

# Child Care Licensing



## Child Care Licensing

### Responsibilities

- ◆ Regulate all child-care operations 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.
- ◆ Establish and monitor operations' and agencies' compliance with minimum standards of care.
- ◆ Inform parents and the public about child-care in general and about the histories of specific homes and daycare operations in complying with minimum state standards.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to providers on areas covered in the minimum standards of care.

### Accomplishments

- ◆ In collaboration with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), DFPS Licensing staff revised rules related to a type of 24-hour care known as “therapeutic camps.” The new standards bring these types of programs into compliance with other residential treatment operations.
- ◆ For the first time, the majority of Licensing inspectors and investigators were issued digital cameras to help them document facility inspections. Workers gained the ability to photograph playground equipment and potential safety hazards and immediately review the digital photos with supervisors. As a result, there was a reduction in the number of administrative reviews.
- ◆ Staff enhanced the Child Care Licensing Automated Support System (CLASS) so that it could allow child-care providers to log in and submit criminal background checks through the Internet. CCL staff use the CLASS system to enter all pertinent information about regulated operations and agencies, including monitoring, inspections, and investigations.
- ◆ Staff across the state was trained on how to better assess child-care operations. The project, known as “See The Overall Picture” (STOP), helped staff take a more holistic approach to how they evaluate child-care providers based not only on what they find, but on the history of each provider.
- ◆ Staff in the Houston area worked with the Texas Workforce Commission and the Houston/Galveston Area Council to provide intensive training to child-care

providers in Northeast Houston. The training attracted many providers who historically had not participated in community training sessions or association meetings and rarely networked with each other.

- ◆ Staff in the Dallas area partnered with Red Oak Books to distribute books to children attending low-income child-care centers and to train child-care providers on early literacy topics. Dallas staff also worked with the Texas Education Agency Region 11 Education Service Center to train child-care providers and school district staff regarding the inclusion of special needs preschool children.
- ◆ Staff in Tarrant County helped develop a new coalition to address the needs of early childhood education. The coalition includes Child Care Licensing, Child Protective Services, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Work Advantage, Head Start, Clayton Schools Inc., and Child Care Management Services. In April, the coalition partnered with the African American Health Expo which had more than 1,000 participants and more than 70 vendors.

### CCL Services

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

#### Regulating Child-Care Operations

There are three categories of child-care operations regulated by Child Care Licensing: Listed, Registered, and Licensed.

#### Listed Family Homes

Listed Family Homes provide child care on a regular basis (at least four hours per day, three or more days a week, for more than nine consecutive weeks) in the providers' own homes for one to three unrelated children. Providers are required to go through an application process that includes a criminal background check and issuance of a certificate. Listed Family Home providers must be at least age 18, however, there are no minimum standards, orientation, or training requirements. Listed Family Homes are not inspected unless our agency receives a report alleging child abuse or neglect. CCL would also investigate any facility that is reportedly not properly listed or registered.



**K**im Kofron of The Children's Courtyard in Austin is one of thousands of child-care directors in Texas who began using a new DFPS service in 2004 that allows them to conduct online criminal background checks of their employees and volunteers.

"The online check is so much easier," she says. "We just submit it through the Internet and get an e-mail within about 24 to 48 hours that tells us the results. Prior to this, it was a two- to four-week wait where I'd have to fill out a form, fax it to my Licensing representative, and wait for the results to be sent back by snail mail. In fact, sometimes it was as long as six weeks." Kim says in addition to getting faster service, the \$2 per search remains the same as in snail mail days.

Kim says the online system really helps considering her child care operation, which has 65 children and 18 staff, is one of 47 Courtyard campuses in the state of Texas. "We conduct criminal background checks on all staff every two years. It's a service we are now using all the time."

Kim admits she's computer savvy, but says the online check is simple enough for anyone to use. "You go to the web site, enter a user name and password and you are logged on. Then you can enter in a person's information—name, address, Social Security number, etc.—and click on the "Submit" button. It's very user friendly."

### Registered Operations

Registered Child Care Homes provide care in the providers' own homes for as many as six children younger than age 14; they may also take in as many as six more school-age children. The number of children allowed in a home is determined by the ages of the children. No more than 12 children can be in care at any time, including the provider's children. Providers are required to go through an application process that includes completion of an orientation class and criminal background checks. DFPS issues a registration certificate after Licensing inspectors complete an on-site inspection to ensure providers are meeting minimum standards. Registered homes are inspected every 1 to 3 years. Our agency will also inspect them if we receive a report related to child abuse or neglect or standards violations.

