors the definitions of abuse and neglect in adult facilities instead of those for children living at home and affects all Health and Human Services state agencies that regulate child care.

Types of Child Care Facilities in Texas, End of FY 2002





Mom Uses Web Site to Find Child Care

While a student at San Antonio College, Claudia Pena was able to take advantage of the on-campus child development center to care for her son and daughter. After graduating, she had to begin looking for child-care alternatives. But where could she start?

Using txchildcaresearch.org, Pena entered in her ZIP code and found a registered family home provider in her neighborhood. “By using the web site, I was able to determine that the provider had a good record and her inspectors never found any violations. Because she follows the rules, I feel more confident for her to take care of my kids.”

Pena says she likes the web site because it is very easy and to the point. “You decide if you want a day care or a registered home, and it gives you all the information – how many kids they take, the ages, how long they have been licensed or registered, recent inspections and records, if violations were fixed, and a contact name and phone number for the provider. The site also has articles about things like how to choose a good day care, child development, and child safety articles about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and shaken baby syndrome.”

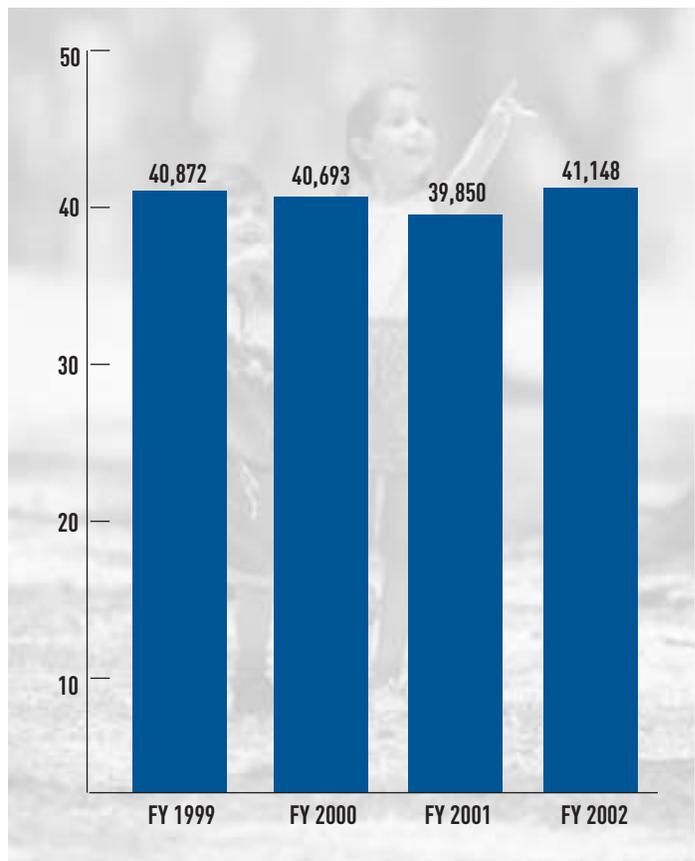
Since discovering the site, Pena has told many people about it. “Child care is a very important decision that can affect your child forever. A lot of people don’t know Texas has such an informative web site.”

Ongoing Initiatives

CCL began a pilot project of testing handheld data entry devices in the field. A small number of CCL staff will use the devices while conducting on-site inspections and investigations then download the information into the automated system. If the pilot is successful, the devices will be distributed statewide to all CCL inspectors and investigators.

For the last two years, CCL staff have been developing new standards for day-care homes and facilities. The process included mail-outs to about 23,000 home and facility day-care providers, cost impact studies, public hearings, and meetings with providers, focus groups, associations, state agencies, and other external stakeholders. The new standards will consolidate six sets of standards into two sets and will be written in a plain English question and answer format. By the end of fiscal year 2002, PRS had published proposed revisions to the standards in the Texas Register for public comment, with plans to implement changes in fiscal year 2003.

Inspections of Child-Care Facilities



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What CCL Does

Child Care Licensing is responsible for protecting the health, safety and well-being of Texas children who attend or reside in regulated child-care facilities. These facilities include day-care centers, family day homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, child-placing agencies, foster homes, adoptive homes, and maternity homes. CCL also licenses child-care administrators.

Inspections

CCL staff conduct inspections and investigation of child-care operations to monitor compliance with minimum standards. Minimum standards are the base-level health and safety requirements that no facility should fall below. Facilities failing to meet minimum standards may be placed on evaluation or probation, which increases the number of inspections and the level of technical assistance they receive. If the risk to children is substantial, the license or registration may be suspended for a period, or it may be revoked. Once a license is revoked, operators may not re-apply for two years.

Day-Care Licensing

Day-care providers care for children for less than a full day.

- ◆ Day-care centers provide care for 13 or more children who are younger than age 14.
- ◆ Registered family homes provide care in the caregiver's home for up to six children who are younger than age 14. They may also care for up to six more school-age children after school. The total number may not exceed 12, including the caregiver's own children.
- ◆ Group day-care homes provide care in the caregiver's home for seven to 12 children who are younger than age 14, including the caregiver's own children.
- ◆ Listed family homes provide regular care in a caregiver's home for one to three children who are not related to them. Unlike other facilities, listed family homes do not have minimum standards and are not inspected.
- ◆ Kindergartens and nursery schools provide care for children age 2 to 6 for up to four hours a day.
- ◆ Drop-in-care centers provide occasional care for short time periods.
- ◆ Schools – grades kindergarten and above – provide educational programs for children ages 5 to 13 during the same hours as public schools. Only schools meeting certain criteria are regulated by CCL.



Conference Addresses Diversity in Child Care

In April 2002, about 200 hundred teachers, professors, early childhood teachers, students, and child-care directors attended an annual diversity conference organized by the Barshop Jewish Community Center of San Antonio's Early Childhood Program. A diverse group of organizations participated in the event including Carver Academy, Miller Child Development Center, Good Samaritan Center, PRS, City of San Antonio Children's Resources, San Antonio College Child Development Department, the Family Services Association's Smart Start for Teachers program, the Directors' Mentoring Program, and San Antonio Association for the Education of Young Children.

"Our society is becoming more diverse," says Alissa Levey Baugh, Barshop JCC's early childhood director. "I think we need to start with our young children by teaching them to be empathetic to those who are different. If adults have biases, children pick up on them. Through the conference, we try to get below the surface. We are challenging people to see what prejudices they may have and how those attitudes are passed along to children." Barshop's Early Childhood Program also sponsors a friendship exchange that brings together children from different ethnicities and religions. "In order to get to know one another, you need to break down barriers," says Baugh.



Children Learn About Making Choices

April Wilson (right), a CCL administrative technician in Bryan, works with children at the eighth annual Hispanic Health Fair, hosted by Texas A&M Chaplain Outreach Services.

CCL, which was one of 36 organizations that participated in the fair, provided more than 300 children with an activity designed to help them learn about choosing healthy snacks. “I really enjoyed working with the children,” says Wilson. “The kids would spin a wheel and once it stopped on a particular food, I asked them if the food was healthy or not and we talked about making food choices. Each child who participated got a sticker and a little prize.”

CCL staff provided more than 300 adults with information about the www.txchildcaresearch.org website, and brochures on choosing child care, SIDS, and Shaken Baby Syndrome.

The health fair is one of the many events that regional CCL staff members participate in during the course of the year, taking information directly to the citizens of Texas.

Residential Licensing

Residential child-care facilities care for children 24 hours a day.

- ◆ Foster family homes provide care for up to six children.
- ◆ Foster group homes provide care for seven to 12 children.
- ◆ Emergency shelters provide short-term residential care, including any necessary medical care, for more than 12 children.
- ◆ Residential treatment centers provide care and treatment for children and adolescents who have therapeutic needs for more than 12 children.
- ◆ Basic child-care institutions provide 24-hour care but do not offer specialized programs such as those at emergency shelters and residential treatment centers.
- ◆ Institutions serving mentally retarded children care for children or adolescents with deficits in intellectual function or adaptive behavior.
- ◆ Halfway houses serve as transitional living facilities for no more than 24 children who are 15 years or older. They provide therapeutic group living to help children make the transition to living in the community.
- ◆ Therapeutic camps provide special outdoor experience programs for children older than age 6 with behavioral problems.

Residential Licensing also regulates the following:

- ◆ Child-placing agencies, which arrange for placement of children in adoptive or foster care. Agencies are responsible for assuring that their foster homes meet minimum standards.
- ◆ Maternity homes provide residential care for four or more pregnant women or women who have given birth within two weeks prior to the date of admission.
- ◆ Child-care administrators supervise and exercise direct administrative control over a 24-hour child-care institution.

Training

Regional CCL representatives, investigators, supervisors, program administrators, and clerical staff received more than 9,400 hours of training and professional development on topics related to their work such as child development, using automation support, regulation and inspection of facilities, and health and safety.

Licensing Resource Consultants, CCL management staff, and CCL representatives provided more than 730 training events for more than 18,000 child-care providers and caregivers. The topics included areas related to the minimum standards, health and safety, infant and toddler needs, guidance, discipline, staff/child ratios, and child development. The training was provided through conferences, licensing meetings and orientations, and technical assistance to centers.

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Staff Increase Outreach Efforts to Minority Community

Since he began working for Child Care Licensing in 1999, Phan Hoang (right) says he has seen a dramatic increase in the number of home child-care providers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area who are of Vietnamese descent. Current estimates suggest there are about 200 such providers in Dallas County, 150 in Arlington, and 60 in Tarrant County. As a result, PRS has taken a more proactive stance in reaching out to the Vietnamese community.

“We have helped them with training, held orientation sessions before they became providers, answered questions, given technical assistance, and provided translation,” says Hoang. “Recently, we also organized several meetings and trainings to help them form provider support groups, and eventually, to form provider associations.”

Than Hackney (left), a registered family home provider in Arlington, says she first learned about the state’s child-care registration process through a friend. “A lot of providers find out about Child Care Licensing through word of mouth,” she says. “The program is helpful. If there’s something we don’t know, they provide us with the information.”

In recent years, the number of Vietnamese child-care providers has also increased in the Houston area. In 2003, PRS’ Dallas and Houston Regions will team up to hold a conference for these providers that will feature additional training, orientation, and support.