### Licensed Operations

All licensed operations must follow published standards and are routinely monitored and inspected. To become a licensed operation, a prospective provider must complete an application process that includes completion of an orientation class and criminal background checks. DFPS issues a license after our staff completes on-site inspections to ensure providers are meeting minimum standards. Licensed Operations are inspected every 5 to 12 months or more often if there are reports of alleged child abuse or neglect or violations of state standards. Licensed Operations include Day Care and 24 Hour Care:

#### Child Care

- ◆ Child Care Centers care for 13 or more children younger than age 14 for less than 24 hours.
- ◆ Licensed Child-Care Homes provide care for less than 24 hours per day for 7 to 12 children younger than age 14.

#### 24-Hour Care

- ◆ Foster Family Homes provide 24-hour care for 6 or fewer children younger than age 18.
- ◆ Foster Group Homes provide 24-hour care for 7 to 12 children younger than age 18.
- ◆ Child Care Institutions provide 24-hour care for 13 or more children younger than age 18 and for the mentally fragile. These Institutions include emergency shelters, residential treatment centers, halfway houses, maternity homes, and therapeutic camps.

### Child Placing Agencies

Child Placing Agencies are persons or organizations other than a child's natural parent or guardian who plan for

placement of a child or place a child in a child care facility, and foster and adoptive homes.

**Training**

District CCL representatives, investigators, supervisors, directors, and clerical staff received more than 30 hours of training and professional development on work related issues like child development, using automation support, regulation and inspection of operations, and health and safety.

CCL staff provided more than 100 training events for more than 5,000 child-care providers and caregivers. The topics included 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. CCL workers provide training and collaborate with local associations to provide training for providers on a regular basis. 🌸

**Child Care Facilities in Texas**

<b>Number of homes:</b>		
Listed Family Homes (LFH)	3,845	11.9%
CPS-Approved Adoptive Homes	649	2.0%
Agency Foster Homes	4,906	15.2%
CPS-Approved Foster Homes	3,175	9.9%
Registered Family Homes (RFH)	8,422	26.2%
<b>Number of centers:</b>		
Licensed/Certified Facilities	10,621	33.0%
<b>Number of 24-hour care:</b>		
Residential Facilities & Child Placing Agencies	578	1.8%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>32,196</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



**T**o most people, merry-go-rounds, seesaws, swings, and other playground equipment are just another way for kids to have fun. Michele Adams of Child Care Licensing agrees—she thinks they’re fun, too, but she also wants them to be safe.

With more than 20 years as a child-care regulator and teacher, Michele is certified as a playground safety inspector by the National Playground Safety Institute. Because of her expertise, one of her job duties is to answer questions from DFPS staff members who conduct safety inspections on the state’s approximately 20,000 home-based and center-based child-care operations.

Thanks to the distribution of digital cameras in 2004, Licensing inspectors and investigators can photograph playground equipment and potential safety hazards and immediately review the digital photos with supervisors. When staff aren’t sure, there’s a good chance those photos will end up in Michele’s e-mail In-Box.

“Digital cameras are an important part of our assessment process and they dramatically increased our ability to communicate with providers and management staff,” says Michele. “By using digital cameras, we not only have almost immediate access to the photos, but save the time and money required when developing traditional film.”

For example, Michele says lately she has been getting a lot of questions about relatively new equipment such as “Water Park” and “Moon Walk” -type attractions. “While this equipment can help a child care center attract business, it also presents a whole new set of safety-related questions from our field staff. Having access to the photos helps me determine if the equipment meets the state’s minimum safety standards for child care operations; and, because the questions and photos are coming to one place, it helps me guide staff across the state in a consistent manner.”

Michele encourages parents who are choosing day care to ask questions of the child care staff and look at the outdoor equipment themselves. “Most modern playground equipment is safer than the older or handmade equipment. People can look to see if the equipment is in good condition, if children are well supervised, and if there is enough protective material such as pea gravel or sand on the surfaces where a child might fall. Parents can read a facility’s last inspection report at the operation on our web site at [www.txchildcaresearch.org](http://www.txchildcaresearch.org).”